

< Talking with your child

How to Talk to Your Child About Getting Evaluated



By Bob Cunningham, EdM



At a Glance

- Talking about the evaluation ahead of time can make your child feel calmer.
- How you talk about it depends on your child's age.
- Tell your child that the testing might take place outside of the regular classroom.

Deciding to get your child evaluated is a big step. Maybe your child even helped make the decision. Either way, it's important to be open about the process. Talking about it shows your child that it's not something to be embarrassed about. It shows that you're there to listen and help. And it gives your child a heads-up about what to expect.

Here are ideas to get the conversation rolling, depending on how old your child is.

Grade-Schoolers

Talk about what's fun and what's hard at school. Start by talking about what your child likes. Then ease into the question: "What's hardest about school?" It doesn't matter if your child says the same thing that made you decide on evaluation. It can be anything that's challenging.

From there you can explain how the evaluation will help. You'll both get information about why certain things are hard for your child. You'll also get ideas on how to work through those challenges.

Explain the process. Point out that **the evaluation** isn't really a test. Instead, it's a series of activities. The truth is that some of them may even be fun.

Make it clear that this isn't the kind of test that gets a grade. Kids **don't have to study for them** and they can't fail—even if they don't know the answers to some of the questions or how to do an activity. What's important is trying hard, because the evaluation helps people understand more about how your child learns and thinks.

Talk about the team. You can say, “The school has some great teachers whose job is to help the other teachers understand how they can teach you best. Those teachers work with a few other people at school, and you might get to see them too.”

Explain that one or more of those teachers may pull your child out of class for a little while. And say that it's OK with the regular teacher.

If your grade-schooler is concerned about being pulled out of class—or has other concerns related to getting evaluated—here are **ways you can respond**.

Middle-Schoolers or High-Schoolers

Older kids are usually aware of what's hard for them and why they're being evaluated, especially if **you've had ongoing conversations** about it. They also might know that the process could end with them getting special education services.

It's important to be open about concerns your child has about what might happen. Here are some things to talk about. Ask how your child feels about each, and if there are any questions.

- The team—including you and the teachers—will get information to help understand why your child is

struggling in school.

- The school may provide **support and services** to make it easier for your child to learn. That could mean different kinds of instruction, changes to the schoolwork, or **accommodations** like extra time for tests.
- You'll find out if your child should work with other teachers or specialists who are trained to help kids with specific types of challenges.

Some kids worry more about the social impact of getting evaluated than about what it means for schoolwork. Read about how to address **concerns about getting labeled**. You might also be interested in **special education myths**. Your child might be relieved to debunk some of these myths, too.

Watch as an expert shares more tips for talking to your child about being evaluated at any age.

Preparing for an Evaluation



Try to remember that the goal is to help your child feel comfortable about the evaluation. Make sure your child knows this isn't punishment for struggling in school.

Instead, it's the best way for you and the teachers to provide support.

You and your child may also need to talk through fears about learning and thinking differently. If you have that conversation, here are **some pointers**.

*Learn more in our **guide to preparing for an evaluation**.*

Key Takeaways

- Make sure your child knows that an evaluation isn't a "punishment," and that you don't have to study for it.
- Explain that the goal is to find out how your child learns best.
- The most important thing is to talk openly about the evaluation and to let your child express concerns.

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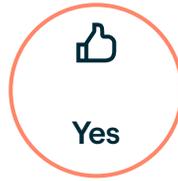


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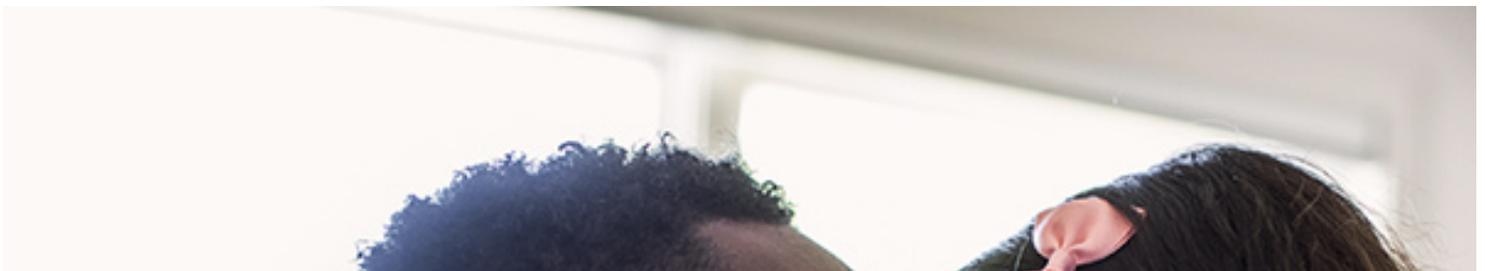
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