



Vaughn K. Lauer, Ph.D.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

### **MAKING SENSE of SCHOOL EVALUATIONS AND TEST SCORES**

#### **A Step by Step Approach to Understanding Evaluation Reports and other Data**

#### **A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

Have you ever wondered why a school or private educational evaluation is sometimes so difficult to understand, or explain? “Mean scores”, “standard deviations”, “percentile ranks”—what are these and what do they mean? How do these terms help us better understand or, even explain, a child’s specific needs and strengths?

#### **WHAT SOME OF US DO WITH EVALUATION REPORTS**

Well, here’s what some of us have done. We get the report and check the front page to make sure that the report DOES indeed belong to the right child. We start reading until it stops making sense to us, and then glaze over the rest until we reach the summary page. And, then, we hope that all that stuff that we’ve just glazed over ACTUALLY makes sense to someone else who will explain it, right?

Truth is that, at some point, most of have “been there and done that!” **Including me!**

#### **THE PROBLEM WITH EVALUATION REPORTS**

Evaluation reports are written in a specific jargon that few of us can easily understand. And, since even fewer of us have taken graduate courses in

psychometrics or test development, we are not always certain what parts of the reports are useful. That's why many of us skip right to the end of the report and read the summary—and hope to understand it.

So, then, why does the report contain all that other stuff that we don't read? Is it really that important? Here's the thing: It's *all IMPORTANT* because each test score is a part of the puzzle of understanding a child's educational needs and strengths.

Here's something else to keep in mind, school decisions are team decisions and in order for that to happen the entire group needs to understand what the reports mean.

Even more important is that so much of what's decided during school meetings is heavily dependent on tests of all kinds. It means that all members of the meeting (parents and educators alike) need to understand the findings of the reports in a way that can shed an UNDERSTANDABLE light on those areas of learning that are causing a child to struggle in school.

## **SOLVING THE PROBLEM**

So what can we do to makes sense of evaluation reports to help us determine eligibility as a child with a disability or who has needs for special education and related services? Or, to decide which services are needed and why? And, how do we know that the *entire* school team understands enough to make informed decisions? There is a solution.

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### **THE SOLUTION:**

#### ***MAKING SENSE OF TEST SCORES and HOW TO EVALUATE AN EVALUATION***

I have worked long enough to see my fair share of evaluations that have compromised the quality of decisions made by the IEP team. I have also seen excellent reports from which the school team was capable of making good educational decisions. Unfortunately, I have seen far too many instances when,

for one reason or another, the school team did not understand the test results. (Just in case you are wondering, I have sat in on over 2,000 school meetings.)

So, I decided it was time to help tame this dragon, so that the next time you held an evaluation in your hand, you would know how to make more sense of the report and make better educational decisions.

When everyone understands what the test results mean, all will be making informed decisions which is what all IEP team members want to do. Most of us simply need a little help, so that good decisions can be made (and hey, that's what evaluation reports are meant to help do). Good decisions result in meeting our children's educational needs.

This course will help you to make good educational decisions.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To understand the general organization of an educational report and the components that should be found within that report
- To become familiar with the jargon and often confusing terms, so they will make sense to you (gone are the days of "glazing over" or crazy and lengthy google searches),
- To enable you to visually present test scores that will help you and the school team to draw out valuable information that often gets lost in the technical part of reports,
- To develop your level of understanding of assessment reports so that you can tell if an assessment report is flawed or if there is need for further testing,
- To give you tools to assist the evaluator in designing an Independent Educational Evaluation that will be easy to understand and useful to all IEP meeting participants,
- To learn how to use the **Special Education Decoder System (SEDS)** to better understand and explain test scores at school meetings to help make informed educational decisions. The **SEDS** is a powerful online tool that helps teams to literally see how test scores relate to each other. Seeing those relationships enables the team to understand not only what the needs are but why they are needs. It is **FREE** and is included in this course to use with your student's/child's report. (Click [HERE](#) to see watch a video on using the SEDS), and

- With my support and using your student's/child's report, you will be more confident and comfortable with "reading" and understanding the report and other evaluations.

## **COURSE MODULES**

- **Module I Evaluations and Reevaluations**

Learn about the federal IDEA regulations related to referrals to special education, initial evaluations (initial testing) and reevaluations, Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE), and who is to attend school meetings.

- **Module II What's In An Evaluation?** ([Click HERE](#) to see a short sample of Module 1)

Learn what components should be found in school and private evaluations in order to determine eligibility as a child with a disability and the need for special education and related services.

### **Bonus Video: Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Understand the concepts behind Rtl, why it was put into place, issues with the implementation of Rtl and recent study results evaluating the use of Rtl. (Note: Rtl is not found as a specific regulation in IDEA.)

- **Module III What Do Tests Test?**

Learn about the various kinds of tests, their purpose and what skills they measure.

- **Module IV What Do These Test Scores Mean?**

Learn the differences among test scores including standard scores, percentile rank, scaled scores, T-scores and more.

Understand the meaning of terms including standard deviations, mean, average, and descriptors.

Also learn about cautions with using various test scores such as grade equivalents.

- **Module V How Do I Evaluate an Evaluation?**

Learn how to review an evaluation and make meaningful notations and observations.

Learn how to compare findings of test scores and summary statements and recommendations.

Learn to recognize when a test score might not be helpful and when it is.

Learn how to prepare for a school meeting where an evaluation will be discussed and what questions should be asked and why and how to phrase them.

- **Module VI How Do I Use the Special Education Decoder System (SEDS) at School Meetings?**

Using the SEDS tool, you will learn how to present the test scores so that meeting participants can see how test scores cluster around needs and strengths.

Learn how the SEDS program can show not only the learning needs but also the cognitive processes resulting in those needs.

Just as easily show the school team the child's strengths.

Learn how the SEDS program can assist in determining eligibility and in the writing of initial Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)

**Note that the SEDS program/tool does NOT analyze the evaluation reports. That remains a team decision and requires the appropriate professionals be in attendance at the particular school meetings.**

- **BONUS 1 FREE** access to the **Special Education Decoder System** (\$40 value) (Click [HERE](#) to see a video on how to use the SEDS.)

- **BONUS 2 FREE** One Hour of Individual Consultant Time (\$150 value)
- **NUMEROUS RESOURCES** including IDEA regulations related to evaluations and reevaluations, lists of tests of reading, speech and language, cognition, processing and more.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

- This is a 6-week course, plus an hour of one-on-one consultant time with each participant.
- Prior to weekly group discussions, watch a video specific to each module.
- Each week you will then take part in an online discussion (via Zoom) about the week's topic (and video) and evaluation(s) you are working with.
- During each discussion I will present additional information to you using videos, slide presentations and resource documents.
- Each week's online session is interactive with time for questions and answers throughout and following the presentation.
- Session times will vary based on the group's needs, but each usually ranges from 1 to 1 1/4 hours.
- Following the six sessions, each participant will receive an individual one-hour of one-on-one consultant time.
- To make this course more meaningful and more personalized, it's best if you have access to a school or private evaluation to use as your "learning" document.

## **INTERNET NEEDS**

- You will need a sufficiently fast internet connection to download recordings, play videos and to remain connected during weekly sessions. Although you can use cell phones, I cannot guarantee that a cell phone will be able to hold a connection when all participants are online.

- You will need speakers/headset and a microphone to fully participate during sessions.
- You do not need a webcam but are free to use one.
- Using the service of Zoom is at no cost to you. You will be given a link for each night's session and instructions (two quick steps) for joining the session.

### **LIMIT OF 8 PARTICIPANTS**

To ensure personalized support, I will accept **a maximum of 8 participants**, so that each participant will have time to ask questions specific to their needs. If, by the end of this course, you still have questions, or you need further clarifications, or want to discuss a report, I'm offering you a **free one-on-one hour** of consultant time. Please be certain to take advantage of this offer.

### **WHO THIS COURSE IS FOR**

This course is specifically designed for educators, parents, and advocates who:

- are frustrated with not being able to understand evaluation reports,
- need help with developing a better understanding of the data that are contained in assessment reports, so you can make informed decisions and obtain the services and accommodations that are helpful to a child's learning and educational programming,
- do not want to be totally dependent on others to "understand" evaluation reports for them, and
- want to make the best educational decisions as possible.

### **WHO THIS COURSE IS NOT FOR**

This course is not for those who:

- are unwilling to put in time and effort to learn how to understand evaluation reports,
- want others to make sense of the assessment reports for them,
- are not concerned with using the data from reports to determine children's needs and strengths,
- will let others make all educational decisions on their behalf, or

- want to know everything there is to know about ALL educational tests—there are 100's of tests and it's simply not possible in this or any similar course.

## **COURSE FEES**

This course is a great investment of your time and effort because you will learn valuable information and develop skills that will empower you to make the best use of evaluation reports so that you can actively participate in school/IEP meetings in making informed educational decisions.

As such, you will have full access to me, course materials and resources, and the powerful online program tool called the **Special Education Decoder System**.

**FOR INFORMATION ON PRICING, PLEASE EMAIL ME AT:  
[VAUGHN@SPECIALEDUCATIONDECODER.COM](mailto:VAUGHN@SPECIALEDUCATIONDECODER.COM)**

**THE COURSE IS OFFERED  
AT VARIOUS TIMES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE EMAIL ME AT:  
[VAUGHN@SPECIALEDUCATIONDECODER.COM](mailto:VAUGHN@SPECIALEDUCATIONDECODER.COM)**

**FOR EVEN MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT  
<https://specialeducationdecoder.com>**

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**READ MORE BELOW**

**WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE COURSE,  
HELP I HAVE PROVIDED TO OTHERS  
AND  
THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL DECODER SYSTEM (SEDS)**

**The Special Education Decoder System is a great tool** for your advocacy toolkit! I was able to use the graphs to show that my daughter is not the sum of her scores. The school led me to believe that they planned to deny Dyslexia services. I scheduled a meeting with the Dyslexia department and used the graph to point out her strengths and weaknesses in a clear, concise, and easy to understand manner using the Special Education Decoder System. It allowed me to show that crucial scores, although not below average, were a relative weakness when compared to her cognitive ability. By the end of the meeting they agreed that she needed Dyslexia services and thanked me for being so proactive in fighting for my child's needs. I highly recommend this program to ease the burden of test evaluation for both parents and advocates! **Dana P., Parent**

**Does in minutes** what used to take me hours to do -- and it's all visual. Now the staff will be able to see it and say "OHHHHHH." **Y. C., Parent/Educator/Advocate**

**Evaluating evaluations was always time consuming** for me, looking at scores on individual tests, trying to see where they all fit together and what they revealed about a student. Having to present this information clearly to teachers and parents in a way that was understandable was, at times, an additional challenge. Using the decoder has simplified all of this. It instantly provides an overall view of a student's test scores on a bell chart, facilitating comparisons quickly and easily. This has been highly effective particularly in my role as an advocate and has literally changed the course of a meeting. Teachers have immediately understood a student's challenges and issues when presented with a visual picture of strengths and needs.

This is an invaluable tool that I highly recommend. **A.H. Parent/Advocate**

**This resource will prove to be a game-changer** for [educators] parents and advocates. It is what we've needed for years - showing with clear visuals the strengths and weaknesses of our children. I've taken it to numerous team meetings and have had an incredibly positive response (and outcome) at each. Thank you Vaughn Lauer. **A.M., Parent/Advocate**

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## TRUE STORY AND TESTIMONIAL

Hi! I have an 11-year-old son who is dyslexic (and severely speech delayed) and was required by his school to have his regular assessment with his speech pathologist before we decide on the next course of action in his twice yearly IEP meeting. And like most normal people, I would take the assessment report and just skip through it till the summary section and read the recommendations. Little did I know that by doing so, I was missing out on a lot of information that was crucial and needed to be addressed at IEP meetings--until I sent a copy of the assessment report to Dr. Lauer for a second opinion and he started pointing out areas in that report that were "ambiguous" and that lacked data to support the findings.

Here's a good example of what I mean:

In the summary, it was reported that my son's "receptive language" is slightly better than his "expressive language." Now I roughly know what "receptive" and "expressive" means but before this, it had never occurred to me to ask "why" or "how" they came to this conclusion, so that we can pinpoint exactly what he is struggling with in the areas of his "receptive" and "expressive" language. Now, of course, a lot of this data was contained in the parts of the assessment report that I didn't read, simply, because it never made sense to me (and this is coming from a master's degree graduate who has spent time on research work).

I remember feeling like I was falling off a cliff when I came to that realization, because I have been reading all my son's assessment reports that way (by just relying on the summary) and I've also done the same with all my students' assessment reports (I have been teaching pre-school for the past 16 years) and had no idea that what I was doing had put me in the position where I couldn't possibly be making informed decisions for my son or for all the students that I've worked with.

Since then, I've learned much from Dr. Lauer about how to properly "study" an assessment report and, although there are still some areas that are illusive to me, I am better able to "read" them and to know exactly what questions to ask when

something looks unclear to me. At the end of the day, all I want for my son (and for every child) is to figure out what they really need so that we can provide them with the best assistance that will help them reach their full potential. And, hey, this is coming from a mom and teacher who is dyslexic, a published author, international speaker, teacher trainer, and early childhood education specialist...who (clearly) still has much to learn. :) **F.T., Parent/Educator**