

# Successful Transition from Elementary to Post-Secondary (STEPS)

## Assessment Information for Parents

### ***What is involved in the assessment?***

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| Interview and Consent<br>(30-60 minutes)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To obtain informed consent by explaining the nature of the assessment and expected consequences</li><li>▪ To provide the clinician an opportunity to clarify items from the background questionnaire</li><li>▪ To put the child at ease before testing</li><li>▪ To give child and parent a chance to ask questions before testing</li></ul> |
| Testing<br>(8-9 hours, with breaks, over three sessions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To examine the child's ability to do things that require very specific skills so we can better isolate the problems (e.g., if the problem is described as reading, we find out if it is sight word learning, phonics, reading speed, comprehension or a combination that is the root of the problem)</li></ul>                               |
| Checklists, questionnaires                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To get information from parents, teachers, the student about things we can't directly test (e.g., daily functioning, classroom behaviour, study skills)</li></ul>  |
| Feedback<br>(about 1 hour)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To share assessment results with parent and child</li><li>▪ To talk about realistic and practical recommendations</li><li>▪ To ensure the child understands his or her own learning profile</li><li>▪ To give parent and child the opportunity to ask questions</li></ul>  |
| School visit<br>(about 1 hour)                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To share assessment results with the school in a setting where they can ask questions</li><li>▪ To discuss with school staff how recommendations might be implemented</li></ul>  |

### ***What does the testing involve?***

There is huge variety in the test activities. We might ask your child to copy designs, repeat made-up words, solve some arithmetic problems, remember a list, and define words. The testing is standardized. That means that each time we administer the tests, we use the same instructions. That way, we can tell how a child did on a task compared to the norm for that child's age. Then, we can look at which things are easier and which things are harder for that child than for others. This way, we can identify the specific processes that are interfering with the child's learning.

### ***What if my child has been previously assessed?***

Previous assessment results can be very helpful in attempting to understand the history of your child's learning and development. However, sometimes children's strengths and weaknesses change as they develop. As a result, diagnoses that seemed to fit when the child was younger, might not fit now. What we try to do at any given time is determine how the child's learning profile is affecting their learning now.

### ***What kinds of skills are tested?***

Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• visual and verbal memory</li><li>• memory for meaningful information (e.g., stories, pictures)</li><li>• rote information (strings of numbers)</li><li>• ability to manipulate information in memory (e.g., do mental arithmetic, reverse a sequence of numbers)</li></ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• storage of information that is presented repeatedly</li></ul>
Processing Speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• speed at which information is recognized and can be acted on</li></ul>
Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• problem-solving, using stored knowledge to think through new ideas.</li></ul>
Executive functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• planning, organizing, inhibiting responses</li><li>• shifting between ideas or tasks, initiating behaviour, generating ideas</li></ul>
Visual-motor skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• paper and pencil skills similar to those used in writing and printing.</li></ul>
Phonological processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identification and manipulation of sounds</li><li>• memory for sounds in sequence</li><li>• retrieval of sound sequences from long term memory</li></ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identification of real words</li><li>• ability to use phonics to sound out words</li><li>• reading speed for individual words and in passages</li><li>• understanding of what is read</li></ul>
Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• spelling of real words and phonetic nonsense words from dictation</li></ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mental calculation, written calculation, automaticity of basic math facts</li><li>• understanding of mathematics concepts including oral word problems, geometry, money and time</li></ul>

### ***What other information is taken into account in the assessment?***

When we interpret the results of the tests we take into account test behaviour (e.g., level of distractibility, effort, and anxiety), the child's general response style (e.g., impulsive, careful and slow, hesitant to response), and current stressors (e.g., family issues, problems at school). When formulating a diagnosis we take into account the child's learning and school history including grades, early development, and past assessment results. We put all these together to try to understand the child as fully as possible, in order to make the most sensible recommendations and form a clear diagnosis, if needed.