

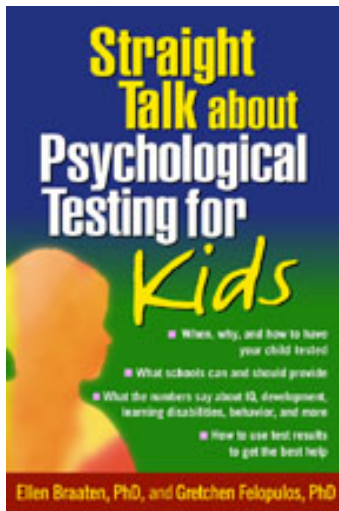
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## STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING FOR KIDS

By Ellen B. Braaten, PhD & Gretchen Felopulos, PhD

Published Feb. 2004, Guilford Press



### SUMMARY

This authoritative guide gives parents the inside scoop on how psychological testing works and how to use testing to get the best help for their child. Child psychology experts Drs. Braaten and Felopulos spell out the entire process of testing for dyslexia, ADHD, math and reading disorders, Asperger syndrome, depression, anxiety, and other common childhood problems. Parents learn what different tests actually measure and how to "crack the code" of jargon-filled reports, numerical scores, and educational recommendations. Also discussed are key qualifications to look for in evaluators, what kinds of testing schools are required to provide, and when to consider paying for private testing instead. Comprehensive and accessible, the book includes tips on making testing less stressful for children and loads of resources, FAQs, and examples.

For more information visit [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com).

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11. Children at the Extremes: Mental Retardation and Giftedness
12. Depression, Anxiety, and Other Psychological Concerns

Resources

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ellen Braaten, PhD, is the track director of the Child/Adult and Neuropsychology training programs at Massachusetts General Hospital and is on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Braaten is a staff psychologist at the Massachusetts General Hospital's Psychology Assessment Center, where she specializes in child neuropsychology. She has authored numerous scientific papers and chapters on children with ADHD, depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities.

Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist on the Massachusetts General Hospital staff in Child Psychiatry and in its Psychology Assessment Center. She is also on the faculty of Harvard Medical School and has a private practice in Lexington, Massachusetts. In addition to her specialization in pediatric neuropsychology and psychological testing, Dr. Felopulos provides psychotherapy to children as well as parental guidance. She is a primary supervisor for psychology interns studying the process of testing, and she teaches many seminars each year to interns and residents on the topic of children and testing.

## AUDIENCE

Any parent whose child has been referred for psychological or educational testing, or who is considering seeking testing independently. Also of interest to psychology and education professionals seeking accessible, up-to-date information about testing, as well as answers to parents' frequently asked questions.

**A Guilford Trade title for both general readers and professionals –  
[www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com).**

264 Pages

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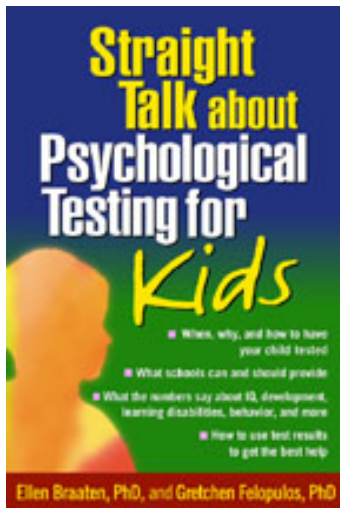
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## BOOK REVIEWS -- STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING FOR KIDS

By Ellen B. Braaten, PhD & Gretchen Felopulos, PhD

Published Feb. 2004, Guilford Press



"Professional psychologists, while mindful of the complexities associated with psychological testing, often fail to remember how intimidating the process can be for parents and families. Drs. Braaten and Felopulos provide an excellent review of the psychological testing process from the beginning to the closing stages. The book will be both enormously helpful to parents and instructive to professional psychologists, social workers, school-based professionals, and graduate students. This is a very valuable book."

**-Tanya L. Eckert, PhD, School Psychology Program, Syracuse University**

"This book is an extraordinary reference for parents and professionals in truly understanding when to use, and how to interpret, the various psychological tests available. Drs. Braaten and Felopulos provide an exceptional service by distilling complex information into a very readable and pragmatic guide."

**-Timothy E. Wilens, MD, author of *Straight Talk about Psychiatric Medications for Kids***

"At last! A superb book for the lay person about psychological testing. It is highly informative, extremely interesting, and it is really fun to read. Braaten and Felopulos have written a totally engrossing book on a topic that is usually deadly dull. Their secret is to give testing a human face and describe how it points the way to solutions for many kinds of human suffering. They write with clarity, but also with heart. They are clear, without oversimplifying. They cover a huge amount of ground, but allow the reader to enjoy the ride. This is the best book of its kind that I have ever seen." - **Edward M. Hallowell, MD, author of *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness* and coauthor of *Driven to Distraction***"

"For parents wrestling with the question of how best to help a child struggling with school or with social or behavioral problems, this book is an absolute godsend. Clarifying what psychological testing is and what it can tell parents about their child, Drs. Braaten and Felopulos manage not only to demystify these complex diagnostic tools but also to teach parents about child development in general. Warm and wonderfully reassuring, the authors

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convey their extensive knowledge and clinical experience in language that is clear, direct, and accessible. Parents will appreciate the effort to highlight important terminology, the Q & A sections, and especially the affirming message that their 'non-expert' insights and understanding of their child are invaluable." - **Bonnie Ohye, PhD**

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### **BOOK Q&A WITH EXPERT CHILD PSYCHOLOGISTS Dr. Ellen B. Braaten & Dr. Gretchen Felopulos**

#### **1. Why did you develop this book? Who should read this?**

We developed this book because we get hundreds of calls each year from parents who want their children tested or who wonder if an evaluation is needed, but who have questions about the evaluation process. Many parents have asked us over the years whether there was a book we could recommend about this issue, but unfortunately there was nothing to recommend. We were as frustrated as the parents that there was no place for them to get answers, so ultimately we decided to write the book ourselves. It's written for parents who are new to the evaluation process, as well as, those have previously had their children tested but who would like a reference book that they can keep on their shelf. So far we've had very positive feedback from both types of parents.

#### **2. How do you know if a child needs testing? When should a child get tested?**

These questions are more complicated than you might realize, because they are so dependent upon each child's presentation. Most of the time it begins with parents feeling that there's something "not quite right" with their child. Generally, the concerns can range from language/speech skills, problems with motor skills, learning and academics, and behavior and emotional concerns. There's an entire chapter in the book devoted to answering these questions.

#### **3. What tips would you recommend for parents about the testing process?**

The number one thing they can do is to make sure the evaluation is done by a competent professional. Parents are often confused about whether they should have the evaluation completed through the school system or by a professional in private practice. Again, there is not one right answer to this question, so we review the pros and cons of each in the book, as well as talking about how to go about finding a good professional. Another tip we'd recommend is "ask questions." Professionals (ourselves included) often talk over parents' heads and our reports are often written at a level that can make it difficult for parents to understand. Thus, it's important that parents ask the professional to translate this information in a way they can understand it, because, ultimately they (the parents) are their children's most important advocate.

#### **4. What should every parent know about testing? Are there any common misconceptions?**

Many parents are concerned that testing will "label" their child. However, labeling isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as the label is appropriate. A firm diagnosis can help focus the treatment. For instance, knowing your child's inattention in school is due to problems learning to read (which are a result of dyslexia) as opposed to an

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attention problem, can direct treatment toward reading intervention instead of medication. Another misconception is that testing can predict what a child is ultimately capable of. However, testing is not a crystal ball; it provides information regarding a child's ability at a certain point in time and is not necessarily predictive of a child's ultimate potential.

### **5. How does this book help parents and educators?**

We feel this book fills a huge gap in the parenting education literature in that it's the first book of it's kind that answers a broad range of topics regarding what's involved in different types of evaluations, what are the commonly used tests, what to expect before, during, and after an evaluation, and "cracking the code" of the test reports. The book also describes how testing is used to evaluate specific disorders such as dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, Autism, Mental Retardation, Giftedness, and other learning and emotional issues. So, the book not only answers broad questions about the process, it also provides more specific information that parents will find useful. Since we've seen thousands of children and families over the years, we have a pretty good idea of what kinds of questions they have – since most families have similar questions.

### **6. Are there any additional resources you recommend?**

Our book is full of additional resources, including books, websites, and videos. Some of our most frequently recommended books include *The Explosive Child* by Ross Greene, *Straight Talk about Psychiatric Medications for Kids* by Tim Wilens, and *Driven to Distraction* by Edward Hallowell and John Ratey. They all happen to be written by our colleagues at HMS, so we may be a bit biased, but they are great books.

### **7. Where can someone purchase the book?**

Most major bookstores and online sites stock both the paperback and hardback versions of the book. You can also visit our website at [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com) for purchases.

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## BIOGRAPHY FOR ELLEN B. BRAATEN, PhD Psychologist & Author

Ellen B. Braaten, PhD, is an experienced and prominent psychologist, researcher and author. Dr. Braaten currently teaches general child psychology to medical students and research fellows at the Harvard Medical School. She is also a clinical psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) specializing in pediatric neuropsychology. She directs the child and neuropsychology internships at MGH/Harvard. Dr. Braaten is a member of both the American Psychological Association and American Psychological Society and has published research on topics relating to ADHD, anxiety in children and learning disabilities.

It is estimated that nearly one-in-five children will have psychological testing during their childhood. Until recently there was little help available to help parents and professionals navigate the testing process. In 2004, Dr. Braaten and co-author, Dr. Gretchen Felopulos, wrote *Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids*, published by Guilford Press.

*Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids* is an excellent, easy-to-read reference guide for parents and professionals on the who, what, why, when and how of child psychological testing. Drs. Braaten and Felopulos's comprehensive guide helps adults determine when a child needs testing, what type of testing is appropriate and what to expect from the process. It also assists adults in understanding what the results say about IQ, behavior and learning disabilities. The authors have de-mystified an often complex and intimidating topic for a wide audience of parents and educators. Dr. Braaten's second book, *"The Child Clinicians Thesaurus"* is scheduled for publication in late 2004.

Dr. Braaten received her PhD in Counseling Psychology from Colorado State University and completed her internship and a post-doctoral fellowship in Child/Adult Psychology at MGH and Harvard Medical School. She received her Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from The University of Colorado-Denver and a Bachelor of Science Education from The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Dr. Braaten has published over a dozen articles in professional and medical journals on topics such as, ADHD, ADD, gender and psychology, motherhood, depression and psychotherapy. She also writes articles for parenting and consumer publications. She is also an accomplished speaker, traveling across America making engaging and informative presentations at conferences, meetings and parenting groups. Dr. Braaten has spent many years as an educator, working with young handicapped children. She is a mother of two and resides in Boston, MA.

*Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids* is available at many bookstores and online sites, in both hardback and paperback editions.

Braaten EB, Felopulos G. (2004) *Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids*. New York: Guilford Press.

Paperback, ISBN 1-57230-787-0, \$16.95      Hardcover, ISBN 1-57230-948-2, \$35.00  
Braaten EB. (In Press). *The Child Clinician's Thesaurus*. New York: Guilford Press.

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## BIOGRAPHY FOR GRETCHEN FELOPULOS, PhD Psychologist & Author

Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, is a licensed psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and is on staff for the Child Psychiatry and Psychology Assessment Centers. Dr. Felopulos specializes in developmental disorders, infant cognition and assessment, personality, and neuropsychology. She is also on the faculty of Harvard Medical School, teaching medical students and residents about the psychology testing process for children. Dr. Felopulos has a private practice in Lexington, MA. With over ten years of experience conducting psychological and educational testing, Dr. Felopulos has tested and counseled hundreds(?) of children and their parents.

For parents worried about their child's behavioral or educational difficulties, deciding to test and going the testing process sometimes adds more stress to the situation. It is estimated that nearly one-in-five children will have psychological testing during their childhood. Until recently there was little help available to help parents and professionals trying navigate the testing process. In 2004, Dr. Felopulos and co-author, Dr. Ellen. B. Braaten, wrote *Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids*, published by Guilford Press.

*Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids* is an excellent, easy-to-read reference guide for parents and professionals on the who, what, why, when and how of child psychological testing. Drs. Felopulos and Braaten's comprehensive guide helps adults determine when a child needs testing, what type of testing is appropriate and what to expect from the process. It also assists adults in understanding what the results say about IQ, behavior and learning disabilities. The authors have de-mystified an often complex and intimidating topic for a wide audience of parents and educators.

Dr. Felopulos received her PhD from the University of Massachusetts-Boston in 1994. Dr. Felopulos is an avid writer and has written story books for children. She resides in Natick, MA with her husband and three children.

*Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids* is available at many bookstores and online sites, in both hardback and paperback editions.

Felopulos EB, Felopulos G. (2004) *Straight Talk About Psychological Testing for Kids*. New York: Guilford Press.  
Paperback, ISBN 1-57230-787-0, \$16.95 Hardcover, ISBN 1-57230-948-2, \$35.00

For more information visit [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com).

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## Visit KidTesting.com - The Who, What, Why, When, Where & How of Testing Kids

Brought to you by Ellen B. Braaten, PhD & Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, authors of  
"Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids"



Visit the website for parents and professionals seeking information on psychological testing for children. Do you have a feeling that something is 'not quite right' with your child? Has a teacher or other professional told you that you 'need to get your child tested'? Have you undergone the testing process and need help interpreting the results and plan for your child's future? Do you think your child might have, or has been diagnosed with, dyslexia, ADHD, Autism, Asperger's, learning difficulties, depression or anxiety? If any of these questions apply to you then you've come to the right place.

[www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com)

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## Helping Kids Cope with Disaster – Listening and Reassurance Key to Recovery, says Child Psychologist

**Boston, Massachusetts – Sep 12, 2005**—Helping children deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is an immediate priority, says child psychologist Ellen Braaten, Ph.D. Any child, whether personally involved or exposed to media coverage of a natural disaster, may experience physical or emotional trauma related to the event. Children look to adults around them for coping strategies and reassurance. As recovery operations continue in affected areas, parents and teachers can help rebuild kids' lives gradually.

"A child's reaction will vary depending upon exposure to the event and the child's personality. For some, emotional recovery may take months or even years," says Braaten. "Reactions to the event may be immediate, or occur days or even weeks later. The disaster is a double-whammy for kids already stressing about being back at school. Parents should monitor their child's behavior and discuss any concerns with a pediatrician, teacher or suitably qualified professional."

Braaten offers the following advice.

**1. Listen** – Allow the child to express fear and anxiety. Be an empathetic and non-judgemental listener. Whether the child is three or 13, give them an opportunity to ask questions and talk about the event. However, don't push them into talking. Answer questions appropriately stressing positive solutions, such as, the recovery underway and people helping others. If appropriate, suggest that the child come with you to make a charitable donation. Explain that feeling bad, sad, angry or guilty is normal.

**2. Reassure** – Try to remain calm, especially when watching the news or talking to others. Don't expect kids to be brave or tell them not to cry. A sense of impending doom or panic can affect some children; reassure them as best you can that you will be there for them. Parents can provide extra hugs and try to maintain, where possible, a normal routine. Normal daily activities maintain the familiarity of a stable environment. Some senses in particular can evoke painful memories, for example, images and smells. Be on guard and help them understand their feelings and reactions. Remind them of past fears they overcame and how strong they are. Find peers for the child to play or hang-out with.

**3. Recover** - "With adult involvement children can develop positive coping skills and overcome catastrophic events," says Braaten, author of "Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids". "Over time children will recover and face the future again."

For more information visit [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com) or contact Sethina Edwards at 310-289-2149 or sethina@mommd.com.

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## **"I'm Not Good Enough!" - Is the Pressure to Succeed Stressing Our Kids? Raising 'Average' Kids in a Competitive World**

**Boston, Massachusetts – July 14, 2005** — No parent wants an average child, or so it seems these days. Successful kids must mean successful parenting, right? Wrong, says leading child psychologist, Ellen Braaten, Ph.D. Parents may unwittingly be sending the wrong message by jamming their kid's schedules with organized sports and extra activities. Whether the child is aged two or 20, parental pressure is causing many stressed children to set impossible goals and unrealistic standards for themselves. Braaten suggests parents and kids relax, enjoy being 'average' and, perhaps, even become bored during the remaining summer vacation.

"Most children won't earn early entrance to Harvard, become a violin virtuoso or play professional league sports," says Braaten. "It's a competitive world, for parents and for kids. Being average is great and is the norm for most children. Unfortunately, early competitive sports, rigorous academic testing and the tendency to over-reward normal behavior can make children feel that they must be the best, at everything. Parents can feel like failures if their child isn't signed up for numerous enrichment classes or gets a C in class."

Ironically, childhood obesity and childhood participation in organized sports is at an all time high. Playing sports is touted as the solution to improving kid's health. Parents think they're doing what's best by signing their kids up for competitive sports at an increasingly young age. At weekends, the ball park is packed with kids and there are shiny trophies to be won. Meanwhile, the nearby swings might be empty. "Physical activity shouldn't just be about competing," says Braaten. "Unstructured free play is essential for developmental growth. Kids can get fit by running around, climbing and other self-directed activities. More importantly, free time and even boredom allows kids to dream, discover and explore the world around them, learning through play and imagination."

Both boys and girls feel pressure to be smart, athletic and attractive. Braaten has reported an increase in stressed children appearing at her Boston practice. Particularly striking is a surge in adolescent self-cutting, especially among her most 'over-achieving' child patients. Of course, kids should play sports and enjoy extra activities, but for every hour scheduled, allow them at least an hour of free time.

For more information visit [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com) or contact Sethina Edwards at 310-289-2149 or sethina@mommd.com.

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**FOR RELEASE AUGUST 17 2004, BACK-TO-SCHOOL FEATURE PRNEWSWIRE:**

### **Anxious About the New School Year? – Psychologist Advice to Ease Back-to-School Worries**

**Boston, Massachusetts – August 17, 2004** — Along with the new school back-pack might come some extra baggage -- stress.

The back-to-school season brings feelings of relief and anxiety for both parent and child. Whether worrying about a new teacher or homework, many kids don't look forward to going back. Psychologists and authors of "Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids," Ellen B. Braaten, PhD, and Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, share tips on minimizing fears and when to be concerned.

"Anxiety is typified by frequent excessive worrying or nervousness and is actually fairly common in children," says Felopulos. "Anxiety might manifest itself in symptoms of separation anxiety, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive behavior, or even school phobia. Kids might seem more angry, tense, tearful, irritable or clingy than usual. Whether they're starting kindergarten or 12th grade, parents, even anxious ones, can calm worries and ease the transition."

- \* **Talk it Through**  
Address their worries and explain that feeling anxious is quite normal. Tell them how you survived new schools or new teachers.
- \* **Develop a Plan**  
Come up with a plan together to help them 'get through' the first few days or weeks. Perhaps you'll drop them off a little earlier to spend some extra time settling them in. Alternatively, after their first week have a special "you did it!" evening with pizza and a movie. Whatever you and your child decide, give them something to look forward to after starting school.
- \* **Keep in Touch**  
Kind words or hugs of reassurance can make the child feel secure. Make yourself available and keep communicating. After the first few weeks have passed talk to the teachers and ask how your child is doing.
- \* **When to be Concerned**  
If problems are increasing and the child's behavior is worsening talk to the teachers about next steps. Nearly one in five children are tested during the school year to rule out learning disorders or educational problems.

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"Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids" details when, why, and how to have a child tested; what the numbers say about IQ, development, learning disabilities; and, how to use the results to get help. The book is published by Guilford Press in both hardback and paperback editions.

For more information visit [www.kidtesting.com](http://www.kidtesting.com) or call 310-289-2149.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Is My Child Delayed? Expert Advice on When to Seek Help and What to Expect from the Testing Process

**Los Angeles, California – July 9, 2004** —Many parents worry that something might be 'not quite right' with their child. Whether the child is struggling at school or appears to be 'behind' others their age, parents often wonder if they are being overly anxious or if their intuition is correct. Expert child psychologists, Ellen B. Braaten PhD and Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, recently published an informative guidebook for parents called, "Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids."

"Nearly one in five children receive some form of psychological, academic or intelligence testing each year," said Ellen B. Braaten. "Every day thousands of parents are confronting the possibility that their child might have a learning disability or developmental delay. Not knowing what to do, what might happen and where to seek help can add stress to the situation. Our book helps parents decide what to do, when to do it and what to expect."

Figuring out what is 'wrong' might involve a testing evaluation to assess behavioral and social skills, language development, motor skills, intelligence, attention, memory and learning skills. Results of these tests can diagnose learning problems or conditions like autism, ADHD or giftedness. Braaten and Felopulos offer the following tips for concerned parents.

### **1. Follow Your Intuition**

Often a parent's gut reaction is right. You are your child's advocate and closest ally. Take action right away. Your first stop should be an appointment with a pediatrician, who may refer your child for further testing.

### **2. Do Your Homework**

Being informed about the testing process can ease the fears of both parents and children. Learn everything you can about the testing process and ask pertinent questions.

### **3. Use a Trained Professional**

Any diagnosis must be performed by a trained professional. Your own or a friend's diagnosis might send you down a path of full of unnecessary worry.

### **4. Prepare For the Diagnosis**

Finding out that nothing is wrong can relieve, or even worry, some parents. If something is discovered, try not to worry - your child will soon to getting the help they need. Find a support group and talk to others who have been through the process.

"Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids" is published by Guilford Press and is available in both hardback and paperback editions.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids – Information Every Parent and Teacher Should Know**

**Boston, Massachusetts – July 19, 2004** — When a child is struggling at school, parents, teachers and classmates can also be affected. Knowing when an evaluation is necessary requires key information on when and what type of testing is appropriate, how it is done and what the results mean. Testing results often bring legal obligations for a school and school district. Expert child psychologists, Ellen B. Braaten PhD and Gretchen Felopulos, PhD, recently published “Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids,” an informative guidebook for parents and educators detailing the testing process from start to finish.

“Nearly one in five children receive some form of psychological, academic or intelligence testing each year,” said Ellen B. Braaten co-author and psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital. “Every day thousands of parents are confronting the possibility that their child might have a learning disability or developmental delay. With dozens of different tests available, jargon-filled reports and complex numerical scores, it’s often difficult to determine what the test results really mean for the child’s future. Parents and teachers can wonder how to interpret results and what course of action is appropriate.”

Today’s emphasis on ‘No Child Left Behind’ education policies, heightened parental concern, increased budget constraints and limited resources can all play a part in the testing process. Testing can be a costly route, a parent or teacher’s decision can become easier when equipped with the right information. Every adult should know the right questions to ask, the differences between types of testing, the pros and cons of using a private or public evaluator, and rights defined by a child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). “Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids” explains the role testing plays in diagnosing and developing treatment plans for dyslexia, ADHD, math and reading disorders, and other childhood problems, including Asperger syndrome, depression and anxiety.

The guidebook is an excellent reference for parents, teachers, principals, school psychologists and other education professionals. “Sometimes even educators aren’t exactly sure what happens during the testing process and why certain tests are used,” says Felopulos, co-author and psychologist at Harvard Medical School. “Our book details: when, why, and how to have a child tested; what schools can and should provide; what the numbers say about IQ, development, learning disabilities; and, how to use the results to get the best help for the child.

“Straight Talk about Psychological Testing for Kids” (2004) is published by Guilford Press and is available in both hardback and paperback editions.

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