



Psycho-Educational Evaluations at Morrissey-Compton: What Makes Us Unique?

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Evaluations are a major part of our business at Morrissey-Compton. Most students are referred for psycho-educational evaluations that focus on educationally-related psychological tests and educational tests, including tests of intelligence and cognitive abilities, achievement tests, tests of behavior, processing skills (e.g., executive function), and attention.

In addition to these evaluations, we are asked to perform **educational evaluations, ADHD evaluations, autism spectrum evaluations,** and/or **social-emotional evaluations.** Among the goals of these evaluations are to determine whether the student has a diagnosable condition, such as a learning disorder or ADHD, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, or to help parents understand their child's learning profile. Sometimes families bring in younger siblings of students already diagnosed to identify any early warning signs of learning challenges that will allow for early intervention (if necessary). Additionally, some previously diagnosed students are re-evaluated to monitor academic progress following a course of educational therapy. Finally, some families are interested in determining the impact of mental health concerns on a student's educational performance or day-to-day life activities.



What to Expect During an Evaluation

Morrissey-Compton's evaluations have the following components:

1. At our first appointment, **parents will meet with a staff psychologist** who will gather information about their presenting concerns about their child, birth history, developmental history, medical history, academic history, social/emotional history, and family history. We also request teacher involvement in the evaluation through direct interviews with the teacher(s) or teacher rating forms. At this first meeting time, we also determine whether a school observation would be helpful.
2. Following this initial meeting, **the clinicians develop an assessment plan** that is based on parents' concerns and their child's history.

3. The **students participate in testing sessions**. The number of sessions can range from one to five depending on the information requested by parents.
4. **Students are evaluated in one-to-one testing sessions by our highly trained clinicians**. We try to make the sessions as non-threatening as possible to alleviate students' anxiety and allow them to feel comfortable and motivated to perform at their best. During the sessions, the clinicians will interview the student, and gather important information and behavioral observations (e.g., does the student use any strategies; engage in positive or negative self-talk; level of frustration tolerance; impulse control; restless/fidgety behaviors, distractibility, simple attention errors; etc.). These observations are invaluable in identifying potential hurdles or supports for their learning.
5. Depending on the referral question(s), we will **administer intelligence tests, processing tests** (such as short-term memory, working memory, organization, attention, and other executive function skills), **and academic tests** (in reading writing, and math as well as processing tests that directly impact academic performance, such as phonological processing, visual-motor integration, and orthography). Most of the students participating in evaluations are screened for attention disorders and social-emotional concerns. If parents have specific social or mental concerns, we will also administer psychological tests that assess social-emotional functioning. When the referral question includes autism spectrum concerns, we administer tests specific to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
6. Following the evaluation, the **clinicians involved in the case meet** to discuss the results and develop an integrated conceptualization of the student's profile, areas of strengths and weaknesses, and treatment plan.
7. Our **clinicians meet parents at a follow-up conference** to discuss the results of the evaluation and present a treatment plan, which may include accessing special education services or developing an accommodation plan at the student's school, follow-up therapy (mental health or educational therapy), and other services such as group therapy, summer school, speech and language services, or medication consultation. Our clinicians will help you find appropriate referrals. If the parents are interested, the clinicians will also meet with the student for a 30-minute debriefing session. The clinicians will write a report and be available for follow-up consultations, sometimes even several years following the evaluation.

Having a student undergo an evaluation is a complex and confusing process for most parents. At Morrissey-Compton, we have performed psycho-educational evaluations for more than 30 years, and our years of experience have allowed us to develop an expertise in this area.

Quality, Expertise, and Flexibility

Here is a list of what makes Morrissey-Compton's evaluations different:

- **We routinely receive feedback from educators, psychologists, pediatricians, and others that our reports are exceptional:** They are comprehensive, clear, and written in everyday language for parents and educators to digest.

- **Our staff have specific expertise.** Our psycho-educational evaluations almost always involve at least two clinicians, a psychologist, and an educational specialist. At times, a sole practitioner clinician does not have specific training in education or mental health. Morrissey-Compton's team approach combines expertise in psychological assessment and education. Many of our educational specialists have experience and training in special education and most have been teachers and/or tutors, which provides them with invaluable insights regarding which accommodations and strategies work in a classroom setting. This allows our clinicians to develop a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs from two professional viewpoints and minimizes the likelihood of a misdiagnosis.



- **Our reports are comprehensive.** They include an extensive review of parents' presenting concerns, history, and previous evaluations, which makes them a single reference document. We also provide detailed description of test scores and a qualitative analysis of the student's performance, identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- **We write clear recommendations for implementation in school and at home.** We also help prioritize recommendations based on our staff expertise and experience.
- **We work with families to find the specialist they need and tailor specific referrals to the individual client.** Often, this can be in our own clinic with our very talented multidisciplinary team. Indeed, many times the student requests working with a clinician who performed the assessment because of the rapport they established or ability to understand the student's needs. As many of you know, we offer a wide variety of follow-up services including educational therapy, mental health therapy, group (social skills) therapy, psychiatric (medication) services, speech and language services, advocacy at school, and consultation with parents or schools.
- **We can attend school meetings** to advocate for student's needs and support at the school.
- **We are well versed in which tests and the language that is needed** for specific boards/testing agencies, and have a high success rate with securing accommodations for College Board tests, ACT, GRE, MCAT, etc. **We have a track record of securing accommodations that are not typical** such as 100% additional time, **or based on mental health diagnoses.** Moreover, we will work with the family through this process on appeals and advocacy if the accommodation request is denied.
- **Many of our students return for follow-up evaluations as they advance through school.** It's not unusual for us to see student first seen at age six or seven who are then seen during their middle school years, high school years, college years, and/or postgraduate years. Returning students are an incredible vote of confidence in our services.