



## Educational Exchange - November 2008

By Susan Schapiro

*This month, educational diagnostician and consultant Susan Schapiro answers two questions—about finding help to pay for educational testing and about deciding whether homeschooling is the right option for a family.*

**Question:** My son is 7 years old and is [starting] the second grade in Baltimore County. He has been diagnosed with ADHD and has fine motor and speech delays. He receives speech services and OT through the school and has an adult support person who works with just him during the school day. The school has given him the Woodcock Johnson test, and he scored on an average level. I am pleased with the support he receives through the school. However, I would like him to undergo further testing. I consulted a child psychologist who recommended a reasoning test, a reading and phonemic awareness test, a neuropsychological test, a language test, and a perceptual test. Here is my problem. My health insurance covers the testing, but we have a deductible. It would cost us \$920 for the tests. Do you know of a place outside the school system that offers testing on a sliding scale fee?

**Answer:** I certainly understand your desire to pursue additional educational testing for your second grader. While he is receiving speech/language and occupational therapy services and is fortunate to have one-to-one support in school, results from only one evaluative measure—such as the Woodcock Johnson test—may not provide enough information to fully determine the scope of his strengths and needs. It would be wise to consult with your public school's special education team to investigate additional testing, known as psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing. Psychoeducational testing often includes assessments of intellectual functioning/learning aptitude, perceptual-motor development, as well as measures for academic achievement and personality/mood adjustment factors.

Unfortunately, many parents find it challenging to obtain comprehensive educational testing. If you have requested psychoeducational testing for your son and you were turned down by his home school, a private evaluation is advised. Now, the tricky part for many families, as you well know, is how to pay for private psychoeducational testing services. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer at this moment.

I've done some investigative work and found a few *possible* options to explore in the Baltimore area—Loyola Clinical Center, Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, and Kennedy Krieger Institute. These facilities frequently consult with families on a case-by-case basis to better understand their unique financial situations. Each facility has its own way of handling a family's ability to pay for the testing, be it through a sliding scale, payment plan, or other option. Also, you may wish to inquire among private educational psychologists and neuropsychologists regarding sliding scales or payment plan services offered within their practices.

Additionally, check with local support groups who might be able to put you in touch with assistance for testing. *Baltimore's Child* prints a listing of resources supporting families with children with special needs in its publication *A Special Edition*, which is available in its entirety on the Baltimore's Child website, [www.BaltimoresChild.com](http://www.BaltimoresChild.com).

*Understanding your son's learning profile through comprehensive psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing may be key to his emotional and academic success. Also, keep in mind that academic weaknesses are often accompanied by wonderful strengths in other areas. Good luck with your journey!*

**Question:** I'm thinking about homeschooling my child, but I don't know whether I should.

**Answer:** While homeschooling is not a new concept, an increasing number of parents are choosing this educational alternative. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than a million children are now being homeschooled in the United States.

When consulting with homeschool families, I am frequently reminded of the wonderful benefits of home education. However, if you are considering this option, there are a few questions that you should ask yourself:

Do I have the time necessary to teach my child?

Do I enjoy teaching my child, and do I have the necessary skills?

Do I have a positive relationship with my child?

Do both parents agree that homeschooling is a good idea?

Do I have the financial means to homeschool my child?

Homeschooling requires organization, a daily routine, and a substantial commitment of time and energy. While parents have the flexibility to set school-day schedules, ample time is needed for gathering materials, planning lessons, instruction, and grading papers. And you must be prepared for those "off" days, when discipline, off-task temptations,

and/or occasional crankiness may be an issue.

Social interaction is another concern. While homeschooling allows parents to have more control over social situations, getting your child together with other children is very important. Discussing the decision to homeschool with your child is also a good idea. Some children already in traditional school settings may not want to leave their friends and familiar school-related activities.

You'll want to consider your finances, too, since homeschooling can be more expensive than you might expect. The costs, however, do vary depending on curricula and materials.

Finally, before you transform from Regular Mom to Teacher Mom, be sure to talk with other homeschool parents. You may want to test the waters by teaching your child a specific concept on weekends or during a school holiday break. And you may want to homeschool one year at a time to see how well it goes.

While most parents I've spoken with are happy with the results, homeschooling can be time-consuming, physically demanding, and expensive. Homeschooling your child can be a wonderful, rewarding, and very positive experience, but it may not be for everyone. Choosing to homeschool is a personal decision, and you know yourself and your child best. **BC**

### **A Forum for Educational Advice**

Do you have a concern about your child's learning abilities? Would you like some advice on an issue you have with your child's school? Susan Schapiro, M.S., of Educational Evaluations & Get Set To Read Consultations in Towson, answers questions from readers about their child's education—no matter the child's skill level or ability.

If there's a concern you'd like to see discussed, please write to us—your answer could be published in this column. Send your question by email to [Dianne@BaltimoresChild.com](mailto:Dianne@BaltimoresChild.com) and label it Educational Exchange. We will notify you if and when your question will be addressed in an upcoming issue.

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