

Karen Pavlidis, Ph.D.

www.arboretumpsy.com
dr.pavlidis@gmail.com

400 E Pine St, Suite 220
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 729-2829 x4

Advanced Learning Appeals Testing FAQ

I encourage you to carefully read the school district website about Advanced Learning before seeking private testing. Many families find the process of appeals confusing and overwhelming. Here is a list of common questions that come up about appeals testing.

How do I know which tests to request in order to complete the appeals process?

There are three areas used by the public school to determine advanced learning placement: cognitive ability, math achievement, and reading achievement. Please refer to the table on the Seattle Public Schools website to determine whether your child has met the cut-off scores for the program you are seeking admission. You need only do appeals testing in the areas where your child did not meet the score criteria (cognitive, math, or reading). *Please note that it is your responsibility to have up-to-date information on score criteria from the school district.*

Which tests are used in private testing?

In private appeals testing, tests are individually administered and are different than what your child was given through the public school.

If you are requesting cognitive testing, I will use the Wechsler tests which in most cases will be the WISC-V (for Kindergarten students, I may use the WPPSI-IV). Even if your child met partial criteria on the CogAT, the full WISC-IV or WPPSI-IV must be administered. The Wechsler tests assess a fairly wide range of abilities, including verbal, nonverbal, processing speed, and memory.

For reading and math achievement, I use the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Third Edition (WIAT-III). Three areas in each subject are used to compute the achievement scores.

When is the best time to complete private testing?

It is probably most efficient to seek private testing after receiving results from the school district, so as to avoid unnecessary testing. However, some families prefer to seek private testing in all three areas before they receive the school district results. Scores on the Wechsler can be used for three years from the date of testing. However, achievement testing needs to be recent. The school district website notes that “Only achievement tests that have been completed no earlier than the previous March will be considered.”

Can private testing be used instead of the public school testing?

No, you must complete the application and testing process through the school district (which starts in early October of each year) even if you decide to seek private testing. There may be exceptions made for families that are new to the area, so please be sure to clarify what is needed directly from the school district.

My child recently missed the cut-off in private testing. Can we re-take the tests?

Due to concerns about practice effects, professional guidelines recommend a one-year interval before repeating Wechsler tests.

For achievement testing, the answer is more complicated. If the time interval is too brief to repeat a given test version, there are several other forms of achievement testing that can be used. Different providers may have access to different achievement tests.

Even though you can have your child re-take achievement testing, it's important to consider the potential stress and impact of repeated testing on your child. Unless you have reason to believe that the results may not be valid from a particular achievement test, I would discourage achievement retesting after a short time interval.

How can I prepare my child for private testing?

The validity of the Wechsler results is based on a child having *not received coaching or test preparation*. If it becomes apparent during the course of testing that the child has recently been exposed to the material, the test results will be considered invalid.

Achievement testing covers a broad range of skills, so it is unlikely that a crash course in any area will significantly impact your child's scores.

How should I explain the testing to my child?

It depends on your child's age and how they cope with new situations. For older children (approximately fifth grade and up), parents may wish to be transparent about the purpose of the testing. Younger children typically do well with a simple explanation such as that they are going to do some "learning activities." Every effort should be made to minimize any stress or pressure around testing. I am happy to discuss specifics with you that take into account the particular needs of your child.

What can I expect at your office when I bring my child for private testing?

I start the first session by bringing both child and parent into my office to help orient the child about what to expect and to give the child a chance to settle in. The parent will wait in the waiting area during the testing. We have complimentary wireless access for parents. Depending on the age and temperament of your child, you are free to leave the building (and enjoy the many great coffee houses in the neighborhood!). Your child will be given opportunities for breaks.

Parents should bring snacks for their child. I usually have Goldfish and juice boxes on hand, and make a point of getting your permission before offering these foods.

Testing time varies from child to child, depending on age and other factors. The Wechsler tests take one to two hours to administer. Achievement testing takes from thirty minutes to an hour, per subject.

If you are having your child tested in all three areas, we may schedule the testing to happen all in one day or over two sessions.

If time permits, I will score the testing during a break and meet with you briefly (approximately 10 minutes) to review the results. Otherwise I will call you later in the day with the results.

Reports are completed within a week of testing. The report will include a behavioral narrative of your child in addition to the test results.

My child is very shy. Will you be able to still get his or her best performance?

Most children enjoy the one-on-one structure of the testing, and experience the session as positive. Many children are curious and find the novelty of the testing activities to be fun.

Even very shy children are likely to manage the separation from their parents well and are usually more talkative after their parent leaves the room. I am usually successful in putting children at ease and pulling for their maximal performance. In rare instances when this is not the case, I will discuss this with you and note such concerns in the test report.

What is the cost of private testing?

Cognitive testing (WISC-V or WPPSI-IV) costs \$600.

For Kindergarten through second grade, achievement testing costs \$250 for one subject area and \$450 for both subject areas.

For third grade and above, achievement testing costs \$300 in one subject area and \$550 for both subject areas.

These fees include test administration, feedback to you at the time of testing, and the written report.

Can you bill my insurance for private testing?

No. Insurance does not cover testing for giftedness.

Do you work for the Seattle Public School District?

No. I am a licensed psychologist in private practice.