

## What's your child's potential?

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School can be a critical time in a child's development and can provide key indicators of their performance and potential. But, how do parents measure their child's full potential and how do they know when they are taking the right steps to help?

Dr Aaron Frost at Psychology Consultants says many parents feel the pressure of not knowing their child's true learning and development potential.

"Parents find a neuropsychological assessment can provide a clear understanding of their child's ability and give practical steps to maximise their child's development," he said.

"Until school, parents often use their own judgement to assess their child's ability in areas such as intelligence, problem-solving, attention and concentration, or memory and learning.

"And it's not until reports start coming home from school that parents can get some sense of how their child compares with others," he said.

Although these reports can assist parents, they don't provide specific information about the child's abilities and what parents can do to improve weaknesses and build on strengths.

Dr Frost said if parents do suspect that their child is a little slow or is having trouble concentrating, they can sometimes be indicators of more serious learning difficulties, attention disorders such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or even as a result of brain trauma from an accident or fall.

"Alternatively, emotional or social problems such as parental breakdowns, performance anxiety, fear, or even bullying may impact on a child's development and school performance."

But Dr Frost warns that parents should not jump to conclusions if their child is having problems and assume learning difficulties or emotional problems.

"Sometimes, the learning environment just needs to be designed to fit the child's needs better.

"An assessment takes all these factors into account."

Our clinical psychologists spend time with the child, their parents and sometimes teachers, to gather background information as well as information about the child's current physical, emotional, and behavioural state."

To assess a child's cognitive skills, the psychologist uses different tests depending on the child's needs. These will include asking them questions, and having them remember information and solve problems.

"Most children enjoy the experience of solving puzzles, looking at pictures and being asked to demonstrate what they know. Unlike school, there is no right or wrong answers and they receive a lot of encouragement."

After the assessment is complete, the psychologist prepares a report which details the assessment findings and provides practical recommendations to help parents, and other interested parties such as teachers, better understand the child's strengths and weaknesses. This also enables them to implement management and coping strategies if necessary.

For more information about your child's performance or psychological assessment, please complete an enquiry form or contact Psychology Consultants on 3395 8633.