



Saint Joseph University of Beirut
Faculty of Education
Lebanese Institute of Educators

HANDBOOK ON EVALUATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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This Handbook on Evaluation in Special Education, the first of its kind, is intended as a practical guide for special educators, supporting their evaluation practices with learners with special educational needs. It presents the fundamental concepts of evaluation in special education, including its definition, objectives, and developmental process.

The Lebanese Institute of Educators, which has trained qualified special educators for over four decades, has sought to address the pressing need to systematize evaluation practices in special education. This domain, rarely incorporated into university-level programs in Lebanon, continues to rely heavily on practitioners' experience and individual training in the field. It therefore continues to rely on practitioners' professional judgment. Accordingly, discussions were undertaken with a team of faculty members from the Department of Special Education of the Lebanese Institute of Educators, along with professional special educators, to examine this practice and identify emerging needs.

These brainstorming sessions culminated in the launch of a research project on evaluation in special education, entitled *Evaluation in Special Education: Foundations, Process, and Reality*, carried out by a team of four faculty members: Ms. Rania Abdo, Ms. Asma Mjaes Azar, Ms. Najat Cordahi Malhamé, and myself. This research also benefited from the contribution of Ms. Manal Al-Ahmar, an experienced special educator, who helped develop the research protocol and distribute the questionnaire to special educators. This research was made possible through funding provided by the Research Council of Saint Joseph University of Beirut.

The primary objective of this research was to examine the current state of evaluation in special education. To this end, a survey was conducted among Lebanese special educators, followed by interviews with experts in the field. I would like to express my gratitude to them, as well as to all the special educators who responded to the questionnaire, thereby making this research possible. The findings have enabled us to develop a comprehensive overview of this practice in Lebanon.

Alongside the fieldwork, a systematic literature review informed the development of this handbook on evaluation in special education, enriched by relevant findings from empirical research.

The production of this handbook constituted the second objective of our research. Based on this work, we aimed to develop a handbook on evaluation in special education that would guide and support special educators in their practice. It was conceived and written by Ms. Asma Mjaes Azar and Ms. Najat Cordahi Malhamé.

This handbook provides strong support for strengthening knowledge related to evaluation in special education and serves as a practical guide for planning and implementing this practice.

It can also serve as a foundation for future research aimed at further developing and refining this approach, supporting its systematization in the field, and contributing to the development of high-quality specialized training dedicated to this practice.

With the contribution of the Syndicate of Special Education Teachers in Lebanon, the Handbook on Evaluation in Special Education, translated into Arabic and English, is available free of charge on the website of the Lebanese Institute of Educators at Saint Joseph University of Beirut. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mrs. Rayan Choucair Kanaan for translating this handbook into Arabic, and to Mrs. Rania Abdo for translating it into English. Thanks to their valuable work, this handbook is now accessible to a wider audience of readers and professionals.

Dear special educators, I encourage you to consult this handbook, which contains all the key elements for understanding the foundations of evaluation in special education. It also outlines the different stages of the evaluation process and includes a non-exhaustive list of the most commonly used standardized tests among Lebanese special educators.

I hope it will serve as a guide in your evaluation practice in special education, supporting you in your work with learners and their parents.

I would like to conclude by noting that your perspectives and experience will certainly enrich this first version of the handbook, contributing to its further refinement and to the strengthening of both this practice and the related university training.

Micheline EL-Khoury Yammine

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Special Education (Orthopedagogy) is a key discipline in supporting students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). These students may face a multitude of challenges caused by learning and developmental disorders; adjustment and learning difficulties; cognitive, sensory, or physical impairments, etc.

Evaluation plays a central role in the field of Special Education. It allows for the detection and understanding of learners' characteristics as well as the environmental factors that promote or hinder their development. This process goes beyond a simple diagnostic assessment to become a strategic lever, contributing to the implementation of targeted interventions aimed at learning and success.

Despite its critical importance, Evaluation in Special Education (EvalSpEd) remains a field that is still undergoing structural change. An exploration of publications relating to Special Education (Orthopedagogy) and Evaluation in Special Education shows that this field exists in several countries, including Canada, Belgium, and, more recently in France. The various international documents consulted present the principles of this kind of evaluation and the broad outlines of its procedure. However, the operationalization of this procedure is not sufficiently detailed.

Furthermore, although professional and specialized training in Special Education has existed in Lebanon for several decades, the practice of Evaluation in Special Education remains marked by a lack of standardization and the absence of a unified methodological framework. This situation results in disparate practices, limiting the effectiveness of evaluation and intervention in Special Education.

Aware of these challenges, the Lebanese Institute of Educators at Saint Joseph University of Beirut (ILE-USJ) initiated an in-depth reflection to structure and formalize this practice. It is within this framework that a study was conducted, exploring existing evaluation practices in Special Education at the local and international levels.

The present document, produced as part of this study, aims to fill an important gap by providing Special Educators with a methodological and practical framework to enhance the rigor and effectiveness of Evaluation in Special Education.

It is structured into three main parts. The first covers the various aspects of Evaluation in Special Education, highlighting its specific features, objectives, usefulness, areas of application, and beneficiaries. The second describes the operational and organizational framework, detailing the process, procedure, and resources required to conduct a rigorous Evaluation in Special Education. Finally, the third part presents the profile and role of the assessor, emphasizing the skills and professional posture required to ensure the quality of the Evaluation. This handbook, as structured, seeks to offer a comprehensive and practical overview of Evaluation in Special Education as an essential tool for Special Educators and the profession.

Part 1: Particularity and Purpose of Evaluation in Special Education

1.1 Definition

Evaluation in Special Education (EvalSpEd) is a dynamic process that allows the identification and evaluation of the learner's difficulties, abilities, strategies, cognitive processes as well as the level of attainment in areas of academic learning, autonomy and socialization (L'ADOQ, 2018). It also analyzes the affective, motivational, socio-familial and school-related factors that have an impact on learning and quality achievement (L'Office des professions du Québec, 2014).

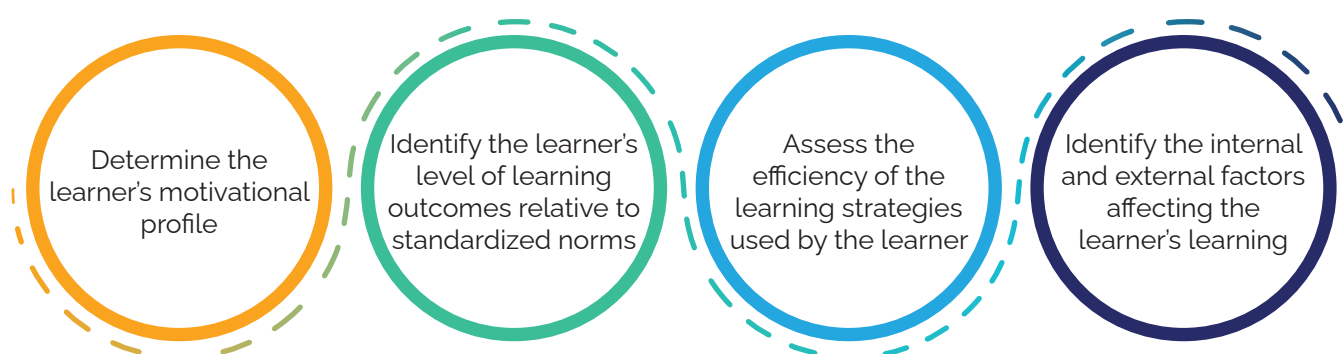
1.2 Aim

Evaluation in Special Education aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the learner's situation, with a view to determining the necessary actions to improve their learning and ensure their success.

It thus makes it possible to determine the learner's strengths and needs, understand the temporary or persistent nature of their learning or adaptation difficulties, and guide Special Education intervention. Such intervention may include preventive, consolidation, remedial, or compensatory interventions aimed at promoting optimal learner progress (L'ADOQ, 2018 ; L'Office des professions du Québec, 2014 ; Services des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys, 2012 ; Institut des troubles d'apprentissage, 2020).

1.3 Objectives

Evaluation in Special Education allows one to:



1.4 Particularities

Evaluation in Special Education requires collecting and analyzing data on the learner, their learning, and their school, family, and social environment in order to make an informed judgment and support decision-making regarding intervention (Tilman, 2005; Goupil, 2020; Archambault & Chouinard, 2022).

It is at the same time normative, dynamic, and systemic, by virtue of being based on three types of evaluation, which are dynamic evaluation, systemic evaluation, and normative evaluation.

Dynamic evaluation

Through an interactive approach, dynamic evaluation allows the evaluator to identify the learner's emerging skills and learning strategies. It also allows the learner to become aware of their own cognitive and emotional functioning. As a result, it guides the intervention and determines the adjustments to be undertaken so that the learner can reach a maximum level of performance (Delage, Prat, & Winkler-Kehoe, 2021).

Systemic evaluation

Systemic evaluation allows the Special Educator to focus attention on all the factors likely to influence learning, namely personal factors, school factors, and family and social factors (Service des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys, 2012; Belleville, et al., 2022; Goupil, 2020). It therefore makes it possible to consider their interaction and to deduce their influence on learning.

Normative evaluation

The objective of normative evaluation is to classify the learner's results in relation to a standardized norm or reference (*Service des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, 2012). However, the ranking obtained is not sufficient in itself to make decisions for regulatory or certification purposes (Tilman, 2005; Belleville, et al., 2022; Goupil, 2020).

In summary, no single type of assessment is sufficient on its own; each represents one component of the evaluation in special education process.

In addition, Evaluation in Special Education is part of an interdisciplinary approach that allows for an informed judgment to be made on the different facets of the learner's problem (Tourrette, 2006). Ideally, it should be included as part of the overall assessment of the learner's situation.

If not applicable, it is important to share the results of the EvalSpEd with the interdisciplinary team, as they contribute significantly to drawing up the learner's profile, planning the educational project, and including interventions in Special Education.

Distinction between EvalSpEd and other evaluation-oriented actions

It is important to distinguish EvalSpEd from other evaluative actions such as detection, screening, and diagnosis. It should also be distinguished from the evaluation of the special educator's intervention.

Detection

Detection is a non-systematized process that allows the identification, in a particular student, of signs of an unidentified disorder or risk factors that could affect their learning and success. It is carried out by any professional within the limits of their skills and is based on their sensitivity to the signs identified (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013).

Screening

Screening is a systematized process that aims to identify among all students those who may have an undiagnosed disorder or a risk factor that may affect their learning and success. It does not allow for a diagnosis to be made but rather directs students who are likely to have a disorder towards further investigations. It is carried out by any professional within the limits of their skills (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013).

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is a systematized process that allows for the identification of a disorder based on medical or paramedical examinations. This is an activity reserved for doctors. However, other professionals may carry out an assessment related to their field of expertise and communicate the conclusions (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013) in order to reach a comprehensive evaluation of the learner's situation.

Evaluation of the Special Educator's intervention

It is an essential process aimed at measuring the effectiveness and impact of the Special Education intervention carried out with a learner. It is conducted by the Special Educator during the intervention to support the learner's progress and is done systematically at the end of one or several interventions (Belleville, et al., 2022; Archambault & Chouinard, 2022). Its results provide information on the degree to which the targeted objective(s) have been attained, as well as on the progress made, gaps or shortcomings, and persistent difficulties. It also provides information on the impact of the tools used, the intervention methods, and the strategies followed (*Centre de services scolaires de Montréal*, 2023; Goupil, 2020). It leads to an assessment of Special Education interventions (*Centre de services scolaires de Montréal*, 2023).

1.5 Functions

The results of the EvalSpEd assessment are used in the:

- Elaboration of the Special Education intervention plan in terms of the content of the intervention (reeducation, support, strategic teaching, etc.) and the resources to be implemented (*Institut des troubles d'apprentissage*, 2020; *L'ADOQ*, 2018; *L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013; *Service des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, 2012).
- Determination of the adapted educational services to be provided to the learner (*L'Association des Orthopédagogues du Québec*, 2014; Goupil, 2020).
- Adjustment of the pedagogical or Special Education intervention already in place (*Service des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, 2012; Belleville, et al., 2022).
- Referring the learner to other specialists who can make a diagnosis or help better understand their situation (*Institut des troubles d'apprentissage*, 2020).
- Designing an individualized educational program (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2014; Goupil, 2020).

1.6 Beneficiaries and Target Population

Evaluation in Special Education targets at-risk learners and those with learning or adjustment difficulties resulting from a disability or disorder. It covers learners of various ages (from preschool to adulthood).

It should be noted that before the age of integration into preschool education programs, the intervention of the Special Educator is more focused on early childhood stimulation than on Evaluation in Special Education (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2014).

1.7 Evaluated Domains

Learners with Special Educational Needs may experience difficulties in various areas related to learning strategies and cognitive processes, academic learning, attitude toward tasks, work habits, as well as autonomy and socialization. Hence the importance of assessing these areas in order to recognize the potential and needs of these learners and to be able to provide them with appropriate support and promote their success.



1.7.1 Learning Strategies and Cognitive Processes

Learners with SEN may experience difficulties in optimally mobilizing learning strategies and cognitive processes, which may affect information processing and problem solving (Saint-Laurent, 2008)

Learning strategies

Learning strategies are a set of metacognitive or cognitive actions used in a learning situation (Bégin, 2008). They represent the means that learners use in a deliberate and intentional manner "to acquire, integrate and remember the knowledge they are taught" (Viau, 2003, p.78 cited by Vianin, 2009, p. 60). As a result, they occupy a central place in learning and influence the academic performance of learners (Frenkel, 2014).

Learning strategies encompass both metacognitive and cognitive aspects.

Metacognition-related aspects concern self-knowledge as a learner and knowledge of the mental activities used during learning (Bégin, 2008). They also encompass "knowledge of task-specific requirements and [...] knowledge of the specific procedures or strategies that must be implemented to accomplish them" (Bégin, 2008, p. 55). Metacognitive strategies represent the actions of anticipating and self-regulating.

As for cognitive aspects, they concern the direct mental actions used by the learner to process information (Vianin, 2009). These actions are chosen consciously and deliberately to learn and reuse knowledge.

According to Bégin (2008), there are two different categories of cognitive strategies:

- Processing strategies (6): select, repeat, decompose, compare, elaborate, and organize.
- Execution strategies (4): evaluate, verify, produce, and translate.

Cognitive processes

Cognitive processes refer to fundamental mental operations involved in information processing (acquisition, processing, storage, recall, or retrieval) (Vianin, 2009; Saint-Laurent, 2008). These processes are generally automated and can include activities such as perception, attention, memory, problem-solving, decision-making, and comprehension. They aim to process information to accomplish a task or solve a problem and are therefore essential for learning (Saint-Laurent, 2008; Vianin, 2009).

To assess cognitive strategies and processes, the Special Educator uses various methods such as observation; specific tasks assessing memory, attention, problem-solving, interviews; self-assessment questionnaires; analysis of student academic productions, etc. (Goupil, 2020 ; Saint-Laurent, 2008; Vianin, 2009).



1.7.2 Academic Learning (Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Oral Language)

The field of academic learning includes all academic disciplines taught in a formal teaching-learning framework, such as mathematics, languages, science, etc. (Vienneau, 2017).

The EvalSpEd allows the Special Educator to identify the learner's academic level by identifying their achievements and shortcomings in the main disciplines, namely reading, writing, and mathematics (*Institut des troubles d'apprentissage*, 2020; *L'ADOQ*, 2018; Saint-Laurent, 2008).

It also allows for the identification of their educational needs, i.e., the gap between what they know and what they are required to know, given the school curriculum relative to their actual age (Myara, 2017).

To assess the level of school learning, the Special Educator uses national placement tests or tests developed by the school or by themselves (Goupil, 2020), in other words, standardized or "homemade" tests.

1.7.3 Learner's Attitude Toward the Task

The learner's attitude toward the task refers to the feelings, beliefs, and preferences a learner may have when faced with a specific learning activity or task (Saint-Laurent et al., 1995; Goupil, 2020). It can result from past experiences, cultural expectations, and the learning environment.

This attitude influences the way in which the learner engages in the task, thus affecting their motivation, perseverance, and performance.

To assess the learner's attitude toward the task, the Special Educator attempts to examine more closely the student's interest and enthusiasm for the task, their perceived competence to accomplish it, their degree of involvement and concentration, and their capacity to overcome obstacles (Viau, 1994). These aspects reflect motivation, confidence, commitment, and persistence, respectively.

The Special Educator assesses the practical and metacognitive aspects (Grisé & Trottier, 2002) of the learner's attitude toward the task using structured observation and interviews.

1.7.4 Learner's Work Habits

Work habits include the behaviors, routines, and organizational strategies adopted by learners to complete academic tasks efficiently and within the allotted time (Goudeseune, 2023).

Learners with SEN generally have ineffective work habits (Archambault & Chouinard, 2022; Goupil, 2020; Saint-Laurent, 2008). They have difficulty managing time, organizing resources, in addition to understanding and following instructions. They encounter challenges in analyzing the task and focusing their attention on the essential aspects required for carrying it out. Furthermore, they may struggle with the various stages of task completion, such as planning, reviewing, and identifying errors.

To assess learner's work habits, the Special Educator uses several means such as observation, interviewing, evaluation, and self-assessment grids.

1.7.5 Socialization

Social skills are defined as a set of abilities that enable learners to interact in an effective and appropriate manner with others in various contexts and situations (Goupil, 2020; Archambault & Chouinard, 2022; Saint-Laurent, 2008).

They include communication (expressing, listening, understanding, and interpreting verbal and nonverbal signals), emotion management (identifying, expressing, and regulating one's own emotions), interpersonal skills (building positive relationships, resolving conflicts, working within groups), and, finally, respecting social norms and rules (Morlaix, 2015; Massé, 2015).

Learners with Special Educational Needs are less socially competent than their peers and often encounter difficulties solving interpersonal problems (Saint-Laurent, 2008). As a result, their socialization is affected and manifests itself either through isolation or inappropriate behavior (impulsivity, aggressiveness, etc.) (Massé, 2015), jeopardizing their emotional well-being and their integration into the school community.

The Special Educator assesses social skills through various means: direct observation, behavioral scales, questionnaires and self-evaluation scales, interviews, etc. (Myara, 2017).

1.7.6 Autonomy

"Autonomy is the ability of a person to decide, implement his or her decisions and satisfy his or her particular needs without subjection to others" (Rocque et al., 1999, p.39) It does not exclude helping relationships, but it does exclude relations of subordination, submission, or constraint imposed by others (Rocque et al., 1999).

Learners with Special Educational Needs generally have difficulty developing autonomy skills. To better identify these difficulties, it is essential to distinguish between basic autonomy and functional autonomy (Rocque et al., 1999). This distinction is crucial in order to be able to assess the acquired state of autonomy and for planning adapted and effective intervention.

Basic autonomy is linked to five domains related to basic needs. It concerns essential activities of daily living such as simple personal care, nutrition, simple household chores, mobility, and maintaining a daily routine.

Functional autonomy refers to the ability to perform the necessary activities and tasks related to social life, including residential and community life, leisure activities, mobility, personal care and development, and professional or academic life.

In the school setting, autonomy encompasses three spheres: cognitive autonomy, personal and emotional autonomy, and social autonomy (Vienneau, 2017). Cognitive autonomy includes taking charge of one's own learning; personal and emotional autonomy is the ability to learn and act while freeing oneself from any emotional dependence on others; and social autonomy is the ability to assert oneself as an individual and interact with others without submission or constraint (Vienneau, 2017).

The Special Educator assesses the level of autonomy using various tools, including direct observation, interviews, standardized tests, assessment grids, and adaptive behavior scales, etc.



2.1 Process

EvalSpEd requires a rigorous approach to ensure its quality. Indeed, a quality evaluation follows an appropriate and feasible process that produces reliable, relevant, and useful results. These results will help to draw up a profile of the learner, guide intervention, and formulate recommendations to optimize the academic and social environmental conditions (*Institut des troubles d'apprentissage*, 2020). In this sense, EvalSpEd is carried out according to a clear, step-by-step approach, from planning to communicating results (*L'ADOQ*, 2018). Throughout this process, the Special Educator ensures that the facts reported by parents or practitioners are verified, that the school situation is analyzed (performance, teaching and learning, behavior, relationships, program, etc.) (Deslauriers & Boudreau, 2012), and the social and family factors are analyzed in order to deduce to what extent environmental factors affect the learner's learning, participation, or autonomy (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013).

Step 1: Evaluation Planning

This first step is essential because it allows for the exploration of the learner's situation, the formulation of explanatory hypotheses for their difficulties, the development of an assessment action plan, and its communication to the learner and relevant stakeholders. It includes the following actions:

01

Gather relevant preliminary information regarding the factors influencing learning using the learner's file, assessment reports conducted by other professionals, and interviews with parents and stakeholders involved with the learner (teachers, specialists, school staff, etc.).

Analyze the information gathered, formulate explanatory hypotheses highlighting the possible sources of the learner's difficulties, and specify the axis of assessment accordingly.

02

03 Choose, considering the explanatory hypotheses, the methods and approach to be followed for conducting the assessment.

Choose the appropriate assessment tests, tools, and procedures; if necessary, adapt or develop them.

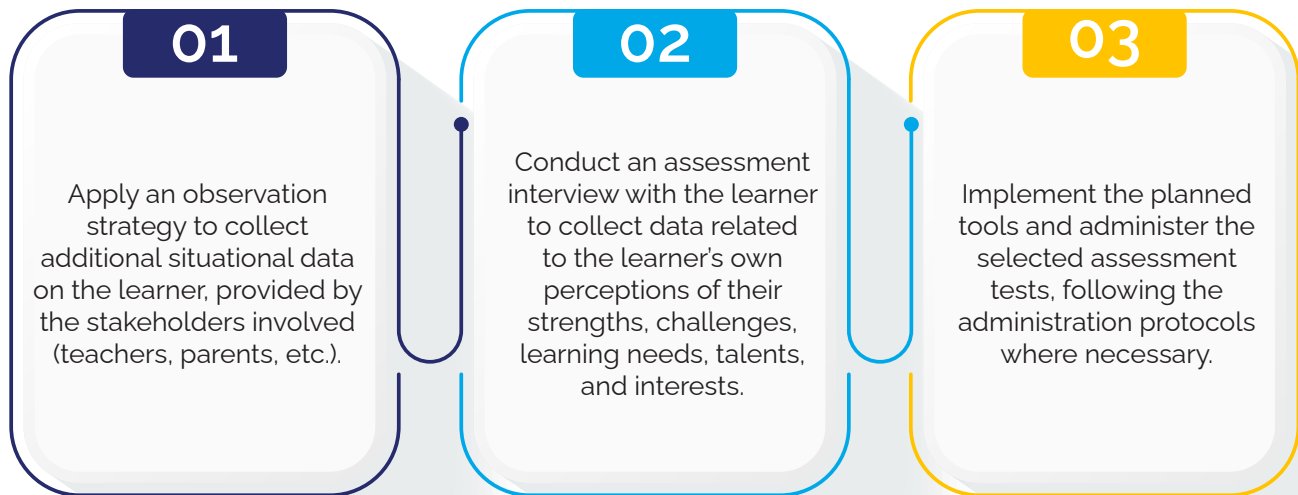
04

05

Once the evaluation process has been clarified, explain it to the learner and the stakeholders involved.

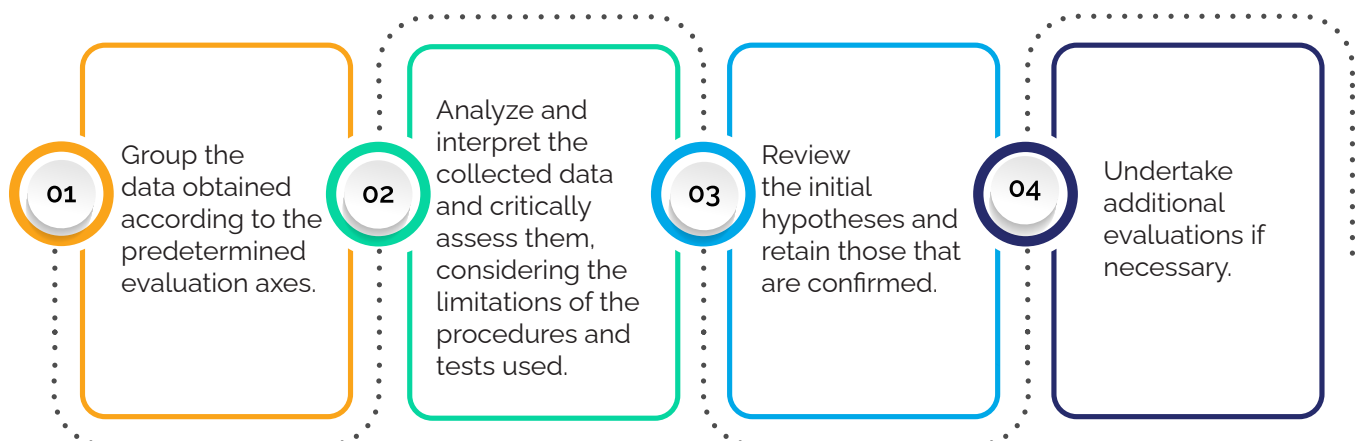
Step 2: Implementation

This step involves carrying out the planned evaluation process, including observations, interviews, and the administration of the planned tests. When conducting the evaluation, it is important to ensure ongoing interaction with the learner in order to understand their conceptual representations and cognitive strategies, and consequently regulate the intervention. This step includes the following actions:



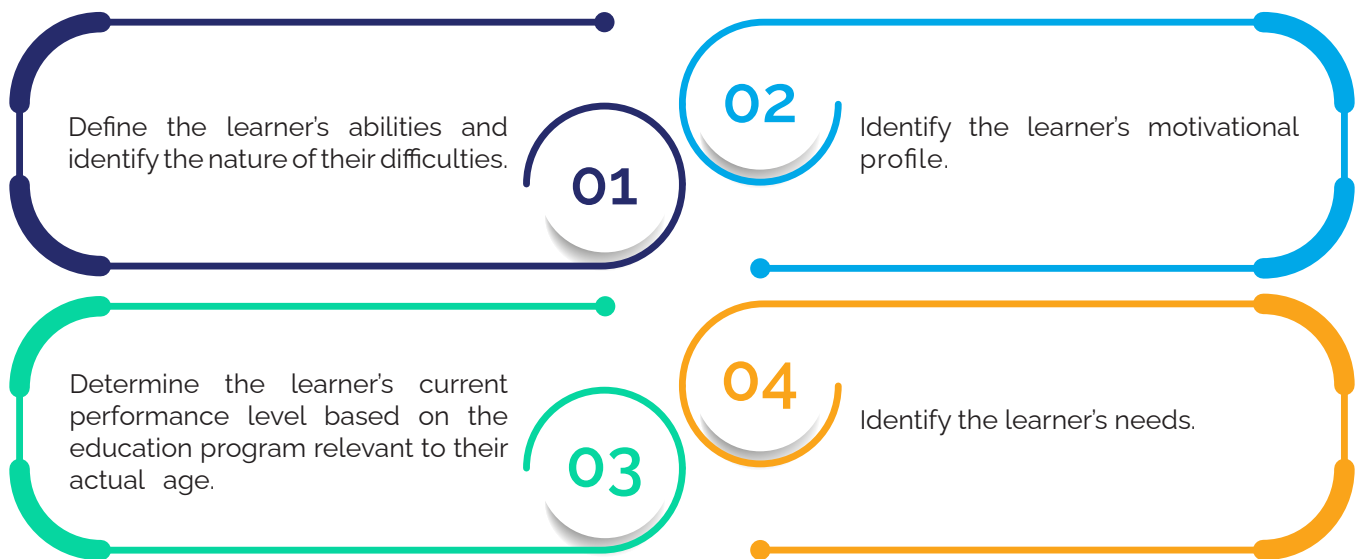
Step 3: Analysis and Interpretation of Evaluation Data

This step makes it possible to gather all the data collected in order to process them, to verify the validity of the initial hypotheses, or to plan additional evaluations if necessary. It includes the following actions:



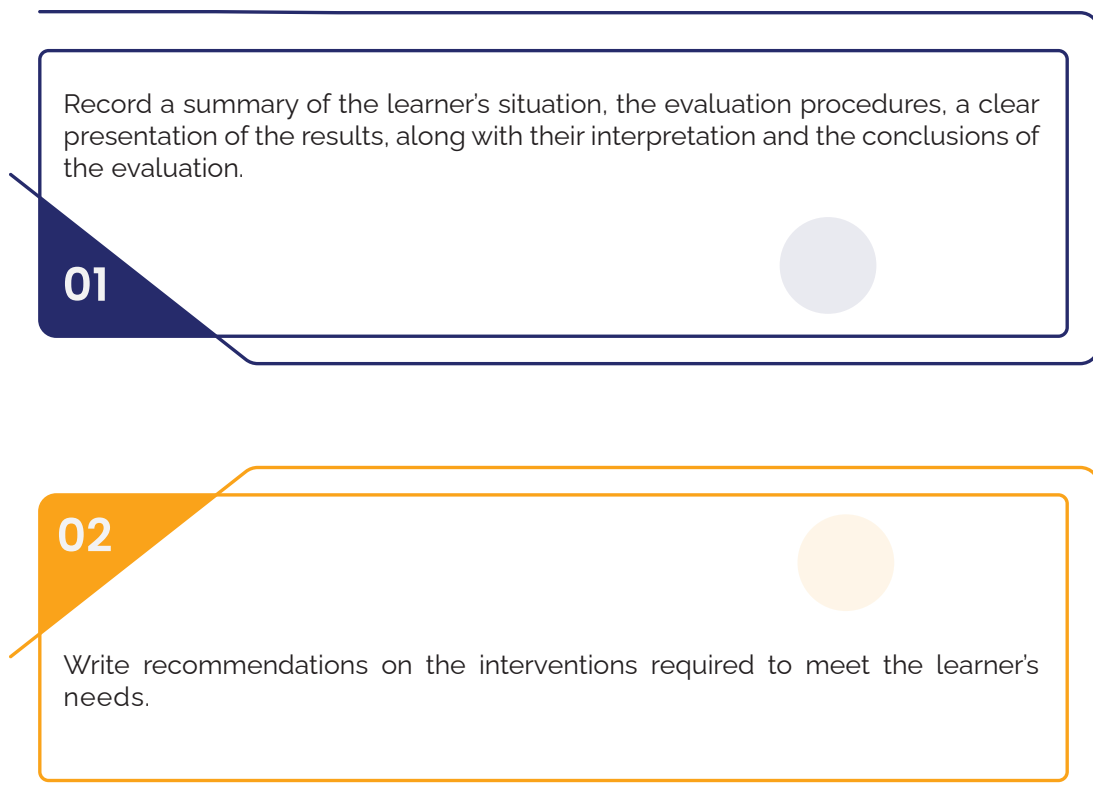
Step 4: Synthesis of the Learner's Situation

This step determines the learner's needs by identifying their abilities, difficulties, motivational profile, and the state of their level of academic achievement, autonomy, and socialization. It includes the following actions:



Step 5: Drafting the Report of the Evaluation in Special Education

This step involves writing the Evaluation report. This report includes a synthesis of the information and results of the evaluation, as well as the necessary recommendations to ensure the learner's optimal progress and success. This includes the following actions:



Step 6: Communication of Results

The communication of the results to the parents, the student, and the concerned educational team is an essential step in the process of the Evaluation in Special Education. To this end, the Special Educator ensures optimal conditions so that the results and recommendations are clear and accessible to the various stakeholders. In this sense, a meeting with the parents and the learner must accompany the submission of the written report.

2.2 Procedure

To complete the various stages of the process, it is important to use a methodical working procedure, from the initial contact to the communication of results. This procedure ensures internal consistency and standardization of the action, thus guaranteeing the quality of the EvalSpEd.

Initial contact with the learner and their parents

- Welcome the parents and the learner and allow time for mutual introductions
- Encourage the parents to describe the situation underlying or justifying the request
- Encourage the learner to express their perceptions of their difficulties and to position themselves regarding the request
- Clarify the request for the evaluation and its reasons
- Obtain preliminary information about the learner, their family, school, and social environment
- Determine the need to undertake an EvalSpEd
- Announce the overall approach of the EvalSpEd (if envisaged)



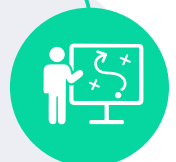
Developing a portrait of the learner's overall situation

- Specify the sources of information to be collected (files, observations, consultations, etc.)
- Plan the information collection (contact details, permissions, schedule, etc.)
- Collect the information
- Analyze the situation and formulate explanatory hypotheses
- Specify the areas and skills to be assessed



Developing the action plan

- Prioritize the targeted areas and skills
- Formulate the EvalSpEd objectives
- Choose the appropriate assessment procedures, methods, and tools
- Specify the organizational framework (location, dates, resources, etc.)



Presenting the protocol

- Record the evaluation request, reasons, approach, and methods in the EvalSpEd protocol
- Explain the plan to the learner and parents
- Present the procedures (location, frequency, duration, etc.)
- Specify the cost and payment terms, if applicable
- Formalize this protocol with the signatures of the parents, the learner, and the Special Educator
- Provide a copy of this protocol to the parents and learner



Conducting the Evaluation

- Prepare the location and tools in advance
- Make yourself available to avoid any interruptions
- Welcome the learner and put them at ease.
- Practice active listening throughout the evaluation
- Encourage the learner, using targeted questions, to talk about their approach (verbally or nonverbally)
- Implement the planned tools and administer the chosen tests
- Observe the learning strategies used by the learner and adapt the activities accordingly
- Adjust the planned methods if necessary (in case of fatigue, agitation, blockage, etc.)
- Document the actions, evaluation results, and learner reactions (note-taking, examples of the learner's work, etc.)



Analysis and interpretation of the results

- Classify the data obtained according to the evaluation areas
- Analyze the data collected and draw conclusions, considering the procedures, the modalities, and limitations of the tools used
- Identify the learner's current level of academic performance relative to their chronological age or the level of the program they are following
- Assess the learner's achievements in terms of socialization and autonomy
- Determine the level of acquisition of self-regulation strategies (affective, cognitive, metacognitive, and organizational strategies)
- Specify the environmental factors that facilitate or hinder learning



Preparation of a synthesis of the situation

- Identify the learner's capacities
- Determine the learner's motivational profile
- Define the learner's educational needs



Drafting the Evaluation report

- Record the learner's personal information (last name, first name, age, date of birth, disorder/deficiency, educational placement, etc.)
- Write down the reasons for the request for EvalSpEd and mention the promoters
- Record the dates of the assessment consultations
- Briefly describe the learner's current situation (personal, family, academic, etc.)
- Record for each test administered its purpose, the tasks performed, the results obtained, and the corresponding interpretations.
- Write a summary presenting the learner's strengths and needs
- Formulate recommendations regarding support and pedagogical and intervention in special education
- Suggest additional assessments if necessary
- Sign the report



Communicating the results

- Meet with the parents and the learner
- Provide them with a copy of the evaluation report
- Explain the results obtained in simple, clear, and precise language
- Explain the recommendations in accessible language
- Inform them of the additional services that can be provided by the Special Educator (remedial or compensatory intervention in Special Education, consultation and support for school staff, etc.)
- Send the report, if applicable, to the third party that recommended the EvalSpEd



2.3 Spatial and Temporal Organization

Modality

The Special Educator intervenes with the learner individually and carries out the face-to-face Evaluation in Special Education.



Duration and frequency

Assessment meetings with the student are spread over two to three sessions, each lasting approximately one hour (*Institut des troubles d'apprentissage*, 2020). The duration depends on the student's concentration skills and environmental constraints.



The moment of Evaluation

The timing of the EvalSpEd cannot be defined a priori. It could take place:

- Systematically upon the admission of the learner with Special Educational Needs, in an inclusive or specialized school
- Before the start of the Intervention in Special Education for a student with Special Educational Needs
- Following a request from parents, specialists, school officials, etc.



Locations

Professional Evaluation in Special Education activities are part of the services offered by inclusive schools, Special Education centers, rehabilitation centers, child and youth protection centers, diagnostic and guidance centers, and private practice (Azar, Raad, & Bou Sreih, 2012).



Setting

The Special Educator ensures a supportive environment that promotes the learner's participation in the assessment. For this purpose, it is recommended to choose a place that is quiet, well-lit, well-ventilated, clean, comfortable, well laid out, and far from any source of distraction.



2.4 Methods

To successfully conduct the EvalSpEd, the Special Educator uses a variety of methods adapted to the evaluation objectives and the specific needs of each learner.

To ensure the quality of the evaluation, the Special Educator selects tools (tests or others) in accordance with their professional field of practice and for which they have the required skills. They ensure the use of valid tools, consistent with the learner's age, their disability or disorder, and the area being assessed (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2014). In all circumstances, they must be able to justify their choices based on their objectives.

Standardized tests

Depending on the context, the Special Educator may choose standardized tests or adapt existing tests to meet the assessment requirements.

Currently, there are no standardized tests intended for use by Special Educators and adapted to the Lebanese population. Despite this, Lebanese Special Educators report using various tests in their evaluation practice. The list of tests mentioned is provided in the appendix as an example (refer to Appendix 1).

Note: It is clear that the use of each standardized test is contingent upon appropriate training and the acquisition of a certificate issued by the producing body.

Other means

Other means are used to collect information on factors likely to influence learning, such as personal factors, school factors, and family and social factors. The tools used may include anecdotal recording sheets, assessment grids, interviews, observations, etc. This list is not exhaustive, and other tools may also be used, adapted, or created based on the specific needs of the assessment.

Anecdotal Records

Throughout the Evaluation in Special Education, the Special Educators will ensure they briefly and regularly note their observations regarding the learner's behaviors, abilities, and attitudes toward the various assessment activities proposed (interviews, test administration, etc.) (Duquette, 2014; *Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005). The sum of these notes provides information on the learner's interactions with others (their parents or the Special Educator), their actions and reactions to the proposed tasks, and their degree of autonomy. An objective and systematic processing of these notes makes it possible to point out certain trends in behaviors and learning styles and to adjust the direction to be given to the assessment (*Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005).

Evaluation grids

The Special Educator uses assessment grids to gather specific information on the abilities, skills, strategies, and behaviors required for learning (listening capacity, attention, work management, memorization, transfer, etc.) (Goupil, 2020 ; *Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005). They also use them to gather data on the level of learner achievement in relation to the content of the curriculum.

To develop the assessment grids, the Special Educator lists the essential criteria, drawing inspiration from models and referring to the curriculum. They also define indicators and quality levels to specify the threshold at which the skill/ability, behavior, strategy, or knowledge is considered acquired (*Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005).

The results of the assessment grids provide information on the quality of the learner's performance, strengths, and areas requiring improvement.



Interview (meeting)

This short meeting is conducted with any stakeholder (learner, parent, teacher, etc.) likely to provide information about the learner, their family and school environment.

It allows the Special Educator to discuss with the learner their work, their successes, and their concerns: what they like, what they achieve, their interests, what they don't achieve, what they struggle with, their learning processes, etc.

Within this same perspective, the Special Educator could also offer the learner, before the interview, a self-assessment session using various tools such as interest or metacognitive process inventories, self-evaluation grids, etc. (*Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005; Goupil, 2020; Saint-Laurent, 2008).

The interview also allows the Special Educator to discuss the learner's situation with other stakeholders in order to identify their perceptions of the learner's characteristics, their concerns, and their expectations. It also allows the collection of contextual elements providing information on extrinsic factors having an influence on learning.



Interview

An interview is a meeting assessment with a defined objective. It allows the Special Educator to collect targeted data from the learner on a specific topic through a series of pre-prepared questions (Goupil, 2020; *Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005). It can provide information on the learner's strengths and difficulties in reading, writing, mathematics, metacognition, behavior, etc.



Observation

Observation consists of carefully observing the learner's actions, behaviors, and reactions (Larousse online, 2022) during the evaluation. It allows the Special Educator to collect relevant data to understand the learner, understand their situation, draw conclusions, and guide or adjust the assessment (Egron, N.D.). It can be either informal or structured.

While informal observation takes place throughout the evaluation process, the Special Educator can use structured observation (*Bureau de l'éducation française Manitoba*, 2005; Duquette, 2014; Goupil, 2020; Saint-Laurent, 2008). They use sheets or grids to target specific behaviors or processes when deemed necessary.

Observation must be systematic and cumulative. It is therefore important to document it carefully and record the collected data in a clear and reliable manner.



3.1 Role and Qualifications of the Special Educator

Role of the Special Educator

The Special Educator plays a central role in the EvalSpEd process, identifying the learner's strengths and needs, as well as the environmental factors that impact their learning and success. Their role is to:

- Plan the EvalSpEd.
- Conduct the EvalSpEd.
- Interpret the results.
- Formulate recommendations.
- Write the EvalSpEd report.
- Communicate the results to stakeholders.

Qualifications of the Special Educator

The EvalSpEd is a process involving a significant level of complexity and technicality. Therefore, its implementation requires the intervention of qualified and competent professionals.

To practice the EvalSpEd, the professional should have at least a Master's degree in Special Education and two years of professional experience in the field. Ideally, the Special Educator should have completed a university-level or certified training program that qualifies them to conduct this evaluation. Such training enables them to acquire the theoretical knowledge and technical skills required to carry out Evaluation in Special Education. Holding a diploma certifies that the professional has been able, through supervision and exposure to a sufficient number of situations, to acquire the skills necessary for this practice (*L'Office des professions du Québec*, 2013).

However, given the rapid evolution of the fields of Education and Special Education, the Special Educator must constantly update their knowledge and skills by engaging in a process of continuous professional development. This will enable them to increase their expertise in Evaluation in Special Education and maintain a high level of professional competence (*Service des ressources éducatives de la Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, 2012).

3.2 Skills

Evaluation in Special Education requires a set of specific skills, ranging from mastery of certain key knowledge (theoretical skills) to mastery of technical skills (Jorro, 2009). "Soft skills" or general skills also remain essential to carry out this evaluation.

Theoretical Skills

Mastering theoretical knowledge is not an end in itself; it informs the evaluator about the measures to be taken to establish, structure, and regulate the actions of EvalSpEd (Jorro, 2009).

The key knowledge includes knowledge related to:

- Learning disabilities, disorders, and difficulties.
- Evaluation and Evaluation in Special Education.
- Multidimensional development of children (ages 0-18).
- Curriculum and the teaching-learning process.
- Professional code of ethics.

Methodological Skills

Methodological skills are essential for designing and conducting a relevant and individualized EvalSpEd and effectively understanding the learner's situation.

The methodological skills include:

- Planning the EvalSpEd.
- Implementing an EvalSpEd process.
- Analyzing and interpreting the data collected.
- Providing an overview of the learner's situation regarding their learning and motivational profile.
- Writing an EvalSpEd report.

General Skills/ "Soft Skills"

With well-developed soft skills and general competencies, the Special Educator is able to foster exchange and collaboration while strengthening the value and integrity of the evaluation process.

These general skills mainly include interpersonal skills (communication, collaboration, flexibility) essential for establishing fruitful relationships with stakeholders; integrity and research, both essential in the context of professional interactions and in the ethical conduct of the EvalSpEd; organizational skills to ensure effective management of resources and activities related to the EvalSpEd; and finally, continuing professional development, which allows the Special Educator to remain up to date and ensure appropriate and effective interventions in a constantly changing environment (Herrity, 2023; Danao, 2023).

Interpersonal Skills

Communication

Communication encompasses the skills of listening and active listening, verbal, nonverbal, and written expression, observation, and empathy, all of which are necessary for any interpersonal exchange.

It enables effective communication (clear, precise, concise, tailored to the speaker, etc.) in a variety of settings (face-to-face interactions, digital or social media interactions, and written correspondence).

Effective communication is essential for building strong professional relationships with stakeholders (learners, parents, specialists, etc.).

Collaboration

Collaboration skills enable the Special Educator to work with other stakeholders (learners, parents, specialists, teachers, etc.). They allow them to use and share their experiences and skills to solve a problem or achieve a common goal.

Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to understand and adapt easily to any new situation, change, or challenge encountered during the EvalSpEd process. It also represents the ability of the Special Educator to adjust their approach, communication methods, and expectations based on the individual needs and preferences of learners or parents.

Integrity

Integrity enables the Special Educator to act morally and ethically in all circumstances, to treat others with respect, to be conscientiously involved in their work, to keep their commitments and promises, and to assume responsibility for their actions.

Organizational Skills

Organizational skills enable the appropriate management of time, space, energy, and resources to conduct the EvalSpEd efficiently and effectively.

Professional Development Competency

Professional development allows Special Educators, through active and ongoing engagement, to constantly update and enrich their skills, knowledge, and practices. It is achieved through various means such as reading and research, training, professional networking, mentoring, reflection and self-assessment, and the use of educational technologies. It contributes to improving the quality of services, increasing the effectiveness of EvalSpEd, and maintaining professional excellence.

Research Skills

Research skills enable the Special Educator to approach a problem or a question in a methodical way. They allow them to collect relevant data relating to a particular situation or subject, to process it, and to extract the key elements in order to find the most appropriate solution or answer.

3.3 Professional Stance of the Special Educator

The evaluator's professional stance plays a fundamental role in the success of the EvalSpEd. It significantly contributes to establishing a safe and welcoming environment. It also promotes interaction and communication and ensures a fair and objective evaluation process.

The evaluator's stance encompasses several important aspects, including verbal and nonverbal communication, availability, and attitude toward error (Toastmasters International, 2016).

Verbal communication

It is evident in the words, the rate, tone, and volume of the voice.

The evaluator uses a clear, concise lexicon adapted to the listener's level of understanding, avoiding overly technical or complex terms. They use positive and constructive language that encourages learners and boosts their self-confidence.

They speak at a moderate and steady pace – neither too fast nor too slow – to allow their listener to follow the conversation easily. They also make sure to include moments of silence to give the other person time to think and respond.

The evaluator maintains a calm, confident, and poised tone of voice to establish a secure environment and promote effective communication. They nuance their voice to express different feelings such as encouragement, motivation, empathy, etc. However, they ensure a neutral tone of voice, avoiding fluctuations that could be interpreted as prejudice or favoritism.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is ever-present and significantly influences overall communication as well as the quality of the relationship between the Special Educator and the learner. It is expressed through body language (posture, movement, and physical positioning), facial expressions (smiling, eye contact, frowning, etc.), and appearance (clothing, hairstyle, hygiene).

The evaluator makes sure to be expressive through varied and dynamic facial and body expressions. They adopt a receptive and warm body language that invites a simple and genuine interaction.

With an upright posture and confident gestures, the evaluator conveys self-assurance and professional seriousness. They also ensure that they maintain an appropriate and respectful physical distance.

The Special Educator maintains sustained eye contact and body expressions that demonstrate active listening and attentive concentration (such as nodding in agreement, leaning slightly forward, opening the palms of the hands, and avoiding crossed arms, etc.).

Finally, the evaluator's appearance inspires trust, respect, and neutrality, thereby reinforcing their credibility. Clothing should be clean, well-fitted, and comfortable. It is important to choose neutral hairstyles and outfits, simple, discreet, and non-distracting, to make a positive impression and maintain a professional and respectful working environment.

Evaluator availability

The evaluator's availability is crucial during the EvalSpEd to ensure a climate that fosters communication and action. It allows them to be attentive, engaged, and receptive to the learner's needs, as well as flexible in their actions. To achieve this, the Special Educator makes sure to plan their intervention in advance, prepare the setting and necessary materials ahead of time, and ensure they have enough time to carry out the evaluation properly.

Reaction to errors

Errors are indicative of several aspects of the learning and development process, such as the level of understanding, the learning strategies used, skill levels, and the specific challenges faced by learners (Adopting an Assessor's Stance, n.d.; Giordan et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important for the Special Educator to accept that the learner may make errors during the evaluation by adopting an objective and respectful attitude.

Conclusion

Evaluation in Special Education constitutes a fundamental pillar in ensuring the success of learners with Special Educational Needs. However, the lack of standardization in this practice, both in Lebanon and internationally, has led to a wide variety of evaluation methods that are often disparate and sometimes insufficiently reliable. The exploratory study conducted by ILE-USJ clearly shows that current practices, although numerous, lack a common framework, a clearly defined protocol, and standardized tools. This lack of uniformity not only affects the quality of the interventions proposed for students, but also undermines professionals' confidence in their evaluation tools and impacts the professional image of Special Education practitioners.

To address this gap, this handbook on Evaluation in Special Education has been developed to provide a theoretical framework and to propose an approach, a process, and tools grounded in clear guiding principles. Its aim is to harmonize evaluation practices in Special Education, strengthen the rigor and quality of evaluations, and provide professionals with reliable reference points for targeted and effective intervention. This work represents a significant step forward toward a more structured evaluation process and aspires to ensure high-quality Special Education services for learners with Special Educational Needs.

Through this initiative, ILE-USJ not only responds to the immediate needs of Special Educators but also contributes to a broader reflection on Evaluation in Special Education. The development of this handbook therefore represents a decisive step toward the formalization of Evaluation in Special Education, offering a unified framework that supports the development of a more standardized, reliable, and professional practice in the years to come.

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Appendix

Standardized Psychoeducational Assessments in Lebanon:

Domain	Instruments
Academic Achievement	• Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement • Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – Arabic Version • WIAT (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test: Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Oral Language Skills)
Developmental Assessment	• NEPSY (Developmental Neuropsychological Assessment) • Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development (0–3 years) • Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development
Specific Learning and Neurodevelopmental Disorders	• CTOPP-2 (Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, Second Edition) • ODEDYS (Dyslexia Screening Tool) • DEDALE (Experimental Screening Tool for Reading and Writing Learning Difficulties) • LDDI (Learning Disabilities Diagnostic Inventory) • Autism Screening Instrument for Educational Planning • CARS (Childhood Autism Rating Scale) – Arabic Edition • VADRS (Vanderbilt ADHD Diagnostic Rating Scale) • BDA Checklist (British Dyslexia Association) • WIDA ACCESS for ELLs (English Language Skills: (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking))
Language Assessment	• VB-MAPP (Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program) • ISADYLE (Language Assessment Battery) • EOWPVT (Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test) • ROWPVT (Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test)
Intellectual Ability	• WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) • TONI (Test of Nonverbal Intelligence) • EVAC (Verbal Cognitive Aptitude Assessment)
Reading, Writing, and Spelling	• GORT (Gray Oral Reading Test) • BELO (Language and Spelling Assessment Battery) • TELEQ (Quebec Written Language Assessment Test: Reading and Writing) • PRIMO (Procedures for Identifying Written Word Recognition and Spelling Skills) • RÉGULO (Orthographic Regularities in Writing Assessment) • ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Examination) • E.L.FE (Evaluation of Reading Fluency) • WIDA ACCESS for ELLs (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking) • LLI (Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System) • MAP Reading Fluency • OURA (Outil de Repérage des Acquis en lecture des élèves de CP à l'usage des enseignants) • DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)
Adaptive Behavior	• ABS (Adaptive Behavior Scale)
Executive Functioning and Behavioral Rating Scales	• BRIEF (Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function) • Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales

