

Mary Miele:

Hello. My name is Mary Miele. I am a tutor, a teacher, a parent, and the founder of Evolved Education Company. We are a full-service tutoring and advisement company for all of your educational solutions. On this podcast, we'll explore ideas, techniques, and resources that you can use to support your school-age child to conquer any learning issue. I'm so glad you're here.

Hi, everyone. How are you? It's Mary here and I'm starting the podcast this month. It's May 2023. I'm so excited that it's May. I am here with Becky Reback, who we all know. And I wanted just to say that Becky is moving into a very exciting role here at Evolved, and we are doing this podcast because we're going to share it with anyone who's coming in who is going to access our assessments here at Evolved. So Becky's love beyond anything is to understand students. It is so exciting every time a student steps into the realm of Becky and gets to experience her assessment services, because for sure their parents and anyone else involved is going to learn a lot more about themselves in that process.

So it became a no-brainer when our company is growing and evolving. And we'll be announcing next month a little bit more about the tutoring piece. But right now, Becky is going to be holding our assessment department. And so I thought it would be so helpful to have a podcast that we could give to you parents who are coming into our company, who are going to be having assessments with us, what is this all about and how come it is such an important piece of the service work that we do here at Evolved? So thanks, Becky, for coming on and talking about this with us. Appreciate it.

Becky Reback:

Happy as always, yep.

Mary Miele:

All right, so let's get into it. So we have a wide range of assessments at this point that are provided by Evolved, and I would just like to ask you to share the names of those assessments and what they would provide families. And then we'll get into a little bit of what do parents always want to know about these assessments? And how does it work? What is some of the things that they can expect out of this service as they get involved? So first, let's talk about the name of the assessments that we have.

Becky Reback:

Sure. So we have a wide range of assessments. And we really can assess pre-K through college, which I think is really exciting. And I've said it many times in all of our podcasts, honestly, but I'll say it again, is when you and your child have an opportunity to learn about their brain and how their brain works, it's such a gift to everybody, and most importantly, to the child themselves, to the student themselves. So they can learn so many skills, but I would say number one is self-advocacy. And how amazing if your child could walk into a ninth grade classroom or a sixth grade classroom, whatever it might be, and say to the teacher, "Hey, this is how my brain works. This is how I learn best. How can we work together to optimize my learning?" That's always the goal, is that the kid knows their brain and how they work so we can all make sure that learning is at its optimal level.

So I'm going to go through our assessments that we have on file here at Evolved, and we have been lucky enough to partner and pull in some of these assessments and get to know them really well. And we find that parents find them invaluable, the information that we get from them. So the first one is the QRI, which is short for the qualitative reading inventory. And that is a formal reading assessment anywhere from pre-K all the way up through high school. And it really lets us know the student's reading level, their comprehension level, their fluency and decoding level. So it helps us know just all around

what the student is performing at in terms of reading. And it really gives us a look into, I mean, their ability to answer explicit questions, implicit questions, just generally who they are as readers and how we can continue to develop them as readers.

Particularly if your child is struggling in any area of reading, this is definitely going to be one you want to do along with some other phonological assessments and phonemic awareness assessments. But we definitely want to know who they are as readers and how they comprehend texts and how they attack questions from a text and using the text as information. So that's a great assessment that we have. Another assessment that we work with is called the ECAM, the Early Childhood Assessment for Mathematics. That's actually for K through two, but it gives us a lot of information on who your child is as a mathematician. And do they have the foundational skills that they're going to need to move forward in mathematics? And do they have a good number sense? Do they have a good understanding of the basics of mathematics that's really going to serve them as they learn higher level skills like multiplication, division, percents? I mean, there's so much that goes into it. So the ECAM is another great assessment that we have.

We recently brought on the Brown Executive Function/Attention Scale, which is hugely helpful in understanding a student's executive function abilities. We have long time in executive function had inventories that we do with students, but they're a little bit more of an informal assessment and they're a little bit more subjective. And we would do them with the students and then the parents would also do them, and the results would be so incredibly different, which I always found to be so fascinating what different perspectives are seeing. But the Brown is going to give us a more formalized understanding of your child's executive functions and how they are currently presenting. And that really allows us to target instruction in executive function and provide specific strategies and skills that they're going to need to be successful and develop their executive functions.

We've talked about our next assessment a lot. It's one of our favorites. It's called the Mindprint learning assessment. We use it all the time in everything we do, in test prep, in school placement, if we just need to understand a kid. We even are partnering with some schools to do them in schools. And it's such a great assessment. It's an online, self-paced, cognitive-based assessment. It takes maximum an hour. The students find it to be quite fun. It's looking at the 10 skills that are predictive of academic success. And it falls into the three buckets of reasoning, memory, and executive function. And it just gives us a blueprint of your child's brain and lets us know their learner profile and gives us specific strategies and tools that we can implement with them immediately to help to optimize their learning.

Then of course, we have our whole suite of mock tests. We partner with Bespoke Education to provide mock tests to anybody who is studying for the SHSAT, the specialized high school exam for public school, the ISEE, the SSAT, the ACT, or the SAT. Say all of that 10 times fast. And all of our students get in there and they take mock exams. And that just provides a baseline for us so we can create objectives and goals for testing, tutoring, to make sure that we're really teaching the students exactly what they need to be successful on those tests. And we're going to talk about how we personalize learning from these assessments a little bit more.

And then the final two that we're really using in our college suite, but honestly I think they could be really beneficial and a great pair for at least high school placement, they're called the Career Liftoff and the 16 Personalities. The Career Liftoff is a series of questions that ask you about different types of career paths that you might be interested in, which is why we tend to use it for our college placement students, so that way we can help research programs that are going to be the best fit for them.

And then the 16 personalities assessment is just getting us to understand who you are on a little bit more of a social-emotional level. Are you an introvert? Are you an extrovert? What type of person are you? How do you handle certain situations? What is your perspective on certain situations? So that's the

16 Personalities. So that's a lot. We have a lot of assessments, the QRI, the ECAM, the Brown, the Mindprint, the mock tests, Career Liftoff, and 16 Personalities. It's seven in total and we are always growing. So we're excited to learn new assessments, but these are the ones that we're working with currently.

Mary Miele:

I love that so much. And I love that too because I think what you're so good about, Becky, is that you do also customize this process for families. So usually when they come in, you'll have a call and talk with them about what they're wanting to learn. And we're not doing neuropsych testing, which is done-

Becky Reback:

Yeah.

Mary Miele:

... by a neuropsychologist. These are tests that are administered by educators who are certified at master's level with special education certifications to be able to administer these types of assessments. And so they can be very, very helpful to give families the information that they need in an educational sense to make some decisions, to formulate programming. So can you tell us a little bit, because I'm in such awe of the way that this company gives families the service and helps them not only to take the assessment, but also the care at which it provides families after receiving the assessment.

I think it really speaks to our ethos that we are here for families and we're here for students. And we really want families and students to access these assessments with a really high level of service. And I just get such good feedback from all of our families that go through the process with you and your department, because I know how much we care about the process and what parents are getting out of it. So could you talk a little bit more about that part so parents can understand what to expect when they come in and sign up for such an assessment?

Becky Reback:

Sure. So all of this is in service of understanding your child and how they're going to learn best. Like you said, we're not doing neuropsych tests. That's certainly for a whole different set of training and people that do that. But what we're doing is understanding who they are as a student, and areas that we can nourish so that way they are being extended in areas of strength. And then areas that we can support that are the areas that they're having challenge in and that we can support and develop there. I mean, of course this is linked to tutoring and just general support is that everything we do here is very bespoke. And everything that we're doing is really looking holistically at the child. So if you're unsure about what's going on for your child, you have no idea how they're attacking a reading question or you have no idea what their number sense is.

These are all assessments that we can do in service of understanding who they are as a learner. Not only are we looking at the actual skill of reading, but I'm also watching for, how do they handle certain questions? How are they attempting to accomplish a task? What are the steps that they're taking? Do we need to teach them the steps in order for them to even access the material? So a little bit there's that piece of it. But in general, what clients can expect when they come in is not only for us to administer the assessment, but also for us to provide you with the opportunity to debrief the results. And our job in that moment is to really synthesize the information for parents so they can walk away

understanding who their child is as a learner. And what we do is make sure that you understand all the lingo.

There's so much education lingo that if you're a parent and you're not an educator, you don't know what this means. You don't know what verbal reasoning means or why processing speed is so important or why we want to read this way and not... There's so many different pieces of information that go into it. And so we're really here to synthesize the information and make it digestible for parents, and then provide them so not only they understand, but that we can provide them with a plan to move forward and how they can support their child moving forward. Whether it be a plan for, what type of school is going to be the best school that they're going to learn in? Or a plan for how we're going to personalize outside supports, or a plan for how we're going to go into school and say, "This is who my kid is as a learner. How are you going to help us optimize this in your classroom environment?"

So we can help you really deeply understand the information. And that's why we debrief, I mean, we do it on Zoom, but in-person, so to speak. So that way we can talk to you and answer your questions. We're not just doing an assessment, writing it up, and sending it over to you. We're actually talking you through it and sharing our observations and sharing the formal reports with it as well. One example that comes to mind with the Mindprint learning assessment is we just debriefed with the family. And it came out of the Mindprint learning assessment that the student had a slower processing speed. And she is going through the school placement process and is going to have to take standardized tests, like an IC or an SSAT. And so we had the opportunity to talk with the family about this, what the applications are in terms of test prep, and school, really, and then teach them about the referral process for their school so that way the student can access accommodations like extra time on their actual, I mean, on the mock test, but also on the actual standardized test assessment.

So that way, we can help the student perform as best as they possibly can. So like I said, our goal always is so that way the parents understand who their child is and can support them in a way that makes sense for their particular child, because every single brain is different, every child is different. I think something else that we do is not only look at them through the academic lens, but like I said, we're looking at it the holistic way. So I might say, "Is this coming up at home? Does your child have a hard time when you give them five-step directions and they just sort of look at you blankly?"

Or they do steps one and two, but not three and four, but then they do five because they're still processing step three and four? They haven't quite gotten there yet? And so they skip over it because they haven't taken in the information and then you're frustrated by it. But now we know that because of their slow processing speed, we need to present their information in a different kind of way, so that way they can do all five steps of the directions that you're giving them. So we're looking at them in the academic lens, but also in the home lens and the social-emotional lens, what all this means together and what the whole package is going to need support with.

Mary Miele:

I think that's exactly what I was talking about in that it's not just an assessment, it's also providing parents with the understanding of the assessment. But then in addition, what are you going to do with that understanding? And I think that's such an important piece because, I don't know, I'm a parent too. And sometimes I take off my ed consulting hat and I go into a parent role with one of my kids and I'm experiencing the feedback of an assessment without those pieces. And I can get a little overwhelmed in the information. I have to take it and sit down, make sense of it, and make a plan with it, which I can do because I have the educational training. It still takes me time.

So I think that's just a crucial, crucial, important piece. And so if you are coming in right now and you've just signed up for a Mindprint learning assessment, you happen to listen to this podcast because we sent

it over to you, I think you can just know that in addition to us giving that Mindprint learning assessment, you're also going to be able to talk with one of our assessment specialists about that assessment, and also create a next steps plan for what you're going to do with that information, wherever you are in your child's education, whether you're going through an admissions process, whether you're staying at your current school.

And I love those kind of plan A, plan Bs even. So what are you going to do right now? What are you going to do when you go to the next place? So that is really what this is all about. So thank you, Becky. I'm so excited that you'll be able to dedicate more time because I can also assure you, for anyone who's listening to this, and it's now the fall of 2023 or it's January 2024, I almost guarantee we're going to be having even more assessments available for families. And the process itself will be still in its original form in terms of helping parents to understand and create those plans.

Becky Reback:

Absolutely.

Mary Miele:

Yeah.

Becky Reback:

And we're always evolving, so-

Mary Miele:

Yes.

Becky Reback:

... as we get into this more and more and as we develop this area of our company more, I'm sure we'll refine everything that we're doing. But I would say that in general, I have yet to have a parent that hasn't walked away being like, "Oh my God, this information is so valuable for me." Or, "Yes, this is my kid. You understand my child." And that is truly our goal is to understand your child and help you understand your child in the school and everyone that comes into play with them.

Mary Miele:

Thank you so much, Becky. So exciting, and I'm so excited for our next steps. We'll see you all in the summer. And I hope that we get to experience you coming in into our company as the summer gets started to do some of these important assessments as you gear up for the summer, as you gear up for the next school year. You're always welcome to come in at any time. So thank you so, so, so much.

Becky Reback:

Thank you.

Mary Miele:

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