

A Comprehensive Model for Specific Learning Disability Evaluations



**Using the *Building Blocks Brain Model* of
Development to Understand and Assess Learning
Disabilities**

Peter Thompson, Ed.S., Ph.D.

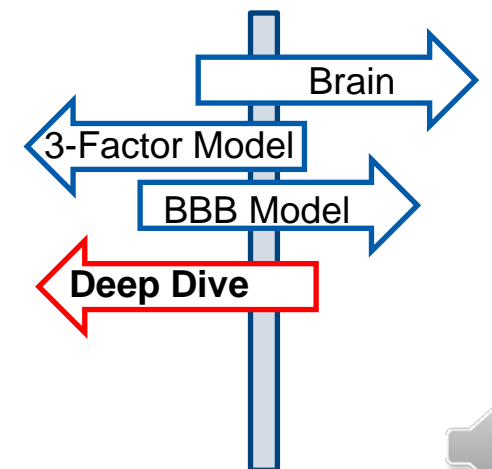




Module 2.4 Guidepost 4

The Building Blocks Brain Model

A DEEPER DIVE: Attention



Important Note

The information, concepts, and models provided in this presentation are intended to give practitioners a framework when conducting special education evaluations. It is emphasized that nothing in this presentation is meant to be directive or prescriptive. Professionals are free to use some, or all of the information presented, but they are not required to do so in their practice. **Always consult with your special education director for clarity around district policies and expectations for special education evaluations.**



IMPORTANT 

Learning Outcomes

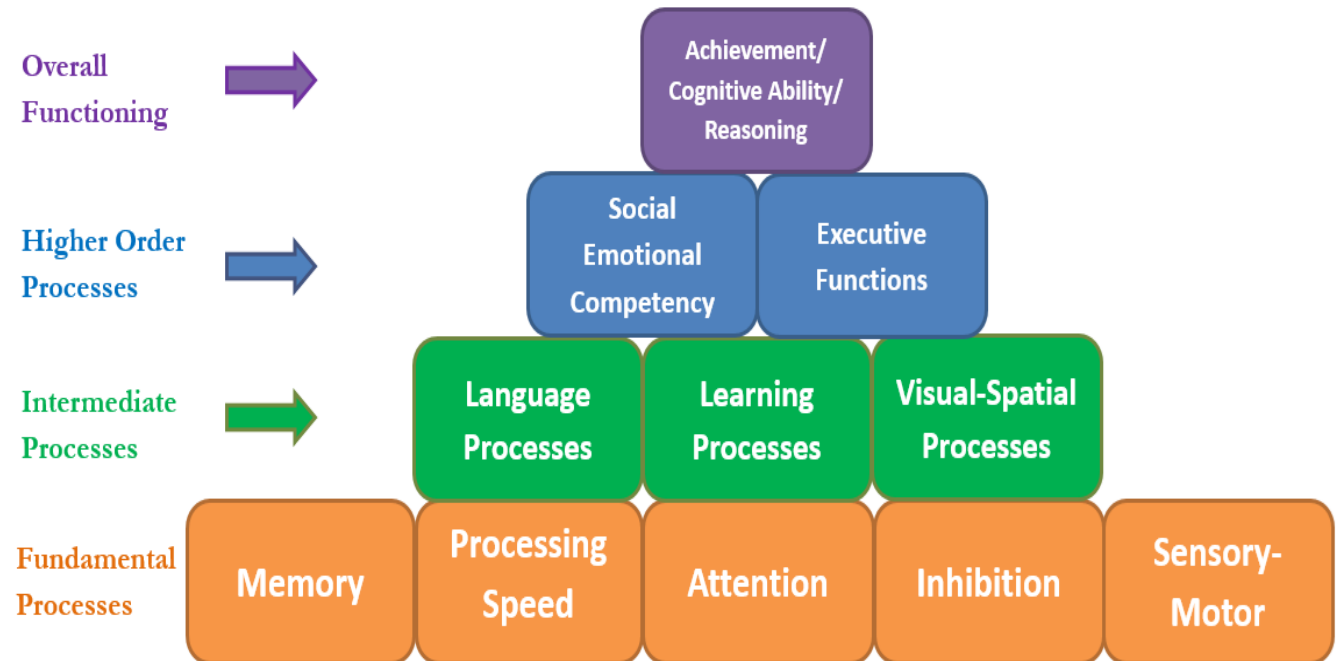
- Why is attention critical for all learning?
- Behavioral and academic “Look-Fors”
- How to properly assess attention



Key Points: Attention's Impact in Learning

- Attention is the ability to orient and focus on a task for other processes to work.
- Attention, is the first step in all learning. Information cannot be processed unless a person “attends” to it first.
- Important: Various types of attention. Attention is a key aspect of executive functioning.

Building Blocks of Brain Development ©



The Hierarchy of Neurocognitive Functioning © - created by Peter Thompson, Ph.D. 2013, adapted from the works of Miller 2007; Reitan and Wolfson 2004; Hale and Fiorello 2004.

The Building Blocks of Brain Development © - further adapted by the CO Brain Injury Steering Committee, 2016.

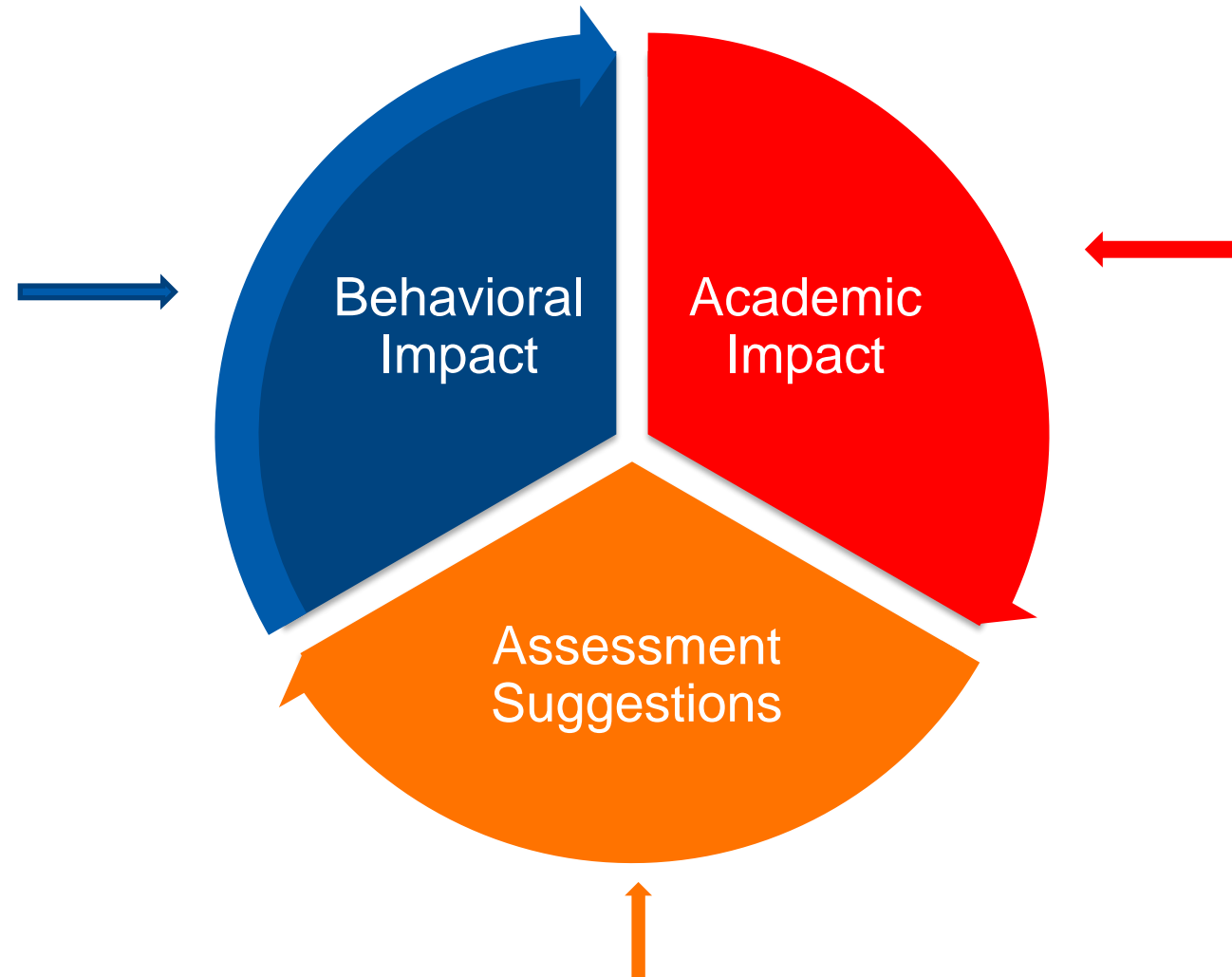


Attention: The Doorway to Memory

- Attention and memory have a dependent relationship.
- Without attention, information cannot be placed or encoded into memory in the first place.
- Many memory problems may actually be attention problems



Memory: 3 key Aspects to Consider in SLD Evaluations



Behavioral Impacts (Look-Fors)

- Multiple environments, especially uninteresting
- Spacey, not oriented to the speaker or task
- Seems forgetful (lack of attending)
- Easily distracted (easily off-task)
- Difficulty with turn taking
- Fidgets/squirms in seat or does not stay in seat (foot / hand tapping)



Behavioral Impacts (Look-Fors) Cont.

- Interrupts conversations, talks over people
- Loses personal items
- Low frustration tolerance
- Off topic (due to “popcorn” ideas)
- Organization of thought / materials



Academic Impacts (Look-Fors)

- Careless mistakes with school-work
- Difficulty following directions
- Does not follow through with directions/tasks
- Doesn't complete assignments / tests



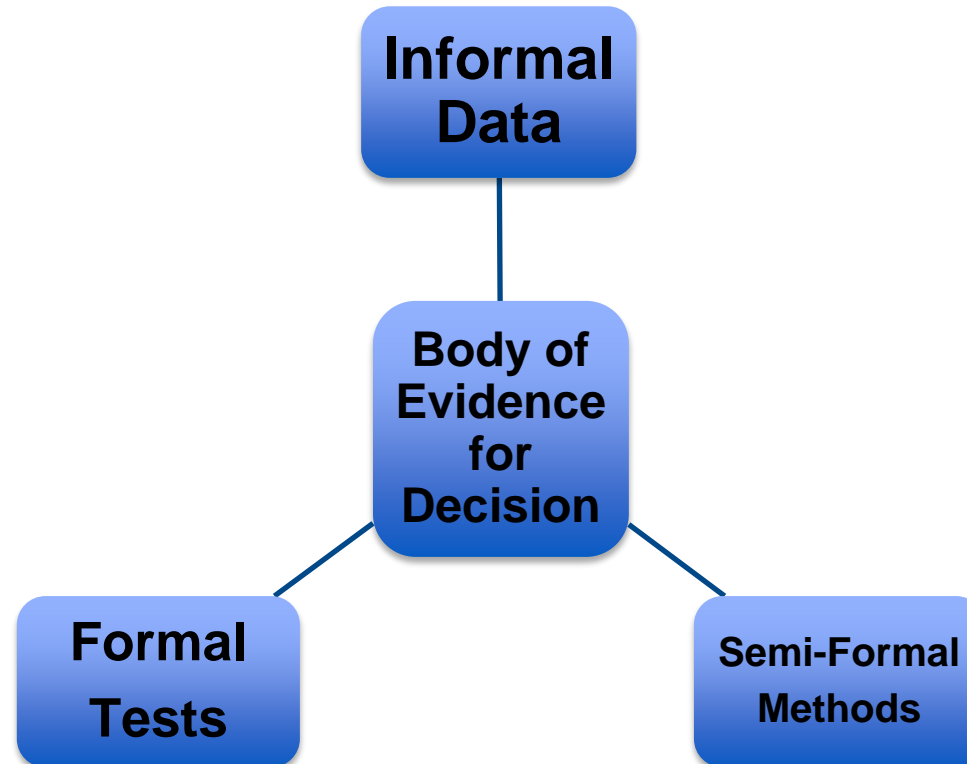
Academic Impacts (Look-Fors) Cont.

- Erratic recall / memory (but due to attention)
- Has inconsistent performance in school
- Can't keep up with rest of the class / failure
- Discipline issues (impulsivity)



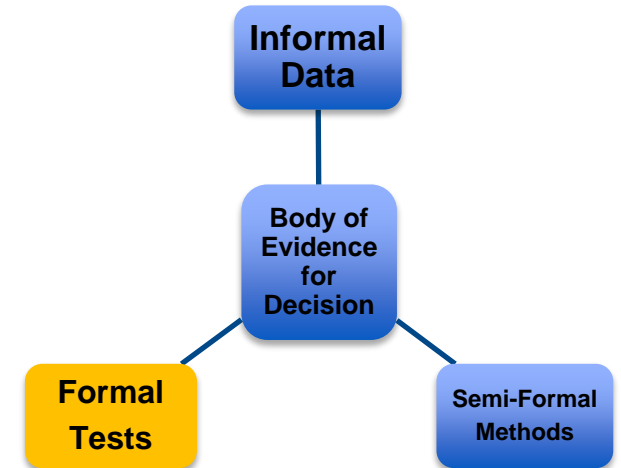
Assessment Suggestions: Attention

- Use 3-Factor Model for Assessment
 1. Formal
 2. Informal
 3. Semi-Formal



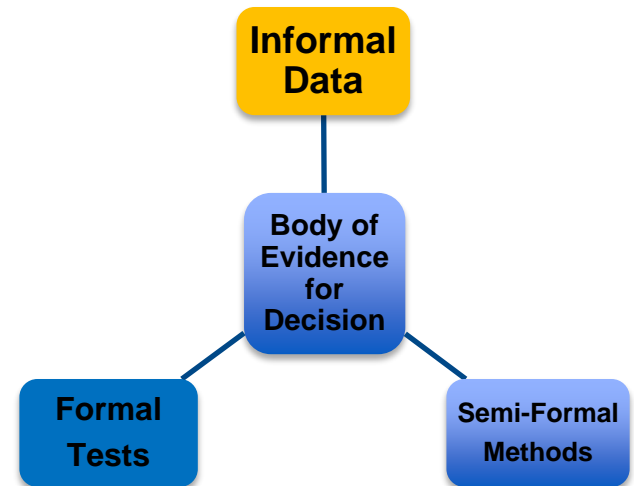
Formal Methods: Attention

- CAS-2 Attention and Planning subtest
- NEPSY-2 (Attention Subtest)
- Working Memory & Processing Speed subtests
- CPT (computerized)
- BRIEF-2 / CEFI-2



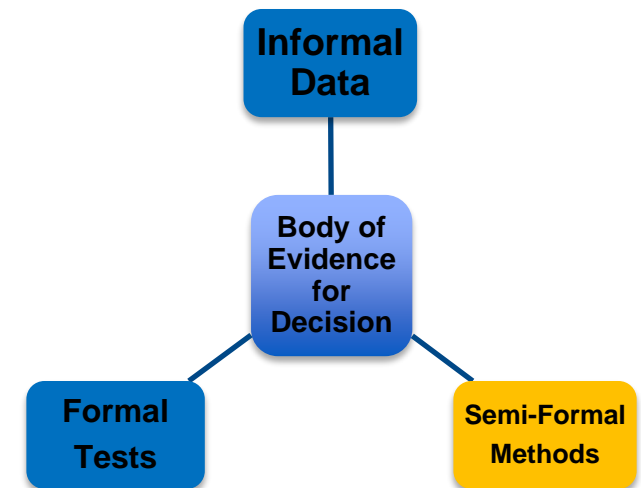
Informal Methods: Attention

- Parent, Student, Staff interview
- Records Review- Family history-.60 correlation (key)
- Medical history -TBI/multiple cx
- Observations-multiple settings
- Work Samples
 - Inconsistent work
 - Poor handwriting

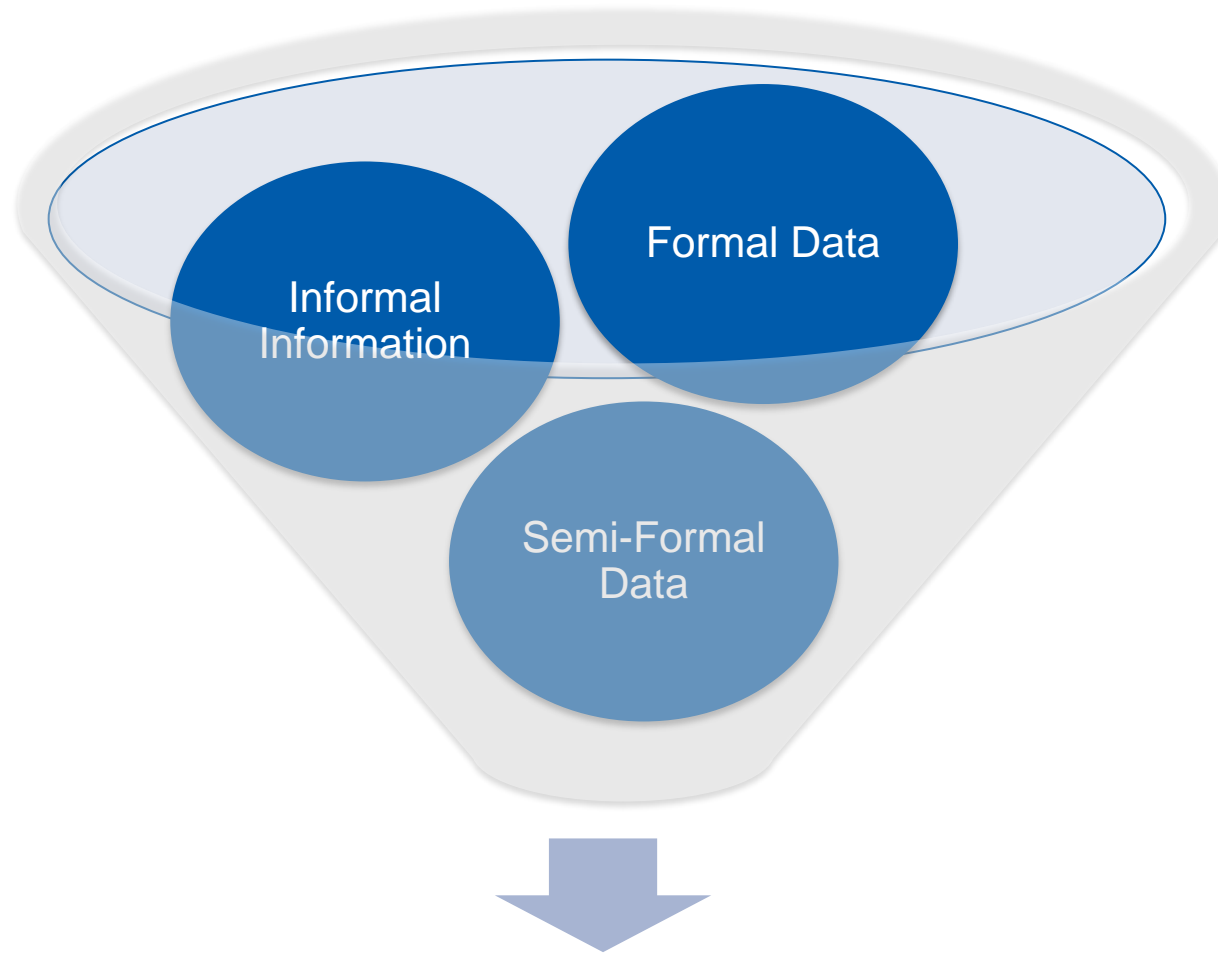


Semi-Formal Methods: Attention

- Attention Rating Scales
- Executive Function Rating Scales
- NEF (Neurocognitive Evaluation Form)
- Vanderbilt Scales (free download)



Examining Attention



Integrated Body of Evidence






Summary: Attention

1. Attention is the key "initial" step in all learning.
2. Attention deficits have obvious behavioral and academic impacts.
3. Attention and executive function have overlap and you can assess for both. The 3-Factor model is effective to assess for attention problems.





End of Module 2.4

Thanks for Listening



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