

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.



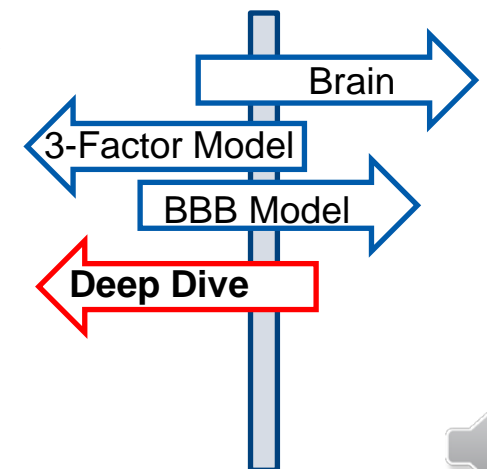


Module 4.1 Guidepost 4

The Building Blocks Brain Model

A DEEPER DIVE: Higher Order Processes

Social-Emotional Competency



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

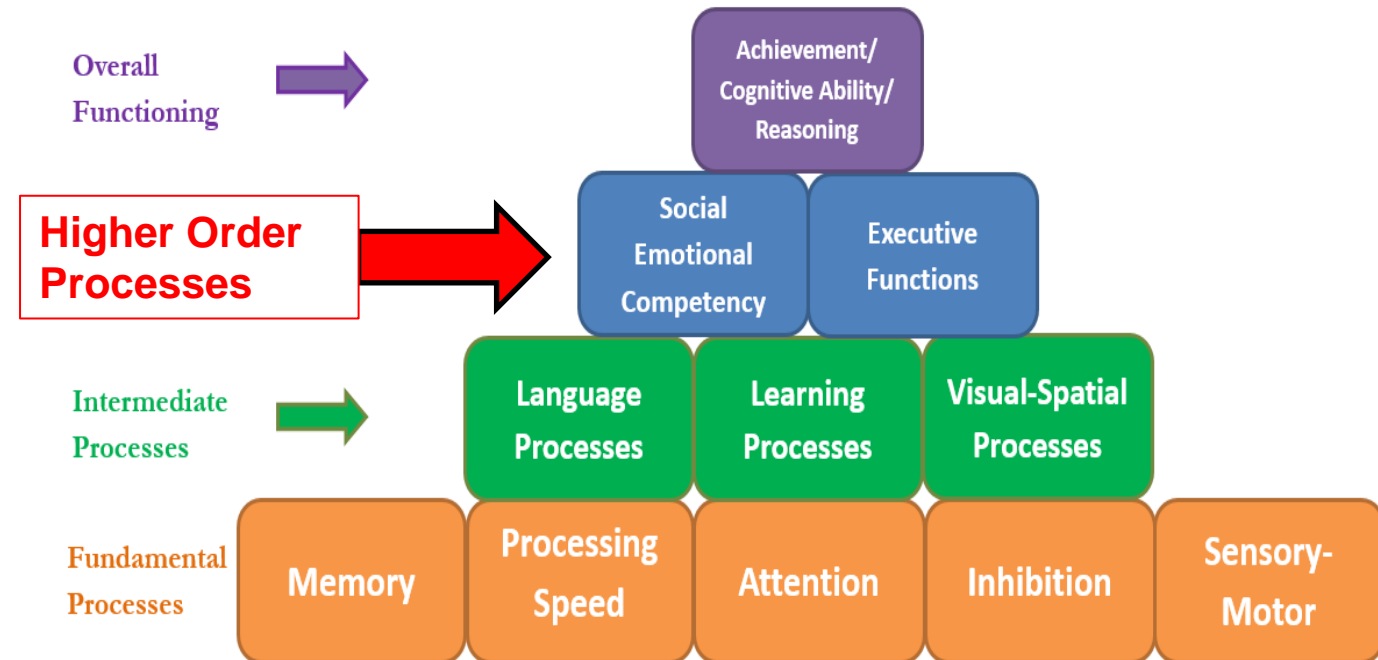
- What are higher order processes?
- What are the “Look-Fors” for students that have difficulty with social-emotional difficulties?
- How to properly assess social-emotional deficits



What Are Higher Order Processes?

- **Success within this level is based on proper functioning of all lower processes**
- **Once functions are integrated, this level “applies” learned skills and knowledge**
- **Navigate complex environments, interpersonal issues, will determine overall success**

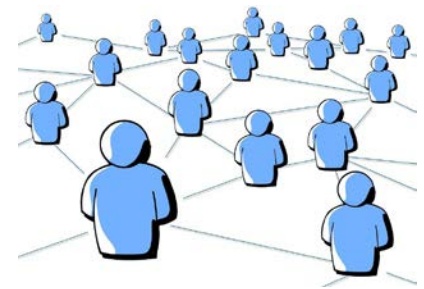
Building Blocks of Brain Development ©



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.

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Higher Order Processes

- Full integration of all fundamental processes; acquisition of knowledge at the mid-level; application of skills in the real world; using feedback to immediately modify behavior for successful navigation
- Involves perceiving and controlling the emotions within oneself and perceiving the emotions of others, which is a very complex process.
- More substantial and “evolved” self-control and executive functions to experience and manipulate the environment
- Utilizes high level language, such as social language, inferences, tone of voice, abstractions, to respond appropriately

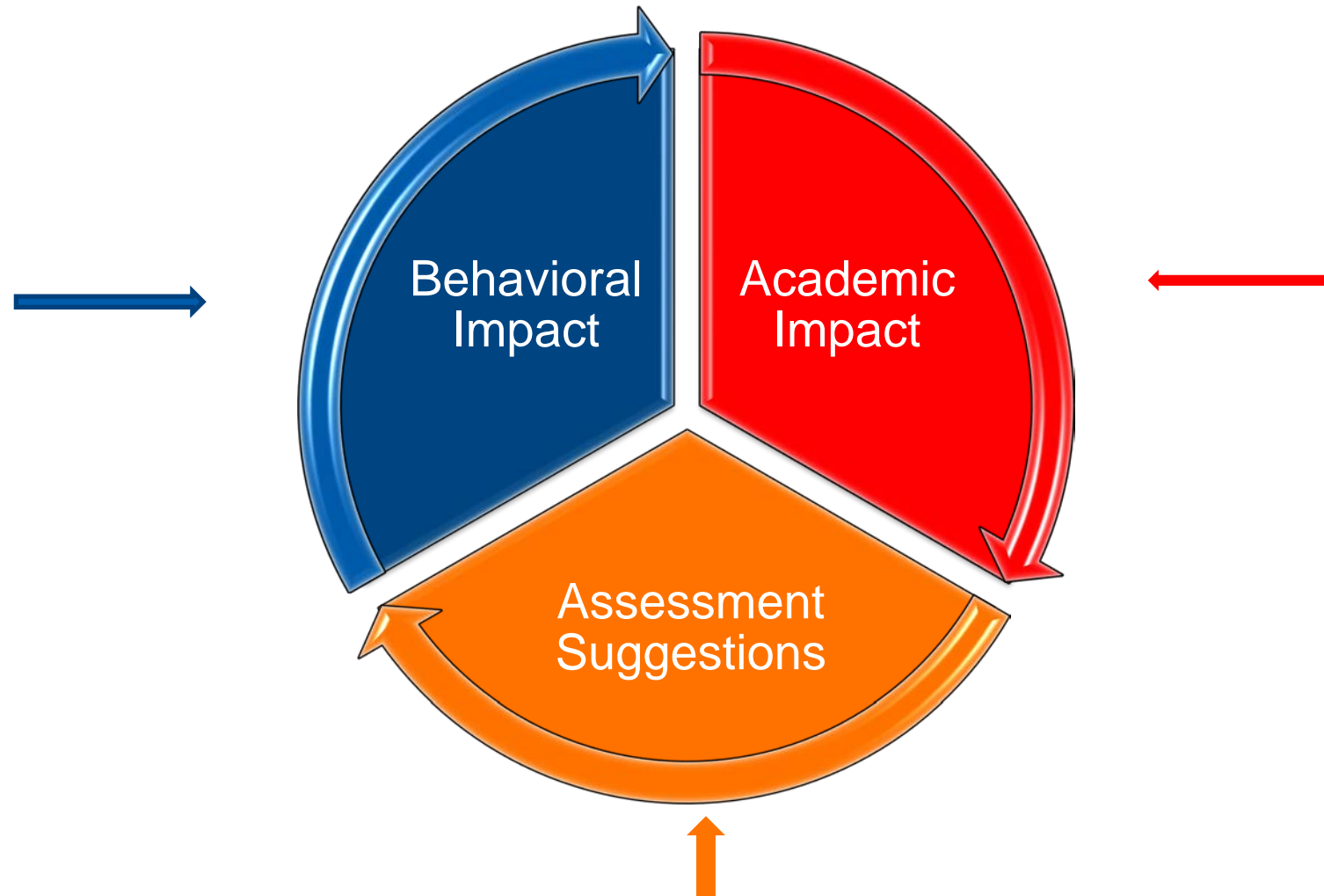


Social-Emotional Competency

- **Must accurately perceive nonverbal body and facial cues**
- **Interpersonal problem solving involves thinking in the future and how responses impact outcomes-complex thinking**
- **Involves sub-cortical and cortical brain structures**



Social Emotional Competency: 3 key Aspects to Consider



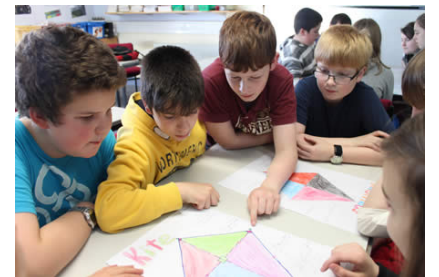
Behavioral Impacts (Look-Fors): **Social Emotional**

- Interpersonal conflict, misreading social cues
- Difficulty making and keeping friends
- Difficulty with emotional regulation (over-under)
- Emotional meltdowns
- Group issues—parties, social gatherings, loner
- Anxiety, depression brought on by difficulties



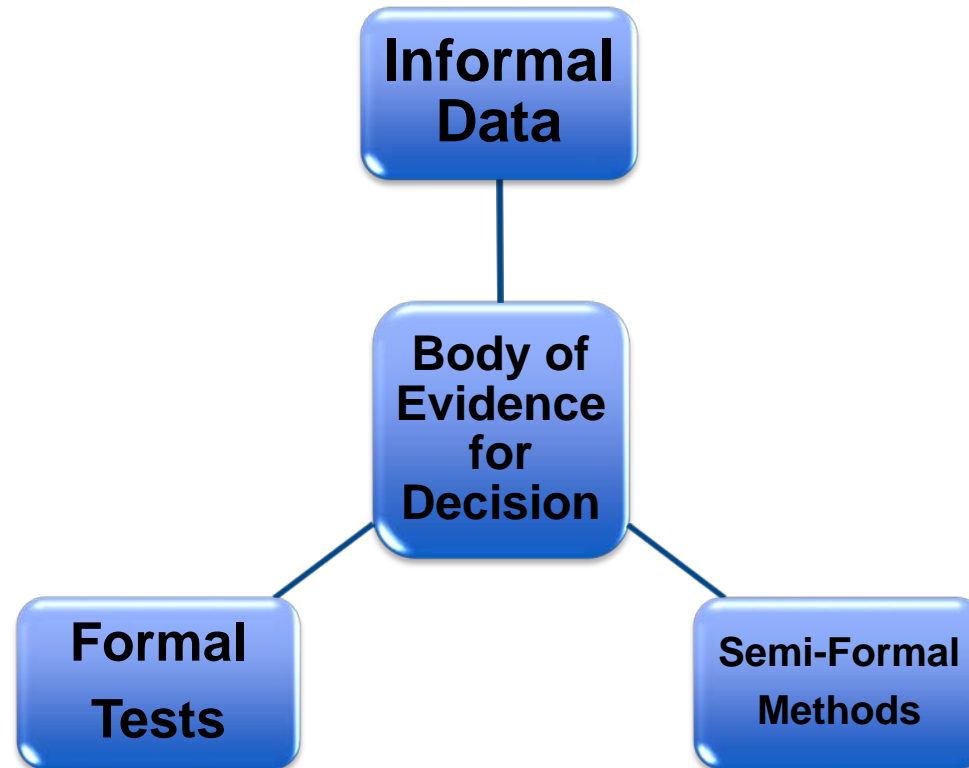
Academic Impacts (Look-Fors): **Social Emotional**

- Cognitive distortions--exaggerated or irrational thought patterns impacting social interactions
- Difficulty with group learning -collaboration
- Emotional pre-occupation that interferes with academics
- Trouble focusing
- Difficulty with flexibility



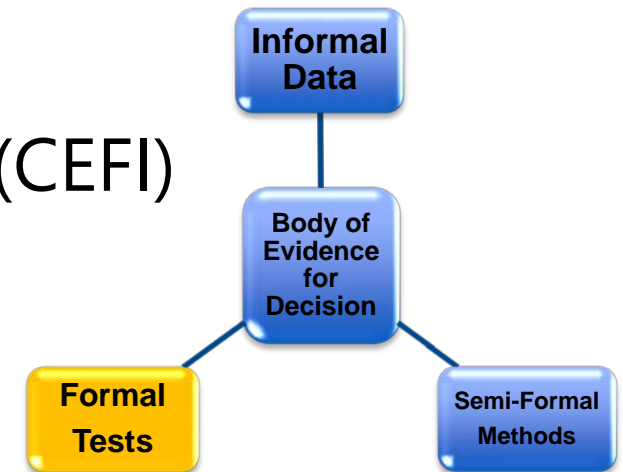
Assessment Suggestions: Social Emotional

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



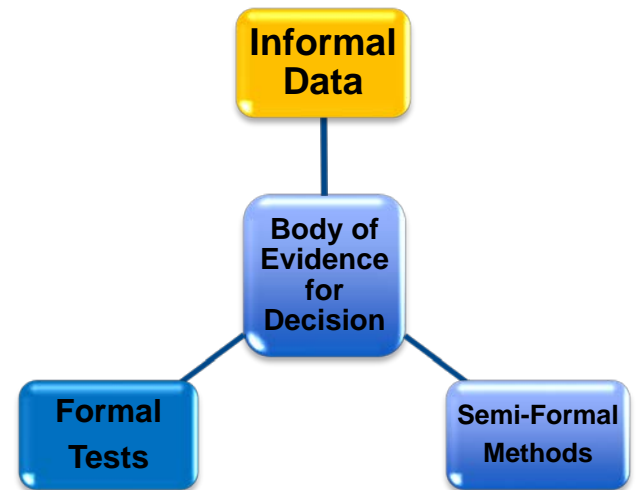
Formal Methods: Social Emotional

- (NEPSY-II): Social Perception Subtests
- Behavior Assessment System for Children, 3rd (BASC-3)
- Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function, 2nd Ed (BRIEF2):
- Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory (CEFI)
- Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)
- Test of Problem Solving, 2nd (TOPS-2)



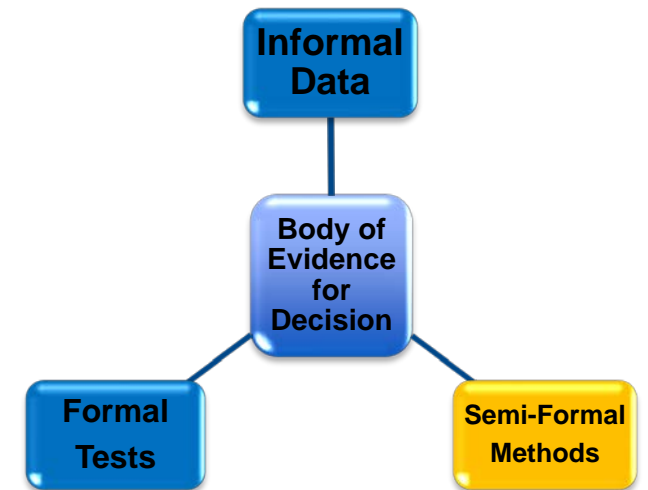
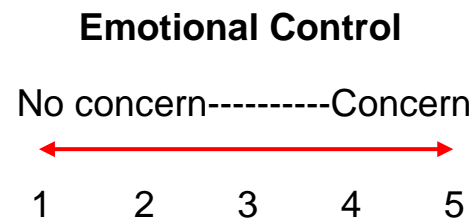
Informal Methods: Social Emotional

- Observations: (Interpersonal interactions)
- Records review (Discipline or office Referrals)
- Parent, teacher and student interviews
- Developmental history is key

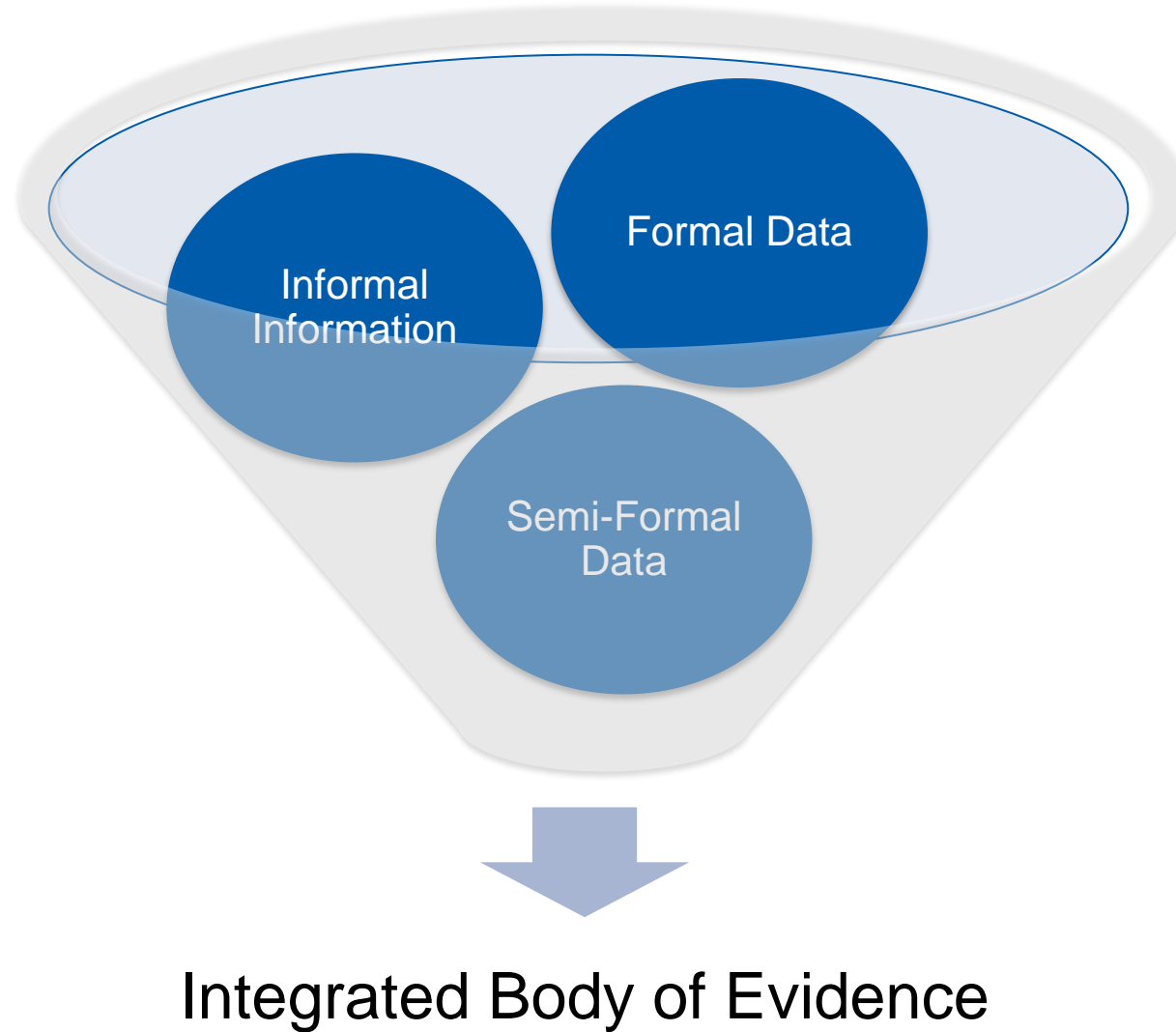


Semi-Formal: Social Emotional

- NEF (CDE)
- Commercial Rating Scales
- Self-Created Rating Scales



Evaluating Social-Emotional Difficulties



Summary: Higher Order Level: Social Emotional

- Higher order processes entail the full integration of all lower functions and the “application” of knowledge and skills in real world settings.
- Social-emotional difficulties typically impact cognitive processes needed for learning.
- Students that struggle with social and emotional skills often have difficulty with group work in the classroom and making friends.
- Informal observations and reports from various sources are very effective methods when evaluating a student’s social competency.





End of Module 4.1

Social-Emotional Competency



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