

---

## What About the 'R' in RIOT? : A Comprehensive Examination of School Psychologists' Record Review Processes

Hannah Luken  
*University of Southern Maine*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/thinking-matters-symposium>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Other Psychology Commons](#), [School Psychology Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

---

Luken, Hannah, "What About the 'R' in RIOT? : A Comprehensive Examination of School Psychologists' Record Review Processes" (2022). *Thinking Matters Symposium*. 21.  
[https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/thinking-matters-symposium/2022/poster\\_presentations/21](https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/thinking-matters-symposium/2022/poster_presentations/21)

This Poster Session is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Thinking Matters Symposium by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu](mailto:jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu).

## ◆ Abstract

This study examined record review practices for school psychologists throughout the United States. Survey measures gathered comprehensive information about record review practices, style, and time spent on this process. Results revealed that record reviews are not the most time-consuming piece of the RIOT method. Additionally, results revealed school psychologists' procedures for conducting the record review and the timing of the record review in their evaluation process.

## ◆ Introduction

Record reviews are a major component of psychoeducational evaluations. 92.6% of school psychologists in Canada indicated they always review a student's records when conducting a psychoeducational evaluation (Corkum et al., 2007). School psychologists use records to begin to understand the history of the student and their presenting problems (Walrath et al., 2014). Record reviews have been a rich source of information for school psychologists throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly when testing may not have been possible in person or remotely (Hass & Leung, 2020). Beyond the pandemic, record reviews are vital when assessing bilingual children, since there are not many standardized tests that appropriately capture their abilities (Hass & Carriere, 2014).

There is a gap in the literature regarding the "what?", "when?" and "how?" of record reviews. Research has not systematically determined what school psychologists examine during a record review, how much time is spent on it (compared to interviews, observations, and testing), and when in the evaluation process school psychologists conduct record reviews. With a lack of research about record reviews, there have not been any standardized, systematic procedures formulated specifically for this step of the psychoeducational evaluation process.

## ◆ Research Questions

### How do school psychologists conduct record reviews?

- When in the psychoeducational evaluation process do school psychologists conduct the record review?
- How much time (in minutes) is spent on the record review for initial evaluations and re-evaluations?
- What approach do school psychologists use when conducting record reviews?

## ◆ Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that school psychologists are not likely using standardized practices in conducting record reviews. In other words, it was hypothesized that school psychologists conduct record reviews in an unstructured way. With little information regarding the process of the record review itself, it is likely school psychologists are inconsistent in how they conduct record reviews. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a wide range of minutes spent on record reviews and timing of conducting the record review.

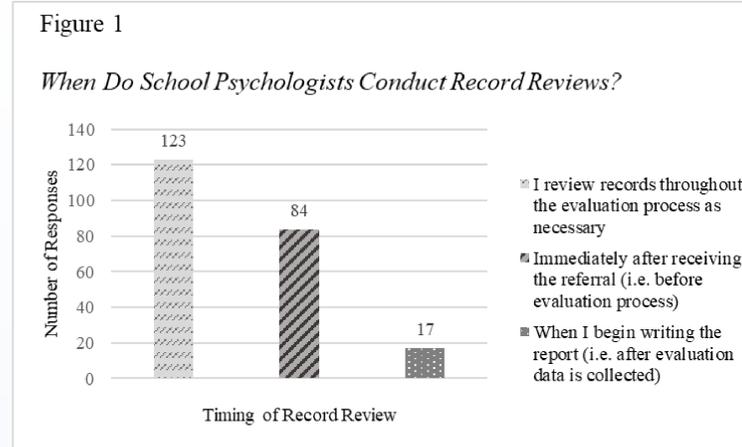
## ◆ Methods

This survey consisted of 28 items that were a mixture of multiple choice, constant sum, open-ended, and matrix table items. The author developed the survey using Qualtrics software, in collaboration with the dissertation advisor and committee, and was approved by an IRB before it was distributed to participants. Each state's school psychologist association (that allowed non-member survey distribution) was forwarded a recruitment email and survey link explaining the purposes, benefits, and risks of the study and asking the head of the state association to email the survey link to members. Also, a link to the survey was posted on various social media groups that target school psychologists as described in Benson et al. (2019). Additionally, to boost the response rate, the end of the survey included a link and message asking participants to forward the survey link to other school psychologists.

## ◆ Participants

The survey was sent to practicing school psychologists in the U.S. The number of participants ranged from 166 to 251 depending on the question in the survey. Respondents were disproportionately White (93%) females (90%), and most worked full-time (90%) with the largest percentage reporting 11-30 years of experience (47%). Most respondents worked in the New England area (40.3%). Additionally, the majority of participants reported specialist level (e.g., PsyS, Eds, SSP, CAS, CAGS) academic training (66%). The grade levels served by participants ranged from 8% reporting serving middle school only, to 36% reporting serving Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 20% of the sample reported serving elementary school only, 10% of the sample reported serving high school only, while 26% of the sample reported serving populations not listed as options (e.g., elementary and high school only, Pre-K only, etc.)

## ◆ Results



*Average Time Spent During RIOT Process for Initial Evaluations*

Stage of the RIOT process	Mean Time (In minutes)	Standard Deviation
Record Review	55.7	35.1
Interview	35.1	25.4
Observation	37.6	17.1
Testing	133.0	64.3

*Note. Data rounded to the nearest tenths place*

*Average Time Spent During RIOT Process for Re-Evaluations*

Stage of the RIOT process	Mean Time (In minutes)	Standard Deviation
Record Review	55.8	37.7
Interview	30.8	22.8
Observation	32.5	16.6
Testing	108.9	55.8

*Note. Data rounded to the nearest tenths place*



## ◆ Results

Most school psychologists reported conducting the record review throughout the evaluation process as necessary (55% of sample). 37.5% of the sample indicated they conduct the record review immediately after receiving the referral (i.e., before assessment, observation/etc.). 7.6% reported conducting the record review when starting to write the report.

Minutes spent on each stage of the RIOT method are similar between initial and reevaluations, with the exception of testing. More time is spent on testing for initial evaluations (M= 133 minutes) compared to reevaluations (M= 108.9 minutes). For both evaluations, the largest number of minutes are spent on testing, and the least amount of minutes are spent on interviews (initial: M= 35.1; reevaluation: M= 30.8).

The majority of participants (85.5%) reported sifting through records and selecting what seems relevant to the referral concern for their record review strategy, while 14.5% of participants reported using a systematic tool to select records for the review based on the referral concern.

## ◆ Discussion

Results revealed the record review process is ongoing for most school psychologists in this survey, and that most do not use a systematic tool (e.g., checklist) to conduct the record review. Rather, they sift through all the records available and select what seems relevant. Also, the majority of time for evaluations is spent on testing, followed by record reviews.

Further research may clarify school psychologists' reasoning processes utilized when deciding whether to include information obtained from the record review in the psychoeducational report.

## ◆ Limitations

- Limited number of responses.
- Sample was not completely representative.
- Information was limited to survey content.
- Many of the questions were not open ended, and therefore, data may not reflect all current practices.

## ◆ References

Benson, N. F., Floyd, R. G., Kranzler, J. H., Eckert, T. L., Fefer, S. A., & Morgan, G. B. (2019). Test use and assessment practices of school psychologists in the United States: Findings from the 2017 National Survey. *Journal of School Psychology, 72*, 29-48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2018.12.004>

Corkum, P., French, F., & Dorey, H. (2007). School psychology in Nova Scotia: A survey of current practices and preferred future roles. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 22*(1), 108-120. <https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus.proxy01.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/0829573507301121>

Hass, M., & Carriere, J. A. (2014). *Writing useful, accessible, and legally defensible psychoeducational reports*. Hoboken: Wiley.

Hass, M. R., & Leung, B. P. (2020). When You Can't RIOT, RIO: Tele-assessment for School Psychologists. *Contemporary School Psychology, 1-7*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-020-00326-5>

Walrath, R., Willis, J.O., & Dumont, R. (2014). Best Practices in Writing Assessment Reports. In Harrison, P. L. & Thomas, A., *Best Practices in School Psychology: Data-Based and Collaborative Decision Making* (pp. 433-445). National Association of School Psychologists.