

Identification of Children with Specific Learning Disabilities



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Disadvantages of Discrepancy Model

Clinicians using the same discrepancy formula, but different tests, may arrive at different classifications.

Using discrepancy formulas without regard for the absolute level of the child's performance may result in serious misinterpretations and misclassifications.

Jerome M. Sattler, Oct.2012

Disadvantages of Discrepancy Model

Discrepancy formulas are based on the assumption that the tests used to evaluate a child's intelligence and achievement measure independent constructs, when in fact achievement and intelligence tests measure similar constructs (e.g., vocabulary, mathematics, factual information).

Disadvantages of Discrepancy Model

Discrepancy formulas fail to identify children with learning disabilities who show no discrepancy between achievement and intelligence test scores.

Discrepancy formulas have never been empirically validated.

The discrepancy formula approach prevents children from receiving services during their early school years.

Reason for Change

- Current system - process above results.
- Current system - wait to fail.
- Culture of compliance; focus on compliance and bureaucratic imperatives not academic achievement.
- Identification methods lack validity.
- “...the IQ-achievement discrepancy does not reliably distinguish between disabled and non-disabled readers...children who were found to be difficult [and easy] to remediate...and it does not predict response to remediation.” Velutino et al., 2000)

Federal SLD Criteria Made Easy

Putting It Together Overview

Three ✓s Needed to Determine SLD

§300.309(a)(1)

Underachievement for
age or on State approved
grade-level standards

§300.309(a)(2)

(i) RtI

or

(ii) PSW

§300.309(a)(3)

Exclusionary Factors

1 & 2 are not primarily
the result of visual,
hearing, or motor
disability, intellectual
disability, emotional
disability, cultural factors,
environmental, economic
disadvantage or Limited
English proficiency



and



and



Referral Form page 3:
ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, AND/OR
ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Use this checklist:

1. To determine factors impacting a student's learning and therefore **excluding him/her from being identified** as a student with a disability.
2. To determine whether or not a student needs to be administered a **non-traditional intelligence test** if there is environmental, language, cultural, and/or economic concerns checked.
3. To consider if there has been a **lack of appropriate** instruction in reading and/or math.

Referral Form, page 4 - FOR IEP TEAM USE ONLY

The answer to each question listed should be YES if the IEP Team decides to accept the referral for further evaluation.

1. Does the data support that the reason for referral has a direct impact on the student's educational performance, or for a preschool child, participation in age appropriate activities? [] Yes [] No
2. Does the data support the severity of the reason for referral?
[] Yes [] No
3. Does the data support the duration of the reason for referral?
[] Yes [] No
4. Does the data support the valid implementation of intervention(s) for the referral concern(s) (e.g., appropriate target behavior, relationship of intervention to target behavior, duration of intervention, integrity of implementation, data collection procedures)? [] Yes [] No [] NA

Referral Form, page 4 - FOR IEP TEAM USE ONLY

5. Does the **data support** the ineffectiveness of the intervention(s) for the referral concern(s)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

6. Does the **data include multiple sources** of information about the reason for referral?

☐ Yes ☐ No


Questions 5. and 6. apply only to those referrals that require intervention strategies.

Check NA if intervention strategies were waived.

Definition of Specific Learning Disability


Learning disability or specific learning disability?

Defined at §300.8(c)(10) as...

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written... 


Definition of Specific Learning Disability

...May manifest itself in the imperfect ability to:

- listen
- think
- speak
- read
- write
- spell *or*
- do mathematical calculations... 

Definition of Specific Learning Disability

...including conditions such as:

- perceptual disabilities
- brain injury
- minimal brain dysfunction
- dyslexia *and*
- developmental aphasia 

Definition of Specific Learning Disability

Does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of:

- visual, hearing, or motor disabilities
- mental retardation
- emotional disturbance *or*
- of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

Determining SLD

IDEA includes additional procedures
for determining SLD.

§300.307

Where shall we begin?



A Close Look at §300.307

- ❑ State must adopt criteria* for determining whether a child has an SLD as defined in IDEA



- ❑ Public agencies must use State criteria in determining whether a child has an SLD

* *Consistent with §300.309 of Part B*

A Close Look at §300.307

New

State criteria may **not** require use of severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has an SLD.



A Close Look at §300.307

New

State criteria must permit use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention.



A Close Look at §300.307

State criteria may permit use of other alternative research-based procedures.

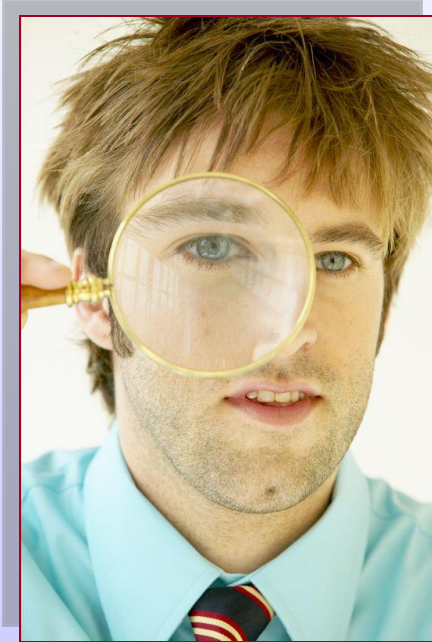


New

Group Determining SLD

Determination of SLD is made by child's parents and a team of qualified professionals, which must include:

- ❑ Child's regular teacher



If child does not have a regular teacher:

A regular classroom teacher qualified to teach a child of his or her age

If child is less than school age:

An individual qualified by SEA to teach a child of his or her age

and →

Group Determining SLD



- ❑ At least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children...

Such as...

- ✓ school psychologist
- ✓ speech-language pathologist
- ✓ remedial reading teacher

Determining SLD

Factors involved:

❑ Child's achievement levels in 1 (or more) of 8 specified areas:

- ✓ Oral expression
- ✓ Listening comprehension
- ✓ Written expression
- ✓ Basic reading skill
- ✓ Reading fluency skills
- ✓ Reading comprehension
- ✓ Math calculation
- ✓ Math problem solving



and...



Determining SLD

- ❑ Child's progress in 1 (or more) of these 8 areas is not sufficient to meet age or State-approved grade level standards when his or her response to scientific, research-based intervention is part of determination process

- or* ❑ Child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both:

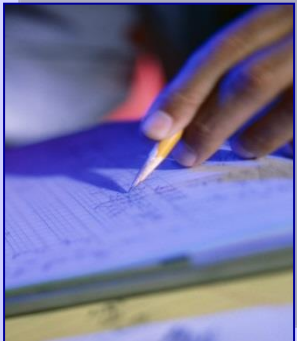
Relative to:

age

State-approved grade level standards, or
intellectual development

...that group determines is relevant
to identification of SLD

and...



Determining SLD

❑ Group determines that its findings are not primarily the result of:

- ✓ Visual, hearing, or motor disability
- ✓ Mental retardation
- ✓ Emotional disturbance
- ✓ Cultural factors
- ✓ Environmental or economic disadvantage
- or* ✓ Limited English proficiency



“Either / Or / And”— Putting It Together

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and



and



Determining SLD

Purpose:

To ensure child's underachievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math

Group must consider data in 2 areas:

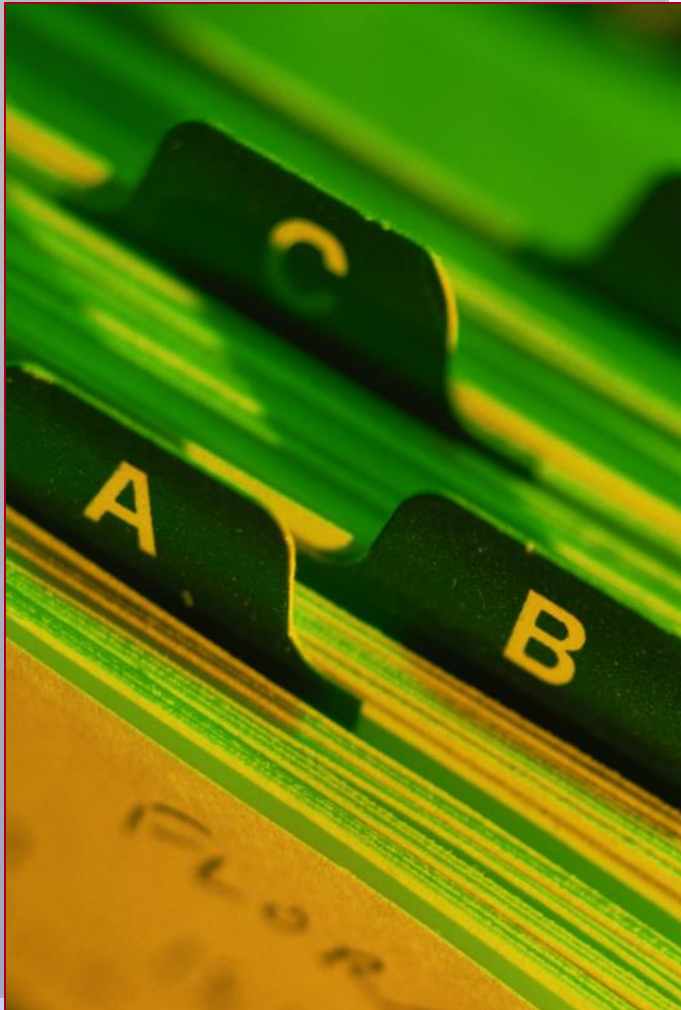
1.

Data showing that **child was provided appropriate instruction** in regular education settings, delivered by qualified personnel, before (or as part of) referral process

and...



Determining SLD



2. Data-based documentation that child's achievement was repeatedly assessed at reasonable intervals

This documentation:

- ✓ Reflects formal assessment of student progress during instruction
- ✓ Was provided to the child's parents

Determining SLD

Public agency must promptly request parent consent for evaluation:

- ❑ Whenever child is referred for evaluation
- ❑ If, before referral for evaluation, child has not made adequate progress...
 - ✓ after appropriate period of time
 - ✓ when provided appropriate instruction by qualified personnel

Observation in SLD Determination

Public agency must ensure:



- ❑ Child is observed in his or her learning environment
(including the regular classroom setting)
- ✓ to document child's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty

Observation in SLD Determination

Group must decide whether to:

- ☐ Use information from observation done before child was referred for an evaluation



- ✓ routine classroom instruction
- ✓ monitoring of child's performance

or

- ☐ Have at least one group member conduct observation after child has been referred for evaluation and parental consent



- ✓ child's academic performance in regular classroom

Observation in SLD Determination

Observation of child **less than school age** or **out of school**:

- ❑ Group member must observe child in environment appropriate for a child of that age



Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

For a child suspected of having SLD, documentation of determination of eligibility must contain a **statement of 7 elements**:

1. Whether child has a specific learning disability
2. Basis for making the determination*



and...



-
- * ...including assurance that qualified professionals and child's parent determined child was a "child with a disability" and his or her educational needs

Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

3. Relevant behavior (*if any*) noted during observation of child and relationship of that behavior to child's academic functioning
4. Educationally relevant medical findings (*if any*)



and...



Documenting the Determination of Eligibility



5. Whether child does not achieve adequately:

- ✓ for the child's age, or
- ✓ to meet State-approved grade-level standards*

and...



* Consistent with §300.309(a)(1)

Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

5. *Continued...*

and

Child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State grade-level standards **

or

Child exhibits pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State grade-level standards or intellectual development ***

** Consistent with §300.309(a)(2)(i)

*** Consistent with §300.309(a)(2)(ii)

and...



Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

6. What the group has determined concerning **effects** on the child's achievement level of—

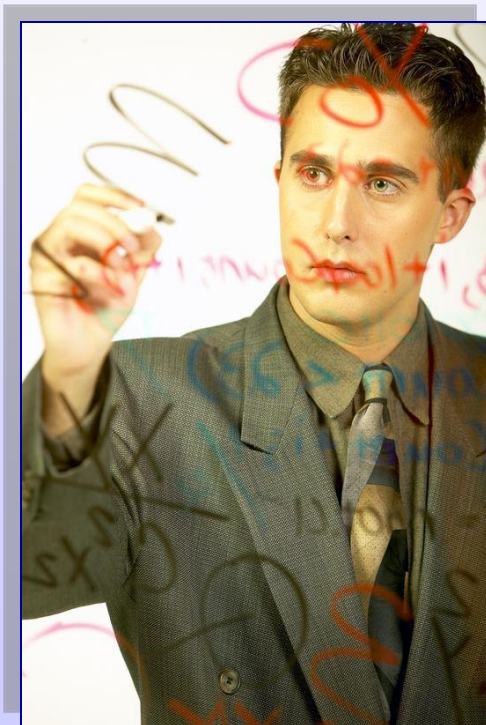
- ✓ Visual, hearing, or motor disability
- ✓ Mental retardation
- ✓ Emotional disturbance
- ✓ Cultural factors
- ✓ Environmental or economic disadvantage
- or ✓ Limited English proficiency

and...



Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

7. If child has participated in a process assessing his or her response to scientific, research-based intervention—



- ✓ instructional strategies used and student-centered data collected; and
- ✓ documentation that child's parents were notified about 3 things, as follows...

Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

→ ...that child's parents were notified about—

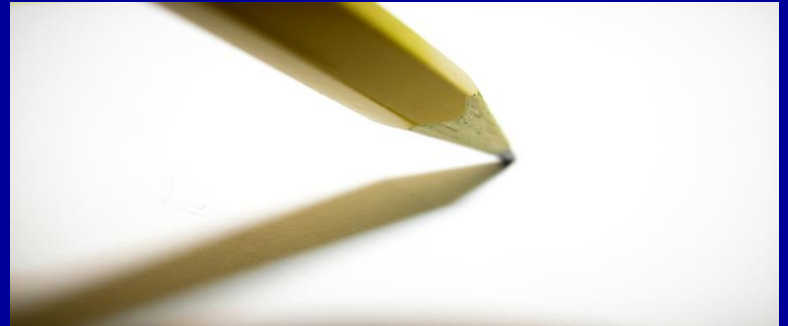
- ✓ State's policies regarding amount and nature of student performance data that would be collected and general education services that would be provided
- ✓ Strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning
- and* ✓ Parents' right to request an evaluation

Documenting the Determination of Eligibility

Each member of group must certify in writing whether report reflects the member's conclusion

If report does not:

Member must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusions



Roundup Time!



Questions for ALSDE/SES?

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334-353-1191

President's Message



“I would hope that the goal here is to *expand* the methods of assessment available to the practitioner and not to limit them. It seems possible that these two very valuable approaches can be utilized along a *continuum* of collecting information about a child that would culminate in a very clear and *comprehensive* evaluation that would be of value to all.” Huff, L. (2005, February). President's Message. *NASP Communique*, 33, 2-3.