

Differentiating Intellectual Disability (ID), General Learning Difficulty (GLD) and a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Instructions: This information is intended to guide IEP Teams and should be considered along with the team's knowledge of the student as well as assessment data. Decisions about assessment and eligibility should not be based solely on this document.

Characteristics

<i>Intellectual Disability (ID)</i>	<i>General Learning Difficulty (GLD)</i>	<i>Specific Learning Disability (SLD)</i>
Little variation in cognitive ability and processing profile	Little to moderate variation in cognitive ability and processing profile	Moderate to high (or statistically significant) variation in cognitive ability and processing profile
All or nearly all cognitive areas 70 standard score and below	May have normative deficits in one or more cognitive and academic areas	Normative deficits in specific cognitive abilities and processes; Normative deficits in specific academic area(s); Empirical or ecologically valid relationship between cognitive and academic deficits
Possible relative strengths in one or more processes or abilities that are not highly related to general intelligence such as phonemic awareness, simple clerical-type tasks or social skills	May have <i>relative</i> strengths in one or more processes or abilities	Intact functioning in many processes and abilities and possible normative cognitive or academic strengths
Deficits (70 standard score and below) in adaptive behavior, little variation in performance across adaptive behavior domains	May have one or more deficits in adaptive behavior (but not in all domains)	Minimal to no deficits in adaptive behavior

Etiology

<i>Intellectual Disability (ID)</i>	<i>General Learning Difficulty (GLD)</i>	<i>Specific Learning Disability (SLD)</i>
Normative cognitive deficits are explained by genetic conditions; problems during pregnancy; problems at birth; problems after birth	Underlying causes of general low average cognitive and academic abilities are typically not known	SLD has a neurobiological basis. The <i>pattern of generally average or better overall cognitive ability and below average performance in related cognitive and academic areas</i> cannot be explained by exclusionary factors (e.g., poor instruction; social/emotional factors; psychological disturbance; cultural or language differences. Environmental deprivation, etc.), although one or more of these factors may contribute to weakened academic performance

Response to Instruction/Multi-tiered Systems of Support/Intervention and Programming

<i>Intellectual Disability (ID)</i>	<i>General Learning Difficulty (GLD)</i>	<i>Specific Learning Disability (SLD)</i>
Progress Monitoring (or other performance indicators) demonstrates very slow rate of response/learning; will not meet typical grade level benchmarks in any academic area	Progress Monitoring (or other performance indicators) demonstrates slow rate of response/learning; may meet typical grade level benchmarks in some, but not all, academic areas	Following a comprehensive evaluation and resultant provision of tailored interventions, accommodations, compensatory strategies, and/or modifications, Progress Monitoring (or other performance indicators) demonstrates grade peers; may approximate or meet typical grade level benchmarks in certain areas
Special Education Services	Tier II and Tier III interventions in General Education and Remedial Programs	Special Education Services; Remedial Programs; General Education Inclusion (Tier II and Tier III Interventions)
<i>Instructional Emphasis:</i> Self-Help Skills; Functional Academics; Social Skills; Self-Esteem	<i>Instructional Emphasis:</i> Basic Academics; Vocational Training; Accommodations; Compensatory Strategies; Social Skills and Self-Esteem	<i>Instructional Emphasis:</i> Grade Level Performance; College Preparation; Accommodations; Compensatory Strategies; Self-Esteem; Self-Advocacy; Assistive Technology

Adapted from: Flanagan, D.P., Ortiz, S.O. & Afonso, V.C. (2013). *Essentials of Cross-Battery Assessment*, (3rd ed). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.