

Chapter 5:

Additional Procedures for Specific Learning Disabilities

In this chapter you will -

- learn the criteria required to determine whether a child has a specific learning disability
- learn how all Illinois districts may use response to scientific, research-based interventions or a multi-tiered system of supports as part of the special education evaluation process to determine if a student is eligible for services due to a specific learning disability

Overview

IDEA 2004 expanded the specific learning disability (SLD) determination to require states to adopt criteria that -

- do not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability
- must permit school districts to use an educational process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based instructional interventions
- may permit the use of other alternative evidence-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

Schools in Illinois are required to implement the use of a process that determines how the child responds to evidence-based interventions as part of the evaluation procedure.

SLD may manifest itself in:

- » listening comprehension
- » oral expression
- » word reading
- » reading fluency
- » reading comprehension
- » written expression
- » mathematics problem-solving or calculations

SLD can include dyslexia. Dyslexia is a reading or language-based learning disability that makes it difficult to read, write, and/or spell. Young children may have trouble with the following:

- recognizing letters
- matching letters to sounds
- blending sounds into speech
- pronouncing words (for example, saying “mawn lower” instead of “lawn mower”)
- learning and correctly using new vocabulary words
- learning the alphabet, numbers, and days of the week or similar common work sequences
- rhyming

SLD does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of -

- » visual, hearing, or motor disabilities
- » intellectual disability
- » emotional disturbance
- » environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

IEP teams cannot determine that a child has an SLD if the child’s learning problems primarily result from -

- » lack of appropriate instruction in reading
- » lack of appropriate instruction in math
- » limited English proficiency

Special Education Eligibility Considerations

Within a scientific, research-based intervention process, such as MTSS or RTI, school teams are able to use student progress monitoring data collected at each tier to document a student’s response to interventions as part of the special education evaluation process. Evaluation to determine special education eligibility may occur at any

Worth a Look

ISBE’s Department of Special Education Services published a specific resource, *The Dyslexia Guide: A Handbook for Parents, Educators, and Students* in July of 2019 at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Dyslexia-Handbook.pdf>

tier, although it typically occurs within Tier 3 when a student either -

- Does not respond to the most intensive interventions
or
- Responds to the interventions but is not able to maintain his or her performance if the intensity level is decreased or the interventions are faded.

It is also important to note that a parent may request a special education evaluation at any point during the intervention process. The use of the MTSS/RTI process cannot delay the evaluation, if one is needed. The district must fully consider the parents' request and decide whether or not to conduct the evaluation. The district must then notify the parents in writing of its decision and the reasons for that decision.

Worth a Look

The procedures for addressing eligibility under the category of SLD can be found at 23 IAC 226.130.

State special education regulations require school districts to use an MTSS/RTI process as part of the special education evaluation process when a specific learning disability (SLD) is suspected. After using an MTSS/RTI process for this purpose, a district may also, but is not required to, use a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement as part of the evaluation process for determining whether a child has an SLD. However, they are not able to use severe discrepancy alone to determine eligibility.

ISBE recognizes that some districts are currently further along in the implementation of MTSS/RTI and may have already implemented this process. Additionally, the MTSS/RTI process may be used as part of the evaluation process for students considered for eligibility in other disability areas.