EVALUATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (SLD)

A student with a learning disability is one who does not achieve adequately for the student's age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, or mathematics problem solving when provided appropriate instruction, as indicated by performance on multiple measures such as in-class tests; grade average over time (e.g. six weeks, semester); norm- or criterion-referenced tests; statewide assessments; or a process based on the student's response to evidence-based intervention; and exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both relative to age, grade-level standards, or intellectual ability, as indicated by significant variance among specific areas of cognitive function, such as working memory and verbal comprehension, or between specific areas of cognitive function and academic achievement.

19 Texas Administrative Code § 89.1040 (c)(9)(B)

Initial Referrals

1. Review Records

RTI data, attendance, discipline, nurse or health information, grades over time, benchmark, state assessment data to include early literacy K, 1 & 2 assessment (TRPI, DIBBLS, ISTATION, MAP, PAPI, PALS, WJIII-DIAGNOSTIC READING BATTERY, etc) or history of STAAR. Texas middle school diagnostic reading assessment 7th grade (ISTATION, RAPS 360, TMFSA, WJIII-DRB).

Determine whether the child does not achieve adequately for his/her age or meet state-approved grade-level standards when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child’s age or state approved grade level standards.

2. Interview the teacher or parent to answer any questions about any gaps or conflicting information found in the records.

3. Observe the child by at least one team member, looking for academic behavior, such as, do they initiate task, do they ask for assistance appropriately, do they keep up with the pace of the class, do they need directions repeated or clarified, does the student need additional direct instruction. Describing the child’s academic performance in the regular classroom setting.

Or, in the case of a child in private school, by a team member in an academic environment appropriate for the child of that age.
4. **Test to determine** if the student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weakness in performance, achievement, or both, (processing deficit) relative to age, grade-level standards, or intellectual ability, as indicated by significant variance among specific areas of cognitive function.

Areas of cognitive functioning include: crystallized knowledge, fluid reasoning, short term/working memory, visual processing, long-term retrieval, auditory processing, and processing speed.

Areas of academics include: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving.

**Shady 80s (Borderline scores)**

Professional judgement should be used in conjunction with auxiliary information when interpreting standard scores in the range of 84-89. Determining strengths and weakness should be made on an individual basis and supported with supplemental data such as other student response data, teacher report, or observations.

**There are several methods in determining the educational condition of specific learning disability, such as XBASS, C-SEP, PASS Theory, or other models. It is the LEAs responsibility to research, determine and adopt the best method to be used consistently throughout the LEA. This decision should be made with input from assessment personnel and reviewed periodically.**

Initial referrals for ALL grade levels:
When evaluating students for the first time, that are suspected to be SLD, give an appropriate cognitive test and an achievement test.

To test achievement, the most commonly used tests are the WIAT-III, KTEA-II Woodcock-Johnson IV. While these are the most regularly used tests, the diagnostician is not limited to these choices. In many cases, the most appropriate cognitive test would be a Wechsler battery, WJ-IV, KABC II, DAS-II or Stanford-Binet-5. A full scale IQ score is recommended, even when considering a specific learning disability.

In identifying SLD the following factors are considered:

- Is there an academic deficit in relation to same age/grade level peers?
- Is there a significant cognitive deficit?
- Have extraneous factors been ruled out as primary causes for the academic and cognitive deficits?
- Is there empirical and logical links between the cognitive disorder and area of academic deficit?
- Does the student have an otherwise well-developed profile of cognitive abilities?
- Have the deficits caused a significant interference with academic performance?

This information can be answered in paragraph form, bulleted questions or other methods available to the report writer.

Recommendations for instruction should be linked to the deficits found in formal assessment. It is suggested that the teachers give input as to what has been tried and/or successful in the classroom.

In addition to the Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIE) report, a Multidisciplinary Disability Report (MDT) is required for SLD students. Membership must include an evaluation person, and a regular education teacher who teaches the student, or if the student does not have a regular education teacher, a teacher who is qualified to teach such a student. **In addition, note that the person signing for general education should be currently functioning as a general education teacher. It is not correct to have a person sign for general education that is certified to teach but who is currently filling a different position such as counselor.

Reevaluations:
LEA needs to complete a REED to plan evaluation. Best practice, a minimum of two cohesive evaluations should be completed before the review of existing evaluation data determines that no formal/informal assessment is needed. If further assessment is needed, LEA needs to send notice of FIE and obtain consent for FIE.

When completing a review of existing evaluation data, the group of qualified professional may see a need for specific areas of assessment to determine the child’s needs in the area(s) of academics, adaptive behavior, social behavior, transitional /vocational or other needs.

When further assessment is needed typically there are two options.

A. Full reevaluation –follow same steps as initial evaluations procedures
B. Focused assessment- consider if the child has had 2 cohesive evaluations. If focused assessment is still determined appropriate, assess previous cognitive and achievement deficit areas.

1. Retest only the cognitive and achievement areas the student demonstrated deficits in the previous evaluation.

2. If deficits DO continue to exist in these areas, and educational data supports a deficit in these areas, the student can continue with the SLD educational condition in these areas.

3. If deficits DO NOT exist in these areas and the student does not demonstrate a need for special education, the student may be eligible to be dismissed. If the student IS demonstrating educational need for special education and does not qualify in the same areas, a complete reevaluation may need to be completed.

4. Complete the Multidisciplinary Disability Report for SLD.