

Procedures for Determination of Specific Learning Disabilities

Parents can help children with learning disabilities achieve by encouraging their strengths, knowing their weaknesses, understanding the educational system, working with professionals and learning about strategies for dealing with specific difficulties.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 included important changes in the approaches schools use to determine specific learning disabilities. Based on current research, Wayne County Schools are using new methods of assessment and instruction to prevent learning deficits. When analyzing a student's performance and achievement for patterns of strengths and weaknesses, the consistencies among cognitive and academic skills are used to identify specific learning disabilities. The Gibraltar School District, following the Wayne County Committee for Specific Learning Disabilities Guidance Document (2009), utilizes both Response to Intervention (RtI) AND Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) models in an effort to look for consistencies and inconsistencies among cognitive and academic skills.

Response to Intervention

With the Response to Intervention (RtI) method, the student is provided with explicit evidence-based interventions. Student progress is carefully measured and the instructional interventions are adjusted to teach the skills necessary for the student to make sufficient progress toward age or grade level standards. The team uses the student's response to the interventions and the pattern of strengths and weaknesses to determine whether or not the student demonstrates a specific learning disability.

Patterns of Strength and Weakness

The Patterns of Strength and Weakness method requires an extensive analysis of the student's patterns of strengths and weaknesses in performance or achievement or both when compared to age, State approved grade level standards or intellectual development using appropriate assessments.

Out with the Old: The Severe Discrepancy Approach

The former method of comparing IQ to achievement has been called the "Wait to Fail" model because, by the time students show a "severe discrepancy", they have experienced so much failure in school, it is harder to intervene and help them improve.

Each Specific Learning Disability (SLD) evaluation shall include a school psychologist. The Gibraltar School District requires that a school psychologist serve as a member of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET).

The Wayne County Model for the Identification of Specific Learning Disability

The Gibraltar School District, with the guidance of the Wayne County Committee for Specific Learning Disabilities, incorporates RtI and PSW Wayne County Models in its determination of specific learning disabilities.

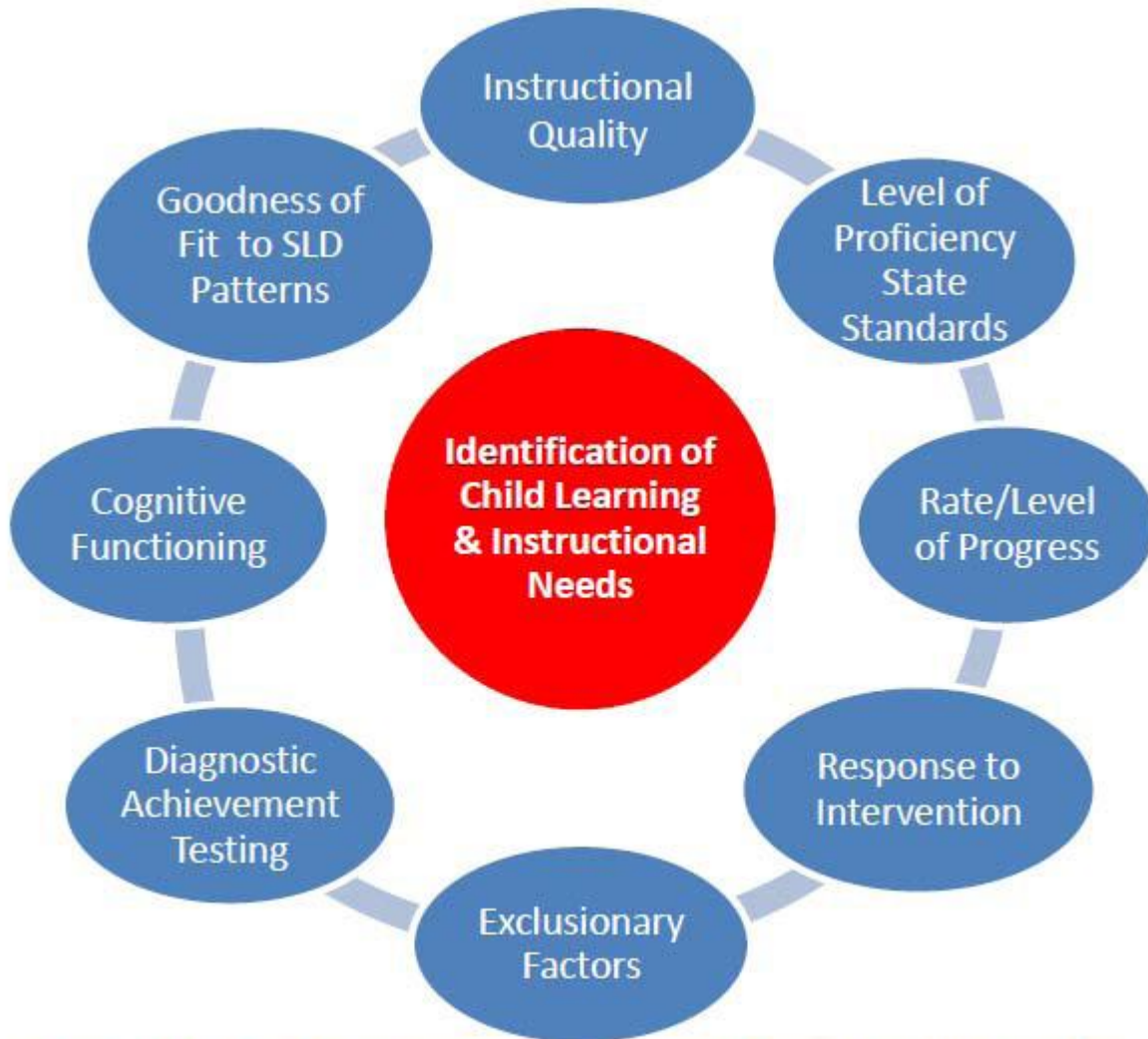


Figure 1. The Wayne County process model of specific learning disability eligibility.

The full and individual evaluation is a process of data collection that includes multiple methods of assessing student performance with input from parents, teachers, instructional specialists, and school psychologists.

The purpose of the evaluation is to surround the student of concern with the best information possible to make appropriate recommendations as to the student's eligibility for special education and, more importantly, educationally relevant recommendations for instructional strategies, supports and services.

Specific Learning Disability. A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
Disorders not included. The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor impairment, of cognitive impairment, of emotional

impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Limited English Proficiency, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Achievement Areas. When provided appropriate learning experiences, the child does not achieve adequately for age or State approved standards in one or more of the following areas: Basic Reading; Reading Fluency; Reading Comprehension; Written Expression; Math Calculation; Math Reasoning; Oral Expression; Listening Comprehension.

**For additional information please contact Tom Arkwright, Director of Special Education at 734-379-6360 or visit the Wayne RESA website at:

<http://www.resa.net/services/spedcompliance/learningdisabilities>