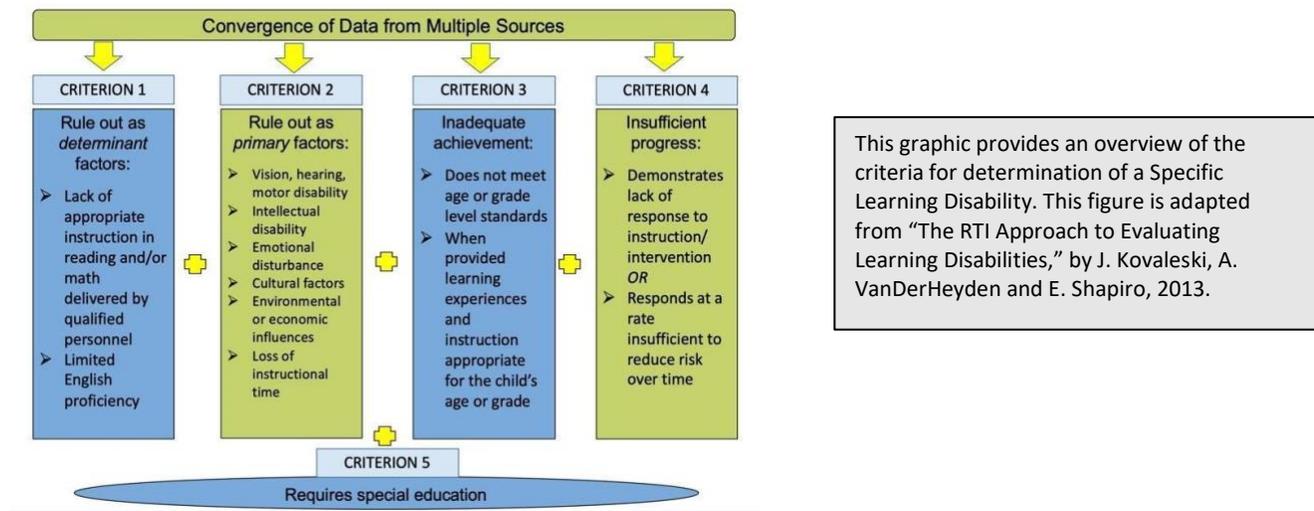


# SLD POLICY FACT SHEET #3 – EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The [NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities](#) became fully effective July 1, 2020, regarding the definition, evaluation and identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). The regulations for IDEA 2004 define a comprehensive evaluation as a “data-gathering process.” This fact sheet, the [third in a series](#), addresses the requirement for multiple sources of educational assessment data, including the required data sources measuring a student’s academic *performance*.



Effective July 1, 2020:

- A psychological evaluation<sup>1</sup>, which often includes measures of intellectual ability, as a *requirement* for a comprehensive evaluation for SLD is *removed* from policy.
- The use of cognitive discrepancy formulas of any type for the purposes of determining eligibility for SLD is *prohibited*.
- The use of cognitive assessments that lead to important instructional decisions is *permitted*.
- Multiple sources of educational data, including formal and/or informal diagnostic data, are *required*.

1503-2.5 (d)(11)(i)(I) Multiple sources of educational assessment data, which must include diagnostic and/or standardized norm-referenced measures of achievement (related to the area(s) of concern) and data from progress monitoring. These measures must include relevant comparisons to state and/or national norms, age/grade level peers, and appropriate intervention group comparisons. Additional measures may include common formative assessments, universal screening, interim/benchmark assessments and outcome assessments.

## Multiple Sources of Data

SLD eligibility decisions should never be based on a single data point, whether a single test or the documentation of a single criterion. The use of multiple data points allows for greater sensitivity, assessment of a full range of academic skills and the collection of data that informs future academic interventions (Fletcher and Miciak, 2019). Teams should continually ask if the value of the information acquired from assessments merits the time spent administering such tests. Fletcher and Miciak (2019) recommend that the amount of testing administered as part of the evaluation process be limited to only those that inform future intervention.

<sup>1</sup>Definition of a psychological evaluation can be found at NC 1500-2.14(b)(15)

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In this light, the utility of an intellectual evaluation is diminished. “The research is mixed on the value of cognitive data to identify an SLD and help make educational decisions, which is at the core of models that identify patterns of strengths and weaknesses across cognitive domains. Some proponents believe that cognitive data can provide meaningful, necessary feedback in addition to instructional response data to make instructional decisions. However, research has not supported that claim, and even some supporters of including cognitive assessments in the evaluation process acknowledge that the evidence is limited and requires an inferential leap (NCLD White Paper, 2020).”

### Diagnostic Assessments and Processes

Diagnostic assessments and processes are used to assist in developing hypotheses about why a problem is occurring and to identify a student’s specific skill deficits and strengths **in order to determine the instructional focus and to inform decisions about how to adapt and individualize interventions** (NC 1500-2.8). Diagnostic assessments and processes may include, but are not limited to, formal and/or informal direct skill assessments, interviews and analysis of student work. Some of these may be available as existing data for the IEP team to consider if schools are implementing screening, progress monitoring and outcome assessments in a reliable and valid way. If not available, this information may need to be collected and examined as part of the comprehensive evaluation to answer specific questions that inform the design and delivery of effective instruction.

### Standardized Norm-referenced Measures of Achievement

Standardized norm-referenced measures of achievement can provide valuable information about the child’s current functioning in all areas of suspected difficulty. When possible, tests selected should have the same normative basis (Fletcher and Miciak, 2019). These assessments ensure that low achievement is directly measured with tests of high reliability and validity and also provides an assessment that, when combined with assessments of instructional response, provides multiple indicators for determining LDs (Fletcher et al, 2019).



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### References and Resources

Fletcher, J., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. (2019). Learning Disabilities from Identification to Intervention. New York, New York: Guilford Press

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2020). NCLD White Paper- Evaluation for Specific Learning Disabilities: Allowable Methods of Identification & Their Implications. Retrieved from: <https://www.nclld.org/get-involved/understand-the-issues/sld-eligibility-under-idea-resources-to-improve-practice-policy>

Texas Center for Learning Disabilities. (2019). The Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities: A Summary of Research on Best Practices. Retrieved from: <https://www.texasldcenter.org/external-resources/resource/the-identification-of-specific-learning-disabilities-a-summary-of-research->

**IEP teams are encouraged to understand diagnostic and comprehensive assessment guidelines within the context of an educational assessment.**

**For additional information, contact the [NC Department of Public Instruction Exceptional Children Division](#)**

For additional information regarding MTSS, contact your PSU’s MTSS Coordinator or building level system of support team.