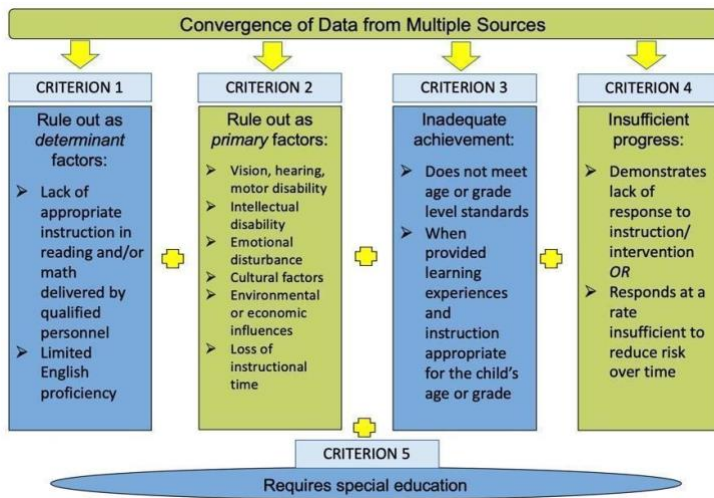


SLD FACT SHEET #5 - INADEQUATE ACHIEVEMENT

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). This fact sheet, the fifth in a [series](#), addresses Criterion 3, inadequate achievement.



This graphic provides an overview of the criteria for determination of a Specific Learning Disability. This figure is adapted from "The RTI Approach to Evaluating Learning Disabilities," by J. Kovalski, A. VanDerHeyden and E. Shapiro, 2013.

This criterion provides evidence that the student does not achieve adequately for the age or grade-level standards in which the child is enrolled in one or more of the following areas when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or state-approved grade-level standards:

1. Basic reading skills;
2. Reading fluency skills;
3. Reading comprehension;
4. Written expression;
5. Mathematics calculation;
6. Mathematics problem solving;
7. Listening comprehension; or
8. Oral expression.

While inadequate achievement has long been associated with the identification of Specific Learning Disabilities, low achievement alone is not a marker for SLD nor are all students with low achievement students with an SLD. **Continued inadequate achievement within the context of effective instruction and intervention is a powerful marker of an SLD.** Thus, this criterion cannot be considered in isolation and must be considered alongside the assurance of appropriate instruction and intervention delivered by qualified personnel (Criterion 1) and data indicating insufficient rates of progress (Criterion 4).

While the criterion for inadequate achievement was included in previous policy, the conclusion of "unexpected" was often overshadowed by comparison to an intellectual score, rather than the larger context of a student's responsiveness to quality instruction and intervention. However, existing IDEA, previous NC policy, and current NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities *all* specify that inadequate achievement is established when the student is "provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or state-approved grade-level standards." This requirement connects us directly back to a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) which assures a system of high-quality core instruction and evidence-based intervention. The [Adequate Instruction Decision Guidelines](#) is a tool that can support LEAs and school teams in evaluating the quality of curriculum and instructional practices within their school system and school buildings.

SLD FACT SHEET #5 - INADEQUATE ACHIEVEMENT

Determining Extent of Inadequate Achievement

To determine the gap between the student's current performance and age- or grade-level state standards, existing data from multiple sources may be available to the IEP team. According to NC policies NC 1503-2.5(d)(11)(i)(I), these data *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. These data must also be relevant to the area(s) of concern (e.g., reading, math, writing, listening, oral language).

Current recommendations warn professionals of the implications that result in applying rigid cut scores to determine an SLD. A determination of inadequate achievement through the use of multiple data sources rather than through cut points associated with single test scores increases a team's ability to confidently establish that the inadequate achievement is "unexpected" and provides a more accurate description of the student's current levels of performance. Rigid cut scores or criteria that could inadvertently become an isolated determinate factor runs contrary to the IDEA. The NC Department of Public Instruction Exceptional Children Division advises Public School Units (PSUs) to avoid any practice that may result in decision-making heavily weighted in data derived from single sources.

In order to address the continuum of achievement and measurement error, key concepts that IEP teams should ensure are understood and addressed when establishing decision rules specific to inadequate achievement are as follows:

- Decision-making should reflect multiple sources of educationally relevant data.
- The use of confidence intervals is important to consider in order to account for measurement error that exists with current tests.



"Regardless of the assessment tools used, confidence intervals should be considered to take into account the measurement error of the tests and to permit the expression of a range of scores, not a set cut-point. Use of confidence intervals is one approach to the problems of rigid cut-points that plagues LD" (RTI-based SLD Identification Toolkit).

Additional Resources

[Achievement Below Standard/RTI-based SLD Identification Toolkit](#)

[Adequate Instruction Decision Guidelines](#)

[SLD Data Sources by Criterion](#)

IEP teams are encouraged to understand the guidelines of inadequate achievement within the context of effective instruction and intervention.

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.