



Best Practice Related to SLD Identification

During the past decade considerable progress has been made in helping to better articulate the nature of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and related disorders. Commendable efforts are underway to clarify and define the nature of SLD and its impact in schools, at work, and in the community.

There is urgent need for clarification about best practice in identifying students as eligible for special education services in the SLD category within RTI/MTSS (Response to Intervention/Multi-Tier System of Supports) frameworks, especially in a new and uncharted climate of Common Core and other state standards. As a leading voice in the field of learning disabilities and SLD federal policy, NCLD with its co-sponsors—the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)—brought experts together on October 19 & 20, 2013, for a Roundtable conference to address this need and to achieve the following objectives.

Objectives of Roundtable:

- Articulate and share current practice as a way to define challenges and opportunities
- Develop criteria for how to identify students for special education eligibility in the SLD category (i.e., articulate the features of a comprehensive evaluation in RTI settings)
- Articulate the challenges of identifying and serving students with SLD in the context of Common Core and other state standards
- Develop a best practice resource on RTI-based SLD identification, replacing IQ/achievement discrepancy with RTI.

An outcome of the Roundtable was to begin the development of an online tool to help schools, districts, and states promote best practice related to RTI-based SLD Identification. Forty stakeholders representing parent advocates, school, district and state educational leaders, school psychologists, university researchers, and foundation leaders participated in the Roundtable. There was unanimous agreement that there is an urgent need for an online tool with best practices that follow existing federal statute and regulations.

The IDEA regulations stipulate that districts can use a process that analyzes how a student responds to research based interventions (RTI) as one of the options permitted for determining if a child has a specific learning disability. This online tool will provide assistance for districts that choose the RTI option.

The foundational resource for the Roundtable was a book published in 2013 by Joseph Kovalski, Amanda VanDerHeyden, and Edward Shapiro, entitled: An RTI Approach to LD Identification.

Educators and parents need a clear vision of best practice related to an RTI-based SLD Identification process. With this vision, systems can develop structures to assure that the identification process for specific learning disabilities will facilitate decision making that promotes instructional decisions to improve outcomes for students.

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