

SPRING LAKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS **Specific Learning Disability Determination Process**

As directed by the Michigan Department of Education, each local educational agency [LEA] and public school academy [PSA] in the state is required to publicly post the process used to determine the existence of a Specific Learning Disability [SLD].

Consistent with this requirement, Spring Lake Public Schools reports the following:

- For grades Kindergarten through 4th in the area of Basic Reading, in both the Jeffers and Holmes Elementary buildings, the district will continue to develop and implement a ***Response to Scientific, Research-Based Intervention Process***. This process will include the following basic components: a universal screening measure administered on multiple occasions across the school year, a multi-tiered delivery of interventions for struggling readers that are targeted to individual need, and repeated progress monitoring during intervention delivery to document the child's rate of growth over time.
- In grades 5 and 6 [Intermediate building] in the areas of Basic Reading and Math, the district will continue to develop and implement a ***Response to Scientific, Research-Based Intervention Process***. This process will include the same basic components discussed above.
- Relative to the determination of a Specific Learning Disability [SLD] in the district, a ***Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses*** [PSW] process/ analysis will be used for students in Kindergarten through 12th grades in the area of Basic Reading. This process will also be used across all other areas of SLD eligibility, Kindergarten through 12th grade, which includes: Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension, Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency and Math Computation-Problem Solving.
- It is noted that regardless of the process used, all schools must follow all of the regulatory requirements in the IDEA, the MARSE, and the Michigan laws, policies and procedures for special education.

What is a Specific Learning Disability?

- A SLD is defined as *“a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia that adversely affects a student's educational performance. A SLD does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”* (34 CFR 300.8(c)(10)).

What is the Response to Scientific, Research-Based Intervention Process?

- Response to Scientific, Research-Based Intervention is a process to determine if a student is experiencing a Specific Learning Disability. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:
 1. The student does not achieve adequately for their age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1)(i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or State-approved grade-level standards.

2. The student does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards in one or more areas identified at 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1)(i) when using a process based on the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention.
- The value of a Response-to-Intervention [RTI] delivery model is that it is both proactive and preventative...students who are identified to be falling behind their peers in academics can receive intervention assistance quickly. It is also diagnostic in its delivery in that data is obtained documenting a “gap” between the student's own academic performance and the average performance of grade-age peers and additionally, documenting the student's rate of learning over time following a series of interventions. In this district, RTI is considered to be a “work in progress” as providers continually modify intervention delivery and re-design student groupings and schedules in the midst of meeting the varying academic needs of “at risk” or below benchmark students.

What is a Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses [PSW] Process?

- Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses is a process that is used to determine if a student has a SLD. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:
 1. The student does not achieve adequately for their age or to meet State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1)(i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or State-approved grade-level standards.
 2. The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team [MET] to be relevant to the identification of a SLD, using appropriate assessments, consistent with the IDEA Evaluation Procedures and Additional Requirements for Evaluations and Reevaluations.
- This process will be used when the RTI model is not appropriate or available...keeping in mind that RTI is not possible for all areas included in the SLD definition. Additionally, there will always be students arriving to the district in need of evaluation who have not had the opportunity to be evaluated with reference to a systematic intervention process. Lastly, in the middle and high school grades in particular, there will also be students in need of initial evaluation and re-evaluation for SLD eligibility who have had no history of RTI intervention.

Source: Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services [2010] – Michigan Criteria for Determining the Existence of a Specific Learning Disability – May 2010 – Lansing, MI: Author