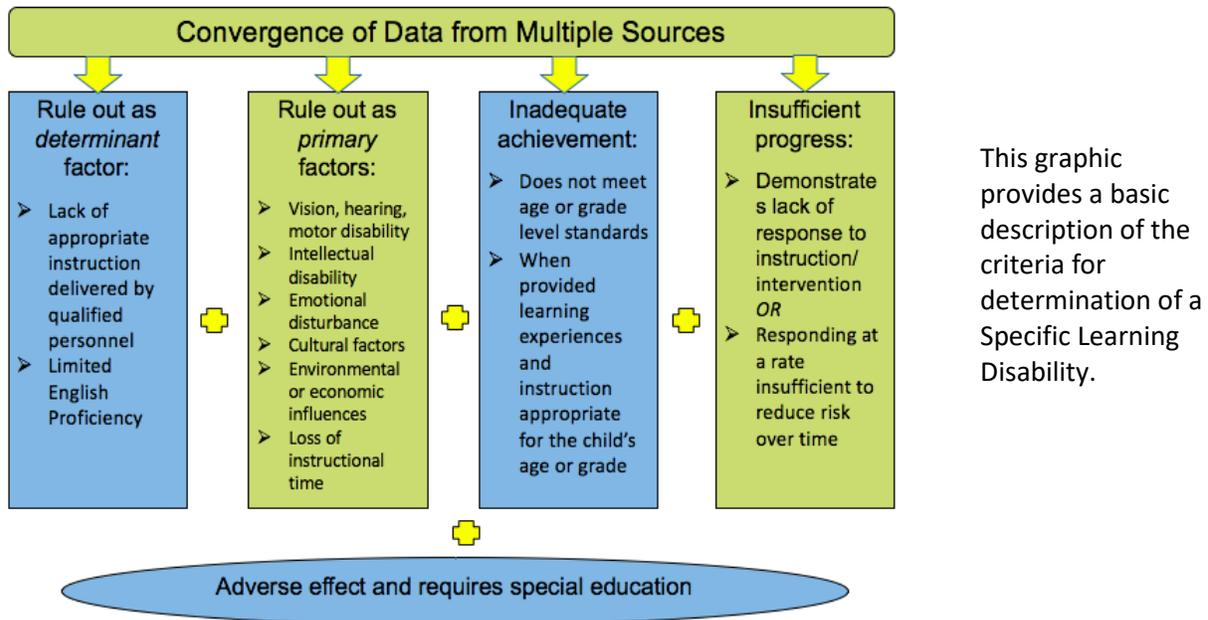


SLD FACT SHEET #5

On February 5, 2016, the NC State Board of Education approved the [NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities Addendum](#) which must be fully implemented by July 1, 2020, for the evaluation and identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).



This fact sheet, [the fifth in a series](#), addresses **inadequate achievement**. 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 and data indicating insufficient rates of progress. While the criterion for inadequate achievement is included in existing policy, the conclusion of "unexpected" is 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 policy *and* the policy addendum effective July 1, 2020 *both* 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

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support (MTSS) which assures a system of high-quality core instruction and scientific research-based intervention.

Determining Extent of Inadequate Achievement

Existing data from a variety of sources, to determine the gap between the student's current performance and age- or grade-level state standards, must include, but is not limited to, two or more of the following: universal screening, interim/benchmark assessments, data from progress monitoring and/or standardized measures of achievement related to the area of concern. When available, sources of data must include state and districtwide assessments. Student performance must include comparison to state and/or national norms and district norms when available. These data must be relevant to the area(s) of concern (e.g., reading, math, writing, listening, oral language).

Current recommendations, based on existing research, warn professionals of the implications that result in applying rigid cut scores to determine 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 LEAs to avoid any practice that may result in decision-making heavily weighted in data derived from single sources. The use of multiple sources of data, while a requirement of existing policy, is more explicitly addressed in the July 1, 2020 SLD Policy Addendum.

“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 problem of rigid cut-points that plagues LD.” (RtI-based SLD Identification Toolkit)

In order to address the continuum and the flaws in measurement, 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.

Thorough review and understanding of the [NC MTSS Guidance Livebinder](#) is strongly recommended.

For additional information:

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Information regarding MTSS, including MTSS regional consultants <http://mtss.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/>