SLD POLICY CHANGE FACT SHEET #1

On February 5, 2016, the NC State Board of Education voted to approve the proposed policy change regarding the definition, evaluation and identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). This change aligns the policy to current evidence and research, and will be included in the *NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities*. The policy can be found at ec.publicschools.gov. This fact sheet addresses the new requirements related to the identification of an SLD.

Summary of Changes

Prohibits

- The use of a discrepancy between intellectual disability and achievement (i.e. the use of a discrepancy, obtained by calculating a difference of 15 points or more between academic achievement and measured intellectual ability).
- the alternative to discrepancy analysis; and
- the use of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses.

Requires

- The use of a student's responsiveness to instruction and scientific research based intervention through a multi-tiered system of a support *as a component of a comprehensive evaluation.*

Continues to Require

- Child Find
- Procedural safeguards
- A full and individual evaluation using multiple sources of data
- Data that demonstrates the child was provided appropriate instruction in the general education setting
- Data based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement reflecting formal assessment of student progress

Why?

- Establishes a single, consistent process of defining, evaluating and identifying students with SLD
- Streamlines training, guidance and coaching
- Research supports neither a discrepancy method nor a pattern of strengths and weaknesses for establishing eligibility
- Provides for early intervention, rather than a "wait to fail" approach

Three Pathways to One

Discrepancy

Alternative to Discrepancy

Responsiveness to Instruction
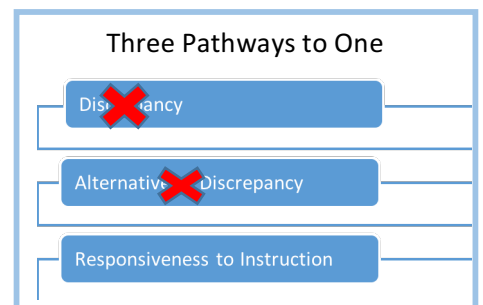
When?

The policy is effective February 5, 2016, but must be fully implemented in every LEA by July 1, 2020.

March 2016

Highlights

- A shift in focus from determining who is eligible for services to providing instruction students need for success; and
- a shift away from unexpected underachievement relative to intellectual ability to unexpected underachievement in the context of high quality instruction and intervention.

> "A learning disability is not technically a learning disability unless it is allowed to become a disability." (Dickman, 2014)

MTSS and RtI

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has cast the vision that "Every NC Pre K-12 public education system implements and sustains all components of a Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure college and career readiness for all students" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015).

MTSS is a *school improvement* framework that promotes effective schooling for *all* children through system wide supports across six domains. RtI is integrated *within* a multi-tiered system of support. "RtI refers to the practice of providing high-quality, multi-tiered instruction and intervention matched to students' need, monitoring student progress frequently, and evaluating data on student progress to determine the need for special education support." (Batsche et al., 2005; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006).

> You cannot have an RtI-based identification system for SLD without a MTSS in place.
>
> You can have a multi-tiered system of support in place without an RtI-based SLD identification system. (Shapiro, 2015)

In an RtI-based approach to a comprehensive evaluation, a multi-tiered system of support is critical. North Carolina has intentionally paired an RtI-based approach to evaluation and identification of students with SLD with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).

Professional Development

Professional development for SLD eligibility will be provided through the MTSS Cohorts and through the EC Division.

For additional information:

Information regarding MTSS, including MTSS regional contacts
http://mtss.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/

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SLD Taskforce report http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/gcs04-taskforce-report.pdf

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