

Specific Learning Disability Evaluation and Identification in North Carolina

A Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a condition that causes unexpected difficulty with certain areas of learning such as reading, writing, math, listening comprehension or oral expression. Federal and state special education laws require public schools to locate and identify students who need special education services. This document is intended to answer some questions that a parent/guardian might have about Specific Learning Disability, the identification process, and what this means for the parent and their child.

Do all students who struggle with learning need special education services?

No. Special education is not the only way that a struggling student can get the help that they need. When a student has difficulty responding to standard classroom instruction, a student support or problem-solving team will review all data (information) and choose additional supports to help that student. Parents may hear this referred to as “intervention.”

How does the problem-solving support help determine what my child needs to be successful in school?

If your child is not making enough progress with high-quality core classroom instruction, the student support or problem-solving team will add an intervention based on data about your child's individual needs. The intervention will be something that has been studied and proven effective. Every child is different, and no single intervention will work for every child. Your child's progress will be checked frequently to see how they respond to the intervention. Some children will require more intensive intervention than others.

Parents should be informed about the intervention(s) being used and how their child's progress will be monitored. Many children show much improvement over time with intervention. If the progress is too slow and/or the team suspects your child might have a learning disability, a referral will be made for a special education evaluation.

Please note, a parent/guardian has the right to request an evaluation in writing **at any time** if they think their child might need special education services. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes the parent, will meet to review available data and decide whether a comprehensive evaluation is needed.



If my child was referred for special education and IEP Team decides that additional testing is needed, what does a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) evaluation consist of?

There is no single test that can prove that a student has a specific learning disability. The comprehensive evaluation collects and reviews many types of data (information) to determine if your child has a learning disability that requires special education services. **NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities** describes the required evaluations and screenings specific to SLD. Other assessments may be added based on the needs of the individual student. Whenever SLD is considered, data about your child's response to instruction and intervention are important in determining if your child qualifies for special education services.

The IEP Team, which includes you (parent/guardian) and school staff, will review data collected about your child. This data will include observations, your input, and formal or informal assessments and data. After ruling out other explanations for why your child might be struggling, the team can then decide if your child has a SLD and requires special education services. If your child is found to be eligible for special education, the team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to meet the individual needs of your child.

You can read NC's definition of SLD and about the evaluation requirements on the NC DPI Exceptional Children Division website under [SLD Policy and Resources](#).



What can a parent do if they are concerned about their student's learning?

Parents/guardians are an important part of any student's plan for success. If your child is struggling to learn, we want you to be involved. *You can:*

- 1** Talk to your child's teacher and school about your concerns.
- 2** Make sure that you understand what is being done at school to help your child and how you can help your child at home.
- 3** Follow your child's progress.
- 4** Request, in writing, a special education evaluation if progress is too slow or you suspect your child might have a SLD.
- 5** Learn about your rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).



For more information, contact:

- The Exceptional Children Department in your school system or charter school
- SLD/ADHD Statewide Consultant (984) 236-2651
- The Exceptional Children Assistance Center (ECAC), 1-800-962-6817 or ecac@ecacmail.org

Other Resources:

Parent Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education: NC Notice of Procedural Safeguards
Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities
Learning Disability Organizations and Websites