
**Special Education Guidelines and Standards
Regarding Evaluations for Specific Learning Disabilities**

The Background:

The IDEA, as reauthorized in 2004, provides that when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning, but may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures. Therefore, states, when developing eligibility criteria and evaluation procedures, are free to prohibit the use of a discrepancy method as criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

Subsequent to the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, Tennessee amended its guidelines and standards for determining eligibility criteria and evaluation procedures to allow local education agencies to use either a discrepancy method or a method based on responsiveness to intervention (RTI) when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

Pursuant to *Tenn. Rules & Regs., Chapter 0520-01-09.11, Rules for Special Education Programs and Services*, a task force within the disability category of specific learning disability was convened on January 9, 2013, for the purpose of determining whether the guidelines and standards should be amended to eliminate the use of a discrepancy method and require the use of a responsiveness to intervention (RTI) method when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. The task force, after consideration of relevant information including the success of RTI as a method of evaluation in other states, and recognizing that the IDEA requires that an evaluation include a variety of assessment tools and strategies and cannot rely on any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining eligibility, recommended elimination of the discrepancy method and adoption of a method based on responsiveness to intervention as the criterion for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability in the areas of basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving and written expression in Tennessee.

On January 14, 2013, the Advisory Council on the Education of Students with Disabilities affirmed the action of the task force and recommended the amendment.

The amended guidelines and standards for specific learning disabilities will be effective July 1, 2014.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends acceptance of this item on first reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.

Proposed Guideline Revision

The guideline and standards for Specific Learning Disabilities are amended by deleting the subsection “Evaluation Procedures” in its entirety and substituting instead the following language:

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation and identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities must be conducted using a state approved Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) Method of Identification as described in Procedural Addendum A of the Specific Learning Disabilities Standards.

Task Force Membership

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title and Agency</i>
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