

Understanding Tests and Evaluations of Learning

How Specific Learning Disabilities are
Evaluated

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Today's Presentation

- Different systems for diagnosing learning disabilities
 - Federal Special Education Law (IDEIA)
 - Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) in Kansas
 - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)
 - Elements of a comprehensive evaluation
 - Samples of cognitive and academic tests
 - Your questions
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What is IDEIA?

- ❑ IDEIA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
 - ❑ Reauthorization of the original 1975 special education law, PL 94-142.
 - ❑ Enacted in 2004
 - ❑ Regulations approved in 2006
 - ❑ Defines special education services and how children qualify for them
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What is a Specific Learning Disability?

Specific learning disability means **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 to do mathematical calculations, **including conditions such as** perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, **dyslexia**, and developmental aphasia.

How is SLD identified?

§ 300.307 Specific learning disabilities.

- (a) *General.* A State must adopt criteria for determining whether a child has a the criteria adopted by **the State**—
- (1) **Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement** for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability;
 - (2) **Must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and**
 - (3) **May permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.**
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Who decides if a child has SLD?

§ 300.308 Additional group members.

The determination of whether a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is a child with a disability must be made by the child's parents and a team of qualified professionals, which must include

- (a) The child's regular teacher
 - (b) At least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children, such as a school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, or remedial reading teacher.
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What kinds of SLD are there?

§ 300.309 Determining the existence of a specific learning disability.

- (a) The group may determine that a child has a specific learning disability if
 - (1) **The child does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards 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: (i) Oral expression. (ii) Listening comprehension. (iii) Written expression. (iv) Basic reading skill. (v) Reading fluency skills. (vi) Reading comprehension. (vii) Mathematics calculation. (viii) Mathematics problem solving.**
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How is SLD defined?

- (2) (i) The child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards when using a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; or
- (ii) The child 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 group to be relevant to the identification of a specific learning disability, using appropriate assessments.
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What happens next?

- (b) To ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math, the group must consider, as part of the evaluation —
 - (1) Data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings, delivered by qualified personnel; and
 - (2) **Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, which was provided to the child's parents.**
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Key Points in SLD Identification under IDEA 2004

- Severe discrepancy is not required.
 - Achievement must be below age or grade-level standards.
 - Response-to-intervention (RTI or MTSS in Kansas) may be used.
 - A pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance or achievement may be used.
 - Repeated assessments must be conducted and results must be reported to parents.
 - An evaluation must be conducted; RTI alone is not enough.
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What are RTI and MTSS?

- ❑ RTI = Response to Intervention, from IDEIA
 - ❑ MTSS = Multi-Tier System of Supports
 - ❑ MTSS is the name for RTI in Kansas
 - ❑ MTSS establishes a strong core for all students.
 - ❑ MTSS includes literacy, mathematics, and behavior.
 - ❑ Universal screening is used to measure the fluency and accuracy of critical early skills.
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Multi-Tier System of Supports

- ❑ Tiers describe the intensity of instruction.
 - ❑ Tiers describe instruction, not steps in a process.
 - ❑ Students remain fluid within the tiered instruction.
 - ❑ Tier 3 is not special education.
 - ❑ MTSS should not delay the initial evaluation of a student that is suspected of having an exceptionality.
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Key Points of RTI/MTSS

- ❑ RTI insures high quality general education instruction and interventions.
 - ❑ Universal screening means kids get help right away and don't rely on teachers to notice problems.
 - ❑ Progress monitoring provides repeated assessment results for parents and teachers.
 - ❑ When progress is insufficient, progress monitoring shows evidence of failure to attain age or grade-level standards.
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Limitations of RTI/MTSS

- ❑ RTI by itself cannot be used to identify SLD.
 - ❑ An evaluation is still required.
 - ❑ RTI does not reveal why a student is not making sufficient progress.
 - ❑ SLD is only one potential reason for lack of progress.
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What is the DSM-IV?

- ❑ DSM-IV = Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (2000, American Psychiatric Association)
 - ❑ Used by psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders ranging from autism and learning disorders to depression and schizophrenia.
 - ❑ Used outside of educational settings to diagnose learning disabilities.
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What is SLD in the DSM-IV?

- ❑ Example: 315.00 Reading Disorder
 - ❑ **Reading achievement**, as measured by individually administered standardized tests of reading accuracy or comprehension, **is substantially below that expected given the person's chronological age, measured intelligence, and age-appropriate education.**
 - ❑ The disturbance **significantly interferes with academic achievement** or activities of daily living that require reading skills.
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Learning Disorder Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation for a DSM-IV learning disorder diagnosis could include the following:

- Intelligence test
 - Tests of academic achievement
 - Social-emotional rating scales
 - Diagnostic interview
 - Written report of results
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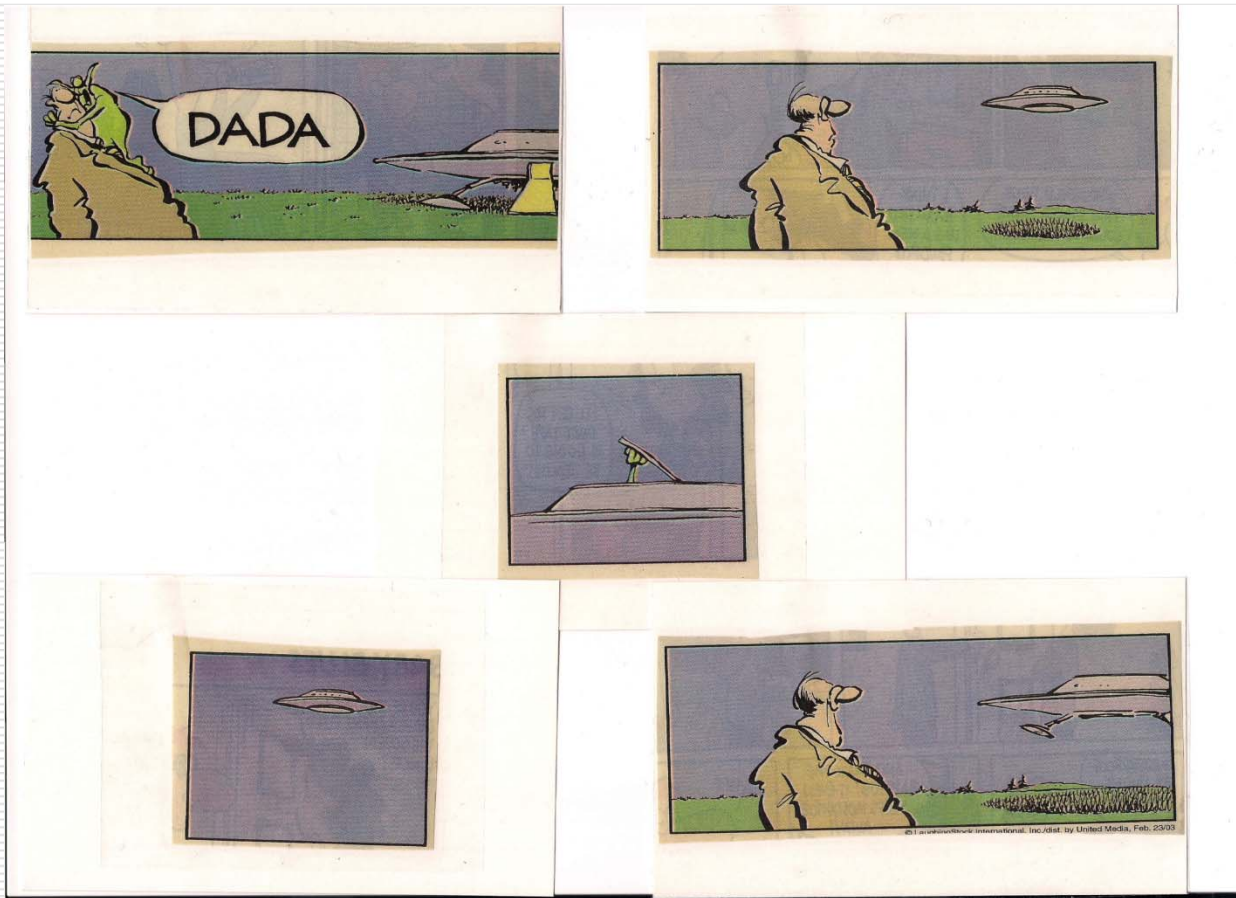
Intelligence Tests

- ❑ Verbal ability: vocabulary, general knowledge
 - ❑ Long-term retrieval: retrieving known information
 - ❑ Auditory processing: manipulating speech sounds
 - ❑ Fluid reasoning: novel problem solving
 - ❑ Memory: auditory, visual, working memory, short-term memory
 - ❑ Cognitive fluency: speed of cognitive processing, rapid naming speed
 - ❑ Visual-spatial processing: picture puzzles, blocks
 - ❑ Processing speed: eye-hand coordination
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Number the pictures in order



Number the pictures in order



Draw a circle around the two numbers
in each row that are the same

2 4 3 9 8 4 7 1 5

21 88 76 54 29 54 33 16 67

357 921 673 357 841

1121 7456 7456 7546 1211

Rapid Naming

Name the letters and digits as fast as you can.

A	5	C	9	X	2	M	3	R
6	L	4	P	5	Q	8	D	7
B	4	J	2	E	9	H	6	Y
3	F	7	K	9	T	5	G	2
N	8	S	3	W	6	Z	4	V

Academic Achievement

- ❑ Reading: word reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension
 - ❑ Mathematics: calculation, numerical reasoning
 - ❑ Written language: spelling; writing sentences, paragraphs, or essays; writing fluency; handwriting
 - ❑ Phoneme-grapheme understanding: decoding nonsense words, spelling nonsense words
 - ❑ Oral language
 - Receptive language: following directions, matching a word with a picture
 - Expressive language: providing a synonym, retelling a story
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Phoneme-Grapheme Knowledge: Pseudoword Reading

- Read these words as if they were real words:

gub pake noot espoy cit

- Spell these words the way they would be spelled if they were real words:
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Phoneme-Grapheme Knowledge: Pseudoword Spelling

niffed or nift

chertle

dack

shong

loy

kout

Social-Emotional Rating Scales

- Include student, parent and teacher forms
 - Measure the severity of emotional, social, and behavior problems
 - Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC)
 - Child Behavior Check List and Teacher Report Form
 - Conners Parent Rating Scales
 - Conners ADHD Scales
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Diagnostic Interview

- What is the reason that you are seeking an evaluation for your child?
 - What difficulties is your child having in school?
 - When did you first notice these problems?
 - What does your child think about these problems?
 - Does your child have any anxiety or fears?
 - Has your child been depressed or made any statements about suicide?
 - How does your child get along with peers? Adults?
 - Does your child have any behavioral difficulties in school?
 - Does your child have any academic difficulties in school?
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Questions?
