

**Specific Learning Disability** is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. The disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. **Disorders not included:** The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of vision, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic differences, or limited English language proficiency.



### Achievement Areas

When provided appropriate learning experiences, the child does not achieve adequately for age or State approved standards in one or more of the following areas: Basic Reading; Reading Fluency; Reading Comprehension; Written Expression; Math Calculation; Math Reasoning; Oral Expression; Listening Comprehension.

### New Options in Determining a Specific Learning Disability

There are new options for the determination of a specific learning disability. Schools may use a process of Response to Intervention (RtI) or analysis of Patterns of Strength and Weakness.

### For More Information:

#### Wayne RESA Guidance for the Determination of Specific Learning Disabilities

<http://www.resa.net/services/spedcompliance/learningdisabilities/>

#### Wayne RESA Field Guides to Response to Intervention

<http://www.resa.net/curriculum/rti/>

#### Links on Learning Disabilities

- LD Online for Parents  
[www.ldonline.org/parents](http://www.ldonline.org/parents)
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHD)  
[www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx)
- National Research Center on Learning Disabilities  
[www.nrcl.org](http://www.nrcl.org)
- National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities  
[www.ldonline.org/about/partners/njcl](http://www.ldonline.org/about/partners/njcl)
- Equitable and Culturally Responsive Resources  
<http://ea.niusileadscape.org/lc/Tag/respons>

#### Recommended Reading

- *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level* by Sally Shaywitz  
ISBN: 0-679-78159-5

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## Understanding New Approaches to the Determination of Specific Learning Disabilities

*Parents can help children with learning disabilities achieve by encouraging their strengths, knowing their weaknesses, understanding the educational system, working with professionals and learning about strategies for dealing with specific difficulties.*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 included important changes in the approaches schools use to determine specific learning disabilities.

Based on current research, Wayne County schools are using new methods of assessment and instruction to prevent learning deficits. When analyzing a student's performance and achievement for patterns of strength and weakness, the consistencies among cognitive and academic skills are used to identify specific learning disabilities.



### Response to Intervention

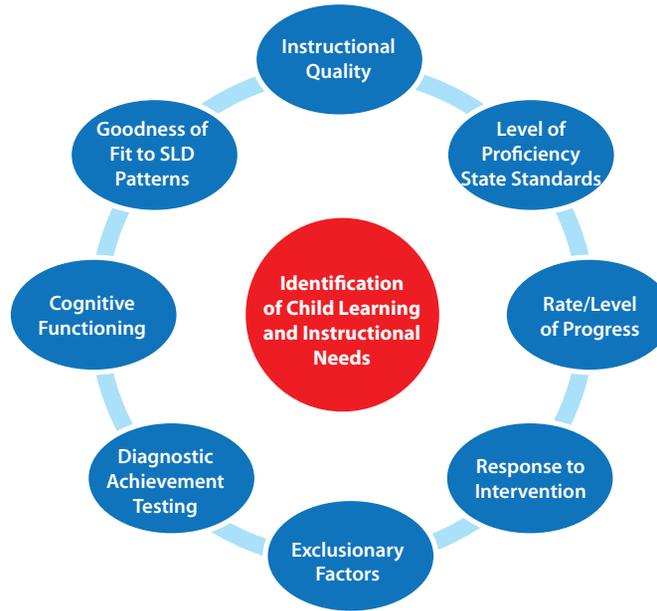
With the Response to Intervention (RtI) method, the student is provided with explicit evidence-based interventions. Student progress is carefully measured and the instructional interventions are adjusted to teach the skills necessary for the student to make progress toward age or grade level standards. Based on the student's response to the interventions, the group then determines whether or not the student demonstrates a specific learning disability.

### Patterns of Strength and Weakness

The "Patterns of Strength and Weakness" method requires an extensive analysis of the student's performance, achievement or both, when compared to age, State approved grade level standards or intellectual development, using appropriate assessments.

### Out with the Old: The Severe Discrepancy Approach

The former method of comparing IQ to achievement has been called the "Wait to Fail" model because, by the time students show a "severe discrepancy", they have experienced years of failure in school, making it harder to intervene and help them improve.



### The Wayne County Model for the Identification of Specific Learning Disability

The full and individual evaluation is a process of data collection that includes multiple methods of assessing student performance with input from parents, teachers, instructional specialists, and staff such as school psychologists.

The purpose of the evaluation process is to surround the student of concern with the best information possible to make appropriate recommendations as to the student's eligibility for special education and, more importantly, educationally relevant recommendations for instructional strategies, supports and services.

### The Aptitude-Achievement Consistency Model

The new method of determining specific learning disabilities will review all information, classroom data, and test data, looking for patterns of consistencies among the student's skills.

In the new model for SLD identification, the evaluation will look for consistencies among cognitive and academic skills. Consistencies are identified among the skills that cluster together as weaknesses and the skills that cluster together as strengths. The consistencies among skills are then examined relative to a normal ability profile.

The patterns of consistencies are then reviewed, giving thoughtful consideration to the factors that could contribute to or reduce the learning difficulties. For example, did the student receive appropriate instruction? Are there conditions, other than a learning disability, that explain the learning difficulties?

The determination of the specific learning disability will be based on careful considerations in these areas:

