Decreasing Overrepresentation by Improving SLD Identification: Considering **ALL** of the Data

Tammy L. Stephens, PH.D.

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Presenter

Tammy L. Stephens, Ph.D.

- » Senior Manager, Clinical Product Support & Training
- » Senior Clinical Assessment Consultant
- » University Professor
- » Educational Diagnostician
- » Special Education Teacher
- » Author of C-SEP
- » Creator of Beyond The Score Webinar Series

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Agenda

- » Understanding Disproportionality
- » Contributors to Disproportionality
- » Data Referral Concerns – Underlying Issues
- » Importance of Collecting and Using Multiple Sources of Data in Decision-making
- » Importance of Considering and Ruling Out Exclusionary Factors
- » Importance of Investigating Language for All Students
- » Recommendations

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Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964), 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq. and 34 C.F.R. pt. 100 provide that **no program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education may discriminate on the basis of race or national origin**.

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Defining Disproportionality

What is it?

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So, What is Disproportionality?

The National Education Association (NEA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) define disproportionality as the **overrepresentation** or **underrepresentation** of **groups of people** in special education services or gifted-talented programs by comparison to their representation in the total school population (Peterson, 2019; Sullivan & Osher, 2019).

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Contemplate Some Statistics

» **Nearly half** of all students enrolled in special education are **students of color** (Fish, 2019b).

» 30% of children with SLD also experience emotional and behavioral problems (Cristofani et al., 2023);

» Students with emotional and behavioral disorders perform below grade level standards in literacy and math (Kern et al., 2019); half fail to meet expectations on standardized testing (Kern et al., 2019);

» 54% of students with a disability drop out of high school (Carney, 2021);

» Early diagnosis of SLD improves outcomes (Cristofani et al., 2023).

Some Statistics of Disproportionality

» **Native Americans** are **four times** more often referred for developmental delays by comparison to other groups (Peterson, 2019).

» **African Americans** are **twice** as likely to meet the requirements of special education services related to **emotional disturbance (ED)** and **intellectual disability (ID)** by comparison to other groups (Grindal et al., 2019; Peterson, 2019)

Other Examples of Disproportionality

A U.S. Department of Education's (2018) report found that **65.5% of white** students with disabilities spent 80% or more of the day **in a general education classroom**, while **58% of African American** students with disabilities spent 80% or more of the day **in a resource classroom**.

Only **10.7%** of white students with disabilities spend less than 40% of their day inside a general education classroom, while **21.3%** of African American students spend less than 40% of their day inside a general education classroom.

Earliest Documentation of Overrepresentation

» In 1968, Lloyd Dunn was among the first to realize that there was a **disproportionate number** of **minority students** in special education classrooms.

» According to Dunn, about **60-80%** of special education students with mental retardation came from **"low status background"** which mainly meant they were Latino, African American or Native American

Examples in the Context of Behavior

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) reported that **African Americans** with disabilities received school suspensions **twice as often** as white students.

African Americans with disabilities **received more severe punishments** and discipline compared to their white peers (Tefera & Fischman, 2020).

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A History Lesson

Let's examine some reasons for why disproportionality may exist.

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Disproportionality and Federal Law

» Some scholars argue that IDEA (2004, 2016) is partially to blame for disproportionality as IDEA is sometimes ambiguous (Sullivan & Osher, 2019; Tefera & Fischman, 2020).

» For instance, clear and operational definitions are often lacking, and it does not specify precise standards or measures.

◊ It is vague about when child find should be pursued (Grant, 2020, p. 153).

» This ambiguity creates confusion, allowing for the development of do-it-yourself practices and inconsistent implementation, factors that are not congenial for solid policy or practices.

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Disproportionality and Confusion

» States therefore can operationalize disproportionality in a manner that allows them to demonstrate they are not in violation of federal law and thus avoid being sanctioned (Sullivan & Osher, 2019).

» This manipulative behavior by states/districts is possible because IDEA (1997) has left it up to local educational agencies to define and monitor things such as disproportionality (Sullivan & Osher, 2019).

» Consequently, many of the policies and practices that have generated disproportionality remain in place and continue to be operationalized.

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Engagement in Poor Assessment Practices- Resulting in Overrepresentation

- » Overreliance on IQ scores
- » Overreliance on Standard Scores
- » Overreliance on cut-scores
- » Limited focus on triangulating all the data
- » Failure to consider and rule out exclusionary factors

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Overrepresentation

Questions the efficacy of our professional practices, our methods of testing, and our take on honoring diversity.

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Poor Assessment Practices

Traditional assessment practices have been identified as one of the major culprits to overidentification and underidentification.

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A History of Overrepresentation

» Around 1976, the OCR (Office of Civil Rights) in Ohio started collecting data on the educational system. Their result further cemented the idea of overrepresentation.

» During the period of 1976-1977, **black students** were placed in **EMR** (educable mentally retarded) classes **3.4 times** as much as white students.

» Data from 1978-1979 indicated the ratio increased even further, to **3.5**.

» They also found that a lot of **limited English proficiency** students were placed in special education programs **without proper assessment** simply because they weren't good at English.

Source: Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)

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A History of Overrepresentation

» The OCR dug even further, specifically into 148 school districts, over the period of **1975-1979**

» Some students were being assigned **EMR classes** <u>without examination for visual/ auditory problems</u>; some based on **outdated IQ scores**; and some were assigned these classes despite having **IQ scores that *surpass* the EMR range**

» At the time, being a minority student was enough to earn placement in special education classes.

Source: [Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)](vernex-cognition.com)

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A History of Overrepresentation

» In the early 1980s, Wright and Santa Cruz found similar results of overrepresentation in California.

» Around 1989, Meier, Stewart and England conducted a large-scale study on 174 school districts, each having at least 15,000 students with at least 1% of them being African American.

» Findings indicated that **African American students** were placed in **mild mental retardation** classes **3 times more** than their white counterparts. The racial disproportion was clear

Source: [Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)](vernex-cognition.com)

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A History of Overrepresentation

» Dunn saw that the root of the overrepresentation problem was that schools were using **IQ scores** from tests like WISC and Binet to justify labeling minority students as "**mentally retarded**".

» These **IQ scores** basically determined their fate

» Deno on the other hand, saw that the problem was due to an **overreliance on the medical model**. This model had one serious problem: it **focused too much on children's defects.** That took the attention away from external factors that might have been easily fixed.

Source: Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)

The Role of Implicit Bias & Stereotypes

» "***the disability-cultural diversity analog***"

» We couple things together in our mind like bed and sleep, food and drink

» People have subconsciously learned to link cultural diversity to disability.

» It's a stereotype that has become so embedded in our thoughts that even some members of minority groups share this preconception.

» Different ethnicity, race, gender, language or social class shouldn't equal disability.

Source: Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)

Historical Causes of Overrepresentation

» The first aspect is **litigation.** Before the passage of public law 94-142 in 1975, litigation was mainly concerned with protecting minority students against **unfair placement based** on **inadequate assessment methods**, such as the cases of Diana (1970) and Guadalupe (1972).

» After 1975, litigation was more concerned with **defining mild retardation** and the **fairness of intelligence tests**. A lot of money, time and effort were spent to reevaluate children with mild mental retardation to make sure they weren't unfairly placed. All these litigation cases made people question a lot of things like what exactly *was* the definition of mental retardation? What's "intelligence"? How can the diagnosis of mental retardation be dependent on something like IQ scores if the IQ cutoff point is constantly changing from time to time?

» Most of these tests **weren't actually measuring intelligence** but were in fact, measuring how much of the dominant culture the student had accumulated. That was definitely unfair for students from ethnic backgrounds.

Source: [Overrepresentation of minority students in special education – Vernex Cognition (vernex-cognition.com)](vernex-cognition.com)

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Other Factors that Contribute

» Our education system is influenced by our social, cultural, and historic experiences and may need to be revised and updated (Cavendish et al., 2018; Sullivan & Osher, 2019; Tefera & Fischman, 2020).

» **Poor data collection during the pre-referral and referral process resulting in inappropriate referrals to special education.**

» **Systemic inequalities** exist in some areas for certain races, classes, genders, etc. (Biddanda et al., 2018; Fish, 2019b; Grindal et al., 2019).

» Some school districts or staff may be influenced by implicit or explicit bias (Carney, 2021; Grant, 2020).

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Social Factors that Contribute

» There are diverging perspectives and expectations across stake-holders: parent -vs- teacher; teacher -vs- school psychologist; (Biddanda et al., 2018); national standards -vs- state/local standard; and so forth (Grant, 2020).

» Some families, schools, states have limited opportunities to pursue systemic change (Biddanda et al., 2018; Carney, 2021).

» The lack of available (federal) resources strains and restricts state and local actors (Grant, 2020; Voulgarides et al., 2021).

    ◊ E.g., Limited resources allocated to minority school districts.

    ◊ Reversely, the threat of sanctions for overrepresentation.

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The General State We Find Ourselves In

» Disproportionality is suggested to exist in special education in general, and across the 13 federally defined disability categories (Fish, 2019a).

» There is some anxiety to refer minority students and attribute to overrepresentation (Grant, 2020).

» There is a nationwide inconsistency in methods and processes used for identifying students (e.g., Child Find) (Grant, 2020).

» There is a nationwide inconsistency in methods and processes used to identify students with behavioral issues (Voulgarides et al., 2021).

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Improving Assessment Practices to Decrease Overrepresentation: When We Know Better, We Do Better

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Assessment Best Practices: Incorporating Multiple Sources

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» Multiple Sources of Data are used to establish whether a disability exists

» All data sources are weighted equally

» Norm-referenced data is one piece of the data

» Interpretation must go beyond standard scores

» Exclusionary Factors must be considered and ruled out as the PRIMARY cause of struggle

» Language should be investigated for all students

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Referral Data

Why is the quality of the referral packet important?

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Legal and Federal Regulations

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004)

Use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather **relevant functional**, **developmental**, and **academic** information about the child. Including <u>information provided by the parent</u>, that may assist in determining whether a child has a disability; and <u>use it for individualized educational planning.</u>

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Slide 31

- Vision screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Parent reports of concerns about handwriting, spelling, or written expression
- Classroom handwriting assessments
- Classroom spelling assessments
- Samples of written work (e.g., journal, story responses, writing samples, etc.)
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Gifted/talented assessments
- Samples of written schoolwork (both timed and untimed)

- State student assessment program results as described in TEC §39.022
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Full Individual and Initial Evaluation
- Outside evaluations
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Universal screening
- Parent survey

Review of Data: Informal Data

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C-SEP REVIEW STEP:

Multiple Sources of Data Worksheet (MSDW)

Sarah B Holman 9-2019

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Data-Based Referral Decisions

» Referral decisions must be made based on all the data collected prior to and part of the referral process

» When important data is lacking, we do not obtain a complete picture of what the student can and cannot do

» This leads to inappropriate referrals and decisions

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Poor Data Collection Practices

» Five data sources are recommended for a comprehensive ED evaluation:

◊ Classroom observations, teacher interview(s), parent interview(s), student interview, and normative data from rating scales completed by at least two different informants.

» One study, however, shows that only 28% of school psychologists consistently include all 5 sources and nearly 30% include only four of the five sources (Allen & Hanchon, 2013).

» Sadly, 5% do not consistently include any of the critical data sources listed; and 13% only consistently include one of the five.

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Gleaning Insight from Such Research

» Some in our profession are failing to collect enough relevant data to make legally defensible decisions.
  ◦ Poor referral process
» Collectively, we are inconsistent in our interpretation and recommendations.
» These weaknesses are concerning in a profession that relies heavily on data collection and interpretation.
» These MAY also attribute slightly to disproportionality.

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Poor Data Collection = Poor Decisions

» Leads to students being referred who shouldn't be referred
» Students who should be referred are not – resulting in ongoing academic struggles and sometime manifestations of behavioral issues
» Leads to inaccurate and poor decisions based on minimal data
» Once referral is made, lack of data that should be integrated into the assessment results on overreliance on NRT scores

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Legal Mandates – Assessment

» May ***not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion*** for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.

» Use a ***variety of assessment tools and strategies*** to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child. Including information provided by the parent, that may assist in determining whether a child has a disability; and use it for individualized educational planning.

Norm-Referenced Standardized Tests are One Source of Data

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Rethinking the Use of Norm-Referenced Standardized Tests

One piece of the data about the student

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Multiple Sources of Data

- Referral Data
- Record Review
- Vision/Hearing Screening
- Work Samples
- Parent Information/Interview
- Teacher Information/Interview
- Observations – school/home

Identify strengths / weaknesses without norms

Identify strengths / weaknesses compared to norm group

- Standardized Measures:
  - Achievement tests
  - Cognitive Tests
- Developmental Measures
- Specialized Measures

Informal

Curriculum-based

Norm-referenced

Criterion-referenced
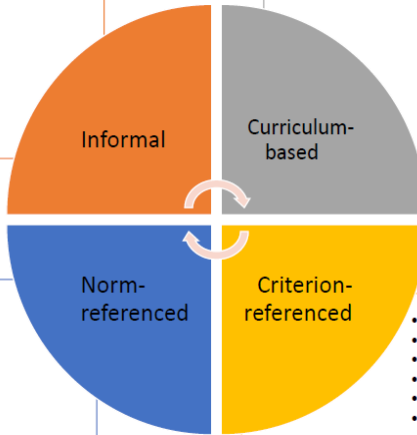
- Teacher-made/Textbook quiz
- District Benchmarks
- Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM)
- Running Records
- Progress Monitoring
- Universal Screeners

Performance level of taught curriculum

Performance in relation to specific tasks

- STAAR results
- Universal Screeners
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
- Brigance
- Texas English Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)
- Advanced Placement Tests
- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
- American College Testing (ACT)

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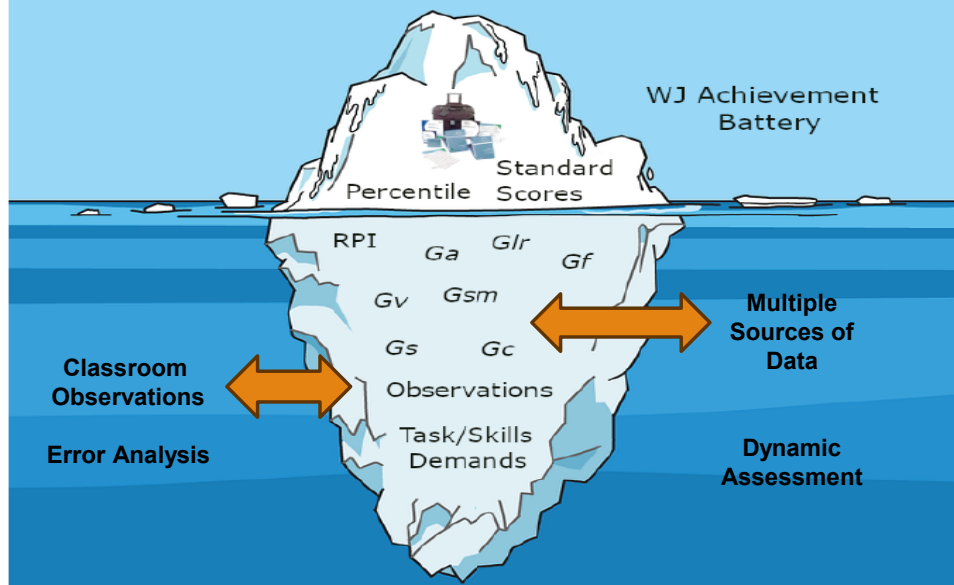
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Considering Student's Performance Beyond a Standard Score

» Standard score are only one data point obtained from an NRT
» Standard scores are **ordinal measures** and only indicate an **individual's place in line** (normal curve)
» Standard scores **DO NOT** indicate skill proficiency or functioning
» One-time **snapshot** of student's performance
» Must consider student's behaviors/strategies when completing tasks

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Historical Uses of Norm-Referenced Standardized Tests

A focus on interpreting student's performance through standard scores

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Norm-Referenced Tests Provide Us With an Abundance of Information about Each Student – Don't Leave Data Behind

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LEVELS OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE WJ IV AND/OR OTHER NORM-REFERENCED TESTS

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Qualitative, informal, error analysis	**Level of Development**	**Level of Proficiency**	**Relative Standing in Group**
Useful for instructional planning	Age Equivalent	Relative Proficiency Index, CALP	Standard Scores
•Test Session Observations Checklist •Useful for behavioral observations	•Level of Instruction •Grade Equivalent	•Easy to Difficult Range •Developmental/Instructional Zone	•Rank Order •Percentile Ranks •Significantly high or low standing •Discrepancy PR, SD

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Level 1: Qualitative Data

Important when interpreting student's performance on tasks.

Level	Type of Information	Basis	Information and Scores	Uses
1	Qualitative (Criterion Referenced)—Describes context or supports a clinical hypothesis	Observations during testing and analysis of responses	• Description of the individual's behavior during testing • Patterns of errors and correct responses within specific tasks • Strategies (correct or erroneous) used to perform specific tasks	• Consideration of the possible effect of the individual's behavior on the obtained test scores • Prediction of the individual's behavior and reactions in instructional situations • Analysis of an individual's strengths, misunderstandings, and limitations regarding specific academic skills, procedures, knowledge, and cognitive abilities

Level 1: Qualitative Data

Take a lot of notes on the test record during the testing session/sessions

LEVEL 1: Qualitative Data - Example

Observations made during the testing session specific to behaviors

» Tapping pencil
» Excessive movement/fidgety behaviors
» Out of seat
» Frequently asks for items to be repeated
» Frequently requires redirection
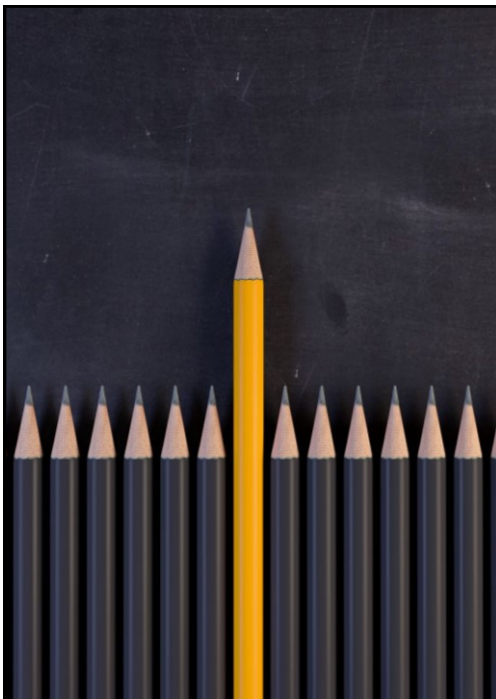
LEVEL 1: Qualitative Data - Example

Observations made during the testing session specific to task performance

WJ IV Word Attack

» Child initially sounds out each letter in the word or chunks the parts of the word several times, but then after a bit of wait time, the child pronounces the word correctly.

Math Applied Problems

» Child constantly asks that items be repeated.

» Child works problems in his head or verbally talks through the problem

» Counts on fingers

» Grips pencil awkwardly when writing

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A Closer Look: Observations

» At least one evaluation team member (other than the student's regular teacher) must observe the student in a regular classroom setting (Davis & Southward, 2019).

» IDEA (2004) requires a written observation report that includes a description of relevant behavior noted during a classroom observations and the relationship between the behavior and student academic functioning (Davis & Southward, 2019).

» Include in your documentation: (a) observer; (b) narrative; (c) location, (d) time; (e) duration; (f) frequency; and (g) behavior.

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Observation Recommendations

» Provide a detailed descriptions utilizing precise language and quantifiable data;

» Avoid making assumptions or interpreting what you observe;

» Consider the physical aspects of the classroom (seating, noise, student position in the classroom);

» Carefully select the timing of the observation (Are the student's concerning behaviors more common at certain times of day/week/activities/etc.?).

(Davis & Southward, 2019)

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Observation Recommendations

» Ideally, it is best to observe the student for an entire period;

» Consider making more than one observation;

» Record data on the accuracy, amount, and completion rates of the student's academic performance;

» Note both appropriate and inappropriate behavior;

» Thoroughly document sequences of events to ensure you have a detailed and chronological account of what occurred.

(Davis & Southward, 2019)

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Level 2: Level of Development

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Level	Type of Information	Basis	Information and Scores	Uses
2	Level of Development (Norm Referenced)—Indicates an individual's level of development, such as age or grade equivalents	Sum of item scores Age or grade level in the norming sample at which the median score is the same as the individual's score	• Raw score • ¹Test or cluster W score • Age equivalent (AE) • Grade equivalent (GE)	• Reporting an individual's general level of development in a skill, ability, or area of knowledge compared with others of the same age or in the same grade in the norming sample • Monitoring an individual's progress within a specific skill or ability • Basis for describing the implications of developmental strengths and weaknesses • Basis for initial recommendations regarding instructional level and materials

Level 2: Level of Development

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The Most Misunderstood Scores of All….

Age/Grade Equivalents
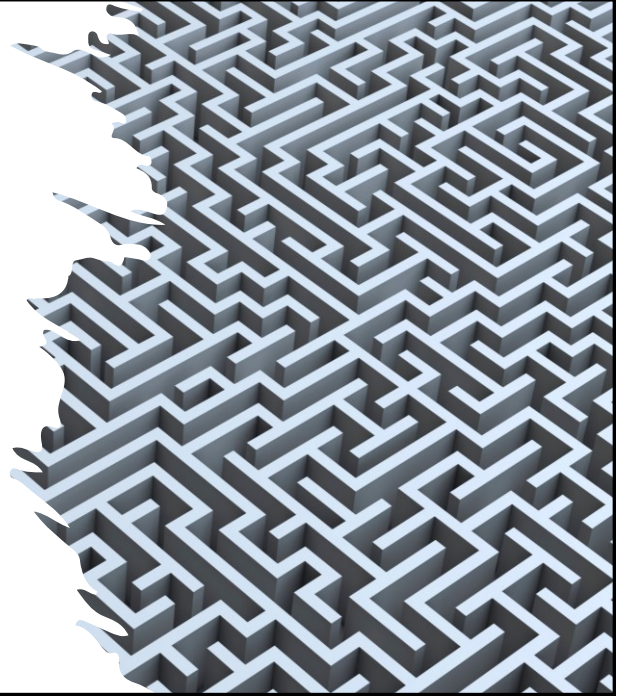
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Age/Grade Equivalent – Interpretation

» GE reflects the examinee's performance in terms of the grade level in the norming sample at which the average score is the same as the examinee's score

 ◊ If average raw score for students in grade 2 (the 6th month) is 14, then any examinee who scored 14 would receive 2.6 as a grade equivalent score

» GE 2.6 ≠ Your student is reading at the mid-second grade level.

» GE 2.6 = On reading tasks, your student is performing the same as the average student in the norm sample who is in the 2nd grade, 6th month

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Remove from your vocabulary (and reports):

According to the WJ IV Achievement, *Student* is performing at the ____ grade level.

Level 3: Proficiency (Criterion-Referenced)

Proficiency and Functioning

Level 3: Proficiency (Criterion-Referenced)

3	Proficiency (Criterion Referenced)—Indicates the quality of performance on criterion tasks of a given difficulty level	Distance of an individual's score on the *W* scale from an age or grade reference point	• Quality of performance on assessed skills and abilities compared to that of age or grade peers in the norming sample • [1]Test or cluster *W* difference (*W*DIFF) • Relative proficiency index (RPI) • Cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) level • Instructional or developmental zone	• Degree of proficiency on tasks mastered by average age or grade peers • Developmental level at which the individual will perceive typical tasks to be easy, mildly challenging, or very difficult • Placement decisions based on a criterion of significantly strong or weak proficiency • Prediction of performance with similar task

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Relative Proficiency Index (RPI)

Hidden jewel of the WJ IV products

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THE MANY USES OF THE RPI

The RPI has several important uses based on the information it provides. These uses include:

- Informing users about how difficult an examinee will find age/grade appropriate tasks
- Describing the quality of an examinee's performance on tasks
- Offering criterion-referenced information
- Helping to monitor progress
- Indicating where on the range of development or instruction the examinee falls ("Developmental Zone)

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RELATIVE PROFICIENCY INDEX (RPI)

Provides a *criterion-referenced index* of a person's proficiency or functionality.

Compares the quality of performance on assessed skills and abilities to that of age or grade peers in the norming sample

Predicts level of success on similar tasks.

Shows actual distance from average proficiency.

Based on the W Difference score.

Ranges from 0/90 to 100/90.
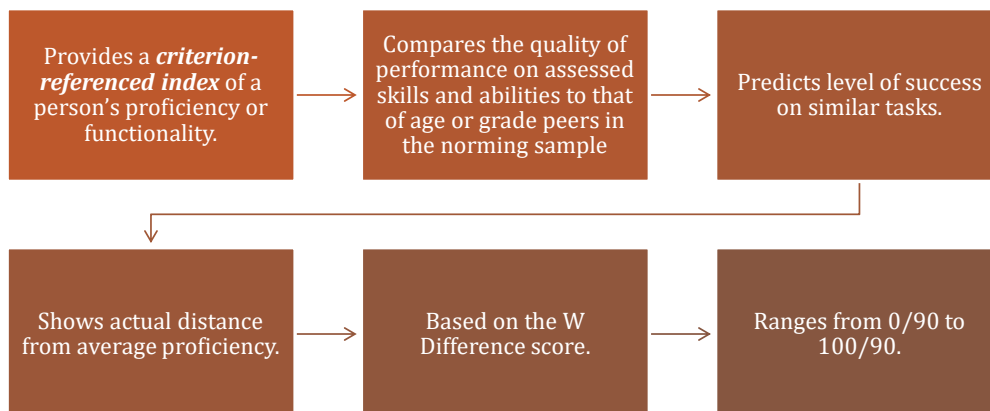
RELATIVE PROFICIENCY INDEX (RPI)

RPI scores are represented as fractions (e.g., 75/90)

- The *numerator* represents the examinee's predicted proficiency if given similar tasks
- The *denominator* is fixed at 90, indicating the proficiency on average same-age or same-grade peers
- For example, if an examinee obtains an RPI of 75/90 on Test 8: Oral Reading, it indicates that the examinee was 75% successful on an oral reading task that average people at the examinee's same age or grade reference group would perform with 90% success.

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RELATIVE PROFICIENCY INDEX (RPI)

Reflects the individual's proficiency on tasks that the average age or grade mate would have 90% proficiency.

Examples:

When average grade mates would have 90% success in spelling, Sandy is predicted to have only 4% success (RPI = 4/90). Her proficiency on spelling tests would be very limited.	Bennett's RPI of 98/90 on the Math Problem Solving cluster indicates his performance would be very advanced compared to his grade peers.

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W Difference Values	Reported RPI	Proficiency	Implications
+31 and above	100/90	Very Advanced	Extremely Easy
+14 to +30	98/90 to 100/90	Advanced	Very Easy
+7 to +13	95/90 to 98/90	Average to Advanced	Easy
-6 to +6	82/90 to 95/90	Average	Manageable
-13 to -7	67/90 to 82/90	Limited to Average	Difficult
-30 to -14	24/90 to 67/90	Limited	Very Difficult
-50 to -31	3/90 to 24/90	Very Limited	Extremely Difficult
-51 & below	0/90 to 3/90	Extremely Limited	Nearly Impossible

INTERPRETATION OF RPI SCORES

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RPI and Instructional Zone

The instructional zone is a special application of the RPI score.

It is based on a range along a developmental scale that indicates and examinee's present level of functioning.

It ranges from easy (the Independent Instructional level to difficult (the Frustration Instructional level)

RPI	Instructional Level
96/90 to 100/90	Independent
76/90 to 95/90	Instructional
75/90 & below	Frustration

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RPI and Instructional Zone

- An examinee with an RPI of 80/90 is expected to be at the instructional level and should find similar tasks developmentally appropriate.

- An examinee with an RPI of 60/90 is expected to demonstrate frustration on similar tasks when compared to average same-age or same-grade peers. Similar tasks are expected to be developmentally challenging.

RPI	Instructional Level
96/90 to 100/90	Independent
76/90 to 95/90	Instructional
75/90 & below	Frustration

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Level 4: Relative Standing in a Group

The Position or "Place in Line" of the student's performance in relation to the normative sample (placement on the normal curve)

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| 4 | Relative Standing in a Group (Norm Referenced)—Provides a basis for making peer comparisons (percentile ranks or standard scores) | Relative position (A transformation of a difference score, such as dividing it by the standard deviation of the reference group) | • Rank order
• [1]Standard score (SS) (including *T* score, *z* score, NCE, discrepancy *SD* DIFF)
• Percentile rank (PR) (including discrepancy PR) | • Statement of the relative (ordinal) position of an individual's score, based on the standard deviation (SD), within the range of scores obtained by age or grade peers in the norming sample
• Placement decisions based on a criterion of significantly high or low standing in a group |

Level 4: Relative Standing in a Group

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Standard Scores are Not Equivalent to Functioning

The fundamental **misunderstanding** and **common interpretive error** with standard scores being equivalent to functioning or performance. This leads to faulty generalizations.

For example, a standard score of 90 on a memory test could be Misinterpreted to mean the student has "average" functioning in memory when in fact a more accurate description of this score is that it represents an individual's relative position or "place" in line as it is ordinal data (Jaffe, 2009; Adeyemi, 2010).

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Looking beyond the standard score and considering the student's performance through other lenses can provide a richer understanding of the learner

Integration of other data sources is also mandatory. Test scores should never be interpreted in isolation

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PROFICIENCY VS. POSITION

❑ At times, the proficiency information provides insights into performance that are not revealed by standard scores or percentile ranks.
❑ If only the standard score is considered, we may miss important information about the student's functioning.

SS

READING FLUENCY	473	8-3		92 (86-97)	92	29
Oral Reading	484	8-2		94 (89-98)	94	33
Sentence Reading Fluency	461	8-3		92 (85-99)	92	29

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PROFICIENCY VS. POSITION

❑ At times, the proficiency information provides insights into performance that are not revealed by standard scores or percentile ranks.
❑ If only the standard score is considered, we may miss important information about the student's functioning.

RPI   SS

READING FLUENCY	473	8-3	63/90	Limited	92 (86-97)	92	29
Oral Reading	484	8-2	78/90	Limited to Average	94 (89-98)	94	33
Sentence Reading Fluency	461	8-3	45/90	Limited	92 (85-99)	92	29

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POSITION VS. PROFICIENCY

Standard score statement: The student's Reading Fluency standard score is in the average range (standard score 92, percentile rank 29).

Proficiency statement: The student's Reading Fluency skills are limited. They will likely find reading grade level texts accurately and automatically very difficult.

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Woodcock Johnson IV ECAD™

Score Report

Name: Javle, S
Date of Birth: 11/11/2009
Age: 5 years, 9 months
Sex: Female
Date of Testing: 08/18/2015

School:
Teacher:
ID:
Examiner: Tammy Stephens, Ph.D.

TESTS ADMINISTERED
Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development

TABLE OF SCORES
Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (Norms based on age 5-9)

CLUSTER/Test	W	AE	RPI	Proficiency	SS (68% Band)	PR (68% Band)
GIA-EARLY DEVELOPMENT	478	6-5	95/90	Average	110 (106-113)	74 (67-80)
EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	476	6-8	96/90	Average to Advanced	109 (104-113)	72 (61-81)
EARLY ACADEMIC SKILLS	468	7-8	100/90	Very Advanced	130 (128-132)	98 (97-98)
Memory for Names	474	4-3	77/90	Limited to Average	91 (87-95)	27 (20-36)
Sound Blending	477	5-10	92/90	Average	102 (96-107)	54 (40-68)
Picture Vocabulary	481	7-0	96/90	Average to Advanced	111 (105-117)	77 (63-87)
Verbal Analogies	478	6-10	96/90	Average to Advanced	113 (106-121)	81 (66-92)
Visual Closure	468	5-2	83/90	Average	95 (89-100)	36 (24-49)
Sentence Repetition	470	6-4	95/90	Average to Advanced	105 (100-110)	63 (51-74)
Rapid Picture Naming	494	8-8	100/90	Advanced	120 (115-125)	91 (84-95)
Letter-Word Identification	459	7-5	100/90	Very Advanced	125 (123-127)	95 (93-96)
Number Sense	471	7-5	99/90	Advanced	125 (119-132)	95 (89-98)
Writing	475	8-2	100/90	Very Advanced	135 (131-138)	99 (98->99)

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An Important Component of a Comprehensive Assessment & Assurance of Adequate Identification Requires Investigating Exclusionary Factors

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CONSIDER & RULE OUT EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS

300.311(a)(6)

34 Code of Federal Regulations § 300.311 Specific documentation for the eligibility determination.

(a) For a child suspected of having a specific learning disability, the documentation of the determination of eligibility, as required in §300.306(a)(2), must contain a statement of—

. . .

   (6) The determination of the group concerning the effects of a visual, hearing, motor disability, or an intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency on the child's achievement level; and
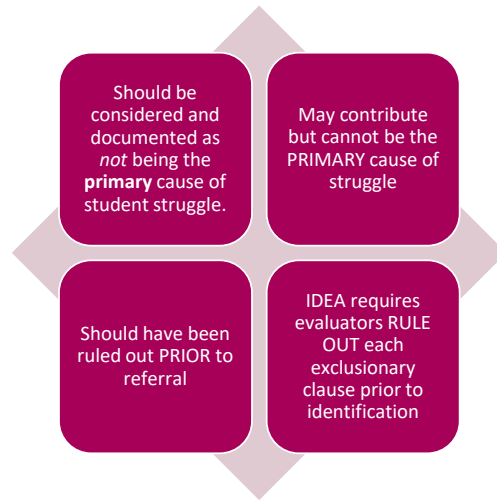
. . .

Last Amended: 82 FR 31913, July 11, 2017
Entered: Aug. 7, 2017

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EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS CHECKLIST

Should be considered and documented as *not* being the **primary** cause of student struggle.	May contribute but cannot be the PRIMARY cause of struggle
Should have been ruled out PRIOR to referral	IDEA requires evaluators RULE OUT each exclusionary clause prior to identification

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SLD Exclusionary Factors Checklist
EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS CHECKLIST
Revised for COVID-19

Directions: Section §300.309 of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEIA, 2014) mandates that ***Exclusionary Factors*** be considered, documented, ruled-out and as the ***primary*** cause of academic struggle ***prior to,*** and ***during*** the assessment process. Read each exclusionary factor and the accompanying questions and circle Y (yes) or N (no) for each. Circle each source of data used to measure the impact of each factor.

EXCLUSIONARY FACTOR: VISION	Yes	No
Has the student had a history of difficulties with vision?		
Does the student wear glasses? If yes, does the student routinely wear glasses during instruction?		
Has the student complained about not being able to see?		
Did school nurse conduct a Near-Vision Screener (within 1 year)?		
Did school nurse conduct a Far-Vision Screener (within 1-year)? If yes, findings: _____		
Did an ophthalmologist/optometrist conduct a formal vision test? If yes, findings: _____		
Has the student been diagnosed with a vision disorder/disturbance? If so, explain:		
Does the student experience difficulty copying, misalign numbers, move closer to visual stimuli, squint or rub eyes when reading or using computers?		

Sources of Data Used to Measure the Impact of this Exclusionary Factor (Circle all that apply)

Review of Records   Parent Information   Health Screener   Teacher Information
Classroom Observation   Doctor's Report   Student Interview   Informal Vision Test

EXCLUSIONARY FACTOR: HEARING	Yes	No
Has the student had a history of difficulties with hearing (including chronic ear infections, have tubes)?		
Does the student wear hearing aides/devices? If yes, does the student routinely wear hearing device during instruction?		
Has the student complained about not being able to hear?		
Did school nurse conduct a hearing screener (within 1-year)? If yes, findings: _____		
Did an audiologist conduct a formal hearing test? If yes, findings: _____		
Does the student frequently request things be repeated orally, misarticulate words, move closer to the source of a sound?		
Has there been a determination between Auditory Discrimination and Hearing Difficulty?		

Sources of Data Used to Measure the Impact of this Exclusionary Factor (Circle all that apply)

Review of Records   Parent Information   Health Screener   Teacher Information
Classroom Observation   Audiologist Report   Student Interview   Tests of Oral Language
Informal Hearing Test

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EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS CHECKLIST-REVISED FOR COVID-19
(STEPHENS & MOON, 2020)

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EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS CHECKLIST-REVISED FOR COVID-19
(STEPHENS & MOON, 2020)

SLD Exclusionary Factors Checklist

EXCLUSIONARY FACTOR: EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE	Yes	No
Does the student have a documented history of behavioral difficulties?		
Are the student's learning problems primarily the result of his/her behavior?		
Have behavioral interventions been tried and progress monitoring data collected? If yes, findings:		
List interventions attempted:		
Updated psychological assessment? Y / N Date		
Observations of behaviors in multiple settings? Findings?		
Is there a history of a lack of motivation?		
Emotional stress: Loss of parent/family member, loss of home, placement in foster care system, or other traumatic life event?		

Sources of Data Used to Measure the Impact of this Exclusionary Factor *(Circle all that apply)*

Review of Records   Parent Information   Health Screener   Teacher Information
Classroom Observation   Psychological Report   Student Interview   Work Samples
Intelligence/Cognitive Test   Achievement Test   Tests of Oral Language   RTI Data
COVID -19 Impact Checklist   Behavioral Checklists

EXCLUSIONARY FACTOR: CULTURAL	Yes	No
Is the student from a culture other than that dominant in the school, community, or society where the student resides?		
Are there conflicting educational and behavioral expectations for the student between school and family?		
Does the student have limited experience in the culture?		
Is the student new to the United States? If so, how long has he/she been in the United States?		
How long has student been exposed to the school system in the United States?		
Was the student enrolled in school prior to entering the United States? If so, how long?		
Does the student have limited experience being taught in English?		
Has there been miscommunication between parents and school due to cultural and/or ethnic differences?		
Are parents less involved due to cultural and/or language barriers?		
Were previously administered standardized assessments validated taking into consideration the student's culture?		
Does the student have limited involvement in groups, associations, and activities?		

Sources of Data Used to Measure the Impact of this Exclusionary Factor *(Circle all that apply)*

Review of Educational Records   Parent Information   Teacher Information
Classroom Observation   Student Interview

COMMENTS:

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SLD Exclusionary Factors Checklist

EXCLUSIONARY FACTOR: ECONOMICALY and/or ENVIRONMENTAL DISADVANTAGED	Yes	No
Does the student reside in an economically depressed area?		
Does the family have a low family income?		
Do the parents work multiple jobs and have limited time for involvement?		
How much access has the student had to educational resources and materials at home (technology-computer, I-pad or tablet, smart phone, video gaming systems-underline all that apply)? **Minimal, Moderate or Extensive** (circle one)		
Does the student have adequate access to health and nutrition (annual visits to dr., dentist, free or reduced lunch)?		
Does the student have appropriate monitoring and supervision at home (to include routine times for school work and meals, adequate supervision, academic learning, and bedtime)?		
Is the child exposed to a large number of at-risk factors (e.g., violence, crime, pollution, excessive number of people in the home, homelessness-past or present, etc.)?		
Does the student have access to environmental conditions conducive to learning (e.g., space to study, adequate sleep, etc.)?		
Does the student have adequate opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities (e.g., boy scouts, girl scouts, team sports, etc.)?		
Has the student had adequate opportunity for educational experiences (trips to the museum, library, zoo, etc.)?		
Is there a history or current status of homelessness with student or family?		
Are the parent or guardian unable to provide educational support?		
Do circumstances prevent the student from having treatment (e.g., glasses replaced, tutoring, prescriptions filled)?		
Is there a history of educational neglect?		
Is there a history of frequent transition (e.g., joint custody)?		
Are there lifestyle factors that might undermine the student's academic performance? Explain:		

Sources of Data Used to Measure the Impact of this Exclusionary Factor *(Circle all that apply)*

Review of Records   Parent Information   Health Screener   Teacher Information
Classroom Observation   Doctor's Report   Student Interview   Work Samples
Free or Reduced Lunch   Coded At-risk   Attendance Record   COVID -19 Impact Checklist

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Continuing On...

Reducing Disproportionality by Investigating Language for All Students

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Importance of Investigating Language

Language is an integral component of the SLD definition

Significant Impact language has on academic performance

Exclusionary Factor –Limited English Proficiency

Important component of reading, writing, and mathematics

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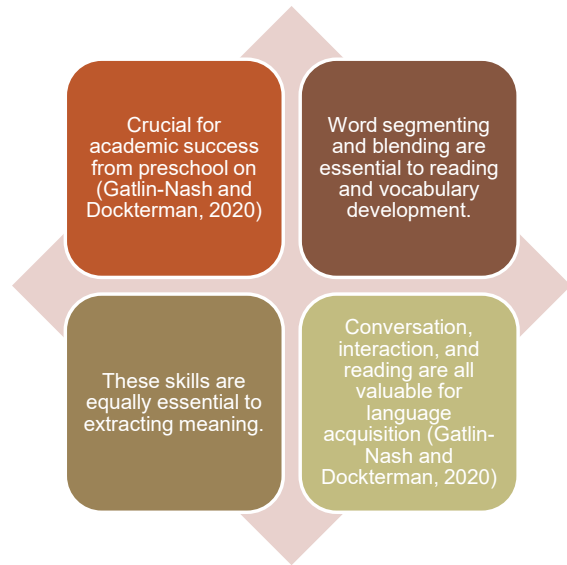
Definition of SLD

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…. 34 CFR,300.8 (c) (10)

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Importance of Language Development

Crucial for academic success from preschool on (Gatlin-Nash and Dockterman, 2020)

Word segmenting and blending are essential to reading and vocabulary development.

These skills are equally essential to extracting meaning.

Conversation, interaction, and reading are all valuable for language acquisition (Gatlin-Nash and Dockterman, 2020)

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Language and Reading

Theories of Reading

Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990)

Word Recognition x Language Comprehension

Reading Comprehension

Language and Reading

Theories of Reading

Rope Model of Reading (Hollis S. Scarborough, 2001)
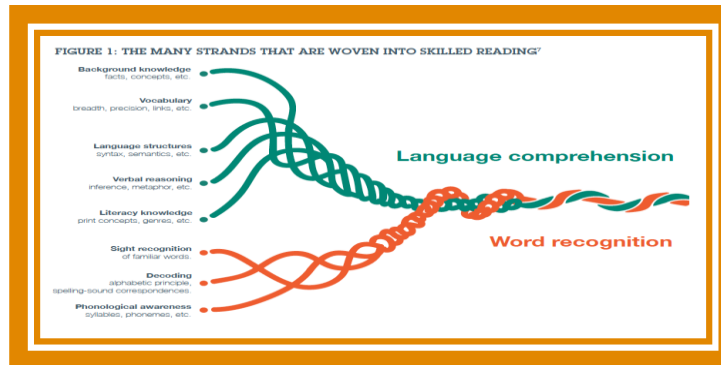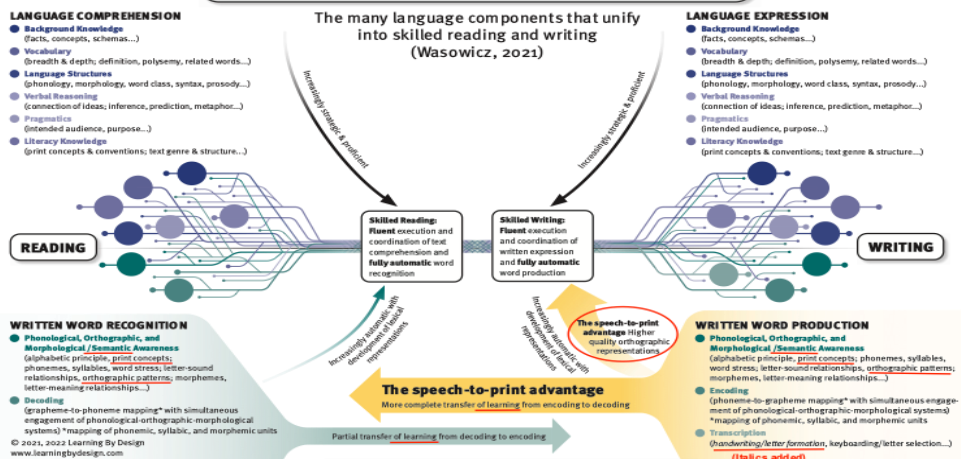
Language & Early Math Learning

» Math learning starts with concepts of quantity, size and comparisons, and the words that represent numbers. According to Mazzocco and Thomas (2005), math learning starts with counting physical objects with parents or caretakers, understanding concepts of greater than and less than, full and empty by playing with food or toys, and general ideas of mass with bigger or smaller. It's important to note that none of these math skills require numerals, instead, they require language. The learning of early math skills is based on *creating a connection between language and physical objects.* Examples include:

» A child being asked if they would like more snacks.

» A parent counting a young child's toes.

» A child presented with a big toy car and a small toy car and asked, "Which toy car is the biggest?"

Language & Math Word Problems

» Connections between language and symbolic representations of numerals and math operations is key in understanding a word problem. Examples of ways language deficits may impact student's performance on word problems include:

  ◊ Lack of understanding what operation or operations (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division) are represented by the language of the problem, when it is not explicitly stated.

  ◊ Lacking language skills to identify past, present, future, possession, direction, pronouns, and verbs used within the context of the word problem.

  ◊ **Example:** *Jack had two apples, he ate one, he plans to buy another tomorrow morning. How many apples will Jack have tomorrow?*

  ◊ Inability to link characters in word problem to pronoun usage (he, she, they).

  ◊ The concept of "less than" is presented in many ways (e.g., smaller than, fewer than, lower than) to indicate one quantity is less than another.

Impact of Low SES on Student's Language

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SES and Language Development – Research

SES environments impact language and communication skills in children

Children from lower-SES families show slower vocabulary growth relative to their higher-SES peers; these differences persist into the school years

Research shows a variation in parents' speech to children – as a function of SES – relates to children's language development.

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SES and Language Development – Research

- » Hart & Risley (1995) Study
- » "30 Million Word Gap"
- » Dramatic differences in the amount that parents talk to their young children as a function of SES
- » Estimates by age 4, children from professional families hear a total of 45 million words on average, while children living in poverty hear 13 million words on average
- » Quantitative differences in parents' language input have been shown to uniquely predict aspects of children's language development, such as vocabulary growth and speed in processing familiar words

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Basic Interpersonal Language Skills (BICS) & Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Insights extracted from Elizabeth Cohen Hamblet

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CALP and Jim Cummins

Developed by Jim Cummins (1979)

Cummins argued that everyone is able to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in a first language regardless of IQ, or academic aptitude.

Cummins also believed there is a continuum between language and cognition, moving from the development of "social language proficiency" to "academic language proficiency" and then to academic achievement.

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BICS versus CALP

» **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)** are the language skills need in social situations
  ◊ The interactive language we use on a daily basis
» BICS is essential for students to interact with their peers beyond the classroom
  ◊ At recess, playing sports, at lunch or socializing
» BICS does not require a great deal of cognitive resources

BICS versus CALP

» **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** is skills essential to academic achievement
  ◊ Includes listening, reading, speaking, and writing about subject matter
  ◊ Also includes the abilities to infer, classify, compare evaluate and synthesize language to adequately understand content
» Become proficient in CALP language skills requires time and patience
  ◊ It can take between five and seven years to acquire a sufficient skills level to excel academically
  ◊ When students lack prior experience and/or support, it can take up to ten years to acquire these skills

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Language Type	BICS (Social Language)	CALP (Academic Language)
Description	• Everyday use • Social interaction • Less specialized • Less cognitive demanding • Used in a social setting • Requires an understanding of cultural and social norms, including nonverbal cues	• Academic • Used in the classroom for reading and writing tasks • More cognitive demanding due to complex vocabulary and grammar structures • Requires specialized knowledge
Acquisition	• Can develop in 3-5 years	• Proficiency can develop in minimum of 4-7 years
Example	• Engage in an informal, face-to-face conversation • Writing a social media post • Texting • Reading a menu	• Defining a scientific term • Explaining how to solve a math problem • Comparing and contrasting art • Summarizing a research paper

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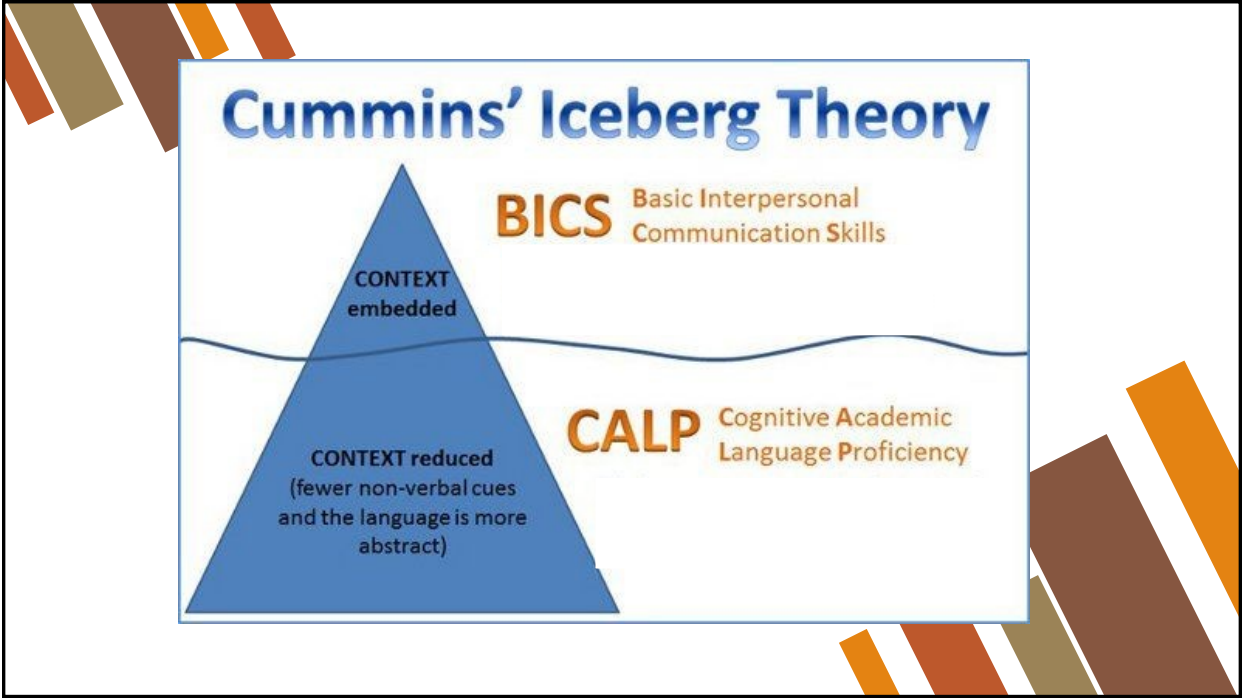
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Social Language	Academic Language
The rocket took off late.	The launch of Apollo 13 was delayed.
Live	Survive
Can I eat this mushroom?	Is this mushroom edible?
The country didn't have any money.	Government funds were depleted.
This is right.	This answer is correct.
Without purpose.	Desultory
The same	Equal

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Cummins' Model of Academic Language

Cognitively Undemanding

A.
•Art, music, PE
•Following simple directions
•Face-to-face conversations

C.
•Telephone conversations
•Note on refrigerator
•Written directions

Context Embedded

Context Reduced

B.
•Demonstrations
•A-V assisted lesson
•Science experiments
•Social studies projects

D.
•Reading a textbook
•Explanation of new abstract concepts
•Lecture with few illustrations
•Math concepts & application

Cognitively Demanding

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WMLS III: Language Proficiency Levels

Language Proficiency Level	*W* Difference Score Range	Relative Proficiency Index (RPI)
Advanced Proficient	+11 and above	97/90 to 100/90
Proficient	-10 to + 10	74/90 to 97/90
Emerging Proficiency	-19 to -11	51/90 to 74/90
Continuing Development	-34 to -20	17/90 to 51/90
Early Development	-50 to -35	3/90 to 17/90
Initial Development	-51 and below	0/90 to 3/90

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Classroom Language Demands Observation

Classroom Language Demands Observation

Instruction

Directions: Record words used in instruction (by teacher, peer, or video) in the appropriate column during the observation. Ask target student what each word means. Record % for each column.		
Common Words (e.g., today, clock, time)	Academic Words (e.g., summarize, transfer, variable, independent)	Content Specific Words (e.g., meiosis, hypotenuse, isosceles)
% Correct	% Correct	% Correct

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Recommendations

Manage disproportionality through these best practices as extracted from the literature.

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When Conducting Evaluations

(1) Be aware of bias;

(2) Recognize that statistics are not neutral;

(3) Appreciate that categories are neither "natural" nor given;

(4) Provide clear voice and insight to findings (since data cannot "speak for itself"), and;

(5) Pursue equity in your work (see also Biddanda et al., 2018; Blanchard et al., 2021).

Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack (2018)

"Equity" means that individuals receive the resources and supports they require to be successful based only on their personal situation and individual needs (Biddanda et al., 2018).

Recognize Bias May Appear

» Bias can influence academic expectations, behavioral expectations, and interpretations of behavior (Fish, 2019b; Peterson, 2019).

◇ e.g., "Special needs children are more difficult to control or teach in mainstream classrooms" (Biddanda et al., 2018).

» Bias may be informed by the documented achievement gaps between different students; stereotypes; cultural ethos; an interpretation of a student's intentionality or motivation; etc. (Fischer, 2019b).

» Recognize bias may exist, but DO NOT be suspicious, distrusting, or accusative.

Bias Manifests in Two Forms

» **Implicit bias** is a subconscious responses that can subtly present in body language, including facial expressions, distance maintained, or eye contact. The individual is not mindful of the action or response.

» **Explicit bias** is defined as the perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs that a person consciously utilizes when evaluating members of a specific group (Blair et al., 2011; Biddanda et al., 2018; Golbeck et al., 2016; Grindal et al., 2019; Peterson, 2019).

Regularly Review Standards, Practices, & Progress

It is important to determine "(a) the appropriateness of school policies and procedures relative to legal requirements, professional standards, best practice, and research evidence along with (b) the consistency with which they are implemented to ensure that no discriminatory practice, whether intentional or unintentional, occurs" (Sullivan & Osher, 2019, p. 404).

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Managing Disproportionality Requires Change

» When evaluating and discussing outcomes, consider institutional belief systems, laws, political systems, and cultural expectations that may be inappropriately influencing decisions and recommendations (Blanchard et al., 2021).

» Unless we change how we view our students and their parents, our role as professionals, the data we collect and interpret, and the overall assessment process, we can not expect to reduce disproportionality (Blanchard et al., 2021).

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Work as a Team

» Coordinate and collaborate with all stakeholders when reviewing the data and making decisions (Biddanda et al., 2018; Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018).

» The group should collectively focus on making sound, data-driven determinations, while being creative, as well as forthcoming and honest in their work (Biddanda et al., 2018).

When Working With Students

» Have a general knowledge of the student you are dealing with (e.g., language, race, culture, behavior) (Cruz et al., 2019).

◊ This knowledge should inform your approach, methodology, decision, and recommendations.

» Build trust and rapport with the parents and students that you engage with.

» Provide insight and recommendations that are easy to understand.

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Advocate for and practice early intervention (Sullivan & Osher, 2019).

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Select Methods Carefully

» Use a variety of assessment methods for each case.

» Use valid assessment instruments which are appropriate to the student (e.g., race, culture) and their individual needs.

◊ Check to ensure norming.

» Administer formal instruments according to publisher guidelines and professional standards.

» NEVER make decisions based on a single instrument/data point.

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Collect data without bias or judgment (Davis & Southward, 2019).

Make Multiple-Sources-of-Data (MSD) Decisions

» Always make decisions based on an aggregation of the data (Biddanda et al., 2018).

» Use MSD to properly identify eligibility, areas of concern, and recommend services and/or accommodations (Blanchard et al., 2021; Kern et al., 2019).

◊ Check for bias (yours and others) when reviewing the data and making decisions (as a collective) (Blanchard et al., 2021).

◊ Use the data collected to identify the characteristics or deficits and then design accommodations that suit those (Kern et al., 2019).

By Way of Conclusion

Our profession needs to rethink how we evaluate students. We need to ensure we are making decisions based on multiple sources of data and are considering all other possibilities before placing a label on a student.

Seek professional development in the areas that you feel unknowledgeable about or uncomfortable with.

Finally and Most Importantly…

Your work should be student-centric. It should not be influenced by a school/district's desire or demand to manage disproportionality!

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Bibliography

If you would like a copy of the references cited in this presentation…

A PDF copy is available.

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Tammy.Stephens@RiversideInsights.com

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