Student Intervention Team (SIT) Referral Process

Implement and progress monitor Tier II and Tier III academic interventions in all areas of academic concern.

Complete the “Academic Exclusionary Factors Worksheet” for students who are not making comparable academic progress to peers in response to Tier II and Tier III interventions (for CLD students compare progress to CLD peers) to determine if there are barriers to learning that would indicate that the learning difficulties are primarily due to factors other than a Specific Learning Disability including visual, hearing, motor, sensory or behavioral concerns, lack of appropriate instruction, lack of English language proficiency, cultural factors, or economic disadvantage.

Generate a working hypothesis of academic and cognitive strengths and weaknesses using the “Development of Working Hypothesis Statement” to formulate a hypothesis about the nature of the difficulty and summarize and analyze a student’s data across all tiers of support and assist in determining if a learning disability is suspected. The Development of a Working Hypothesis Statements includes a selection of research based indicators of Specific Learning Disabilities; the indicators included are not exhaustive (for additional indicators see the Resources and Research Section of the manual).

Follow PPS special education pre-referral procedures for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students including reviewing the Student Intervention Team Process for CLD students and relevant ESL data (e.g., ADEPT, ELPA, IDEL, etc). For general guidelines for the evaluation of CLD students, please refer to Section 19 of the Special Education Procedures Manual -LEP Parents and ELL Students in Special Education Process. If a student is currently eligible to receive special education services under an eligibility category other than Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and the SIT Process for CLD students was not completed as a part of their initial referral for special education services, the SIT process for CLD students should be completed prior to a team referring a student for a SLD evaluation (e.g. student was initially found eligible to receive special education services under the eligibility of Communication Disorder and the team is considering a SLD evaluation). If you require consultation with interpreting the SIT CLD data, please contact Cynthia Velasquez, ESL/Special Education School Psychologist TOSA, cvelasquez@pps.net

For additional information regarding the process for determining if a disability should be suspected please refer to the Child Find Hypothesis Statement Manual.

Evaluation Planning Components

Review with the parents and other members of the IEP team current evaluation data and progress summarized on the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement” as well as additional information provided by parents and current classroom assessment(s) and observations.

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Determine if there is sufficient evidence to suspect the student has an educational disability.

Utilize the “Development of Working Hypothesis Statement” to determine needed evaluation components based on suspected weaknesses in psychological processing and achievement areas

Develop an individualized evaluation plan to assess the specific disability(s) and areas of educational need.

Elicit parent concerns regarding the evaluation plan; and

Provide copies of the written Parent Notification and the Notice of Procedural Safeguards (Parent Rights for Special Education) and obtain written consent in the parents’ native language as specified under IDEA 2004.

**Comprehensive Evaluation**

The purposes of a comprehensive evaluation are to:

- Review instructional interventions,
- Develop a clear statement of student present levels of academic achievement and functional performance,
- Determine why a student is not making adequate academic progress,
- Determine if a student meets eligibility criteria for a specific learning disability and/or other educational disabilities
- Generate an appropriate and effective plan to meet student educational needs.

**Comprehensive evaluation components:**

- **An assessment of the child’s academic achievement toward grade-level standards.** Examine scores on the student’s state testing scores or if applicable, state testing equivalency measures such as scored reading work samples. If the student has not yet taken state assessments or for additional information use standards-based report cards.

- **An observation of the child’s academic performance and behavior in a regular classroom setting or age-appropriate environment.** The observer must be a qualified member of the evaluation team but not the student’s general education teacher.

- **Progress monitoring data.** Provide data that demonstrates qualified personnel provided the student with appropriate instruction in regular education settings. This data includes information on school history, discipline, attendance, curricula used, and progress assessment methods and results. General education teachers must provide data based documentation in area(s) of suspected disability.

- **Developmental history.** For initial assessments, teams must obtain a developmental and family history and report on any relevant environmental or personal factors that affect student participation and learning (e.g., racial or historical trauma, cultural expectations, family or personal history, rural/urban
setting, language and acculturation status, etc.). Vision, hearing, and motor status information must be included.

- **Medical statement.** If a student has a medical condition that affects educational performance, the team must obtain a physician’s statement to document the condition. The evaluation report must contain a statement of how any medical condition affects student body function and structure (including psychological functions) and how this relates to the suspected disability.

- **Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) Assessments, Measures, and Processes:**

All tests that are administered for the PSW model—whether assessing psychological processes and academic achievement or social emotional status—must meet reliability and validity standards. For initial PSW evaluations, teams must complete standardized, norm-referenced achievement tests, tests of basic psychological processes, and other assessment of basic psychological processes. If a parent has concerns about the use of standardized testing, please contact your Special Education TOSA for consultation on how to proceed.

1. **Standardized, norm-referenced academic achievement test data**

   The evaluation team will conduct a standardized, norm-referenced test of academic achievement in the defined area(s) of concern:
   a. Basic reading skills
   b. Reading fluency
   c. Reading comprehension
   d. Math calculation
   e. Math problem solving
   f. Written expression
   g. Oral Expression
   h. Listening Comprehension

   On Achievement testing, a “strength” is considered a standard score of 90 or above and/or a percentile rank of at or above the 25th percentile. A “weakness” is considered a standard score of 85 or below and/or a percentile rank at or below the 16th percentile. An achievement weakness may also be established by an RPI score of 67/90. On current year state testing and standards-based report cards, “meets” is a strength, “does not meet” is a weakness, and “conditionally meets” is neither a strength nor a weakness. On state testing for prior years, a “strength” is considered a score at or above the 25th percentile and a “weakness” is considered a score of at or below the 16th percentile. On progress monitoring, a “strength” is considered a score at or above the 25th percentile or “core” and a weakness is considered below the 16th percentile or “intensive”. Standard scores between 86 and 89 and/or percentiles between the 17th and 24th percentile are considered neither a strength nor a weakness.

2. **Standardized, norm-referenced objective assessments of basic psychological processes.**

Cognitive test selection for CLD students should be guided by the referral concern, the student’s cultural and language background, and by the Culture-Language Test Classifications (X-BASS software, Ortiz, Flannagan, Olfonso, 2015). Evaluations should
be comprehensive and measure all required related and suspected processing areas relevant to the referral concern. Nonverbal tests may be administered as a part of the assessment, but due to the limited processing areas measured by most nonverbal assessments, supplemental testing will also be needed. Nonverbal assessments administered should also be classified using the C-LTC as these tests are not culture free and are also mediated by language. Native language testing may also be administered, though it is important to note that the normative populations for these tests are not always reflective of most of our CLD student’s backgrounds as some of the tests were normed on a monolingual population outside of the USA. Test score validity will also be impacted by the use of an interpreter/auxiliary examiner if this was not a part of the standardization of the test. Tests should be administered in a manner necessary to ensure full comprehension including use of any modifications and alterations necessary to reduce barriers to performance, while documenting approach to tasks, errors in responding, and behavior during testing, and analyze scores both quantitatively and qualitatively to confirm and validate areas as true weaknesses.

Assessment of basic psychological processes is required to meet the federal definition of a learning disability. An objective norm referenced assessment must be administered in order to establish a processing weakness. On individually administered, standardized, norm-referenced tests of basic psychological processes, a “strength” is considered a standard score of 90 or above and/or a percentile rank of at or above the 25th percentile. A “weakness” is considered a standard score of 80 or below and/or a percentile rank at or below the 9th percentile. Professional judgment is needed to classify psychological process scores of 81-89. Depending on the student’s individual testing profile, scores of 85-89 may be classified as a “strength”, a “weakness”, or as “neither” a strength or a weakness. Depending on the student’s individual profile, scores of 81-85 may be classified as a “weakness” or as “neither” a strength or a weakness.

If a psychological process test cluster score is not cohesive, due to a significant difference that is unusual in the testing population between subtest scores that comprise the cluster, an additional subtest will be administered and the X-BASS software (Flanagan, Ortiz, Alfonso, 2015) will be used to calculate a psychological process composite score. The X-BASS composite score is calculated using the subtest scores and median cross battery inter-correlations and reliabilities. The software will determine if a score is an outlier and will not use this score in the calculation of the composite score.

Standardized, norm-referenced tests of basic psychological processes are also used to determine if a student’s cognitive abilities facilitating learning (CAFL) is consistent with a pattern of strengths and weakness that is relevant to the identification of a Specific Learning Disability:

The criteria below is used to determine if a student’s CAFL is consistent with a pattern of strengths and weakness that is relevant to the identification of a Specific Learning Disability:

- Full Scale, GAI, Gf-Gc, MPI, or NVI ≥ SS 90
- X-BASS software gValue ≥ .6 The gValue is calculated by the X-BASS software using the sum of the “g-weights” (values that indicate the relative contribution of each ability to overall cognitive functioning) associated with each area of cognitive strength.
- Gf and/or Gc ≥ SS85 if there is a related cognitive processing weakness that is at least 10 points below the Gf or Gc score & there is confirmation of research based Specific Learning Disability indicators including confirmed “Development of Working Hypothesis Statements”

**Standardized Testing for CLD Students**

Evaluation results for CLD students should be analyzed using the Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) and the X-BASS software should be used to determine if the test results indicate a valid or invalid pattern and whether or not test results are subject to further interpretation. The first step in using the C-LIM software is to select the level of cultural and linguistic difference of the student you are assessing. There are three levels to choose from; slightly, moderately, and markedly, different and guiding descriptors for each level. To determine if scores are valid, the subtest scores are entered into the C-LIM and are classified based on the degree of cultural and language loading of the subtest. After entering in scores, three general declining patterns may emerge which would indicate that the results are primarily the result of culture and/or language and are therefore invalid and are not indicative of a disability:

1. Scores decline and fall within the shaded region on the Cultural and Linguistic Influences Graph
2. Scores decline and fall within the shaded region on the Linguistic Influences Graph
3. Scores decline and fall within the shaded region on the Cultural Influences Graph

If none of the above patterns are present, the C-LIM should be used to assist in determining CAFL and strengths and weaknesses for CLD students. The following patterns may emerge on the C-LIM which would indicate valid results and the possibility of a specific learning disability (Ortiz, 2014):

1. Overall pattern generally appears to decline and is within the shaded region on the Culture and Linguistic Influences, Linguistic Influences, or Cultural Influences Graphs, with one bar on the graph below the shaded region. If the above conditions are met, a related processing area weakness may indicate a valid processing weakness (except for Gc*).
2. Overall pattern does not appear to decline and all bars are within or above the shaded region on the Culture and Linguistic Influences, Linguistic Influences, or Cultural Influences Graphs. If the above conditions are met, a related processing area weakness may indicate a valid processing weakness (except for Gc*).
3. Overall pattern does not appear to decline and is within the shaded region on the Culture and Linguistic Influences, Linguistic Influences, or Cultural Influences Graphs, with one bar on the graph below the shaded region. If the above conditions are met, a related processing area weakness may indicate a valid processing weakness (except for Gc*).

*Gc should only be indicated as a potential area of weakness if the subtest results fall below the shaded range on the Culture and Linguistic Influences or Linguistic Influences graph and/or in context of other data and information. Weakness must also be confirmed using performance data as indicated on the hypothesis statements, observations, and/or
behavior checklists. Interpretation of performance assessment results should also take into account cultural and language factors.

3. **Performance of basic psychological processes:**

Results from cognitive testing must be confirmed by assessments that document the same psychological processing weakness or weaknesses in the general education classroom or other learning environment. This also includes subjective normative measures including rating scales.

4. **Other assessment(s) related to cognition, fine motor skills, perceptual motor skills, communication, social/emotional status, perception, or memory:**

Some students with learning disabilities also have sensory-motor concerns. If a student’s sensory-motor skills, including their fine motor skills, appear to be impacting their educational progress, teams should consider including an occupational therapist as a part of the evaluation planning to determine if assessment in the area of sensory-motor is needed.

Twelve to twenty-four percent of students with dyslexia also have ADHD. If a student is suspected of having an Other Health Impairment, including students where ADHD is suspected due to deficits in one or more of the following psychological processing areas: attention, executive functions, processing speed, and working memory, an evaluation must include a medical statement.

If a student is suspected of having an intellectual disability, an evaluation must include an adaptive behavior rating scale and other necessary assessments. If teams have reason to suspect that a student has social or emotional challenges, teams should conduct additional assessment for social/emotional needs, including functional behavioral assessment when appropriate, and then recommend subsequent behavioral instruction and/or counseling.

If the student meets the SLD eligibility criteria and also meets other disability eligibility category criteria, professional judgement should be used to determine the most appropriate eligibility category(ies).

**Interpretation of Evaluation Data**

- **Analyze** the data to determine if the student is not achieving adequately in four domains:
  1) Achievement relative to age;
  2) Performance relative to age;
  3) Achievement relative to state standards; and
  4) Performance relative to state standards

The student must have a documented “weakness” on a standardized, norm-referenced test of achievement (achievement relative to age); and this score must be corroborated by other academic data including:

1) Empirically-derived criterion assessments (e.g. easy CBM, DIBELS) including

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those used in the RTI process;
2) Results from the State Test and/or State Test equivalency measure;
3) Results from curriculum/grade leveled assessments and standards-based report cards
4) Anecdotal information such as work samples, tests from the curriculum used in the classroom; portfolio assessment, teacher observation, specialist observations, developmental history, “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement”, and teacher report.

- **Examine** the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement” and results from measures of basic psychological processes in two domains:

  1) Achievement relative to intellectual development
  2) Performance relative to intellectual development.

The student must have a documented “weakness” in a basic psychological process (or processes) on a standardized, norm-referenced test of cognition, language or neuropsychology; this score must be corroborated by one additional point of evidence from any of the following four performance of basic psychological processing areas:

  1) Standardized behavior rating scale,
  2) Semi-structured observation or interview,
  3) Classroom and testing observation, or
  4) Confirmed psychological processing indicators on the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement”

The student’s cognitive abilities facilitating learning should also be consistent with a pattern of strengths and weaknesses relevant to the identification of a Specific Learning Disability.

- **Determine** if there is a relationship between the academic weakness and the cognitive weakness using the Cognitive to Achievement GRID. **If there is a relationship between the academic and cognitive weakness**

- **Use the following method(s) to help determine if the student has a PSW.**

- **Examine** results from the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement”. Determine the relationship between the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement” and the results obtained from standardized academic measures, history, and observations. Confirm or disconfirm the working hypotheses for both academics and psychological processes. Consider if the student has a neurologically based learning disability based on this data taking into account both academic deficits and a related deficit (or deficits) in basic psychological processes.

- **Consider and integrate** results from observations, histories, medical, and social/emotional assessment;

- **Review** exclusionary factors when considering the student’s performance;

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- **Consult** (e.g., TOSAs, PSW Committee Members, Technical Assistant) to review hypotheses for students who may not fit the methods above (e.g. gifted, CLD students) but who may still require identification, instruction, and/or accommodations.

- **Report** all assessment findings in either a team or individual report format.

- **Link** assessment results to appropriate intervention and/or accommodations.

**Eligibility**

- **Provide** written Parental Notification in the parent’s native language as specified under IDEIA 2004 and invite parents to attend the eligibility meeting -- i.e., IEP.

- **Ensure** members of the team attend the eligibility determination meeting, including the parents, and two or more professionals, and all professionals who conducted an assessment component.

- **Review** the evaluation data to ensure the team has gathered information from all appropriate sources and, further, the evaluation information is documented, understood, and carefully considered.

- **Elicit** parent input regarding eligibility. Parents should receive verbal and written notification in their native language of their right to agree or disagree with eligibility decisions and to receive appropriate eligibility documentation.

- **Follow** the procedures in the Determination of Eligibility.

- **Determine** student eligibility by following District procedures and the applicable state Administrative Rules for Special Education.

- **Document** in IEP Meeting Notes and Prior Notice of Special Education Action all conclusions including a statement of eligibility for special education, any relevant discussion of inconsistencies in data or participant conclusions, and a record of the discussion regarding the significance of cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, environmental factors and the student behaviors and learning factors related to the assessment data.

- **Schedule** an Initial IEP and Placement meeting for students who meet eligibility requirements (in some cases, eligibility and IEP meetings do not need to be separate meetings, but may be done consecutively).

- **Use** information to draft standards-based Individual Education Programs. Use confirmed results from the “Development of a Working Hypothesis Statement” to target instruction in curricula used. Use information from assessment of cognitive and non-cognitive factors to draft standards-based IEPs including appropriate instruction and accommodations.

- **Refer** students who do not meet the Special Education eligibility requirements or who have learning difficulties that result from exclusionary factors, to the
building’s Student Intervention Team for appropriate Tier II and Tier III instructional interventions and progress monitoring based on evaluation findings

**Three Year Re-Evaluations**
At three-year re-evaluations, IEP team members are directed to determine whether the student continues to need specialized instruction and document how the need for specialized instruction was established on the Prior Notice of Special Education Action. Teams must not be discouraged from completing additional assessments if they determine a need for the information. Teams should examine previous evaluations and note any concerns with the validity of the testing and previous teams’ recommendations. Teams also may decide they do not have enough information from previous testing to establish that a pattern of strengths and weaknesses exists, and/or they have determined that this information has current relevance to academic needs.