



Idaho's Specific Learning Disability Criteria – Question and Answer

Question: I assume that in Idaho, the special education teacher and the school psychologist combine to form the evaluation team. How does Idaho assure that the educational testing is impartial when the special education teacher conducting the testing may also “get” the newly identified child as a student?

Idaho Answer: Our eligibility process requires the use of standardized academic achievement assessments as a part of the evaluation. Special education teachers are trained in the administration of these measures, and because they will develop and deliver instructional plans, they have a strong interest in learning as much as possible about the student's unique needs. As a part of our training efforts, we work very hard with districts and schools to help them allocate instructional resources in a way that will support the needs of their students. In other words we hope that they use more targeted intervention rather than just 'more' intervention time.

Question: Please elaborate on the role of a literacy coach.

Idaho Answer: Each district / school decides on the roles of the various educators on their team, but some ways in which we've seen this work really effectively is to have the literacy coach support the development of a strong Tier 2 (intervention) system. By supporting teachers in working with students at-risk for poor reading outcomes, the literacy coach plays an important role in the instructional process. To do this, the literacy coach is responsible for managing the data collection (teachers collect data, but the literacy coach is there to provide support as needed), provide some targeted intervention (in schools where resources are limited), and work with Tier 1 instruction to ensure that it is well designed and meeting the needs of most students.

Question: I would like to hear more about the fidelity checks.

Idaho Answer: Do you mean fidelity to RTI or Tier 1, 2 or 3 curriculum /instruction? The school or district leaders make sure that the curriculum / instruction is delivered with fidelity and the RTI process is implemented with fidelity. For fidelity to RTI we use the Integrity Rubric developed in conjunction with the National RTI Center.



Question: Can you mention what nationally normed assessments are used in Idaho as part of the initial academic achievement assessment?

Idaho Answer: We've conducted state reviews of the SLD eligibility files received over the last two years and have compiled a list of all of the assessments that are in use statewide. It would be impossible to list them all here, but the most commonly used include the Woodcock Johnson III, WIAT III, CTOPP, TOWRE, Key Math as well as many, many others.

Question: Does Idaho use assessment information solely to determine eligibility or is the discrepancy formula also used?

Idaho Answer: Idaho's SLD eligibility criteria are based on a preponderance of evidence model rather than on a discrepancy formula. Assessment information is collected to demonstrate evidence of the particular criteria and then interpreted by the multi-disciplinary team.

Question: In your system students receive core instruction in Tiers 1 and 2 (supplemental or targeted) do they also receive intensive instructional intervention for a designated period of time prior to the recommendation for evaluation as a student with a suspected disability? How long do they receive the intensive intervention prior to recommending the special education evaluation?

Idaho Answer: Our state policy does not specify that intervention has to occur for a specific length of time, rather the team should be collecting data and based on what their data is telling them. Based on the data, they may choose to 1) exit the student from intervention, 2) continue with intervention, 3) make instructional changes, or 4) consider a comprehensive evaluation.

Question: What instruments are typically used to assess psychological processes in your state?

Idaho Answer: In Idaho, LEA's are allowed to purchase and use any instruments that best fit the situation and concerns presented through the evaluation process. We have seen districts start with either a WJ Cognitive or WISC-IV, but typically select other instruments to help narrow down the concern and help make the connections to academic deficit(s) as well as intervention and core instruction concerns. The SEA does not endorse any master list of assessments for use.



Question: So students remain in Tier 2 or 3 as a general ed student for a specific period of time before recommendation for special ed evaluation?

Idaho Answer: Our policy does not specify a required amount of time spent in intervention - decisions to refer are based on the data collected by the team.

Question: Is benchmarking established through screening from programs on computers?

Idaho Answer: Districts set their own guidelines for what tools they use, and some districts do use computer based programs to collect this data.

Question: Good point on the challenge of this framework being a paradigm shift. Can you provide 1-2 examples of how any districts have been able to effectively involve all stakeholders to buy in?

Idaho Answer: Our staff development has been directed toward district leadership teams that include board members and parents. In our Superintendent Network we also work on how to establish buy in for RTI or other initiatives. We also require that schools send teams that include not only special education teachers and school psychologists, but also principals and general education teachers. In addition to the outreach done through PD, the SEA has made SLD a primary focus of the Idaho Results Work for the new part of the OSEP State Verification Visits. The Idaho Results Work includes presentations about SLD to parents, school boards, principals, superintendents, SAP, and others throughout the State.

Question: What programs do you use to monitor progress in reading and math?

Idaho Answer: We provide PD on how to select good research-based screening and progress monitoring tools. The district teams then make decisions based on a variety of criteria, such as their population, resources, etc. Our folks have used the 'consumer reports' in the tools section of IDAHO as guidance. We do encourage districts to use common tools across their schools.

Question: If a parent writes a letter requesting a CSE (committee on special education) evaluation, must Tier 2 and 3 interventions take place prior to conducting that evaluation- knowing that this will delay the testing for a period of 15 weeks?



Idaho Answer: No. If a parent makes the request, the LEA will consider the request based upon the information available. The important aspect to remember here is that LEA's are continually in the process of progress monitoring students, so information is always available. If no Tier 2 or Tier 3 information is available, the student may have not demonstrated a need for that level of service. Also important to note, a parental request for evaluation does not equal finding a student eligible for special education services.

Question: Are special education teachers allowed to provide direct the instructional interventions for students not identified as special education with an IEP?

Idaho Answer: Yes, it is possible. It is a decision that is based upon the resource planning done through the building's school wide process via the building leadership team. Several factors would be taken into consideration, including looking at the performance data available through the building's academic screenings, as well as who is the best person to provide the decided upon intervention. Typically in LEA's, we see a variety of a students receiving intervention with some of those being SPED and others that are not. The building uses data to manage and change the groups as necessary.

Question: Are special ed teachers allowed to provide direct instructional interventions for students e.g. tier 2-3 not identified as special ed with an IEP?

Participant Comment: In Iowa we are not allowed to have our special education teachers work with non-identified students, period. It is considered an inappropriate use of special education funds.

Idaho Answer: Yes, it is possible. It is a decision that is based upon the resource planning done through the building's school wide process via the building leadership team. Several factors would be taken into consideration, including looking at the performance data available through the building's academic screenings, as well as who is the best person to provide the decided upon intervention. Typically in LEA's, we see a variety of a students receiving intervention with some of those being SPED and others that are not. The building uses data to manage and change the groups as necessary

Question: If there is compelling diagnostic evidence to suggest a highly intensive, "Tier 3" intervention to address reading skills, do schools have the flexibility to schedule 120-180 mins of daily instruction at the expense of other core content areas?



Idaho Answer: Schools have the flexibility to design intervention in ways that support the needs of their students.

Question: How does Idaho make sure district level TEAMS are in place? And ultimately who is in charge of establishing school level RTI Teams?

Participant Comment: In Iowa, RTI is not implemented statewide. Next year however it will be mandated that each school district use RTI. Ultimately RTI is a general education initiative and each school has to develop this on their own.

Idaho Answer: RTI is not an initiative in our state, so we do not make sure that they are in place - rather, we work to support districts implementing RTI. We encourage districts to identify a team charged with implementing RTI - this helps facilitate the process across and within schools. In general, schools decide on the best team structure for their particular setting and context.

Question: General education initiative and no money to implement, correct?

Idaho Answer: We tend to find that RTI is best practice and good for students. While additional funding is always helpful, often times a reallocation of existing resources can be just as effective to meet the needs of students. There is some additional time needed for PD in the beginning, but RTI takes place as part of the normal instructional process. We have found that schools are working hard to make efficient use of resources, and we actively work with schools to help focus their work on improving instruction.

Question: In Idaho if a student receives differentiated core math or reading 60 mins instruction with a general ed teacher and supplemental Tier 2 math or reading instruction with a GE teacher 30-60 minutes AND intensive Tier 3 1:1 or 1:2 with a literacy specialist or math coach and the student is doing well, do you drop the suggestion that the student may have a disability? Or recommend evaluation anyway to provide federal Spec ed rights?

Participant Comment: I think if you are spending that much time in tier 3 interventions, the student probably does have a disability and needs those intense interventions to be continue under an IEP using IDEA funds.

Participant Comment: I agree. It would appear that we would be inadvertently bypassing their



right to the specially designed instruction that can be provided by the spec. ed teacher if they do indeed qualify for special ed service if intensive Tier 3 was prolonged.

Participant Comment: To me it would be a question of whether or not the amount of resources needed to help the student continue making progress is reasonable and can be maintained through general education. If it cannot be, then maybe look at identification for special education services.

Participant Comment: As a part of our training efforts, we work very hard with districts and schools to help them allocate instructional resources in a way that will support the needs of their students. In other words we hope that they use more targeted intervention rather than just 'more' intervention time.

Idaho Answer: At some point, the intervention may become so intense and/or individualized that it becomes unreasonable to sustain in general education alone. Because each situation is different, it is hard to answer your question directly - ultimately, the school and district need to review the data to make those determinations.

Question: I think it should be a general education initiative. RTI is really response to instruction. Tier 1 is core instruction and then teachers should differentiate their instruction based on the needs of the students in the class.

Idaho Answer: That is the way it is viewed here. RTI is a structure for school improvement in Idaho and our state RTI folks are part of our state-wide system of support.

Question: At a NASP conference, a speaker discussed the need for connecting researched based interventions with the psychological processing deficits that the student with learning disabilities may have. Are there some resources that you can share where we can find more interventions for student identified with a LD? Since our RTI intervention system is so comprehensive in regular education, we really need to closely connect the interventions with the deficits to ensure individualized instruction is provided.

Idaho Answer: There is an upcoming conference in March in Seattle that is related to this very issue - Nancy Mather and a host of other experts in the field will be presenting. Please see: [Rehab Seminars 2012](#)
