



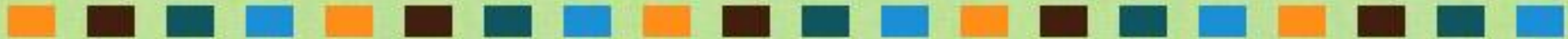
An Update on Learning Disabilities

Laura Kaloi, Director, Public Policy

Sheldon H. Horowitz, Director, LD Resources & Essential Information

Parent Centers Webinar

January 12, 2012



National Center *for* Learning Disabilities
The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

Overview for Today's Webinar

- Latest information on students with learning disabilities (LD), including key findings from NCLD's newly updated *State of Learning Disabilities* report;
- Key research driving school practices including full implementation of response to intervention/multi-tier system of supports
- Federal policy discussion of students with disabilities as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization and state flexibility requests;
- Ways we can work together to support the interest of students with LD.



National Center *for* Learning Disabilities

The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

NCLD works to ensure that the nation's 15 million children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities have every opportunity to succeed in school, work and life.

Board

- *Provides essential information to parents and teachers*

Advisors

- *Develops and delivers programs for early identification, intervention and support*

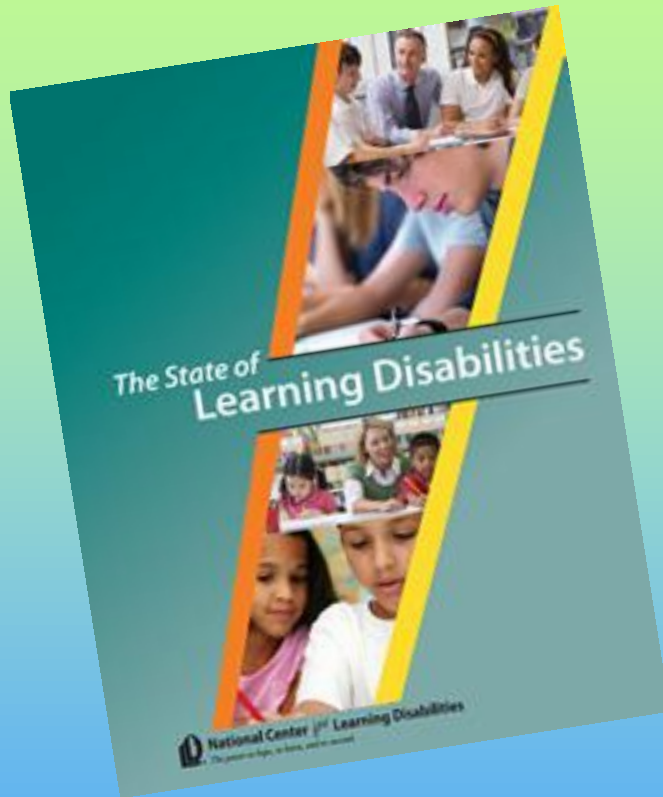
Staff

- *Advocates for policies to strengthen and promote educational opportunities*

Advocates

The State of Learning Disabilities: *Facts, Trends and Indicators*

Only comprehensive examination of LD in the U.S. and the impact on educational achievement and obtaining and maintaining employment.



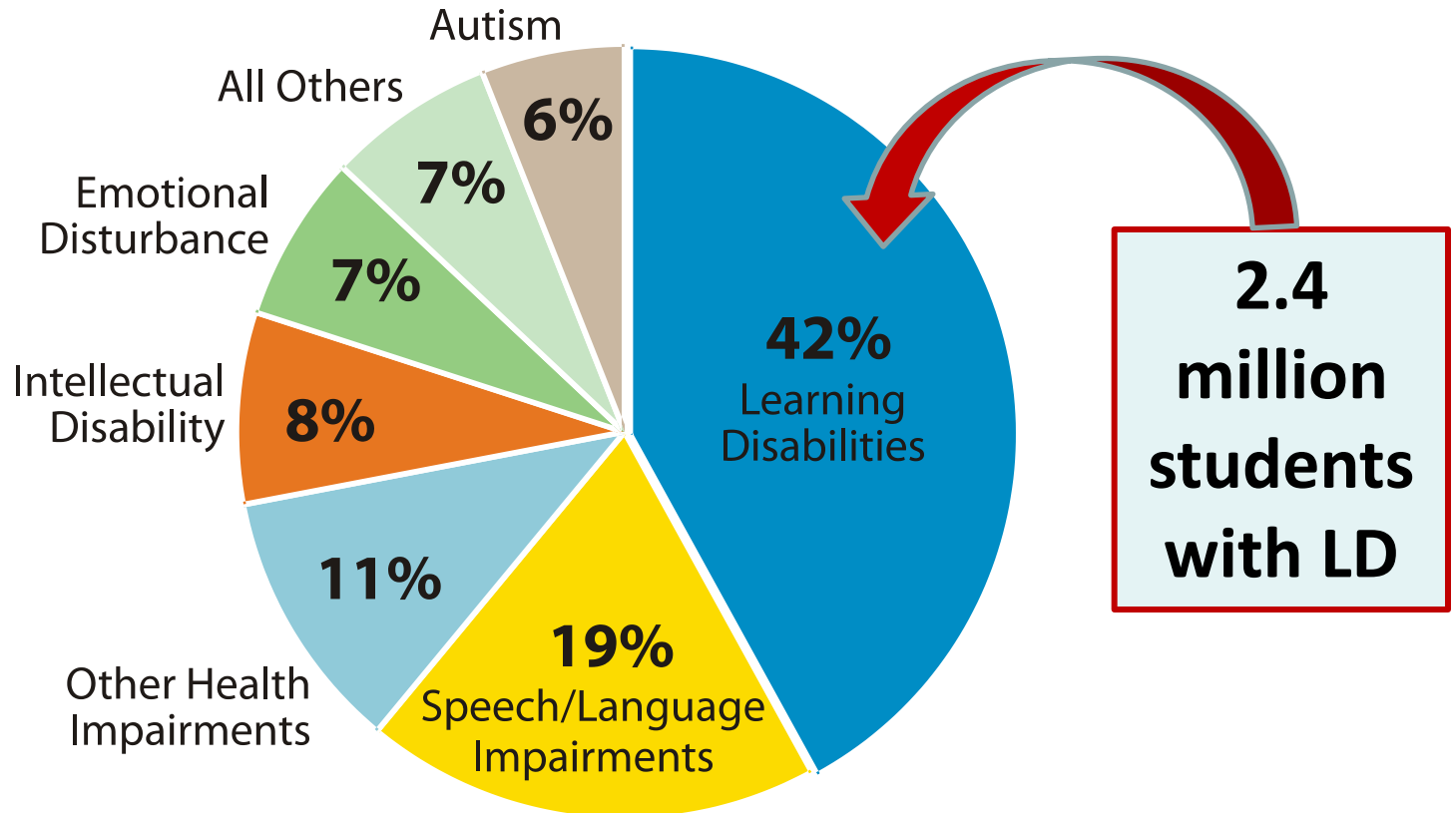
www.LD.org/stateofld



LD in the Schools

Special education students
by IDEA disability
category
Ages 6-21
2009

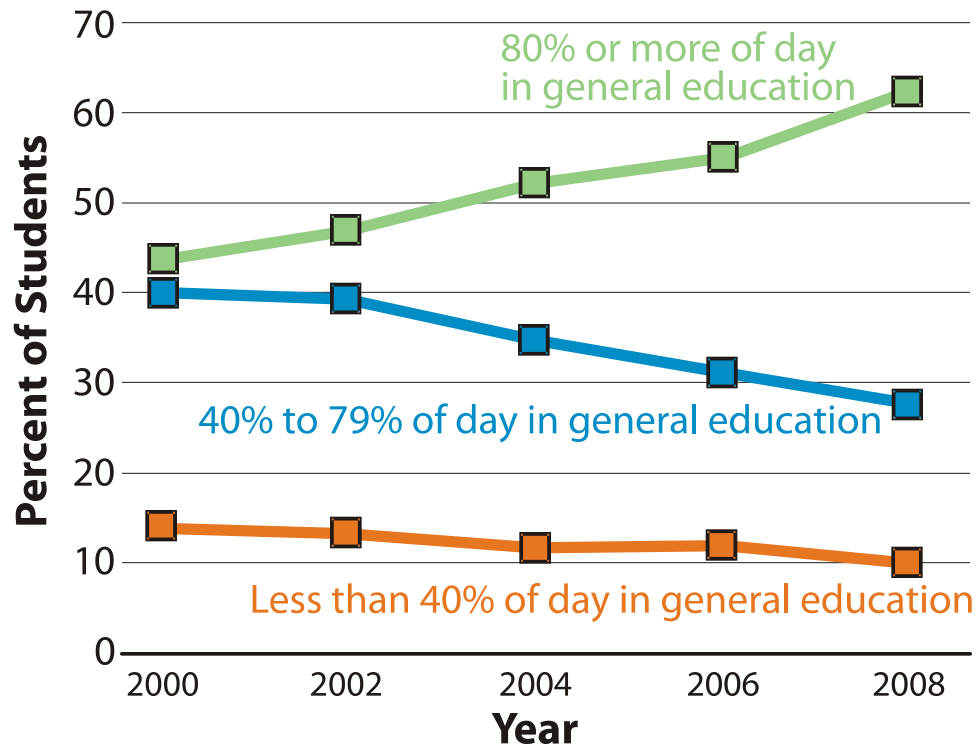
5.9 million IDEA-eligible students





LD in the Schools

Where students with LD spend their school day, 2000-2008

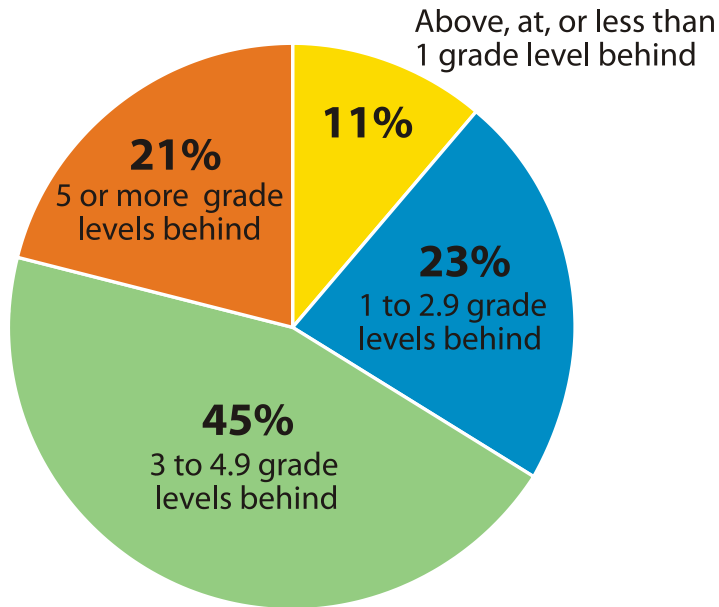




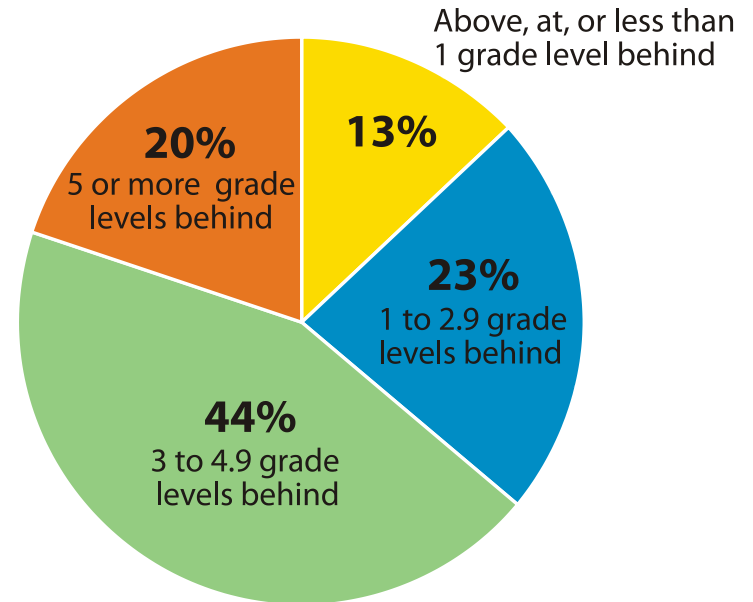
LD in the Schools

Secondary students with LD Discrepancy between tested and actual grade level

READING



MATH

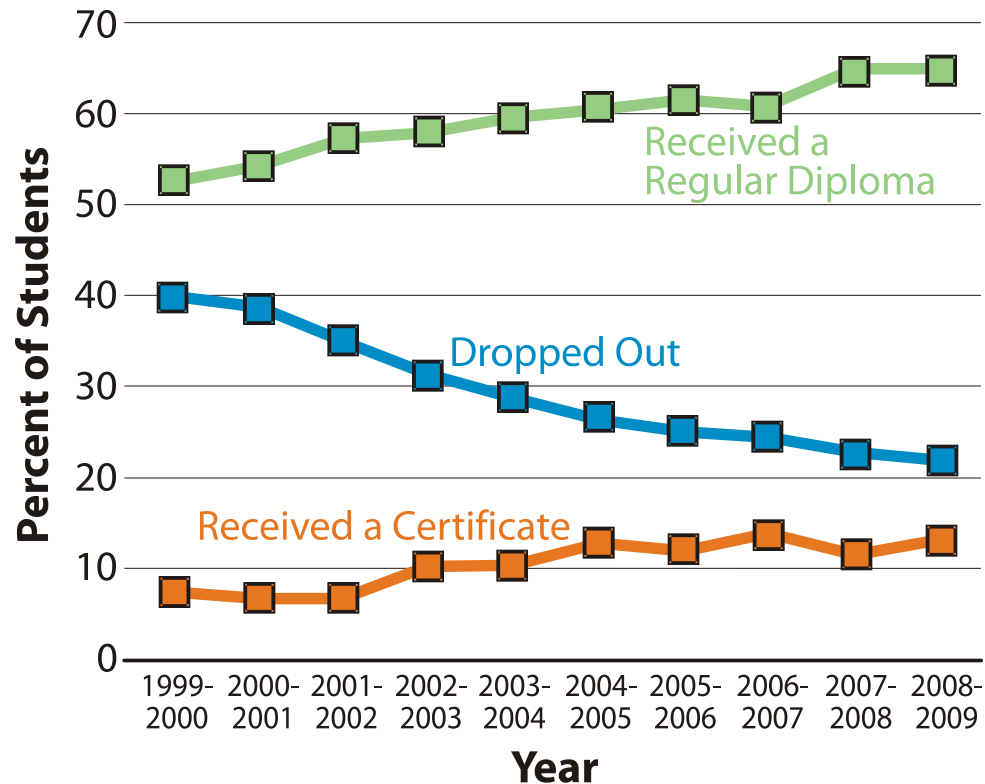


Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study 2, 2003



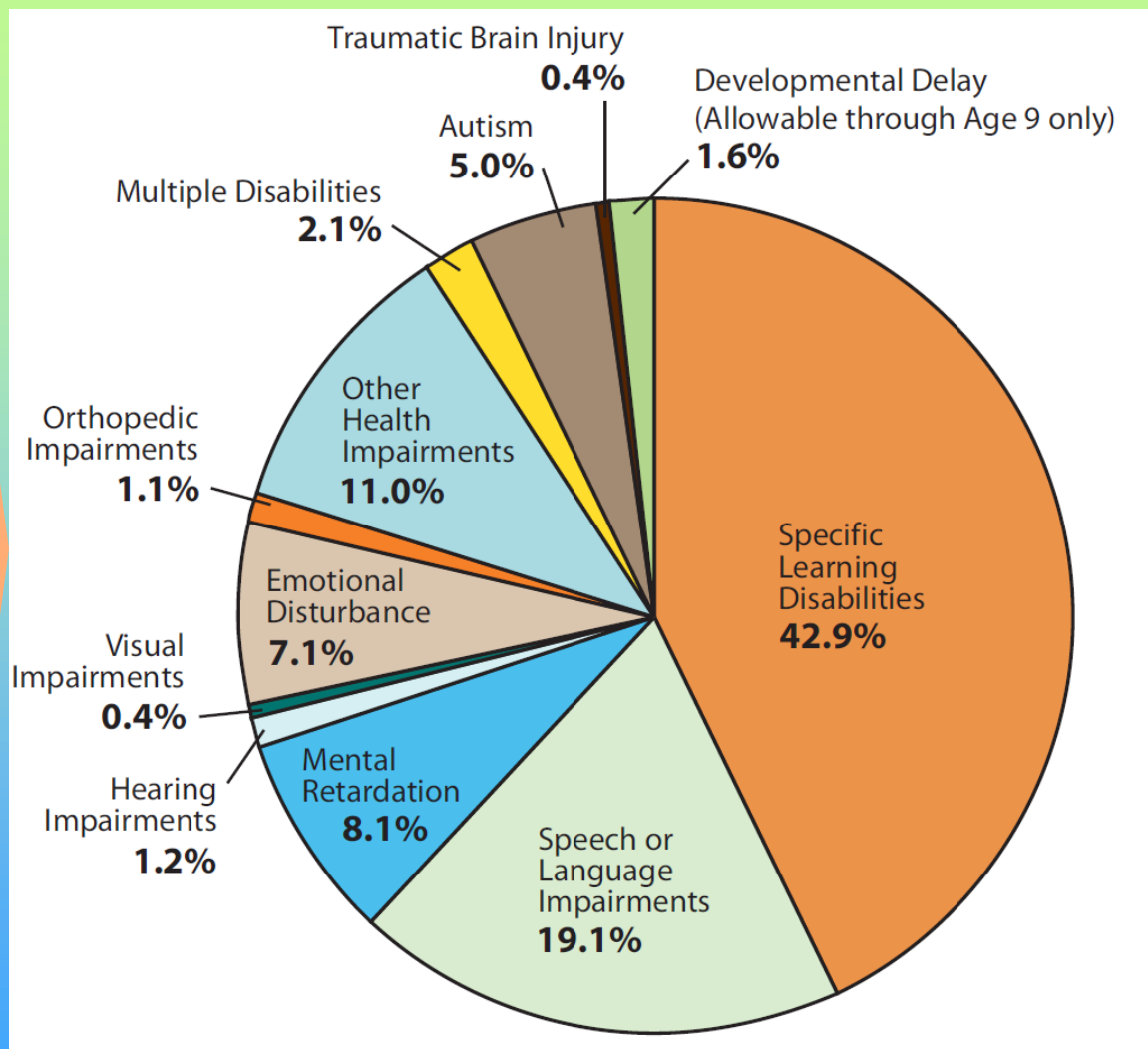
LD in the Schools

How students with LD exit high school



Why Students with Disabilities Should Take General Assessments

In school year 2008-2009, the categories of students that *did not* include cognitive impairments totals **84.4%** of all IDEA-eligible students.



Source: www.IDEAdata.org

Part B Child Count (2008), Students ages 6-21, 50 states, DC, PR, BIE schools.

Sample Questions from the Field

- How to explain complex guidelines related to learning disabilities and RTI to parents?
- How RTI schools identify students with Specific Learning Disability in specific areas i.e., written expression, listening comprehension, short-term memory ?
- When should a school/parent refer to a specialist?
- What should a parent look out for at each grade level?
- What can we do to help parents of kids with learning disabilities get better reading instruction? What is the correct balance of intensive instruction and modifications or accommodations?

Answers to be Found

- LD.org website (www.LD.org)
- On Capitol Hill (<http://www.nclld.org/on-capitol-hill>)
- RTI Action Network (www.RTINetwork.org)

Challenges (unmet needs/opportunities)

- Dissemination of existing high-quality information and resources
- What works for SWLD - reaching educators, school reform
- Parents of SWLD who are adults with LD
- Transition from school to ?

Reflections from the Experts (1)

General LD community

- diminish negative stigma associated with LD
- provide clarity re: LD facts, characteristics and definition (LD ≠ autism)
- 1975 vs. 2011: changes in addressing LD (real, perceived; e.g., the changing construct of “disability” given RTI, new ADA,..)
- address needs of “whole child”, not just academics and not just LD (social/recreational, mental health,...)

Parents: becoming informed, confident advocates and consumers

- provide access to helpful facts and research
- help parents decide what to do with conflicting or unconvincing advice
- addressing the needs of “twice exceptional (gifted + LD)
- what is RTI?
- information needs to be available to low literacy care providers
- family support

Parents: partnerships with schools

- need to understand rights and know what actions to take (especially when schools and parents disagree)
- need details about accommodations and AT resources
- need information about the intersection of RTI and special ed (e.g., what constitutes a comprehensive assessment)
- what is an “evidence-based strategy”

Reflections from the Experts (2)

Educators

- identifying LD in an RTI environment
- accountability for achievement of SWD
- specially designed instruction
- accommodations (for instruction & assessment)
- instructional materials in accessible formats
- under-identification of SWD who are under the radar (e.g., do well) on state assessments
- what to do when “more research is needed” (after Evidence-Based Systematic Review)
- what is appropriate for students with IEPs (standards, full-inclusion, accountability, RTI,...)
- how to include parents as active partners in RTI
- how to help students with “severe LD”

Instructional practices

- Need to clarify meaning of data-based decision making
- Need to identify what works for students who struggle and those with LD (K-5, 6-8, 9-12), especially tier III

Reflections from the Experts (3)

Education Programs: issues

- need to address poor achievement of SWD
- need to address low HS graduation rates
- need to address successful transition to and completion of college
- need to address career and work readiness and opportunities
- risks/benefits re: charter schools, voucher programs, alternatives for SWD
- initial teacher preparation
- ongoing professional development
- how to measure teacher effectiveness (for SWD)
- connections between LD and ED (unaddressed learning needs?)
- perception of RTI as a means to delay identification and evaluation
- math!

Leadership & Expertise

- medical practitioners (MD, nursing,...) in new/expanded roles as partners with parents
- list of experts to provide guidance on key topics (topic, urban, rural,...)
- valuable resources: RTI Centers, **PTIs**

Identification of LD: A Moving Target (and still moving after 35+ years)

Considerable variation in practice and policy as state and local education agencies interpret the federal requirements for SLD identification as outlined in IDEA 2004.

- lack of consensus re: cognitive assessment of a comprehensive evaluation
- needed policy guidance to address the rapid adoption of RTI practices that balance the timelines of IDEA's Child Find mandates with the integration of RTI data into the SLD identification process.

When implemented with fidelity, RTI will expedite the SLD evaluation process

- data on the child's response to instruction and intervention will have taken place prior to the 60-day timeline (or shorter by SED) for the initial evaluation.
(or shorter if required by state policy)
- Schools must act quickly to gather data and meet mandated timelines. **The point is not to replace one wait-to-fail model with another.**

RTI Action Network (www.RTINetwork.org)

- **The Legal Implications of RTI and Special Education Identification** (Jose L. Martín, Esq.)
- **The Role of RTI in LD Identification**, RTI National Online Forum, (Don Deshler, Ph.D., Jack M. Fletcher, Ph.D., Rick Wagner, Ph.D.)
- **Let's Not Go Back to the Good Old Days before RTI** (Louisa Moats, Stevan Kukic, and Robert Pasternak)

and

NCLD's A Parent 's Guide to RTI (www.LD.org)

Processing Deficits: Information Needed vs. Needed Information

DOE Comments:

- without requiring documentation of a basic psychological processing disorder, the number of children identified with SLD will significantly increase and the use of assessment tools that have the potential to significantly guide instruction will decrease.
- failure to consider individual differences in cognitive processing skills reverses more than 20 years of progress in cognitive psychology and developmental neuroscience.
- identifying a basic psychological processing disorder would help ensure that children identified with an SLD are not simply victims of poor instruction.
- the shift away from requiring diagnostic assessments in the area of cognition would make it conceptually impossible to document that a child has a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes, as required in the definition of SLD

The Department does not believe that an assessment of psychological or cognitive processing should be required in determining whether a child has an SLD.

- There is no current evidence that such assessments are necessary or sufficient for identifying SLD.
- In many cases, these assessments have not been used to make appropriate intervention decisions.
- § 300.309 permits, but does not require, consideration of a pattern of strengths or weaknesses, or both, relative to intellectual development, if the evaluation group considers that information relevant to an identification of SLD.
- In many cases, assessments of cognitive processes simply add to the testing burden and do not contribute to interventions.
- “Although processing deficits have been linked to some SLD (e.g., phonological processing and reading), direct links with other processes have not been established. Currently, available methods for measuring many processing difficulties are inadequate. Therefore, systematically measuring processing difficulties and their link to treatment is not yet feasible ... Processing deficits should be eliminated from the criteria for classification.”

LD Identification & RTI: Must, Should, May, Must Not

Consistent with the mandates given in IDEA 2004, NCLD believes that a comprehensive evaluation must include:

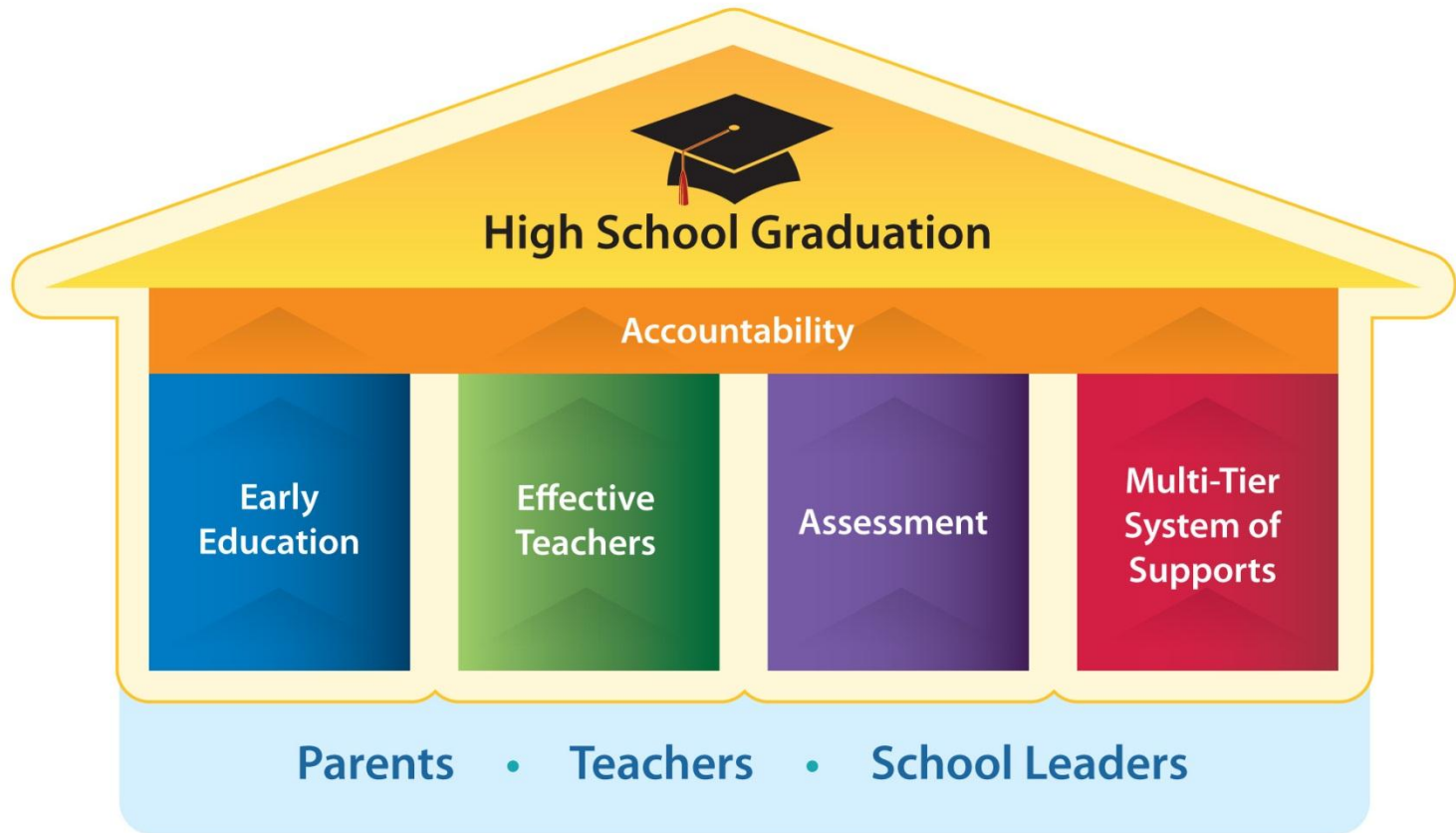
- Multiple forms of assessment
- An observation of the student in the learning environment, including the regular classroom setting
- Determination that underperformance is not primarily the result of a visual, hearing, or motor disability; intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency
- Student performance data indicating that the student (a) was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings delivered by qualified personnel and (b) received repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals
- The determination of a specific learning disability must be made by the child's parents and a team of qualified professionals
- Parents must be provided with the results of repeated assessments of achievement
- For students participating in an RTI program, parents must be notified about their state's policies about the collection of student performance data, strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning, and their right to request an evaluation
- The RTI process must not be used to delay or deny an evaluation (need citation) but should offer data, both academic and behavior, to help problem solve and analyze issues regarding learning

Cognitive Assessments

- Determination of a student's cognitive status should be made as a way to inform effective instructional practice and, as appropriate, to contribute to the SLD determination process. ... Assessments of cognitive processing can provide critical explanatory diagnoses that can help guide instructional planning. However, this does not require a comprehensive cognitive battery, but rather only that testing needed to address specific unanswered questions that contribute to determination of the student's instructional needs.
- Evidence of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement or both should be included, but must be designed to help guide the development of the child's instructional program.
- An assessment of IQ may be included if necessary to rule out intellectual disability as the cause of underachievement.
- A comprehensive evaluation must not include the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement, as there is extensive evidence of conceptual and statistical flaws in this approach.

Rights & Remedies (new... in early development)

Policy Priorities



Policy Challenges in ESEA

Most Members of Congress believe that students with LD cannot:

Achieve on grade level with their peers

Take the same tests

Gain a regular high school diploma

Policy Challenges

Policy Priorities

Most Members of Congress believe students with LD cannot...

Achieve at grade level

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Gain a regular high school diploma

Early Education

Multi-Tier System of Support

Effective Teachers

Assessment

The result – The IEP Team ‘deems’ student proficient = no annual tests, no comparability with others, high risk of NO regular diploma.

The result – All students in same accountability system = grade-level instruction and tests, comparability and staying on track to graduate.

Yet We Know

Special education students can thrive academically when they are:

- Held to the same high expectations as their peers
- Included in standards-based reform efforts and participate in statewide assessment and accountability systems
- Provided consistent, high-quality instruction, interventions and supports aligned to the grade-level content standards by trained and certified teachers
- Treated as separate and distinct from their peers as all other learners.

Assuming pre-determined levels of achievement based on disability limits students' opportunity to learn and diminishes the collective responsibility of adults to provide them with the instruction and support they need.



Senate ESEA Activities

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Committee (HELP)

Tom Harkin (IA)-Chair

Michael B. Enzi (WY)-Ranking

- Introduced Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act on October 17, 2011
- Committee mark-up held October 19-20, 2011
- Passed out of committee by a bi-partisan vote of 15 to 7
- Awaiting Floor action

Big Issues Under Discussion

- What accountability should mean now
 - All schools accountable for all students (current law)
 - A focus on only bottom 5-15% of schools (Senate, waivers)
 - No requirements for ANY intervention in ANY school
- Performance targets for reading and math proficiency, graduation goals
- Principal and teacher performance evaluation systems required vs. optional



House Committee on Education and the Workforce

PASSED BY COMMITTEE:

- *H.R. 1891, The Setting New Priorities in Education Spending Act (May, 2011)*
- *H.R. 2445, The State and Local Funding Flexibility Act (July, 2011)*

PASSED BY FULL HOUSE:

- *H.R. 2218, The Empowering Parents Through Quality Charter Schools Act (Sept, 2011)*
- Bi-partisan discussions have completely broken down.
- Republicans just introduced
 - Student Success Act (ESEA Title I)
 - Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers (ESEA Title II)



U.S. Department of Education

- States applying in November 2011 are:
Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Vermont and Wisconsin
- States applying in mid-February are:
Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, and Washington
- States applying with no timeline: *Connecticut and Oregon*

Application requires “stakeholder” involvement!

See “*Tips for Protecting Students with Disabilities*”

www.advocacyinstitute.org/blog/?page_id=69

How Can We Help Each Other?

Parent Training and Information Centers & Community Parent Resource Centers

Provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and to people who work with parents to enable them to participate more fully and effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of their children with disabilities.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities

NCLD's mission is to ensure success for all individuals with learning disabilities in school, at work and in life.

- Connecting parents and others with resources, guidance and support so they can advocate effectively for their children (Essential Information & Resources)
- Delivering evidence-based tools, resources and professional development to educators to improve student outcomes (Education Programs)
- Developing policies and engaging advocates to strengthen educational rights and opportunities (Public Policy & Advocacy)

RTI Action Network

Dedicated to the effective implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) in school districts nationwide. Our goal is to guide educators and families in the large-scale implementation of RTI so that each child has access to quality instruction and that struggling students – including those with learning disabilities – are identified early and receive the necessary supports to be successful.