



The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer requires school districts to take into consideration whether a student has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in determining whether a student has a learning disability. Consistent with state criteria, school districts may now use the results of a student's response to a scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation in determining whether a student has a learning disability.

1. What are the criteria for determining the existence of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)?

- Eligible for services under SLD must exhibit a primary deficit in basic psychological processes,
- Secondary underachievement in one or more of the eight areas,
- Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement;
- Must permit the use of a process based on the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and
- Must have documentation of the lack of response to instructional intervention as supported by on-going progress monitoring

2. What is the definition of "Response-to-Intervention (RTI)"?

Generally, response-to-intervention means a process of assessing a student's response to a high-quality instruction/intervention matched to a student's need, for the purpose of making educational decisions concerning a student suspected of having a learning disability. Here in Fulton County Schools a response-to-intervention process involves a multi-tiered problem-solving process for schools to address the needs of all students struggling to meet higher learning standards. In an RTI process, the focus is on the strengths and weaknesses of the student and is linked to scientifically-based interventions. This process will usually occur within the student's current academic school year. However, targeted instruction and intervention for students can be implemented from one school year to the next as long as ample time (approximately four weeks) in the new school year has been allotted to adequately measure the student's response to such instruction and intervention.

3. What is required in RTI?

- At least two current assessment such as CRCT, norm-referenced achievement tests, benchmarks or an achievement test that does not meet expectations for grade level standards.
- Information from the teacher related to routine classroom instruction monitoring the child's performance
- Supplementary instruction that last for a **minimum** of 12 weeks
- Four data collections of progress monitoring occur during the 12 weeks
- Presentation to parents at regular intervals on strategies used and progress monitoring results.
- Any educationally relevant medical findings that would impact achievement.

3. How is RTI used to determine eligibility for Specific Learning Disability?

After the required Response to Intervention data is collected and documented (see above) for a student, it is reviewed by the Student Support Team (SST). If the SST team concludes that there is a lack of expected progress towards established benchmarks (based on attainment of grade level standards), a referral to the Comprehensive Building Team (CBT) can be made. If appropriate, the CBT committee will meet to obtain parental consent for a comprehensive individual special education evaluation*. A team of qualified professionals and the child's parents will determine the existence of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) after summarizing the multiple sources of evidence to conclude that the child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, state approved grade level standards and intellectual development. A student's eligibility for SLD **cannot** be determined until all required Response to Intervention data and the comprehensive evaluation has been completed and reviewed by the school based team. *The individual evaluation must be current for the academic school year (evaluations conducted during the summer months prior to the student's academic school year are considered current).

4. What does the RTI process mean for teachers and student?

Research consistently points out that student growth is enhanced when evaluation results are used to guide continued instruction. This concept of monitoring students' progress, or "progress monitoring," enables educators to determine if students are increasing their skills as expected, or if they need additional instructional interventions to enable them to maximize academic success. This proactive approach does not wait until students have large gaps in their learning that are almost too great to overcome. Neither does it allow high-achieving students to languish in a curriculum that is not challenging to them. This approach focuses on determining when students are struggling and providing strategic interventions to help them shore up their areas of need; it also documents students' strength and provides additional challenge in a variety of ways. There is a commitment here in Fulton County Schools to help students learn.