

Y-ACADEMY SCHOOLS GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 included important changes in the approaches schools use to determine specific learning disabilities. Based on current research, Wayne County Schools are using new methods of assessment and instruction to prevent learning deficits. When analyzing a student's performance and achievement for patterns of strengths and weaknesses, the inconsistencies among cognitive and academic skills are used to identify specific learning disabilities. Detroit Innovation Academy, a Y-Academy School, will be following the Wayne County Committee for Specific Learning Disabilities Guidance Document (2009), which is posted on the web at :http://www.resa.net/downloads/special_education_guidelines/sld_guidelines.pdf, for determining a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). This document utilizes both the Response to Intervention (RtI) and Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) model in an effort to look for consistencies and inconsistencies among cognitive and academic skills.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

RtI is an **instructional framework** that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, special, gifted and remedial education in providing high-quality, standards based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. This framework focuses on continuous improvement by using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important educational decisions.

RtI serves two primary purposes. The first purpose is to improve the educational outcome for each and every child through a multi-tiered, data driven (including but not exclusive to EdPerformance, MEAP, AIMSweb, Scholastic Reading Inventory, Explore, and course work) process that utilizes a structured problem-solving method. The second purpose is to establish a process to assist in the identification of students with a specific learning disability. For RtI to be successful, both processes need to be implemented with accuracy.

Implementing an RtI framework provides a continuum of school-wide support. Its fundamental principles are that core instruction is provided with accuracy, student progress is monitored frequently, students' responsiveness to intervention is evaluated, and instruction is adapted as needed (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005)

Patterns of Strength and Weakness

The Patterns of Strength and Weakness method requires an extensive analysis of the student's patterns of strengths and weaknesses in performance or achievement or both when compared to age; State approved grade level standards or intellectual development, using appropriate assessments. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:

- The student does not achieve adequately for the student's age or to meet State approved grade- level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1)(i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or State-approved grade-level standards.

- The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) to be relevant to the identification of a SLD, using appropriate assessments, consistent with the IDEA Evaluation Procedures and Additional Requirements for Evaluations and Reevaluations.