Outline for Specific Learning Disability Identification

Specific Learning Disability Exists When: (IDEA 2006/Article 7)	SLD Not a Primary Result of Exclusionary Factors:
Does Not Achieve Adequately In 1 Or More Of The 8 SLD Areas	
1. **Basic Reading Skills**	(A) A Visual, Hearing, Or Motor Disability
2. **Oral Expression**	(B) A Cognitive Disability or Mental Retardation
3. **Written Expression**	(C) An Emotional Disability or Disturbance
4. **Listening Comprehension**	(D) Cultural Factors
5. **Math Computation**	(E) Environmental Or Economic Disadvantage
6. **Math Reasoning**	(F) Limited English Proficiency
7. **Reading Fluency**	(G) Lack Of Appropriate Instruction In Reading Or Math
8. **Reading Comprehension**	

Federal Regulations under IDEA – 2006	Current State Regulations –Article 7

1. Does Not Require Use Of Severe Discrepancy Between Intellectual Ability & Achievement
  a. Must Not Require Severe Discrepancy
	1. Prohibits Use Of Severe Discrepancy Between Academic Achievement And Global Cognitive Functioning
	  a. *Wait To Fail Phenomenon*
	  b. *Does Not Guide Instruction Or Intervention*

2. States Must Permit Use Of A Process Base Evaluation From Student's Responses To Scientifically Based Research Interventions	**2. Permits Use Of Response To Intervention Process (RTI)**
	  a. Which Is The Process Based Evaluation Inferred By Federal Regulations, But Not Required
	  b. Some States Require RTI, But Give *Grace Periods*
	  c. *Kavale, Kauffman, Bachmeier, & LeFever (2008); Flanagan & Colleagues (2011) Insist RTI Be Combined With Psychometric Testing*
	    • ***RTI Alone Has Difficulty****: 1)Identifying Mild Mental Retardation; 2) Distinguish Slow Learners & SLD; 3) Distinguishing Individual Changes In Performance*

3. May Permit Use Of Other Alternative Research-Based Procedures For Determining Whether A Student Has Specific Learning Disability	**3. Permits Use Of Other Alternative Research-Based Methods**
	  a. Specifically *Patterns Of Strengths & Weaknesses* - Research Base In Field
	    • **Flanagan et al. Indicated That PSW Has Difficulty** Identifying Best Means Of Implementing Effective Interventions

	4. 2 & 3 Are Allowed As Options in Article 7 in SLD Identification

Zirkel & Thomas (2010) surveyed 51 State Educational Agencies - (Rules Sent From Federal→State→District)
  a. 20/51 Permit Alternative Research-Based Methods (3rd Option)
  b. 43/51 Permit Severe Discrepancy – Leaving Decision to Districts (Indiana is Minority)
  c. 13/51 Required RTI; 7 Allowed Severe Discrepancy OR PSW

Patterns Of Strengths & Weaknesses-Alternative Research Based Methods–(Different Theoretical Models)
- Specifically Useful When: Limited Intervention Services, Limited Intervention Implementation, Limited Student Progress Monitoring Data
- Must Consider Whether Strength Or Weakness Clinically Meaningful – No Significant Weakness If No Relation To Low Area

- *Limitations:*
  - Cognitive Tests Fail To Measure Reading Comprehension→Underidentifying Orthographic Dyslexia (McCallum et al., 2006)
  - Requires Expertise, Courage, & Well-Trained Evaluators & IEP Teams Implementing Interventions With Fidelity (accuracy/consistency)
- *Advantages:*
  - Allows For Differential Diagnosis
  - Cognitive Abilities Relevant To Learning Disability Identification
  - Know Why Academic Problem Exists & Why Student Does Not Respond To Interventions (Berninger et al., 2008)

Important to Remember SLD Eligibility Identification Also Uses:
- Assessment of Current Academic Achievement
- Observation In Child's Learning Environment Detailing Academic Performance & Behavior (Multiple Settings + General Classroom Setting)
- Social Or Cultural Background – Social & Developmental History
- Adaptive Behavior; Information On Child's Physical & Medical Condition
- Parental Input ;Teacher Recommendations
- Any Other Assessments & Information, Collected During Or Prior To Referral

Consistency-Discrepancy Model (Naglieri, 1999)
- **Cognitive Assessment System** (Processing, Not Ability Levels)**:PASS theory**: Planning, Attention, Sequential, & Simultaneous Processing
  - **Examines Processing At More Global Level/Scores, Rather Than More Specific Areas**
  - Discrepancy Among Processing Scores
  - Consistency Between Low Processing & Low Achievement Scores
  - Low Scores Are Substantially Below Average
  - Discrepancy Among Achievement Scores

Concordance-Discordance Model (Hale & Fiorello, 2004)-Observation Based–Determining Cognitive Ability Based On Classroom Performance
- **Cognitive Hypothesis Testing (CHT)**-Hypothesis Driven
- Observe Any Signs Of Cognitive Weaknesses In The *Actual Learning Environment (Classroom)*

Ability-Achievement Consistency Model (Flanagan, Ortiz, Alfonso, 2007) – Mostly Supported By Creators Of The Theory-Little Research
- *Strong Anecdotal Applied Base & Theoretical Support – Could Use Cross-Battery Approach To Organize Evaluation*
- Low Achievement In Specific Area, Identifies Deficit In Cognitive Ability & Academic Weakness, & Most Cognitive Abilities Average

- *Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) Intelligence Theory:* Vast Research Base From Over Half Million Administrations Of Different Cognitive/ Neuropsychological Tests Used To Determine What The Actual Specific Human Cognitive Abilities – 7 Broad & 70 Narrow Abilities
  - **7 Broad Abilities: Long-Term Retrieval; Comprehensive; Fluid Reasoning; Short-Term Memory; Visual-Spatial Thinking; Auditory Processing; Processing Speed**