

SLD Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) Procedure

To qualify for special education as having a Specific Learning Disability, the team must be able to answer all three questions in the affirmative. If the team cannot answer “yes” to all three questions, alternative solutions should be explored, including a possible 504 plan, informal accommodations, modification of general education supports, peer tutoring, etc. Schools should provide a wide range of supports for all students such that even if a student doesn’t qualify for special education, that doesn’t mean that nothing will be done.

Complete this form to document the following:

1. *Does the student meet the criteria for Specific Learning Disability as outlined in IDEA?*
2. *Does the Specific Learning Disability have an adverse impact on educational performance?*
3. *Does the student require specially designed instruction?*

In answering question one, the team certifies that the student demonstrates evidence of having (or not having) a disorder in one of more of the basic psychological processes that manifests itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, and perform academic tasks. Additionally, the student will demonstrate a pattern of cognitive and academic strengths and weaknesses that indicates that a Specific Learning Disability is present.

Question two involves demonstrating a link between the evidenced learning disability and the student’s educational performance. Students may struggle educationally for a wide variety of reasons, including home or environmental disadvantage, poor school attendance, adverse childhood experiences, mental and physical health concerns, unidentified vision or hearing issues, or even because they learn at a slower pace or in a different way that is not caused by a learning disability. To qualify under SLD, the team should be able to provide evidence that the reason for a student’s educational difficulties is specifically because of a learning disability, though there may be other contributing factors.

We are required by law to educate students in the least restrictive environment that allows them to continue to make appropriate educational growth. A student may meet the requirements to qualify as having a Specific Learning Disability, though they may not *require* specially designed instruction or special education services. If their needs can be met by other means that are less restrictive, attempts to do so should be made before making the determination that an IEP is required.

This document helps teams determine the strength of their evidence. It is not intended to be a form for data collection.

Section A - Rule Out Exclusionary Factors (Determination was not *primarily* the result of exclusionary factors) (Utah Sped Rules and Regs II.J.10.A, Utah SLD Guidelines pg. 18)

Factor	Examples
Vision Impairment	Vision screening – consider near and far, color, tracking
Hearing Impairment	Hearing screening – consider pure tone, OAE, speech discrim.
Motor Impairment	Parent and teacher reports
Intellectual Disability	Cognitive assessment, parent and teacher reports
Emotional Disturbance	Social/Behavioral assessment, parent and teacher reports, classroom observations
Cultural Factors	Parent and teacher reports
Environmental/Economic Disadvantage	Parent and teacher reports
Limited English Proficiency	Home language survey, WIDA scores, bilingual assessment results
Lack of appropriate instruction	Attendance logs indicate > 85% attendance, Educational History, Average peer performance reports

Section B - Consider Additional Factors (Utah Sped Rules and Regs II.J.10.B)

Factor	Examples
Classroom Observation	At least one observation conducted in area of concern, document any educationally relevant behaviors that may need to be addressed
Parent Input	Parent questionnaire completed
Relevant Medical Findings	Medical findings included on eligibility paperwork, school nurse consulted if necessary, health plan if necessary

Section C – Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses – Consider quality of measures and rate the strength of evidence in each area.

1. Demonstrate Evidences of Classroom Underachievement in an Academic Area

Measures	Scores that Evidence Classroom Underachievement	Strength of Evidence
Universal Screening, Classroom Tests, Grades, Curriculum Based Measurement, State Assessments, Work Samples	< 10 th Percentile, DIBELS Intensive Level, Consistently below 70% proficiency, grades below C, RISE ≤ 2, Error analysis	Minimal (1) Moderate (3) Strong (5)

2. Demonstrate Appropriate Instruction and Insufficient Growth in Response to Interventions

Factor	Examples of Insufficient Growth	Strength of Evidence
Trend Line of at Least 8 Data Points With Weekly Monitoring (Utah SLD Guidelines pg. 21)	Repeated measures of performance in specific area indicates weekly average progress below national, state, or local expectations	Minimal (1) Moderate (3) Strong (5)
Amount of Intervention Required	At least two targeted interventions in each area of concern, > 60 minutes of weekly intervention across multiple sessions, > 90 minutes of weekly intervention across multiple sessions	

3. Identify at Least 1 Area of Cognitive Strength and at Least 1 Area of Cognitive Weakness

Factor	Examples of Cognitive Strengths and Weaknesses	Strength of Evidence
Cognitive Strength	Standard score > 90, Intra-individual strength as indicated by publisher’s statistical analysis	Minimal (1) Moderate (3) Strong (5)
Cognitive Weakness	Standard score < 85, Intra-individual weakness as indicated by publisher’s statistical analysis	

4. Identify at Least 1 Normative Academic Weakness in Same Area as Classroom Underachievement

Factor	Scores that Evidence Weaknesses	Strength of Evidence
Academic Weakness	Standard score < 80, RPI < 60/90	Minimal (1) Moderate (3) Strong (5)

5. Demonstrate Research-Based Link Between Cognitive Weakness and Academic Weakness (White box indicates research link)

Evidence-Based Link Between Cognitive and Academic Domains	Basic Reading Skills	Reading Fluency	Reading Comp	Math Calc	Math Problem Solving	Written Expression	Strength of Evidence
Comprehension/Knowledge							Minimal (1) Strong (5)
Fluid Reasoning							
Short-term Working Memory							
Auditory Processing							
Long-term Retrieval							
Visual Processing							
Cognitive Processing Speed							

Total Scores: Reading _____ Math _____ Writing _____			How confident can we be of a pattern of strength and weaknesses that indicates a Specific Learning Disability?
<p>Minimal Evidence 5 - 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Informal Accommodations Possible 504 Further Evaluation to Explore Alternative Hypotheses Consider Changes to General Education Supports – Increased Duration or Frequency, Change Area of Focus for Intervention, etc. 	<p>Moderate Evidence 14 - 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Providing IEP Services (discuss link between cognitive and academic weaknesses) Consider Informal Accommodations Possible 504 Further Evaluation to Explore Alternative Hypotheses Consider Changes to General Education Supports – Increased Duration or Frequency, Change Area of Focus for Intervention, etc. 	<p>Strong Evidence 20 - 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Providing IEP Services (discuss link between cognitive and academic weaknesses) Consider Formal Accommodations through IEP or 504 Further Evaluation to Explore Alternative Hypotheses Consider Changes to General Education Supports – Increased Duration or Frequency, Change Area of Focus for Intervention, etc. 	