SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY SKILL-BASED GUIDE

Introduction

Collecting and analyzing skill-specific information is critical to the Individual Education Program (IEP) process. The results of skill-based assessments provide valuable information to the prereferral, evaluation, and IEP writing components. Information collected from skill-based assessments will assist IEP teams in identifying a student's present levels of performance and determining a baseline for goal development in areas of need.

Purpose

This document provides a one-page overview of each qualifying area under Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Each overview includes a description of the qualifying area, characteristics by grade range of students with deficits in that area, and examples of skill-based assessment tools that can be used to determine a student's strengths and needs. Please note, the assessment tools list is not an exhaustive list of all skill-based assessments available.

Sources

- Wisconsin Dept of Public Instruction:
  https://www.wsra.org/assets/Convention/Handouts_2015/a17%20sldruleareas_handout.pdf
- Minnesota Department of Education:
  file:///C:/Users/DECN13536/Downloads/016702_Chapter7-SuspectingDisability.pdf
- Colorado Department of Education:
  https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelines_sld_draft_2019-02-25
- Tennessee Department of Education: www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/Basic_Reading_Deficit_Resource_Guide.pdf

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY – SKILL-BASED GUIDE

ORAL EXPRESSION

What is Oral Expression?

The ability to convey wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas in a meaningful way using appropriate syntactic, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological language structures. It relates to a student's ability to express ideas, explain thinking, retell stories, categorize, and compare and contrast concepts or ideas, make references and problem solve verbally.

Characteristics: Children with deficits in oral expression may exhibit difficulty with the following skills:

K-2	3-5	6+
- Learning and using vocabulary. - Using expressive language. - Describing and retelling using sequential language. - Asking and answering questions. - Engaging in turn-taking in conversation. - Grammatical processes of expressive tone and inflection. - Retelling a story of sequence of events. - Difficulty formulating complete, semantically, and grammatically correct sentences, either spoken or written.	- Fluent and coherent language. - Providing explanations and descriptions - Learning and using vocabulary, both academic and conversational. - Collaborative discussions - Grammatical processes of marking categories like person, tense, and case (e.g., understanding the *-s* in *jumps* marks the third person singular in the present tense) - Summarizing and paraphrasing - Nonverbal communication/gestures - Making inferences	- Speaking with varied and precise vocabulary - Delivering formal presentations - Group discussion and debate - Expressing complex ideas - Adapting language for different audiences - Collaborative problem-solving

Assessment Tools

- Rubric
- Checklist
- Performance assessment
- Recorded presentations
- Observation
- Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT)

7.30.2024

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

What is Listening Comprehension?

The understanding of the implications and explicit meanings of words and sentences of spoken language. This includes following directions, comprehending questions, and listening and comprehending to learn (auditory attention, auditory memory, and auditory perception). Listening comprehension also includes the ability to make connections to previous learning.

Characteristics: Children with deficits in listening comprehension may exhibit difficulties with the following:

K-2	3-5	6+
- following directions - identifying key information from oral narratives and texts - word associations, antonyms/synonyms, and categorizing - answering questions about the content of information provided - understanding and inferring the meaning of vocabulary - sequencing - making connections between spoken text and experiences/prior knowledge - visualizing	- remembering homework assignments - critical thinking to arrive at logical answers - identifying main idea and supporting details - making inferences and drawing conclusions - recognizing author's purpose and point of view - sequencing events - making inferences and predictions - comparing and contrasting - recognizing figurative language - analyzing tone and mood	- notetaking or dictation activities - Identifying central ideas and themes - analyzing author's purpose and perspective - evaluating arguments and evidence - recognizing literary devices - making connections and relating to personal experiences - recognizing bias and point of view - evaluating credibility and validity - recognizing rhetorical devices - active listening

Assessment Tools

- Graphic organizers
- Note-taking checklist
- retelling or summarizing of oral narrative or text
- Performance tasks
- Rubrics

- AIMSWEB Listening Comprehension assessment (https://www.pearsonassessments.com/content/dam/school/global/clinical/us/assets/aimsweb/aimswebplus-listening-comprehension-guide.pdf)

WRITTEN EXPRESSION

What is Written Expression?

The communication of ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Required skills include using oral language, thought, grammar, text fluency, sentence construction and planning to produce a written product. Spelling difficulties alone cannot be considered to represent a specific learning disability in written expression.

Characteristics: Difficulties with the following skills may be an indicator of a disability in written expression:

K-2	3-5	6+
• Letter formation • Handwriting legibility and fluency • Word and sentence copying and dictation • Spelling simple words • Word omissions or word order errors (e.g., They ran to bus., I and my mom were here.) • Writing simple narratives or descriptions • Using basic writing conventions (e.g., spacing, indentation) • Using correct punctuation and capitalization	• Discrepancy between oral and written language • Sentence structure and grammar • Paragraph development and organization • Editing and revising written work Sentence and paragraph cohesion (e.g., lack of transition words to link ideas) • Word-retrieval (e.g., use of vague or general words—thing, stuff, good—instead of specific or precise vocabulary)	• Clear and coherent writing structure • Developing and supporting arguments with evidence • Research skills (e.g., validating sources, note-taking) • Use of simple, rather than complex, sentence structures • Paragraph coherence (e.g., poor sentence organization and intra- and inter-paragraph organization)

Assessment Tools

- Writing Rubric (general writing, mode-specific)
- Read Write Think Rubric (https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson401/Rubric.pdf)
- Intervention Central CBM Writing Rubric (https://www.interventioncentral.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pdfs_blog/wright_Learning_Spark_Blog_29_March_2013_Grs_1_5_Identfy_Writing_Difficulties_Instructions.pdf)
- Student work sample
- Timed writing probe
- Developmental Spelling Inventory (DSI)
- Test of Written Expression (TOWE)

BASIC READING

What is Basic Reading?

A set of skills that develop students' understanding and knowledge of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, word composition (spelling), and fluency. These skills are sequenced and serve as a platform for later proficiency in reading and writing across text types and disciplines.

Characteristics: There are two central features of basic reading skill. The first is the ability to accurately identify unfamiliar words based upon the letters in a word and the sounds associated with those letters. This is often called *phonic decoding*. The second is the ability to efficiently develop a pool of words that are **instantly recognized**. _Students with SLD in basic reading skill typically struggle with both phonic decoding **and** instant word recognition._

K-2	3-5	6+
Print Awareness • Letter and sound recognition • Letter-sound correspondence Phonological Awareness • counting syllables in words • recognizing and producing rhyming words • manipulating sounds within spoken words (blending/segmenting, adding, deleting, or substituting phonemes) Decoding • reading one-syllable words with common consonant/vowel combinations	Decoding • reading words with prefixes and suffixes, diphthongs, vowel digraphs, vowel combinations • reading words with two or more syllables • reading with automaticity (requires additional time to sound out words) • Word structure analysis (identifying syllable types, prefixes, suffixes, etc.) • Poor comprehension due to amount of working memory required for word-reading skills.	Decoding • Applying advanced syllabication rules and strategies to decode multisyllabic words • Identifying and reading words with Greek and Latin roots

Assessment Tools

- CORE Phonics Survey
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Assessment
- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)
- Early Literacy Assessment for Preschool (PELI)
- Acadience Reading subtests
- AIMSWeb subtests

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READING FLUENCY

What is Reading Fluency?

The ability to read words accurately, using age-appropriate chunking strategies and a repertoire of sight words, and with appropriate rate, phrasing, and expression (prosody). Reading fluency facilitates reading comprehension.

Characteristics: Children with reading fluency deficits may exhibit difficulty with the following skills:

K-2	3-5	6+
• Word accuracy in reading connected text. • Demonstrating age-appropriate phrasing (may read until they run out of breath or pause at unusual places in a sentence or passage) • Reading rate (pace is unusually slow or rapid) • Using prosody in oral reading (may read without inflection or may apply inflection incorrectly)	• Same skills as K-2	Same skills as K-2

Assessment Tools

- MASI-R Oral Reading Fluency Measure
- Acadience Subtests
- AIMSweb Subtests
- Fastbridge Subtests
- Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF)
- Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT)

READING COMPREHENSION

What is Reading Comprehension?

The ability to understand and make meaning of written text and includes a multifaceted set of skills. Reading comprehension is influenced by oral language development including new vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, working memory, application of comprehension monitoring strategies and understanding of text structure including titles, paragraphing, illustrations, and other details. Reading comprehension is significantly affected by basic reading skills.

Characteristics: Children with a reading comprehension deficit exhibit difficulty with the following skills:

K-2	3-5	6+
Comprehension • Retelling information • Identifying main idea and details • Answering questions Vocabulary • understanding words when read	Comprehension • Summarizing information • Applying literal, inferential, and critical thinking skills to answer questions • Analyzing text structure and features • Summarizing and synthesizing information • Evaluating the author's purpose Vocabulary • Vocabulary acquisition and usage	Comprehension • Analyzing complex texts • Making inferences and drawing conclusions • Evaluating the author's point of view • Identifying literary devices and figurative language • Analyzing text for bias Vocabulary Domain-specific vocabulary

NOTE: A reading comprehension-only deficit assumes that basic reading skills are well-developed, and that the student can read fluently without errors. It is less common for a student to have a comprehension-only skill deficit. More often, a student will have a basic reading skill deficit combined with a comprehension (and/or fluency) deficit. If students have multiple areas of need, it is **critical** to address the basic skill deficits alongside other areas of need.

Assessment Tools

- Cloze/Maze passages
- Maze CBM
- Acadience Subtests
- Fastbridge Subtests
- Aimsweb Subtests
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)
- Receptive One-Word Vocabulary Test (ROWVT)

MATH CALCULATION

What is Math Calculation?

The knowledge and retrieval of mathematical facts and the application of procedural knowledge in computation.

Characteristics: Children who struggle with math calculation may have difficulty with the following skills.

K-2	3-5	6+
• Number recognition • Number composition and decomposition • Counting by tens and ones • Addition and subtraction within 20 • Place value (two-digit numbers; tens and ones) • Using basic units of measurement and non-standard units • Recognizing patterns and sequences	• Multiplication and division facts • Fractions, decimals, and percents	• Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals • Understanding and applying operations and properties to math calculations (e.g., commutative property, inverse operations)

NOTE: A student who understands basic math concepts and algorithms, but has not memorized math facts, should **not** be identified as having a severe delay or discrepancy in this area.

Assessment Tools

- Error analysis
- Work samples
- Key Math
- Brigance Math subtests

MATH REASONING

What is Math Reasoning?

The ability to use decision-making skills to apply mathematical concepts and understandings to real world situations. It is the functional combination of computation knowledge and application knowledge and involves the use of mathematical computation skills and fluency, language, reasoning, reading, and visual-spatial skills in solving problems. Essentially, it is applying mathematical knowledge at the conceptual level.

Characteristics: Children with a math reasoning deficit may exhibit difficulties with the following skills:

K-2	3-5	6+
• Graphing and data analysis • Comparing quantities • Applying age-appropriate procedural knowledge to simple word problems	• Applying procedural knowledge and problem-solving strategies to word problems • Measurement conversions and applications • Geometric concepts (e.g., area, perimeter, angles)	• Sequencing steps in a multi-step word problem • Problem-solving and critical thinking in real-world contexts • Pre-algebra and algebraic concepts • Geometry and spatial reasoning • Data analysis and probability

Assessment Tools

- First Steps in Mathematics
- Scholastic Math Inventory
- Key Math
- AIMSWeb Math subtests
- Acadience Math subtests