



Updated Guidance for the Comprehensive Evaluation of Specific Learning Disabilities



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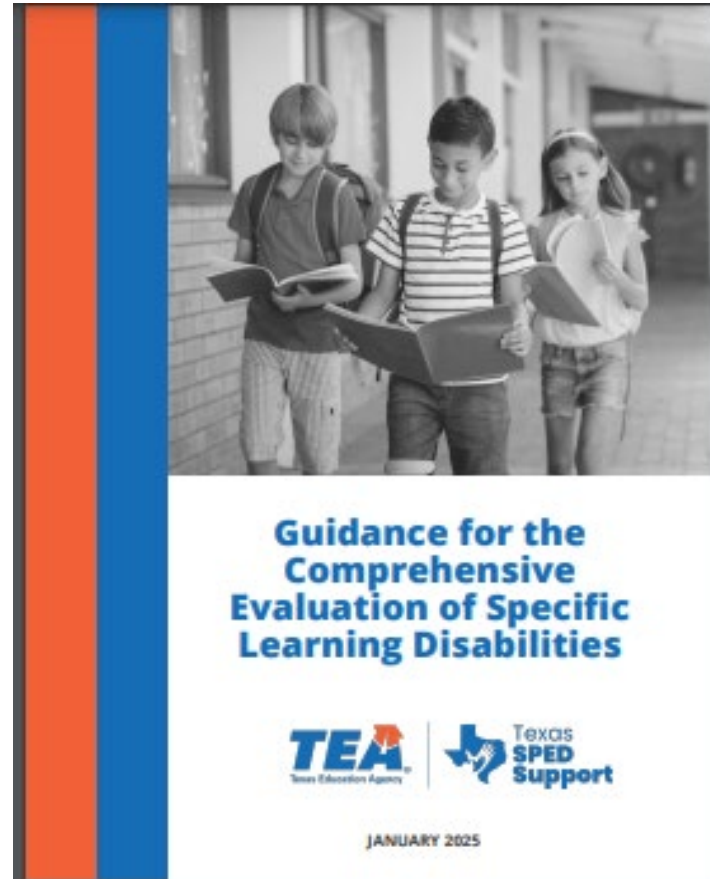
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Updated January 2025

<https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/guidance-for-a-comprehensive-evaluation-of-sld.pdf>



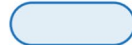
Key for Icons throughout the SLD document

Key

Included in the guide are requirements, links to resources, best practice tips, examples, and more. The following information will help you navigate the technical assistance guides:



▶ **NOTE:** "Notes" point out important reminders or considerations.



▶ **Best Practice Tips:** are highlighted with blue rectangle.



▶ **Changes/Updates:** Information that has been changed or updated since the last release.



▶ **New/Added:** Information that is new or has been added since the last release.

[links](#)

▶ **Informational Links:** Links that are in lowercase will take you to a related website, resource, or document that supports the information which you are reading.

[LINKS](#)

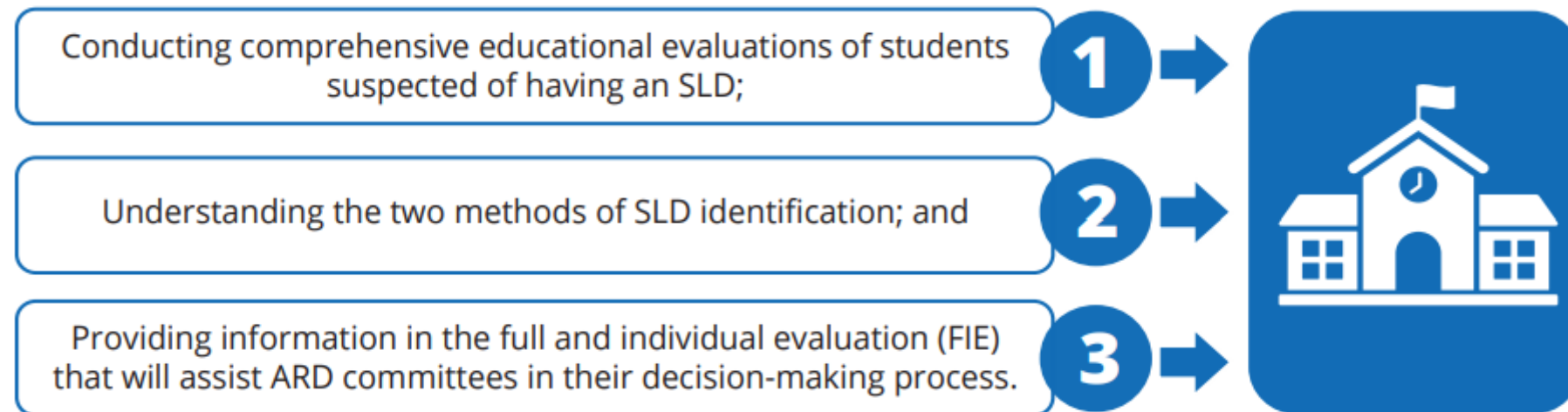
▶ **Legal Citation Links:** Links that use all capital letters will take you to a legal citation and definition.





- Updated graphics
- Updated general information

The primary goals of this document are to assist LEAs in:



A section specific to dyslexia and dysgraphia is included.

There are designated representatives at each regional education service center (ESC) available to assist LEAs with procedures for evaluation.




Updated

- If a student is enrolled in a charter school, the charter school is responsible for implementing Child Find requirements, including referral for possible special education services and evaluating as appropriate.
- This resource was added:

+ Child Find Duty Quick Guide

Quick Guide



Child Find Duty Quick Guide

What is Child Find?


Child Find is the affirmative and ongoing process of public awareness, coordination with agencies and primary sources, and screening procedures to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21 who may require early intervention or special education services. This process includes children who are:

Enrolled in a public school and advancing from grade to grade	Parentally placed in a private school, homeschool, or attend a virtual school	Highly mobile, including migrant children	Homeless
In foster care or unaccompanied youth	Wards of the state	Included in the central justice system	Residing in nursing homes

What are the local education agency's (LEA) responsibilities?

- Develop written local policies and operating procedures
- Engage in public and parent/guardian awareness activities, including partnering with primary referral sources
- Notify parents by providing the Right to Information Statement annually
- Conduct school-wide screenings
- Ensure appropriate and timely referrals for evaluation
- Coordinate with other agencies, including Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)
- Maintain and report accurate data
- Provide training and professional development to all staff

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This link was added:



[The Prior Written Notice-Legal Requirements and Best Practices](#) video reviews the legal requirements of a prior written notice as required by the IDEA, including language and timeframe, circumstances that trigger a notice, and content components that must be addressed, and shares best practices for completing an appropriate prior written notice.

[The Prior Written Notice-Legal Requirements and Best Practices](#)

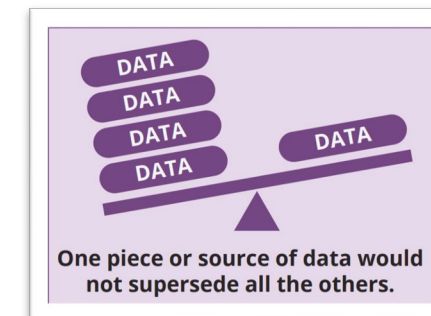


- Moved REED section after Full and Individual Initial Evaluation (FIIIE) Procedures section
- Added under ‘Remember’:
 - If a student is referred for an initial evaluation, all procedures prior to initiating the evaluation must be followed including prior written notice and distribution of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards, Overview of Special Education for Parents form, and the opportunity to sign informed consent provided to the parents/guardians or adult student.
 - For an initial evaluation, the LEA must receive informed consent from the parent before the evaluation can proceed. Since the REED would be a part of the initial evaluation, informed consent serves as the consent for the REED.
 - For a reevaluation, it is common for the LEA members of the ARD committee to conduct a REED and draft existing and needed additional data. In the prior written notice the parent needs to be informed of the REED process as the REED must include updated parent information as part of the process. Sometimes a REED can occur in an ARD committee meeting; however, the LEA must keep in mind the due date of the student's reevaluation when conducting a REED.



5 new paragraphs added

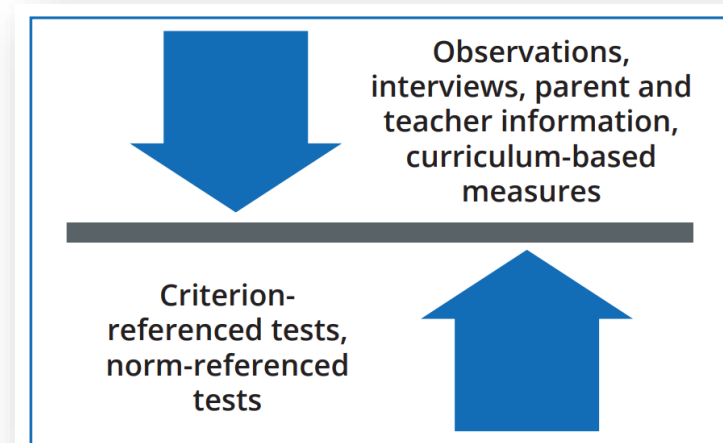
- In the case of SLD identification, does the preponderance (or majority) of evidence indicate that an SLD is more probable than not?
- The multidisciplinary team (MDT) must consider standardized scores in light of other data, the student's behavior and affect during the testing session, the normative population, and any other variables that may have influenced scores obtained during an isolated assessment.
- The graphic on this page shows that equal weight, or consideration, is given to informal information (e.g., observations, interviews, parent and teacher information), curriculum-based tools and assessment measures, and information from criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests.





5 new paragraphs *continued*

- The MDT members should carefully consider each data source and its convergence (or divergence) from other data sources and provide detailed explanations of how each data source relates to the other sources in the FIE.
- When there is inconsistency between data sources, the MDT should take a diagnostic approach to identify reasons for the differing data sets. Error analysis of the student's performance should be conducted, and the construct of the task compared to the student's curriculum should be examined.





- Added in pink box:

A single professional does not conduct evaluations.

MDT members are responsible for ensuring all legal standards required for conducting an FIE are followed.

- Added Federal and State Requirements for MDT Members
 - Federal – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - State – Texas Administrative Code (TAC)
 - State – Texas Education Code (TEC)





Added

Each MDT member must certify in writing whether the report reflects the member's conclusion.

If it does not reflect the member's conclusion, the member must submit a separate statement presenting the member's conclusions. 34 CFR, 300.311(b).

NOTE: It is not defined in federal or state law to whom the separate statement should be submitted.

It could be implied that if the report does not reflect the member's conclusion and the member writes a statement of disagreement, then the statement would be attached to the evaluation report.

Best practice: If there is contradictory data within the report that could lead to a statement of disagreement, then the MDT should explore the contradictory information and pursue an explanation before the finalization of the report.

A copy of the written evaluation report must be provided to the student's parents as soon as possible after completion of the report but no later than five school days prior to the initial ARD committee meeting (see 19 TAC §89.1011(h) for an exception to this timeline).



Updated

- Include individuals with knowledge of the student, instructional practices, and instructional options.
- Include the interventionist(s) as part of the team, if the student receives intervention.
- Work to ensure active contributions and integration of information and data from all team members.
- Collaborate frequently as the evaluation progresses, as new assessment results may uncover additional suspected areas of disability.
- Work together to review the multiple sources of data to identify consistent and inconsistent findings and draw conclusions about strengths and needs.
- Develop recommendations that address the student's individual needs.



- There are two examples of observation forms. One is for observing the student during an intervention, and the other is for observing the student during general education instruction. The MDT may use these templates or revise them to create a form tailored to gather information.

SLD Tier 1 Observation Form

Core Content Area/ Tier 1: Instructional Observation				
Observer	Referred Student	Start time of observation		
Teacher	Grade	# of students	Language of instruction	Finish time of observation
Content area(s): Reading		Math	Grouping observed: (Check all that apply; CIRCLE grouping for referred student)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Fluency <input type="checkbox"/> Writing		<input type="checkbox"/> Computation <input type="checkbox"/> Word/problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole Group <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Small Group <input type="checkbox"/> One-to-One <input type="checkbox"/> # in groups <input type="checkbox"/> Co-teaching	
Core Content:				
Instructional objectives/ Lesson Activities/ Strategies			Student engagement/ Maximization of instructional time/ Pacing	
			Differentiation instruction (materials, activities, student products)	
Features of effective instruction	Comments	Classroom management/ Interruptions/ Behavior redirections		
<input type="checkbox"/> Explicit instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate corrective feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Practice to automaticity <input type="checkbox"/> Scaffolding for understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Material matches student needs		Corrective Feedback/ Accountability for student work		
Observation of referred student's participation				

SLD Intervention Observation Forms

Intervention Observation				
Observer	Referred Student	Date	Start time of observation	
Interventionist	# of students	Language of instruction	Finish time of observation	
Content area(s): Reading		Math	Grouping observed: (Check all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Fluency <input type="checkbox"/> Writing		<input type="checkbox"/> Computation <input type="checkbox"/> Word problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Group <input type="checkbox"/> One-to-One <input type="checkbox"/> # in group <input type="checkbox"/> Partner	
Intervention program				
Intervention objectives/ Lesson Activities/ Strategies			Student engagement/ Maximization of instructional time/ Pacing	
			Differentiation that targeted needs of referred student	
Features of effective intervention	Comments	Opportunities for referred student to respond		
<input type="checkbox"/> Explicit instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate corrective feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Practice to automaticity <input type="checkbox"/> Scaffolding for understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Material matches student needs		Opportunities for referred student to practice to automaticity		
Observation of referred student's participation				



Updated

- The decision to include standardized measures, particularly cognitive assessments, in the evaluation process for an SLD should be made on a case-by-case basis.
- In some cases, sufficient information may be available from sources such as academic performance data, behavioral observations, and input from parents and teachers to make an informed decision about identification without the need for standardized measures. This might be especially true when ruling out factors like intellectual disability, where other indicators may be more salient.
- Although there is no federal or state requirement to include norm-referenced achievement or cognitive functioning in an evaluation and identification of SLD, there are instances where standardized measures can provide valuable insights into a student's achievement and processes that may not be apparent through other means. These measures can help identify strengths and weaknesses in different achievement and cognitive domains, informing instructional planning and support strategies.
- Therefore, the MDT needs to consider the specific circumstances of each case and weigh the potential benefits of including standardized measures, such as cognitive assessments, against the practicalities. Additionally, MDT members have the discretion to determine if a full cognitive profile to measure intellectual functioning is necessary to rule out an intellectual disability before identifying a student with an SLD.
- In other instances, MDT members should determine if limited assessments that measure specific areas of cognitive functioning or processes are valuable to inform the evaluation and better understand the student as a learner.



- Added in pink box:

**Remember, “assess” does not mean only “formally test.”
“Assess” means gathering data from multiple sources.**

- MDT members should consider all data, including qualitative data which indicates how the student behaves during testing situations, how hard they try, and their motivation. Then, compare this information to performance in school. The MDT should also identify how these skills manifest within the school environment, particularly if it is found to be an area of deficit.

Examples of Multiple Measures for the Eight Areas of Inadequate Achievement – pages 23-31



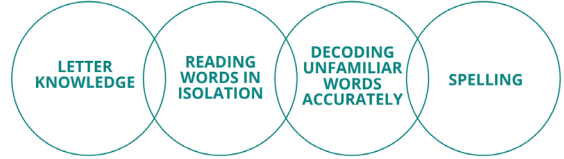
BIG ADDITIONS!

Some potential examples of multiple measures for each of the eight achievement areas are provided. These lists are not exhaustive. You may have additional data sources to incorporate in your data-gather process.

Potential Data Sources (Informal, Curriculum-Based, Criterion-Referenced, Norm-Referenced, If Necessary) for:

- Oral Expression
- Listening Comprehension
- Written Expression – Which May Include Dysgraphia
- Basic Reading Skill – Which May Include Dyslexia
- Basic Reading Fluency Skills – Which May Include Dyslexia
- Reading Comprehension
- Mathematics Calculation
- Mathematics Problem-Solving

Basic Reading Skill – Which May Include Dyslexia
Evaluation of basic reading skills/dyslexia should include data gathering and measures related to the student's educational needs in:



POTENTIAL DATA SOURCES

INFORMAL	CURRICULUM-BASED	CRITERION-REFERENCED	NORM-REFERENCED, IF NECESSARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent information/interview• Teacher information/interview• Observation• Student information/interview• Listening to the student read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dolch sight words• Running records• Intervention progress monitoring• CBM – letter naming/sound fluency, word identification, decoding words (available via Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Intervention Central)• Comparison to enrolled grade-level curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading universal screeners• District reading benchmarks• STAAR® assessment (reading portion in RLA, English I, and English II)• TLPAS reading assessment• Dyslexia screeners	<p><i>Standardized measures of letter identification, reading words in isolation (timed and untimed), decoding unfamiliar words (timed and untimed)</i></p>

When assessing decoding skills, the MDT should look at the student's abilities with **single-word** reading and decoding, as well as reading and decoding **within text**.




Updated

When making high stakes decisions multiple measures need to be considered to avoid using one cut off score.

- Reliability issues
- Fixed cut-point issues
- Recommended practices
 - A recommended practice is to express the test results within the standard error of measurement and specify the student's performance with a confidence interval so that a range of scores could indicate the presence of SLD.
 - Another recommended practice is to incorporate other data that might inform the judgment of the ARD committee, such as previous academic and classroom performance, grades, observations of the child, and the parent's and teachers' perceptions of the student's performance.



- Added enhanced graphics
- Examples of Evaluation Data
 - School Records: Repeated Assessments
 - Other School Records
 - Home Information
- School Attendance
- Disruptions to Instruction

 EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION DATA	SCHOOL RECORDS: REPEATED ASSESSMENTS	OTHER SCHOOL RECORDS	HOME INFORMATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intervention progress monitoring results and reports• In-class tests on grade-level curriculum• Other regularly administered assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District, school, and grade-level benchmark, universal screening, and state assessment results compared to campus and district results• Academic records• Intervention access and progress• School history• Classroom observations• Attendance records• Student mobility information• Discipline records• Disruptions to instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent/adult student interview about school history and access to reading/math instruction• Participation in outside tutoring• Other academic supports



Updated

The term ‘emotional disturbance’ was changed to ‘emotional disability.’ The eligibility criteria has not changed.

5

EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS IN SLD IDENTIFICATION

Students may display underachievement for various reasons. Not every student with inadequate achievement has an SLD. As part of the process of identifying a student with an SLD, the MDT must determine whether specific factors (listed below) are the **primary** reason for the student’s difficulties in learning and academic performance ([19 TAC 89.1040\(c\)\(9\)\(B\)\(iv\)](#)). Exclusionary factors include a visual hearing or motor disability, intellectual disability, emotional disability, environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage, and language proficiency.

A visual,
hearing or
motor disability

Intellectual
disability



Emotional
disability

Environmental,
cultural, or
economic
disadvantage

Language
proficiency



Added Analysis and Interpretation

A chart is provided as one way to organize data for interpretation and to confirm that the student exhibits a PSW.

There are rows to enter data for the different data sources (informal, criterion-referenced, curriculum-based, and norm-referenced, if necessary).

Data Source	Skill and/or ability area	Skill and/or ability area	Skill and/or ability area	Skill and/or ability area	Skill and/or ability area
Informal					
Curriculum-based					
Criterion-referenced					
<i>Norm-referenced, if necessary</i>					



Impact Statements within the FIE

Impact and need statements within the FIE are critical for developing the student's initial IEP. An impact statement is specific to the individual student. Each disability condition needs an impact and need statement that includes baseline data. Impact and needs statements should drive the IEP development process, and the MDT should assist teachers in drafting initial PLAAFP statements based on the information included in the FIE.

Need Statements within the FIE

A specific statement of needed services and supports for accessing and progressing in the general curriculum is based on the individualized and unique needs of the student. The needs statements should align with information within the FIE and the most recent data (i.e., classroom observations, curriculum-based measurements, etc.). This means a description of skills, not just scores.



Added statement in pink box:

“Within the FIE, baseline data should be provided to identify where the student is functioning and where he/she should be in relation to the grade/age-level standards. The FIE should describe **how** the disability impacts the student’s access to and progress in the general curriculum and include recommendations for evidence-based interventions.”



Added

“Recommendations address any needed content, methodology, and/or delivery adaptations. The rationale for these recommendations clearly aligns with the specific impact of the disability. Any needed accommodations, modifications, or prerequisite skills are linked to the student’s unique and individualized needs, and there is an explanation/rationale for why they would be necessary for the student to access the general education curriculum.”



Key Takeaways

- The FIE should also include helpful data and information used to develop the PLAAFP statement and draft measurable annual goals for the student if they are determined eligible for special education and related services.
- Impact and need statements within the FIE are critical for developing the student's IEP and should consider impacts on learning, language and communication, social/emotional/behavioral, and independent living.
- A specific statement of needed services and supports for accessing and progressing in the general curriculum is based on the individualized and unique needs of the student. Keep in mind that if the student is not found eligible for special education and related services, they will still need a plan for support. The FIE information is relevant for developing an intervention or other support plan in general education.



Updated

- Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED)

A REED for an FIIE focuses on the initial identification for special education services, while a REED for an FIE focuses on reevaluating and updating the educational needs and services for a student already receiving special education.

- Reevaluation

A reevaluation is a written report of current functioning and identifies the student's educational (academic and functional) needs.



Added

- Other Circumstances Indicating a Need for a Reevaluation
 - Change in Disability Condition
 - Change in Needs

A substantial or significant:

- ◆ change in the student's academic performance
- ◆ escalation in the student's behavior and/or the student's behavior is impeding his/her learning or the learning of others
- ◆ inconsistency between the description of the student's strengths and needs in the IEP and the student's actual performance

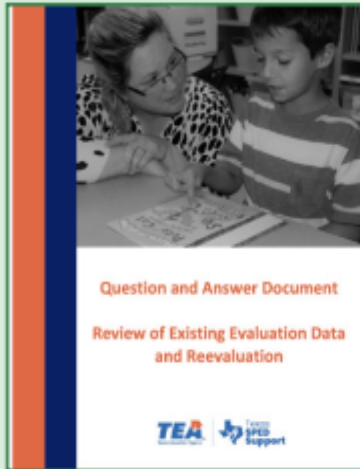


Added Key Takeaways

- The ARD committee and other qualified professionals, as appropriate, review existing evaluation data for the student.
- Based upon that review, including input from the student’s parents, the ARD committee identifies what additional data, if any, are needed to make an informed decision regarding the identification of an SLD, including dyslexia and/or dysgraphia.
- If additional data is necessary, the LEA provides the parent PWN of reevaluation and requests written parent consent according to the IDEA requirements.
- A timeline for completing the evaluation will be determined by the ARD committee (unless it is the three-year reevaluation due date), and all evaluation procedures should be followed.
- When dyslexia is suspected, a person with specific knowledge in the reading process, dyslexia and related disorders, and dyslexia instruction must serve on the LEA’s multidisciplinary team and any ARD committee that is convened to determine eligibility for special education and related services.



Added “Please visit the Texas SPED Support website for additional guidance on the legal requirements and best practices for reevaluations.”



[Review of Existing Evaluation Data and Reevaluation: Question and Answer Document](#)

As part of the reevaluation, the ARD committee and other qualified personnel, as appropriate, must complete a REED to help determine what additional data, if any, are needed to determine whether the student continues to require special education and related services and whether changes are needed to the services being provided. This question-and-answer document is intended to provide guidance and best practices to LEAs regarding the REED and reevaluation processes.



[Reevaluations: From REED to Evaluation](#)

Participants will examine regulations related to reevaluations, review the process for conducting a REED, and determine best practices for a comprehensive reevaluation in this webinar.



Added

The LEA shall reevaluate a child with a disability before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability. As part of the reevaluation, the REED data should reveal what additional data is necessary, if any, to determine if the student continues to have a disability, and the student's educational needs as a result of the disability, or if the student continues to need special education and related services. If the ARD committee members and other qualified professionals, as appropriate, determine no additional data is necessary, then the data/information gathered for the REED could be formulated into a written report identifying the student as no longer a student with a disability. In this instance, the LEA must notify the parent of the determination that no additional data is needed and the reasons for the determination, as well as the right of the parents to request an assessment to determine whether the student continues to be a student with a disability.

Texas Special Education Educator Resources:



spedsupport.tea.texas.gov