

Section 2

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The Fort Bend Independent School District, an Equal Opportunity Educational Provider and Employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, disability and/or age, military status, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment decisions. Additionally, the District does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities. Policies DAA, DIA

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GENERAL INFORMATION

FBISD Board Policies: EHBAA (Legal); EHBAB(Legal); EHBAE (Legal); FB(Legal); FEA(Legal) 20 U.S.C. § 1401(3); 34 CFR §§ 300.8, 300.39(b)(3) 300.301-300.306 (Evaluations and Reevaluations), 300.307-300.311 (Additional Procedures for Identifying Children with Specific Learning Disabilities), and 300.122(Evaluations); TEC §29.003 (Eligibility Criteria); 19 TAC §§ 89.1040 (Eligibility Criteria), 89.1050 (The Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee)

Special education services shall be provided to eligible students in accordance with all applicable federal law and regulations, state statutes and rules, school policies and procedures, and this Special Education Administrative Procedures.

Eligibility Determination

To be eligible to receive special education services, a student must be a "child with a disability." To qualify as a "child with a disability," a student must have been determined to:

1. have met the definition of one or more of the disabilities listed in federal regulations, state law, or both; **and**
2. need special education and related services—Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)— as a result of the disability or disabilities.

Special education means "specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability." Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) means—

- "adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction-
 - To address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability; and
 - To ensure access of the student to *the general curriculum*, so that the student can meet *the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.*"

The provisions in this Section specify criteria to be used in determining whether a student's condition meets one or more of the definitions in federal regulations or in state law. A student must be assessed in all areas of suspect disability.

The student's Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC) make the determination of whether a student is eligible for special education and related services. Any evaluation or re-evaluation of a student shall be conducted in accordance with all applicable law. The multidisciplinary team that

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collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility must include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. A licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), an educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified or licensed practitioner with experience and training in the area of the disability; or
2. A licensed or certified professional for a specific eligibility category.

The student's disability condition must be documented in the Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) and in the ARD/IEP report. There must be an Eligibility Report for each disability condition in the ARD/IEP reports. These reports must be kept in the eligibility file as well as the file kept by the school personnel.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (3), (5); 19 TAC §§ 89.1040(c) (3), 89.1050(b), 89.1050(c) (3) (B); TEC § 29.310(c)

A student with a hearing loss is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for deafness as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(3), or for hard of hearing as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(5).

Deafness means a hearing loss that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Hard of Hearing means a loss in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

Evaluation Procedures

The procedures and materials used for the assessment and placement of the child who is deaf or hard of hearing must be in the child's preferred mode of communication.

The evaluation data reviewed by the multidisciplinary team in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on an auditory impairment must include:

1. An otological examination performed by an Otolaryngologist (or by a licensed medical doctor with documentation that an Otolaryngologist is not reasonably available);
2. An audiological evaluation by a licensed audiologist shall also be conducted; and
3. The evaluation data shall include a description of the implications of the hearing loss for the student's hearing in a variety of circumstances with or without recommended amplification.
4. A communication assessment report provided by a speech-language pathologist, a person certified in deaf education, or another qualified individual. The communication assessment

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should determine the student’s ability to use a variety of modes of communication such as sign language, speech, speech reading or finger spelling.

Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

For a student with a suspected or documented hearing loss, the ARDC must include a certified teacher of the deaf.

Students (0-2)

For a student from birth through two years of age with visual impairments and/or hearing loss, an individualized family services plan (IFSP) meeting must be held in place of an ARD committee meeting in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.320-300.324, and the memorandum of understanding between the Texas Education Agency and the Department of *Assistive and Rehabilitative Services*. For students three years of age and older, school districts must develop an IEP.

AUTISM (AU) OR OTHER PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER

34 CFR §300.8(c) (1); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (1)

Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, which adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be identified as having autism if he or she meets the other eligibility criteria. A student does not qualify as a child with autism if his educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(4).

A student who has autism is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for autism as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (1) by a multidisciplinary team. Students with pervasive developmental disorders are included under this category. Thus, the multidisciplinary team must determine that the student:

1. has a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction; and
2. the developmental disability affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction must have an adverse effect on the child’s educational performance.

The team's written report of evaluation shall include specific recommendations for behavioral interventions and strategies.

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The definitions of conditions or categories that are used for purposes of establishing an individual's eligibility for mental health services, as found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), are not synonymous with criteria used for determining whether a child is a “child with a disability” for purposes of establishing eligibility for services under the IDEA. Letter to Coe (OSEP 9/14/1999) The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having autism will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

DEAF-BLINDNESS (DB)

34 CFR §300.8(c)(2); 19 TAC §§ 89.1040(c)(2), 89.1050(b), 89.1050(c)(3)(C); TEC § 29.310(c)

Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing loss and visual impairment, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Evaluation Procedures

The procedures and materials used for the assessment and placement of the child who is deaf or hard of hearing must be in the child's preferred mode of communication. The evaluation data reviewed by the ARD committee in connection with the determination of the child's disability based on deaf-blindness must comply with the evaluation procedures of DHH and Visual Impairment.

Eligibility Criteria

A student with deaf-blindness is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for deaf-blindness in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (2). A student with deaf-blindness is one who, based on the evaluations specified in 34 CFR §§ 300.8(c) (3) (Deaf/Hard of Hearing) and 300.8(c) (13) (Visual Impairment):

1. Meets the eligibility criteria for DHH in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(3) and visual impairment in 34 CFR §§ 300.8(c) (13);
2. Meets the eligibility criteria for a student with a visual impairment and has a suspected hearing loss that cannot be demonstrated conclusively, but a speech/language therapist, a certified speech and language therapist, or a licensed speech language pathologist indicates there is no speech at an age when speech would normally be expected;
3. Has documented hearing and visual losses that, if considered individually, may not meet the requirements for DHH or visual impairment, but the combination of such losses adversely affects the student's educational performance; or

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4. Has a documented medical diagnosis of a progressive medical condition that will result in concomitant hearing and visual losses that, without special education intervention, will adversely affect the student's educational performance.

Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

For a student with a suspected or documented deaf-blindness, the ARDC must include a certified teacher of the deaf and a teacher certified in the education of students with visual impairments.

Students (0-2)

For a student from birth through two years of age with visual impairment and/or hearing loss, an individualized family services plan (IFSP) meeting must be held in place of an ARD committee meeting in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.320-300.324, and the memorandum of understanding between the Texas Education Agency and the Department of *Assistive and Rehabilitative Services*. For students three years of age and older, school districts must develop an IEP.

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE (ED)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (4); 19 TAC 89.1040(c) (4); 22 TAC § 465.38(b)(2); TX Occupations Code § 501.503

Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined the ARD Committee determines based on evaluation by a group of qualified professionals that the student has an emotional disturbance consistent with the criteria outlined above. The term “social maladjustment” is a persistent pattern of violating social norms with truancy, substance abuse, perpetual struggle with authority or manipulation. *Hansen v. Republic R-III School District*, 632 F.3d 1024 (8th Cir. 2011); *Springer v. Fairfax County School Board*, 134 F.3d 659 (4th Cir. 1998).

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With respect to the criterion that the student manifest one or more characteristics of emotional disturbance to a “marked degree,” this generally refers to the frequency, duration, or intensity of a student’s emotionally disturbed behavior in comparison to the behavior of peers and can be indicative of either degree or acuity or pervasiveness. Letter to Anonymous (OSEP 8/11/1989)

The definitions of conditions or categories that are used for purposes of establishing an individual's eligibility for mental health services, as found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), are not synonymous with criteria used for determining whether a child is a “child with a disability” for purposes of establishing eligibility for services under the IDEA. Letter to Coe (OSEP 9/14/1999) IDEA neither requires nor precludes the application of the DSM criteria in making eligibility determinations. The DSM classification system may assist the group of qualified professionals in evaluating and diagnosing disability conditions in students, including the disability condition of emotional disturbance. Letter to Woodson (OSEP 4/5/1989)

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having an emotional disturbance will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

The assessment of emotional or behavioral disturbance, for educational purposes, using psychological techniques and procedures is considered the practice of psychology. A person commits an offense if the person engages in the practice of psychology or represents that the person is a psychologist in violation of the Occupations Code.

Evaluation Procedures

A student with an emotional disturbance is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for emotional disturbance as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (4).

The written report of evaluation shall include specific recommendations for behavioral supports and interventions. 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §89.1040(c)(4) The written report of evaluation should also include:

1. The type and severity of the emotional disturbance;
2. The functional implications of the disability for situations involving instruction; and
3. The degree to which in-school and out-of-school behavior reflects symptoms consistent with the diagnosis and identification of behavior considered to be a direct result of the emotional disability.

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INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (6); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (5)

Intellectual Disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Evaluation Procedures

The evaluation data reviewed by the ARDC must include:

1. a standardized individually administered test of cognitive ability; and
2. adaptive behavior assessment in at least two of the following areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety.

Evaluation Criteria

A student with an intellectual disability is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for intellectual disability as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(6). In meeting the criteria stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(6), a student with an intellectual disability is one who has been determined to have significantly sub-average intellectual functioning that:

1. is measured by a standardized, individually administered test of cognitive ability in which the overall test score is at least two standard deviations below the mean, when taking into consideration the standard error of measurement of the test; and
2. concurrently exhibits deficits in at least two of the following areas of adaptive behavior:
 - a. communication;
 - b. self-care;
 - c. home living;
 - d. social/interpersonal skills;
 - e. use of community resources;
 - f. self-direction;
 - g. functional academic skills;
 - h. work;
 - i. leisure;
 - j. health;
 - k. safety; and
3. is manifested during the developmental period; and
4. adversely affects the child's educational performance.

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The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having an intellectual disability will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

It is permissible to have evaluation criteria that use intelligence tests to determine whether a child has a disability, provided that the intelligence test has been validated for the specific purpose for which it is being used, that neither the test itself nor its administration is racially or culturally discriminatory, and does not constitute the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for a child. Letter to Warrington (OSEP 9/2/1993)

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES (MD)

34 CFR §300.8(c) (7); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (6)

Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities do not include deaf-blindness. 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(7)

A student with multiple disabilities is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for multiple disabilities as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (7).

In meeting the criteria stated in 34 CFR §300.8(c) (7), a student with multiple disabilities is one who has a combination of disabilities defined in 19 TAC § 89.1040(c)(6) and who meets all of the following conditions:

1. the student's disability is expected to continue indefinitely; and
2. the disabilities severely impair performance in two or more of the following areas:
 - a. psychomotor skills;
 - b. self-care skills;
 - c. communication;
 - d. social and emotional development; or
 - e. cognition.

Students who have more than one of the disabilities defined in Section 89.1040 but who do not meet the above criteria shall not be classified or reported as having multiple disabilities. 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §89.1040(c)(6)

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Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) Requirements

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having multiple disabilities will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination. The FIE must include the eligibility report for multiple disabilities and the specific eligibility reports for the two or more disabilities.

NON-CATEGORICAL EARLY CHILDHOOD (NCEC)

19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (13)

Children between the ages of 3-5 who are evaluated as having an intellectual disability, an emotional disturbance, a specific learning disability or autism may be described as “noncategorical early childhood” (NCEC) for the purposes of special education eligibility. 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)(13)

Evaluation Procedures

The child must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability. The Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (“ARDC”) that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of the child’s eligibility based on non-categorical must include the applicable members for intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, or autism. The evaluation data reviewed by the ARDC in connection with that determination of the child’s disability based on non-categorical must comply with the applicable evaluation procedures of auditory impairment and visual impairment.

A student may be described as NCEC if the child:

1. is between the ages of three to five; and
2. has been evaluated as having intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, a specific learning disability, or autism.

***If NCEC is being utilized as the eligibility criteria, it MUST be noted as the Primary Disability in the ARD Document.*

The group of qualified professionals that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of the child's eligibility based on noncategorical early childhood must include the applicable members for intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, or autism. The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of meeting eligibility criteria for a noncategorical early childhood disability will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

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Additional FBISD Guidance

What does that mean?

In Texas, a child under the age of six that meets eligibility criteria with the disability of ID, ED, LD, or AU could qualify for this category of disability.

When would it be used?

This criterion is typically used when a child meets the eligibility criteria, but it is the opinion of the evaluation team that there may be other factors contributing to the child's functioning. An example of this is a child who is evaluated at age three and prior to the evaluation the child may have had limited experiences outside of the home setting. Evaluation data indicates the child is functioning in the range of an intellectual disability, however the evaluators cannot determine the extent to which the limited experiences are contributing to the child's current functioning. Therefore, the evaluation team may determine that NCEC is the primary disability.

When must you reevaluate?

The eligibility criteria in 19 TAC § 89.1040(13) states that this eligibility category is only appropriate if the child is between three and five years of age. This means that the child must be reevaluated and have an ARD prior to the child's sixth birthday regardless of whether the three-year reevaluation is due.

How do I keep track of this?

You must review the student rosters at your campus and determine which students have the non-categorical eligibility. You need to keep track of this information and make sure you get it done! If a PEIMS report is run and a child turns six and is NCEC it will produce a fatal error. At that point, you will be notified from the special education office that the evaluation is overdue.

Must I complete an Autism supplement if the child is non-cat AU?

Yes. The child is regarded as having the condition of autism so the supplement is required.

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ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT (OI)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (8); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (7)

Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

A student with an orthopedic impairment is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for orthopedic impairment as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(8). The multidisciplinary team must determine that the student: (1) has a severe orthopedic impairment (2) that adversely affects the child's educational performance.

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

The multidisciplinary team that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on an orthopedic impairment must include a licensed physician. Medical services" under IDEA are defined as services provided by a licensed physician to determine whether a child has a medically related disabling condition, which results in the child's need for special education and related services. 34 CFR § 300.34(c)(5) The District will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent. *Letter to Anonymous* (OSEP 6/3/2020)

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having an orthopedic impairment will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT (OHI)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (9); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (8)

A student may be eligible for special education and related services as a student with *Other health impairment* if the student exhibits limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that:

1. is due to chronic or acute health problems; and by reason there of
2. demonstrates an educational need for specially designed instruction.

Letter to Sterner (OSEP 8/19/1998)

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This disability category includes such health conditions as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome. Letter to Sterner (OSEP 8/19/1998) The list of acute or chronic health conditions in the definition of OHI is not exhaustive, but rather provides examples of problems that children have that could make them eligible for special education and related services under the category of other health impairment. 71 Fed. Reg. 46550 (August 14, 2006), Letter to Sterner (OSEP 8/19/1998)

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

The multidisciplinary team that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on other health impairment must include a licensed physician. "Medical services" under IDEA are defined as services provided by a licensed physician to determine whether a child has a medically related disabling condition, which results in the child's need for special education and related services. 34 CFR § 300.34(c)(5) The District will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent. *Letter to Anonymous* (OSEP 6/3/2020)

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having an OHI will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination. *Alvin Independent School District v. A.D.*, 503 F.3d 378 (5th Cir. 2007)

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SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (SLD)

34 CFR §§ 300.8(c) (10), 300.307-300.311; 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (9)

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Disorders not included: Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Prior to and part of the evaluation, and in order to ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or mathematics, the following must be considered:

1. Data that demonstrates the child was provided appropriate instruction in reading (as described in 20 USC, 6368 (3), and/or mathematics within general education settings delivered by qualified personnel; and
2. Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction. Data-based documentation of repeated assessments may include, but is not limited to, Response to Intervention (RTI) progress monitoring results, in-class tests on grade level curriculum, or other regularly administered assessments. Intervals are considered reasonable if consistent with the assessment requirements of a student's specific instructional program.
3. A student with a specific learning disability is one who:
 - a. Has been determined through a variety of assessment tools and strategies to meet the criteria for a specific learning disability;
 - b. Does not achieve adequately for the child's age or meet state-approved grade level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation or mathematics problem solving when provided appropriate instruction, as indicated by performance on multiple measures such as in class tests; grade average over time (e.g. six weeks, semester) ; norm or criterion referenced tests, statewide assessments; or a process based on the child's response to scientific, research based intervention;
 - c. does not make sufficient progress when provided a process based on the child's response to scientific, research based intervention as indicated by the child's performance relative to the performance of the child's peers on repeated, curriculum based assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting student progress during classroom instruction; or
 - d. exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both relative to age, grade-level standards, or intellectual ability, as indicated by significant

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variance among specific area of cognitive function, such as working memory and verbal comprehension, or between specific areas of cognitive function and academic achievement.

Fort Bend ISD Criteria for Specific Learning Disabilities

Fort Bend ISD has adopted the Modern Operational Definition and the “Dual Discrepancy/Consistency Model” of SLD (both of which are featured in Flanagan, D.P., Ortiz, S.O., & Alfonso, V.C. (2013) *Essentials of Cross Battery Assessment* 3rd edition, Wiley and Sons). This model is widely accepted as a best practice in the identification of SLD and is based on multiple sources of literature and research (e.g., Kavale & Forness, 2000; Kavale et al., 2009; Berninger. 2001; Feifer 2012; Fletcher - Janzen & et al., 2001; Geary, Hoard, & Bailey, 2001); Hale & Fiorello, 2004; Hale et al., 2011; McClosky et al., 2012; Naglieri, 2011; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Siegal, 199; Stanovich, 1999; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000).

There are six (6) diagnostic markers for SLD. Each one of the following markers needs to be present to make a SLD edibility determination.

1. **A significant academic impairment.** The student needs to have significant difficulties in an academic area of eligibility based on multiple sources. While a deficient standardized score is necessary, other supporting data is necessary to corroborate the difficulty (grades, STAAR, CBA, data from supplemental interventions etc.).
2. **A significant cognitive impairment.** According to IDEA, SLD is defined as “A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes” (300.8(c) (10) (i)). According to the CHC Theory of Human Cognitive Abilities, there are seven (7) broad cognitive areas (Gs): Fluid Reasoning, Long Term Retrieval, Short Term Retrieval, Processing Speed, Crystallized Intelligence, Visual-Spatial, and auditory processing.
3. **Generally average ability to think and reason.** Individuals with SLD are of average or better overall cognitive ability, but have a “specific” area of disability. SLD is not an appropriate eligibility for those students who have learning difficulties for reasons other than specific cognitive dysfunction. Global Learning Deficit has never been an eligibility category in Texas. A student with SLD should be able to perform academically at a level close to her/her typically achieving peers when provided with individualized instruction, as well as appropriate accommodations and instructional modification. Additionally, students with SLD should possess the ability to learn compensatory strategies and apply them independently, which often requires higher level thinking and reasoning. Specific software tools are utilized for the process of determining this marker. Overall, it must be determined that he student has a generally average ability to think and reason. This also could be evidenced by typical performance in areas outside of those under consideration for SLD.
4. **Consistency between academic and cognitive impairments.** This is where the determination is made that the cognitive impairment (marker #2) is likely the primary cause of the academic impairment (marker #1). For example, Ga (phonetic coding) links to a disability in basic reading but not math calculation. However, a deficit in auditory processing could be a likely cause of

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impairment in Basic Reading Skills, as research and data strongly support a linkage between those two areas. This consistency would be further supported by classroom data and evidence pointing towards the primary cause.

5. **The cognitive impairment is domain specific.** SLD is a vertical problem, not horizontal. The cognitive impairment (marker #2) is different from the other cognitive areas, and stands out. We must determine whether the cognitive impairment is significantly different from the intact abilities and if the degree of the difference is rare and unusual.
6. **Evidence of unexpected underachievement.** The area of academic impairment is significantly different from what would be expected considering the overall cognitive ability of the student.

Exclusionary Criteria

The eligibility team is required to take into consideration the effects of what are commonly referred to as “exclusionary” factors.

Federal Regulations, require that the multidisciplinary team determine that its findings (that address the criteria for SLD) are not PRIMARILY the result of – “visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency.”

Some factors to consider are the student’s attendance history, the impact of the student’s language/culture, sociological factors, trauma, and behaviors.

Role of the Evaluation Staff

Diagnostician/LSSP/SLP: trained to interpret test results. While tests provide a lot of necessary information, they are not the only factor in determining eligibility.

Teachers: provide ecological data and information not again from standardized measures.

When considering a student for eligibility as a student with a specific learning disability, the group of qualified professionals shall:

- use information from an observation in routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the student's performance that was done before the student was referred for an evaluation; or
- have at least one member of the assessment team conduct an observation of the student's academic performance in the regular classroom. 34 CFR § 300.310 (b)

II – Disabilities

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT (SI)

34 CFR, §300.8(c) (11) (Speech or Language Impairment); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (10) (Speech Impairment)

Speech or language impairment means a communication disorders, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. 34 CFR § 300.310(c)(11)

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

The multidisciplinary team that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on a speech impairment must include:

- a. a certified speech and hearing therapist;
- b. a certified speech and language therapist; or
- c. a licensed speech/language pathologist.

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having a speech or language impairment will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

II – Disabilities

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (12); 19 TAC § 89.1040(c) (11)

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

A student with a traumatic brain injury is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for traumatic brain injury as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (12).

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

The multidisciplinary team that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on a traumatic brain injury must include a licensed physician, in addition to the licensed or certified practitioners specified in 19 TAC § 89.1040(b)(1).¹

“Medical services” under IDEA are defined as services provided by a licensed physician to determine whether a child has a medically related disabling condition, which results in the child's need for special education and related services. 34 CFR § 300.34(c)(5) The District will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent. *Letter to Anonymous* (OSEP 6/3/2020)

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having a traumatic brain injury will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

¹ 19 TAC 89.1040(b)(1) provides, in part, that the “multidisciplinary team that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student’s eligibility must include, but is not limited to, the following: (1) a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), an educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified practitioner with experience and training in the area of the disability; or (2) a licensed or certified professional for a specific eligibility category... .”

II – Disabilities

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (VI)

34 CFR § 300.8(c) (13); 19 TAC §§ 89.1040(c) (12), 89.1050(b), 89.1050(c) (3) (A); TEC § 30.002(c-1) (2)

Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Evaluation Procedures

A student with a visual impairment is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for visual impairment as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (13). The visual loss should be stated in exact measures of visual field and corrected visual acuity at a distance and at close range in each eye in a report by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist. The report should also include prognosis whenever possible. If exact measures cannot be obtained, the eye specialist must so state and provide best estimates.

In meeting the criteria stated in 34 CFR 300.8(c) (13), a student with a visual impairment is one who:

1. has been determined by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist:
 - a. to have no vision or to have a serious visual loss after correction; or
 - b. to have a progressive medical condition that will result in no vision or a serious visual loss after correction; and
2. has been determined by the following evaluations to have a need for special services:
 - a. a functional vision evaluation by a professional certified in the education of students with visual impairments or a certified orientation and mobility specialist;
 - i. The evaluation must include:
 - the performance of tasks in a variety of environments requiring the use of both near and distance vision; and
 - recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation.
 - b. a learning media assessment by a professional certified in the education of students with visual impairments; and
 - i. The learning media assessment must include:
 - recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student; and
 - whether or not there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area.

II – Disabilities

- c. an orientation and mobility evaluation conducted by a person who is appropriately certified as an orientation and mobility specialist.²
 - i. The orientation and mobility evaluation must be conducted in a variety of lighting conditions and in a variety of settings including the student’s home, school, and community and in settings unfamiliar to the student

Functionally Blind

A student with a visual impairment is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for visual impairment as stated in 34 CFR § 300.8(c) (13) based upon the preceding evaluations. A student with a visual impairment is functionally blind if, based on the functional vision evaluation and the learning media assessment, the student will use tactual media (which includes Braille) as a primary tool for learning to be able to communicate in both reading and writing at the same level of proficiency as other students of comparable ability.

Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)

A person who is appropriately certified as an orientation and mobility specialist must participate, as part of a multidisciplinary team, in evaluating data used in making the determination of the student’s eligibility as a student with a visual impairment. In addition, for a student with a suspected or documented visual impairment, the ARDC must include a teacher who is certified in the education of students with visual impairments.

Re-evaluation Requirements

The scope of any re-evaluation of a student who has been determined, after the full and individual evaluation, to be eligible for the district’s special education program on the basis of a visual impairment must be determined, in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.303-300.311, by a multidisciplinary team that includes an appropriately certified orientation and mobility specialist.

Students (0-2)

For a student from birth through two years of age with visual impairment and/or hearing loss, an individualized family services plan (IFSP) meeting must be held in place of an ARD committee meeting in accordance with 34 CFR §§ 300.320-300.324, and the memorandum of understanding between the Texas Education Agency and the Department of *Assistive and Rehabilitative Services*. For students three years of age and older, school districts must develop an IEP.

² This requirement along with the requirements in the “Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC)” as well as the requirements involving an appropriately certified orientation mobility specialist found in the “Re-Evaluation Requirements” Section herein took effect beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. See 19 TAC § 89.1040(B)-(E).