

District Process Used to Determine the Existence of a Specific Learning Disability

Each local educational agency and public school academy in Michigan is required to publicly post the process used to determine the existence of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Consistent with this requirement, **North Adams-Jerome School District** reports the following:

For determination of a SLD a **Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW)** process will be used for students in kindergarten through 12th grade across all areas of SLD, which are: Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension, Written Expression, Basic Reading, Reading comprehension, Reading Fluency, Math Calculation, and Math Problem Solving.

It is noted that regardless of the process used, all schools must follow all of the regulatory requirements in the IDEA, the Michigan Administrative rules for Special Education, and Michigan laws, policies and procedures for special education.

What is a SLD?

A Specific Learning Disability is “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 do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. A SLD does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.: (34 CFR§300.8(c)(10)).

What is the Pattern of Strengths and Weakness (PSW) Process?

Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses is a process that is used to determine if a student has a SLD. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:

- ❖ The student does not achieve adequately for the student’s age or to meet State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR§300.309(a)(1)(i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student’s age or State-approved grade-level standards.
- ❖ The student exhibits a pattern or strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) to be relevant to the identification of a SLD, using appropriate assessments, consistent with the IDEA Evaluation Procedures and Additional Requirements for Evaluations and Reevaluations.

Source: Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (2010). *Michigan criteria for determining the existence of a specific learning disability*, Lansing, MI: Author.