**Achievement Scores to Consider When Determining Specific Learning Disability (SLD)**

**Eligibility Using Discrepancy Method**

**Grounding assumptions are a group of statements that set forth the unifying beliefs for all involved stakeholders and serve as the foundation for collaborative efforts. Grounding assumptions address what people know and what they do. www.ideapartnership.org**

Grounding assumptions to consider when determining SLD eligibility using the discrepancy method:

1. Special education eligibility requires three prongs of enquiry. Meeting discrepancy criteria is just one prong. Even when discrepancy criterion is met, teams must still establish the disability has adverse educational impact and results in the need for specially designed instruction (special education and related services).
2. The unique, individualized needs of the student identified in the Review of Existing Data (RED) and referral process should drive the selection of the measurement. Considering the reason for the evaluation and examining how the measurement’s results will align with the referral concerns is a critical step to ensure the appropriate measure is selected.
3. It is the responsibility of the team and assessment professionals to choose valid and reliable measures and assessments designed to fit the individualized needs associated with each comprehensive evaluation. Factors to be considered in the selection of measurement instruments should include the characteristics and unique needs of the examinee, appropriateness of the normative group, levels of validity and reliability, and alignment with the measurement’s construct with the purpose of the evaluation. DESE does not endorse or require specific measures or assessments to be used in evaluations.
4. IDEA requires that assessments are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel, administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producers of the assessments and used for the purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable.(34 CFR 300.304)
5. Eligibility determinations must always be based on a variety of data sources and teams should use a variety of assessment tools. (34 CFR 300.304)
6. Evaluations must not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.([34 CFR 300.304](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.304))
7. Multiple pieces of convergent data, including observational data should be used to substantiate an eligibility determination.
8. Informal assessment data should also be considered when determining eligibility. Whether gathered either pre-referral, or during the Review of Existing Data (RED) or evaluation process, classroom performance data should also be incorporated into the synthesis of information and triangulated with other sources of data to assist in substantiating the eligibility determination.
9. Eligibility determinations are complex and require careful consideration beyond the parameters of a mathematical formula.
10. There will often be outliers within assessment results. In all cases, teams will have to use their clinical and professional expertise to make judgements regarding eligibility.
11. Data analysis should start at the composite or cluster score level and work down to subtest level. Composite or Cluster scores are preferred scores to use for eligibility decisions, as they have higher reliability and validity than a single subtest score. Teams should be cognizant of score reliabilities for any score that is to be used for eligibility determinations. While subtest level scores are helpful for analyzing student strengths and weaknesses and for suggesting instructional recommendations, a single subtest score is not considered sufficient for making eligibility determinations because it lacks the level of reliability required to make determinations about disability eligibility. Composite or cluster scores, in most cases, provide higher reliability because they are composed of more than one subtest. (*Woodcock Johnson, Technical Bulletin 8, 2015)*
12. SLD criteria can be found in Regulation III of the [MO State Plan for Special Education](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/regulation-iii-identification-and-evaluation-2) and in the 1400’s of the [Missouri Standards and Indicators](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/learning-disability-0).

Definitions\*:

1. **Composite or Cluster score**: Score obtained by combining the scores of more than one subtest from the measure.
2. **Subtest score:** A single score based on a subtest. Subtests are relatively short tests that measure specific abilities
3. **Pure Composite or Cluster score**: All the subtests that make up this score measure skills that fall under one subcategory of SLD
4. **Non-Pure Composite of Cluster score**: The subtests that make up this score measure skills that fall under multiple subcategories of SLD.

\* These are generalized terms. Each measure has their own specific terminology for the scores obtained for measure. Assessment staff must be aware of the terminology for each measure they are using.

SLD Subcategories and Associated Skills (use to determine skills that fall under the specific subcategories of SLD.):

1. **Basic Reading**: Skills include: phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, phonics, word analysis, identification of individual sounds, and the ability to manipulate them, identification of printed letters and the sounds associated with letters, and decoding of written language.
2. **Reading Comprehension**: Skills include the ability to process text, understand its meaning, integrate what the reader already knows, determine fact/opinion, predict outcomes, sequence events, identify main ideas, recall basic details, identify cause and effect, and state inferential and literal facts. \*\* When assessing reading comprehension it is important to note that the student has to read a text selection and then answer comprehension related questions. If a student answers questions over a text passage that is read aloud to them, they are using listening comprehension skills not reading comprehension skills.
3. **Reading Fluency**: Skills include the ability to read like you speak and using age appropriate accuracy rate, proper expression, and speed.
4. **Written Expression**: Skills include planning, drafting, reviewing and revising writing for grammar and composition, organizing writing ideas, identifying voice, selecting words, using spelling, using punctuation, forming fluent sentences and paragraphs, and composing different types of writing (entertainment, factual, biography).
5. **Math Calculation**: Skills include the ability to count objects, compute simple math facts and operations, and use step by step processes for basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts
6. **Math Problem Solving**: Skills include the ability to examine questions to find the key ideas, choose the appropriate strategy, use math facts, find and recheck the answer, interpret charts/graphs, use money, solve multiple step word problems, use higher thinking math, algebra, and geometry.
7. **Listening Comprehension**: Skills include the ability to understand the implications and explicit meaning of spoken language words and sentences (receptive language skills), retell stories after listening, follow spoken directions, and answer questions after listening to a story or text passage.
8. **Oral expression**: Skills include the ability to convey wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas meaningfully and use appropriate syntactic, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological language structures (expressive language skills)

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| **Discrepancy Score Decision Making Chart** | | | |
| The intended purpose of this chart is to assist schools in determining which achievement scores could be used (in conjunction with other pieces of data) when determining if a discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability exists. **As a reminder, standardized academic achievement test scores alone do NOT establish SLD eligibility, they are only one piece of data the eligibility determination team needs to examine when determining eligibility.**  **Note 1**: In the examples below, the 1.5 SD (22 point) discrepancy score needed to meet criterion would be a Standard Score (SS) of 80 or lower because the hypothetical student has an IQ score of 102. **Bolded** scores are examples of scores that could be used to demonstrate evidence of a discrepancy. The examples listed below are from commonly used measures. DESE does not endorse or require any specific measure or assessment.  **Note 2**: Establishing discrepancy between academic achievement and ability is only one consideration in the eligibility determination process for SLD.  See 1400’s for other eligibility requirements. | | | |
| **Type of score** | **What skills does score measure?** | **What scores meet criterion level?** | **Can score be used to establish discrepancy?** |
| Composite or Cluster Score | Composite or Cluster score is “pure”.  Meaning ALL subtests that make up composite/cluster score measure skills under one subcategory of SLD | Composite/cluster score meets criterion level, ALL subtests that make up composite/cluster score meet criterion score.  Example: WIAT 4  Composite: Basic Reading **SS 78**  Subtests:  Word Reading **SS 78**  Pseudoword Decoding **SS 75**  Phonemic Proficiency: **SS 77** | **Yes**, composite/cluster score could be used for eligibility determination for SLD in basic reading. |
| Composite or  Cluster Score | Composite or Cluster score is “pure”.  Meaning ALL subtests that make up composite/cluster score measure skills under one subcategory of SLD | Composite/cluster score meets criterion, but, ONLY 1 subtest that makes up composite/cluster score meets criterion score  Example: WIAT 4  Composite: Basic Reading  **SS 78**  Subtests:  Word Reading **SS 78**  Pseudoword Decoding SS 82  Phonemic Proficiency: SS 83 | **Yes**, composite/cluster could be used for eligibility determination since it falls below the criterion. While not all of the subtest scores that make up the composite/cluster score fall below criterion, the composite/cluster score still falls below the criterion, so it would be acceptable to use for eligibility for SLD in basic reading.  BUT...the team should closely examine additional data (classroom tests/work samples, observation data, benchmark data, state tests, etc) to see if eligibility determination is supported by other data. Teams could give another assessment to gain another data point, if they feel they need additional data to confirm suspicions of a disability in that area. As always, teams would need to determine if adverse educational impact exists even when scores may meet criterion level. |
| Composite or Cluster Score | Composite/Cluster score is NOT pure. Meaning subtests that make up composite/cluster score measure skills under different subcategories of SLD. | Composite score meets criterion  Example: WIAT 4  Composite Score: Mathematic **SS 78**  Subtests:  Numerical Operations SS 78  Mathematical Problem Solving: SS 90  **OR**  Example: KTEA 3  Core Math **SS 77**  Subtests:  Math Concepts and Applications SS 76  Math Computation: SS 78 | **No**, These composite/cluster scores cannot be used for determining eligibility for math calculation due to the fact they are composed of subtests that measure skills from multiple SLD subcategories. It is not a “pure” composite or cluster score. In the WIAT 4 example provided, the subtest of Numerical Operations measures skills related to math calculation, while the subtest of Mathematical Problem Solving measures skills related to math problem solving.  Similarly, in the KTEA 3 example, the Core Math score is composed of Math Concepts and Applications which measures math problem solving skills and Math Computation which measures math calculation skills. These composite scores cannot be used for eligibility determinations because the subtests that make up the composite score measure skills from two different SLD subcategories.  When the composite score is not a “pure” measure of skills for a single SLD area, teams will have to use more than one subtest score to establish discrepancy or give another assessment in which the composite score is composed of subtests that measure skills related to a single SLD subcategory. |
| Subtest Score | Subtest measures a skill area that directly aligns with a subcategory of SLD | A **single** subtest score falls below criterion  Example: WIAT 4  Subtest:  Numerical Operations **SS 78**  **OR**  Example: KTEA 3  Subtest:  Math Computation **SS 77** | **No**, A single subtest rarely contains a large enough data sample on which to base an eligibility determination for math calculation. Teams would need to conduct another assessment or use an additional subtest from the same assessment that measures the same skill in order to get another subtest or composite score to support an eligibility determination. |
| Subtest Score | Subtest measures a skill area that directly aligns with a subcategory of SLD | 2 or more subtest scores that measure the same skill in the same SLD subcategory fall below criterion  Examples of possible subtest combinations:  WIAT 4:  Subtest:  Numerical Operations **SS 78**  **AND**  Key Math 3:  Subtest:  Written Computation Addition and Subtraction **SS 75**  **OR**  WIAT 4:  Subtest:  Numerical Operations **SS 77**  **AND**  WJ IV:  Subtest:  Calculations **SS 76**  **OR**  WIAT 4:  Subtest:  Numerical Operations **SS 78**  Subtest:  Math Fluency Addition **SS 75** | **Yes**, Teams may use two or more subtests that measure the same skills aligned to the same subcategory of SLD to make an eligibility determination. In the examples provided, there are different possible combinations to gain 2 or more subtests to substantiate a discrepancy in the area of math computation. . The subtests can be from the same assessment (if available) or from a different assessment. |

| **Examples of Pure vs Non-Pure Composite/Cluster Scores** | |
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| This is only meant to represent a sample of Composite or Cluster scores available from the WIAT, KTEA and Woodcock Johnson (WJ) achievement assessments. To determine if a Composite or Cluster score is pure vs non-pure, one would need to have a full understanding of what subtests make up the Composite or Cluster score and what specific skills the subtests measure. This information can be found by carefully reviewing the assessment’s manuals, protocols and training materials. | |
| **Pure Composite or Cluster Score Examples** | **Non-Pure Composite or Cluster Score Examples** |
| WJ IV Basic Reading (all subtests measure skills related to basic reading skills) | WJ IV Broad Reading (subtests measure reading skills, reading comprehension and reading fluency skills) |
| WJ IV Math Calculation (all subtests measure skills related to math calculation) | WJ IV Math (subtests measure math calculation skills and math problem solving skills) |
| WJ IV Math Problem Solving (all subtests measure skills related to math problem solving) | WJ IV Broad Math (subtests measure math calculation skills and math problem solving skills |
| WJ IV Broad Written Language (all subtests measure skills related to written language) | WJ IV Brief Achievement (subtests measure skills from multiple areas including reading skills, math problem solving and written language) |
| WIAT IV Reading Fluency( all subtests measure reading fluency skills) | WIAT IV Oral Language: (subtests measure listening comprehension skills and oral expression skills) |
| WIAT IV Basic Reading (all subtests measure skills related to basic reading) | WIAT IV Reading: ( subtests measure reading skills and reading comprehension skills) |
| KTEA 3 Reading for Understanding (all subtests measure skills related to reading comprehension) | KTEA 3 Core Reading (subtests measure reading skills and reading comprehension skills) |
| KTEA 3 Written Expression (all subtests measure written expression skills) | KTEA 3 Math (subtests measure math calculation and math problem solving skills) |