

3. In the Wisconsin SLD rule, "Intensive interventions" are defined, in part, as "focusing on single or small numbers of discrete skills." What is the definition of 'discrete skills?'

Answer:

The term "discrete skills" is interpreted differently depending on background knowledge and experience. For the purpose of SLD identification, DPI defines discrete skills as "aligned with one or more of the eight areas of concern." These eight areas include oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving.

Evidence:

"...for the purpose of SLD eligibility, "discrete skills" should be aligned with one or more of the eight areas of concern listed in the rule. Depending on the areas of concern and the intervention, it is possible for one intervention to address more than one area of concern. Reading fluency and reading comprehension, for example, or reading fluency and basic reading skill, are closely related and may often be addressed with the same intervention."

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2013. **Wisconsin's Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Rule: A Technical Guide for Determining the Eligibility of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities**, <http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/sld-guide.pdf>

Eight Achievement Areas of Specific Learning Disability

A student may have a specific learning disability because of inadequate achievement and insufficient progress in one or more of eight areas of achievement, which are listed in federal and state rule. When applying the eligibility criteria, IEP teams consider one or more of these areas of achievement concern. The area(s) of concern are identified by the IEP team during the review of existing data. These areas are not specifically defined in state or federal law. The following provide generally accepted definitions of the eight areas of achievement:

Oral expression is 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.

Listening comprehension refers to 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 in order to learn (auditory attention, auditory memory, and auditory perception). Listening comprehension also includes the ability to make connections to previous learning.

Written expression is 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.

Basic reading skill includes phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, phonics, and word analysis. Essential skills include identification of individual sounds and the ability to manipulate

them; identification of printed letters and sounds associated with letters; and decoding of written language.

Reading fluency skills refer to 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.

Reading comprehension refers to 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.

Mathematics calculation is the knowledge and retrieval of mathematical facts and the application of procedural knowledge in computation.

Mathematics problem solving is 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.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2013. **Wisconsin's Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Rule: A Technical Guide for Determining the Eligibility of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities**, <http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/sld-guide.pdf>

“Our approaches to prevention, however, are unlikely to succeed if they are too narrow. They need to address the entire range of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the curricula, instructional approaches, and assessments emerging from implementation of the CCSS-ELA.* Further, effective early intervention/prevention is critical if we do not want to strand a whole segment of our student population, isolating them from the demanding and important curriculum promoted by CCSS-ELA.” *CCSS-ELA Common Core State Standards-English Language Arts
Wixson, K. & Lipson, M. 2012. *Relations between the CCSS and Rtl in Literacy and Language*. **The Reading Teacher**. Vol. 65 Issue 6 pp. 387–391. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Although the CCSS do not use the word discrete, the introduction to the Foundational Skills (K-5) section states:

“These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves, rather they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines, instruction should be differentiated: good readers will need much less practice with these concepts than struggling readers will.” (p. 15)

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts**. Washington DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. www.corestandards.org.