

President's Letter
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The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has new guidelines for identifying students with learning disabilities (LD). You can download them from here:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/LDGuide.pdf>

What is the difference between the old guidelines and the new ones?

The biggest change is that Connecticut no longer permits the use of a “severe discrepancy” formula to identify learning disabilities. Instead, the state now requires that, as part of the eligibility process, we look at the student’s response to “Scientific Research Based Intervention” (SRBI). Which some people still call “Response to Intervention” (RTI).

Confused yet? No surprise. Lots of experts, teachers, psychologists, and yes, LDA-CT volunteers are right there with you.

Short version: the state and the federal government recognize that many students are struggling with school *not* because they have disabilities but because the instruction they receive is insufficient. It is not our teachers’ fault; most schools of education do not prepare them to provide evidence-based instruction. We are hoping that the new state requirements for SRBI will lead to relevant training for teachers.

What is Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI)?

SRBI refers to proven methods of instruction, as demonstrated in *published*, peer-reviewed research. Usually, we talk about SRBI in terms of reading instruction because that’s where most of the research has been. But it’s also supposed to apply to math, writing, and other types of instruction. SRBI is not yet in place in most Connecticut schools, but once it is, every child—receiving special education or not--will have access to evidence-based instruction, individualized to meet their needs, with progress measured using valid tests.

When you hear about SRBI, you’ll hear a lot about the “3-tier system.” “Tier 1” refers to the research-based instruction every child is to receive in the regular classroom to be provided by teachers trained in the program being used. Tier 2 is more individualized and is provided to students who are struggling in Tier 1. Tier 3 is still more individualized.

Does a child need to go through all three tiers prior to being evaluated for special education?

No. A child can receive a comprehensive evaluation for special education at any time,

even while still in Tier 1. SRBI is only one piece of a comprehensive evaluation and cannot be used as the sole criterion for finding a student eligible or ineligible for special education.

Can the SRBI process be used to “delay” an eligibility evaluation?

No. The time line for eligibility evaluations is the same—45 school days from the date of the parents’ written consent.

More information on SRBI and special education will be posted on LDA-CT’s web site soon. If you have any questions, please call me at our office (860) 560-1711. Welcome back!