


ADAPT! EVOLVING BEST PRACTICES for ASSESSMENTS in a PANDEMIC-ALTERED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

presented by PsychEd Services

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INTRODUCTION

- Must consider whether academic concerns are lack of instruction or Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Re-establish core instruction for all
- Evidence-based interventions for students identified as SLD

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INTRODUCTION

- School psychologists spend 60% of time assessing and serving students
- How to continue or begin identification assessment during or following a lengthy school closure

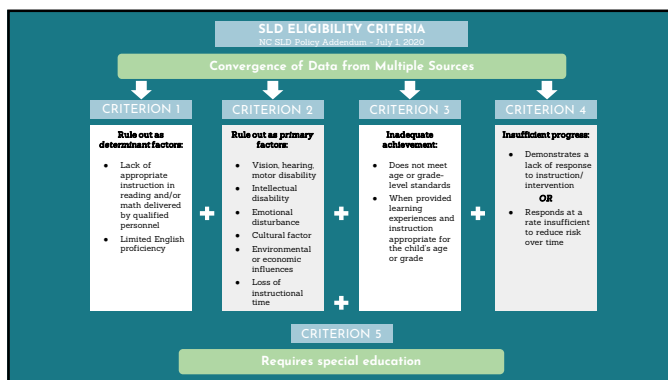
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ACTIVITY

- How do you evaluate SLD referrals?
- How has this changed since the pandemic?

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REALIGNING SLD IDENTIFICATION TO MITIGATE THE COVID-19 EFFECT

- Must fail to meet age or grade-level standards in one of eight academic areas
- Must display a lack of progress in response to instruction (RTI) *or*
- Display a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance and/or achievement

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REALIGNING SLD IDENTIFICATION TO MITIGATE THE COVID-19 EFFECT

- Other disabilities or situational conditions must be ruled out
- Academic difficulties must not be primarily due to lack of instruction

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RE-ESTABLISHING CORE INSTRUCTION

- Rule out SLD identification is lack of appropriate instruction
- Most hard-copy packets and online instructional activities were intended to review or apply previously learned material

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RE-ESTABLISHING CORE INSTRUCTION

- Impossible to rule out a lack of appropriate instruction as a causal factor in learning difficulties
- Re-establishing effective core instruction is a top priority

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SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

- Implement class-wide reading intervention immediately
- Class-wide interventions to re-establish core instruction with return to in-person instruction

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SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

- Even larger deficits between skills and students' new grade-level expectations
- More closely match interventions to student needs

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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Students not in school for extended periods
- Falling further behind during pandemic-related school closures

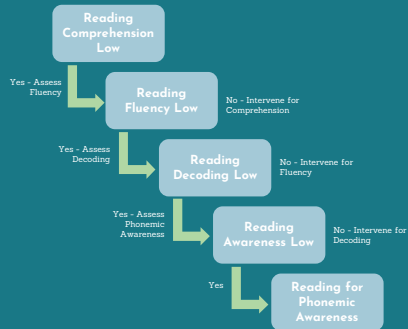
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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Embodies the conflict between "child find" requirement and a lack of instruction
- Problems with over identification and under identification

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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Over identification may occur if:
 - time not taken to re-establish core instruction
 - assess skill levels after extended school closures

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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Over identification may occur if:
 - intervene quickly and incisively
 - assess student progress
 - critical for economically disadvantaged, limited online instructional access, and limited English proficiency

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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Under identification may occur if:
 - received intensive supports
 - displayed a significant lack of progress before the school closure
 - inappropriate to unduly extend the readjustment period

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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR SLD EVALUATION

- Review data on student's growth before and after extended school closure
- Deficient level of performance and poor RTI are signals to proceed with an evaluation

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SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION AFTER COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES

- What do school psychologists do with evaluations started before school closure?
- How to complete new initial evaluations after in-person instruction begins

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IN-PROCESS EVALUATIONS

- Required by federal law to complete evaluations in 60 calendar days
- In California, an IEP meeting must be in 60 days
- Extension may be appropriate due to extended school closure

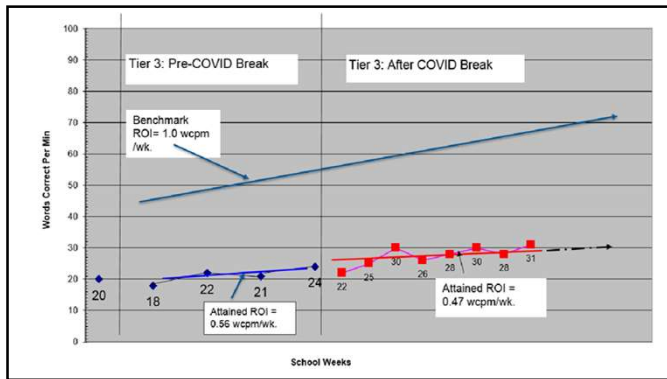
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IN-PROCESS EVALUATIONS

- School personnel cannot request extension to implement RTI
- If extension is not granted, team decides assessments needed and those not necessary
- Aspects of evaluation can be conducted when school is not in session

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- All states must allow the use of RTI to identify SLD
- Some school districts utilize alternative approaches referred to as pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW)

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- PSW as an alternative to RTI or discredited ability - achievement discrepancy model
- PSW relies on subscales of IQ tests, but research questions decisions made with IQ subtest scores

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- American Psychological Association (APA) provided guidelines for virtual assessments during the pandemic
- APA suggested practitioners focus on full-scale scores, not subscales

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- Full and individual evaluation for SLD
- Students must fail to achieve proficiency in one academic area
- When using RTI, analyze student progress before and after the COVID-19 school closure

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- If a student's current response to intervention does not close the achievement gap in a reasonable time, student would qualify under this criterion
- Team needs to consider if a student's deficient performance and poor RTI is another condition or lack of instruction

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NEW INITIAL EVALUATIONS

- Because students lacked instruction for over a year, team should appraise efforts to re-establish high-quality instruction and individualized supplemental interventions
- If a student qualifies under the first four criteria, their need for special education to make progress must be evaluated

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CONCLUSION

- Return to in-person instruction brings unique challenges
 - re-establishing core instruction
 - rethinking assessment practices
 - carefully considering exclusionary criteria

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CONCLUSION

- Unique opportunity to reconceptualize SLD

Record Review
Individualize
Interview
Observation
Test

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ACTIVITY

- How has your initial assessment changed after viewing this presentation?

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RESOURCES

Acadience Learning K-6 reading assessment guidance,
https://acadiencelarning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Spring2020_COVID-19_AcadienceReadingK-6_Guidance.pdf

Videos of virtual reading interventions,
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0adlei6p_HOHHhc-T-JnZg/videos?

COVID-19 Impact Profile Checklist
https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/7083436/RIVE-RSIDE%20COVID%20CHECKLIST_paper%5B12%5D.pdf

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RESOURCES

Department of Education COVID-19 resources page,
<https://ed.gov/coronavirus>

National Association of School Psychologists Ask the Experts Return to School Academic Series,
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/return-to-school>

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RESOURCES

Shaywitz, S., & Shaywitz, J. (2020). *Overcoming Dyslexia*. New York: Vintage Books.

Stevenson, N., & Reed, D. (2017) *To Change the Things I Can: Making Instruction More Intensive*. SAGE, Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

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SOURCE

National Association of School Psychologists. (2020). The pandemic's impact on special education evaluations and SLD identification [handout]. Author.

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THANK YOU

Questions, email:
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