

Overview of Communication Impairment: Effective Practices in Determining Eligibility in NJ

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Overview

•2

- This presentation describes New Jersey's preschool and school age eligibility criteria for speech language therapy based on initial assessments, describes cultural and linguistic considerations in SLP assessment, eligibility, and therapy services, discusses the concept of cognitive referencing as related to provision of speech language services to students with below average IQ and corresponding language abilities in the state of New Jersey, lists NJ dyslexia laws and ASHA's position on SLPs screening and assessing students for literacy based disorders as well as suggests helpful free resources available to SLPs and special education supervisors.

Learning Objectives

3

- After reviewing this presentation, learners will be able to:
 1. Review of state preschool and school-age eligibility criteria for SLP services in NJ
 2. List cultural and linguistic considerations in SLP assessment, eligibility, and therapy services
 3. Outline NJ Dyslexia laws and ASHA's position on SLPs screening and assessing students for literacy-based disorders
 4. Identify helpful free resources available to NJ-SLPs and well as sped supervisors

Preschool Eligibility for Special Education

4



Pre-K Elig Clarif

- Student is between 3-5 years of age with an identified disabling condition adversely affecting learning/development (DS, FXS) or
- Developmental 33 percent delay in one developmental area, or a 25 percent delay in two or more developmental areas below:
 - Physical, including gross/fine motor and sensory (vision and hearing)
 - Intellectual
 - Communication
 - Social/emotional
 - Adaptive
- Delays can be receptive or expressive and not based on a total score rather all testing findings need to be examined to determine adverse impact (academic and non-academic areas/social) and needs special ed and related services
- Delay in articulation can serve as a basis for consideration of eligibility
 - 33 percent delay in one developmental area, or a 25 percent delay in conjunction with another area
 - Necessary to establish relevant impact and need for special education

Battelle And Determination of Preschool Disability

5



Battelle

- Not the only test to determine eligibility. The nature and scope of the evaluation must be determined based on parent, teacher and IEP team feedback.
- Evaluation must include at least two assessments and conducted by at least two CST members
 - SLP needs to participate in a meeting to determine if an SLP eval is needed
 - For districts participating in Indicator 7 (Preschool Outcomes) BDI-2 is a required collection tool BUT this does not preclude the team from deciding what other diagnostic tools are needed to assess all areas of suspected disability to determine eligibility

Preschool Test Selection

6

- General language tests for ages 3-6
 - Preschool Language Scale-5 (PLS-5)
 - Test of Early Language Development-4 (TELD-4)
 - Preschool Language Assessment Instrument -2 (PLAI-2)*
 - Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool -3 (CELF-P3)*
 - Test for Auditory Comprehension of Language-4 (TACL-4)
- Pragmatic Language Checklists
 - Language Use Inventory LUI (O'Neil, 2009)
 - Children's Communication Checklist-2 (CCC-2) (Bishop, 2006)
- Play Sample ([Westby Play Scale, 2020](#))
- Language Sample
 - How their utterance length?
- Narrative Assessment
 - Can be performed on a verbal child as young as two years of age

Initial Assessments Eligibility Criteria: School Age

7



SLP Eval Code
Classification

- "Communication Impaired" - functional assessment of language in other than a testing situation and performance below 1.5 standard deviations, or the 10th percentile on at least (MINIMUM) two standardized language tests, where such tests are appropriate, one of which shall be a comprehensive test of both receptive and expressive language
- Test interpretation and decision-making regarding eligibility the criteria in the above provision do not limit the types of scores that can be considered (e.g., index, subtest, standard score, etc.).
- Test analyses, presented with the functional assessment of language and information about the educational impact of the communication difficulties on the student's ability to be involved in academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities, assist in determining eligibility.
- If it is determined that standardized tests are not appropriate for assessing whether a particular student has a language disorder, the IEP team may utilize other factors to make such a determination, such as relying on a functional assessment in other than a testing situation.

- **N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:14-3.5**

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Initial Assessments Eligibility (cont.)

- When the area of suspected disability is language, assessment by a certified SLS and assessment to establish the educational impact are required.
- The SLS is considered a child study team member.
 - i. When it is determined that the student meets the eligibility criteria according to the definition in (c) 4 above, but requires instruction by a speech-language specialist only, the student shall be classified as eligible for speech-language services.
 - ii. When the area of suspected disability is a disorder of articulation, voice, or fluency, the student shall be evaluated pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(g) and , if eligible, classified as eligible for speech-language services pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.6(a).

Psychometrically Strong School Aged Test Selection

9

- Comprehensive test for ages 6-18
 - Test of Integrated Language and Literacy
- Pragmatic Language for ages 7-18
 - Clinical Assessment of Pragmatics
- Narrative Assessment
 - Picture Books
- Discourse Assessment
 - Peer Conflict Resolution

Why are popular SLP Tests Recommendations Missing?

10

- Should students with disabilities be included in the normative samples ([Pena & Plante, 2020](#))
- Test developers tend to use the same process as they do for psychological and educational tests. Namely to rank people to represent the full population. For the purpose of ranking, disordered children are used in the sample because it widens the normative range, allowing for more fine-grained divisions and better rank estimates of students who fall -1 SD. However, such tests are not meant for diagnostic purposes, or the determination if a child has a disorder.
- Myth: If a child with a disabling condition is represented in the normative sample than the test is appropriate for usage with that population (e.g., ADHD, ASD, DLD, etc.)
- Reality: For diagnostic purposes there should be no students with disorders included in the normative sample, since our goal is to diagnose impairment for intervention purposes.
- Compromise: During the test development stage it is important to identify items that TD students pass and impaired kids fail for diagnostic accuracy purposes. But disordered students should not be included in the standardization norms because it lowers the mean, increases SD, thereby shifts the cut scores, which results in less likely identification of impaired students (“normalizes the disorder”). The overlap between disordered and typical becomes too great and its much harder to reliably identify those with an impairment.

Cognitive Referencing and Qualification for Services

11

- The practice of comparing IQ scores and language scores as a factor for determining eligibility for speech-language intervention and is based on the assumption that language functioning cannot surpass cognitive levels
- Not supported by [US Dept. of Edu](#) (pg. 31) nor [ASHA](#)
- NJ Dept. of Education does not have an explicit written policy regarding IQ/Language gap or lack of thereof BUT is not supported by the NJ Education Code since it gives you criteria for qualifying for services, which has no mention of IQ discrepancy
- Misinterpretation of the code (denial of services based on IQ/lang. discrepancy) is subject to state reporting as well as disciplinary measures

Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

12

- As per NJ Ed Code standardized assessments should be used only when appropriate
- There is no specification as to when a standardized test should be “required,” and, in a number of cases of CLD students, standardized tests may not be appropriate
- Alternative assessment procedures (See CLD Technical Manual for further details)
 - Thorough family interview
 - Critical questions to ask the teacher
 - Use dynamic assessment to determine learning potential
 - Compare the student’s language skills with peers in his/her speech community
 - Obtain a narrative sample
 - Children with language impairment produce linguistically and structurally poorer narratives (Boudreau, 2008). □
 - Children with language impairment display less of the following: conventional introductions/conclusions, total words, different words, cohesive ties, story grammar elements, complete episodes, communication repairs, and attempts, plans, and internal responses (Crais & Lorch, 1994). □
 - Narrative cohesion is not negatively impacted by dialect (Burns, de Villiers, Pearson, & Champion, 2012).
 - Nonword repetition tasks are useful in the assessment of ELLs and have clinical significance in other languages (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Simon-Cereijido, 2010)
 - Knowledge of alphabet/phonics abilities
 - Phonological awareness testing
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Dynamic Assessment: Basic Framework

- Pretest
 - Assess child's current performance
- Teach
 - Through mediated learning experience (MLE)
 - Help the child develop strategies
 - Observe the child's ability to modify
- Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)
 - Teach-Watch-Adjust
 - Clinician's responsibility to ensure success
- Post Test
 - Compare performance to pretest
 - Assess transfer of strategies
 - For more information please see:
 - <http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/issues/framework.htm>
- Materials <http://www.leadersproject.org/?s=dynamic+assessment+>



Dynamic Assessment (Gillam & Peña 2004)

14

- Test -Teach-Retest [Kapantzoglou et al., 2012](#); [Peña et al., 2014, 2001](#); [Ukrainetz et al., 2000](#))
 - Vygotsky's model of cognitive development (1986)
- Concepts to teach via modeling and imitation in structured contexts
 - Grammar
 - Vocabulary
 - Narratives
- Determine the skills child has and his/her learning potential
- Determining the child's response to clinical interactions
 - Interactive and process oriented vs. passive/static approach
- Differentiate between a typical L2 learner and a bilingual child with an impairment
- Can the child identify, produce and generalize taught information
- What is the potential for change given appropriate support?

Indicators of Language Impairment in Bilingual Students (Roseberry-Mckibbin , 2014)

15

- Slow language and academic gains even with assistance (resource room, ESL, etc.)
- Immature/deficient vocabulary
- Decreased utterance length
- Communication difficulties in a variety of settings (e.g. school, home, community) and with a variety of individuals (e.g. peers, teachers, parents)
- Memory and attention deficits in L1 and L2
- Lack of narrative coherence and cohesiveness
- Poorer language and cognitive skills as compared to peers
- Pragmatic deficits (comprehension and use of social language)
- Family history of language/learning issues

Dyslexia Law, Screening and the SLP

16

- NJ has 3 dyslexia-related laws and 1 resolution.
- [A3606 Professional Development Law](#) (actual law text)
- [A3608 Definition of Dyslexia Law](#) (actual law text revised 2/16)
- [A3605/S2442 Dyslexia Screening law](#) (actual law text)
- If a child shows indicators of dyslexia or other reading disabilities early, they have to be screened by the end of the first semester of 2nd grade (*)
- If the screening indicates the child may indeed have reading difficulties then a comprehensive assessment of the learning/language is in order
- If the assessment confirms a diagnosis of reading disability, then the child should receive appropriate evidence-based intervention strategies
- Law does not state what will be done with children older than 2nd grade that show these indicators

NJ DOE and Dyslexia Assessment by SLPs

17

- The DOE did not have a position with respect to SLPs assessing students with suspected literacy based disorders (as per phone interview with Fran Liebner on 3/8/16)
- The DOE defers to ASHA on literacy based disorders guidelines
 - ASHA Literacy Gateway <http://www.asha.org/topics/literacy/>
- As per ASHA
 - SLPs have the specialized knowledge and experience needed to identify communication problems and to provide the help that children need to build critical language and literacy skills.
 - SLPs are often the first professionals to identify the root cause of reading and writing problems through a child's difficulty with language.

ASHA and the Role of SLPs in Literacy

18

- Prevention -communicating risk factors to teachers and parents, and working with them to develop programming
- Identifying At-Risk Children—assisting in development and implementation of screening and referral procedures for very young children as well as older school-age children
- Assessing—selecting, implementing, adapting, and interpreting assessment tools and methods to evaluate skills in spoken language, reading, writing and spelling.
- Providing Intervention—collaborating with teachers and families to plan intervention Documenting Outcomes—establishing a tracking system for identifying new or re-emerging literacy deficits and documenting outcomes of intervention goals and plans.
- Program Development—directing or participating in teams to develop school or system-wide strategic approaches to early identification and intervention for children with reading deficits.
- Advocating for Effective Literacy Practices—providing information about literacy development to state and local agencies that plan and evaluate curricula, establish comprehensive assessments and set related policies; educating them about relationships between spoken language and written language (i.e., reading, writing and spelling), benefits of collaboration etc.
- Advancing the Knowledge Base -conducting scientifically-based research on early literacy development

Special Education SLP-Related Memos

19

- [Delivery of Related Services to Students with Disabilities Through Telepractice](#)
- [Clarification of N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5\(c\)4 \(10/6/15\)](#)
- **Dyslexia**
 - [Dyslexia Webinar \(7/19/16\)](#)
 - [Dyslexia Definition Correction \(2/23/16\)](#)
 - [Update on Dyslexia Legislation \(4/15/14\)](#)

Helpful FREE Resources

20

1. [Technical Manual for the Appropriate Assessment Of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse And Internationally Adopted Individuals \(2015\)](#)
2. [New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook \(2017\)](#)
 - **Free Webinars**
 - I. [Multisensory Structured Literacy- Group Instruction Methodology](#)
 - II. [Comprehension and Fluency](#)
 - III. [Dyslexia and Other Reading Disabilities: An Overview of Screening, Assessment, Intervention, and Assistive Technology](#)
 - IV. [Exploring the New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook: A Guide to Early Literacy Development and Reading Struggles](#)
3. [Special Education Code NJAC 6A:14 \(2020\)](#)

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