Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools

Policies and Procedures for the Identification of Students Suspected of Disability

1. Interventions

Universal Screening

Conduct universal screenings using standardized tools (e.g., MClass for reading, Exact Path for math) to identify students who may need additional support. Review academic records, attendance data, and any previous interventions within the K-5 Literacy Decision Rules or Tiered System of Support for Students with Mental and Behavioral Health Needs.

2. Referral

Referral

A referral for evaluation can come from teachers, parents, or other professionals who observe significant academic, functional, emotional or behavioral challenges that impact the student's academic performance. Refer to the Ohio Department of Education's guide through the Evaluation Process for children ages 3-21 Roadmap.

Intervention Assistance Team Formation

Assemble a team including the school psychologist, special education teacher, general education teacher, school counselor, and parents. If applicable, include other relevant professionals (e.g., speech therapist, occupational therapist).

Review academic records, attendance data, and any previous interventions within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework OR any tier 2 or tier 3 interventions that have been implemented. Analyze the effectiveness of these interventions and identify patterns or consistent behaviors that may indicate a suspicion of disability.

A response to a referral must occur within 30 days from the date of referral (including obtaining consent).

As a team, including the parents, determine if a disability is suspected. If disability is suspected, complete the Evaluation Documents as indicated in the ETR checklist below.

If the team does NOT suspect a disability, consider appropriate intervention(s) and a timeline for a review of student progress. Interventions must be conducted before or during the evaluation. If interventions have not been conducted, they must happen at the same time as the evaluation.

The district has 30 calendar days from the date of the receipt of the request to respond to the request. The district must either send a prior written notice (called a PR-01) indicating that the district does not suspect a disability or obtain parental consent to conduct an evaluation.

The district will provide the parent with a copy of the Special Education Procedural Safeguards Notice titled "A Guide to Parent Rights in Special Education." These can be shared either electronically or as physical copies, based on the guardian's preference.

The special education procedural safeguards will additionally be provided:

- Upon the receipt of a request for evaluation
- Upon filing of a complaint
- Upon disciplinary removal constituting a change of placement
- Upon parent/guardian request

3. Planning for Comprehensive Evaluation

As part of both the initial evaluation and any reevaluation, the evaluation team will complete an Evaluation Planning Form, which guides the overall evaluation process. All appropriate assessments must be conducted for any disability category being considered.

The information collected throughout the evaluation will then be summarized in an Evaluation Team Report (ETR).

Reevaluations will occur at least once every three years, or sooner if the IEP team determines that updated assessment data are needed before the three-year period is complete. In rare circumstances, if appropriate, a waiver may be utilized if both the IEP team and the parent agree that updated evaluation data are not needed at that time.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

When evaluating a student for a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), additional requirements beyond a typical evaluation include:

- Documenting targeted interventions
- Monitoring the student's response to those interventions
- Identifying patterns of academic strengths and weaknesses
- Ruling out other factors that could explain the learning difficulties

Multiple Disabilities (MD)

For a Multiple Disabilities (MD) evaluation, additional requirements include:

- Conducting a comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment of all suspected disability areas
- Documenting how each disability individually and in combination affects educational performance
- Coordinating team input from multiple specialists to inform eligibility decisions

4. Evaluation (Initial or Reevaluation)

A comprehensive assessment should be conducted using a team approach for both initial evaluations and reevaluations. This assessment should include all applicable areas identified during the evaluation planning process, such as:

- Information provided by the parent
- General intelligence
- Academic skills
- Classroom-based evaluations and progress in the general curriculum
- Data from interventions
- Communicative status
- Vision and hearing
- Social and emotional status
- Physical and general health
- Gross and fine motor skills
- Vocational and transition considerations
- Background and history
- Observations
- Behavior assessment
- Adaptive behavior
- Sensory functioning

All areas relevant to the suspected disability category should be assessed to ensure a complete and accurate evaluation. At this time, the team is required to provide parents with information about their right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they disagree with the school's evaluation.

5. Eligibility Determination

The ETR team, which must consist of:

- A parent
- District representative
- Qualified examiner
- General education teacher
- Intervention specialist

Reviews all assessment data to determine if the student meets the criteria for one of the special education eligibility categories (e.g., Specific Learning Disability, Emotional Disturbance, Autism). This includes evaluating whether the student's needs adversely affect their educational performance, despite interventions provided through the MTSS framework.

Parents also have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they disagree with the school's evaluation, and may pursue dispute resolution, as outlined in the Procedural Safeguards for Parents' Rights in Special Education.

The Initial Evaluation

Must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent for the evaluation.

Must consist of procedures to determine:

- If the child is a child with a disability as defined in the definition section of the Operating Standards
- The educational needs of the child

Components of a Compliant Evaluation Team Report (ETR)

A Compliant ETR contains necessary evidence and is located in all of the essential areas:

1. Evidence of Interventions

For any child performing below grade-level standards, evidence must appear in:

- Referral (applicable for initial evaluations)
- Data From Interventions within Part 1
- Summary in Part 2

2. Evidence of Parental Involvement

A compliant ETR includes:

- Evidence of parental involvement
  OR
- Evidence the parent was provided opportunities to participate in the ETR planning process

For transfer ETRs (T-ETRs):

- Adopting educational agency documentation of parent involvement in ETR planning

3. Evidence the Evaluation Addressed All Areas of Suspected Disability

The evaluation comprehensively addressed all areas related to the suspected disability, as documented on the planning form.

Required Procedures for Specific Evaluation Types:

- Specific Learning Disabilities
- Multiple Disabilities
- Blind/Visual Impairment
- Deafness or Hearing Impairment
- Preschool-age children

The evaluation followed the appropriate procedures for the specific disability or age group, as required.

4. Use of Multiple Sources of Information

The eligibility determination was based on multiple sources of information, providing a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs.

5. Clear, Accessible Summary of Assessment Results

The Evaluation Team Report (ETR):

- Provides a comprehensive summary of all assessment results
- Uses clear, jargon-free language easily understandable to parents
- Explains findings so parents fully understand:
    - Their child's strengths
    - Their child's needs
    - Implications for educational programming

The language is tailored to the parents' level of understanding so they can actively participate in the decision-making process.

6. Description of Educational Needs

The ETR:

- Provides a comprehensive and detailed description of the student's educational needs
- Clearly outlines the areas where the student requires support and intervention
- Links the description of needs directly to assessment results

This allows the IEP team to develop specific, measurable, achievable goals addressing identified needs, and includes explanations of how the student's needs impact access to the general education curriculum.

7. Required Team Members

For Initial and Re-Evaluations

A group of qualified professionals, including the parent, determines whether the child is a child with a disability. This group consists of:

- The child's general education teacher
- A person qualified to conduct individual assessments and interpret the results (e.g., School Psychologist)
- An educational agency representative

If Determining a Specific Learning Disability (SLD):

The group also includes:

- The child's general education teacher (or a general education teacher qualified to teach a child of the same age if the child does not have a general education teacher)
- At least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children (e.g., school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, remedial reading teacher)
- When appropriate, the child

For Reevaluations

The group of qualified professionals determining eligibility includes:

- The parent
- The child's general education teacher
- The child's special education teacher

- An educational agency representative
- An individual who can interpret instructional implications of evaluation results
- Other individuals with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child (at the discretion of the parent or the school educational agency), including related services personnel
- Whenever appropriate, the child with a disability

8. Eligibility Determination Justification

The Evaluation Team Report (ETR) provides a comprehensive and well-reasoned justification for the eligibility determination decision.

Meets Expectations when:

- A determination is made for each disability category identified as a possibility on the Evaluation Planning Form
- The justification clearly explains how evaluation data from multiple sources supports eligibility or non-eligibility
- The justification is logical, clear, and aligned with applicable laws and regulations
- Specific details and references to assessment results are included

Exclusionary Factors Considered:

- Lack of appropriate instruction in reading/math
- Limited English proficiency
- Visual, hearing, or motor difficulties
- Environmental or economic disadvantage

For Specific Learning Disability (SLD), the team must also rule out:

- Intellectual disability
- Emotional disturbance

9. Timely Reporting Procedures

Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools will implement a comprehensive data accuracy management system to ensure the integrity of all educational records and evaluations.

Quality Control Measures:

- Automated data validation checks that flag inconsistencies at point of entry
- Regular cross-verification protocols between data systems

Training Requirements:

- Mandatory annual training for all personnel responsible for data entry, covering best practices, common errors, and system updates

Audit Procedures:

- Monthly internal audits of randomly selected records
- More thorough quarterly reviews led by the data governance team to identify systematic issues

Error Correction Protocol:

When errors are detected:

- Documentation of the error
- Supervisor verification of correction
- Tracking of error patterns to prevent recurrence

Data Quality Committee:

- Meets bimonthly
- Reviews audit findings
- Recommends process improvements
- Ensures compliance with all educational data standards

10. Internal Review Protocol for Disability Identification

The district has successfully established a robust framework for improving the accuracy of student identifications by focusing on culturally responsive and equitable interventions. A primary achievement is the formalization of a process where school psychologists, special education administrators, and related service staff utilize an internal review committee to evaluate cases. This team is specifically tasked with reviewing all Evaluation Team Reports (ETR) when a student is being considered for the identification of an emotional disability or intellectual disability to ensure that tiered supports account for environmental and cultural factors. By integrating these considerations into the tiered support framework, the district has made significant strides toward reducing the disproportionality of overidentification among Black students.

Checklist for Compliant Evaluation Team Report (ETR)

☐ Cover page (ETR page 1)

☐ Referral for evaluation (only if an initial evaluation, signed by person referring and school psychologists)

☐ Evaluation planning form (signed by int. specialist, reg. ed. teacher, parent, and school psychologist)

☐ Part 1 - Individual evaluator's assessment pages (all signed by evaluators)

☐ Part 2 - Team summary page

☐ Part 3 - SLD page (if considering SLD)

☐ Part 4 - Eligibility determination page

☐ Part 5 - Signature page

☐ Parent invitation for ETR Meeting (ask parents to sign if not previously returned)

☐ Parent invitation for Planning Meeting

☐ Scholarship notification

☐ Consent for evaluation

☐ Prior written notice (initiating the evaluation)

☐ Prior written notice (after determination)

☐ Contact log/documentation of attempts (if needed)

☐ Eye exam form (initial ETR only)

☐ PR-10 Medicaid consent form (initial ETR)

☐ ETR EMIS at a glance form (must be the last page)

Checklist for Compliant Transfer-Evaluation Team Report (T-ETR)

☐ W-E Cover page (ETR page 1) - with all dates entered

☐ ETR from receiving district

☐ Prior written notice (accepting ETR)

☐ PR-10 Medicaid consent form

☐ ETR EMIS at a glance form *must have eligibility code* (must be the last page)

☐ Double check the disability code