

Lawton Community Schools Special Education Information

Child Find

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires that every school district engage in various "child find" activities to alert parents and others to the right to have children evaluated if they suspect a disability and, if eligible, to be provided special education programs and/or services. Van Buren Intermediate School District coordinates these activities for Lawton Community Schools and the other public school districts in our county. Activities include numerous public service announcements; information sent to hospitals, pediatricians, other health care providers and clinics; flyers sent to area agencies and child care agencies.

Building Teams also serve to meet this obligation. Each building in Lawton Community Schools has either a team to assist staff and parents in meeting the academic, behavioral, and emotional needs that our students may have. These teams are comprised of general and special education staff who, along with consultants from the Van Buren Intermediate School District, collaborate to develop strategies to assist students in improving their achievement. These interventions usually result in improved school performance.

Parents seeking an evaluation of their child should contact the school counselor and/or the school principal and make their request in writing.

Specific Learning Disabilities

Each local educational agency and public school academy in Michigan is required to publicly post the process used to determine the existence of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Consistent with this requirement, Lawton Community Schools reports the following:

- A Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) process will be used to determine the existence of SLD for students in kindergarten through 12th grade across all areas of SLD including Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension, Written Expression, Basic Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Math Calculation, and Math Problem Solving.
- It is noted that regardless of the process used, all schools must follow all of the regulatory requirements in the IDEA, the MARSE, and Michigan laws, policies and procedures for special education.

What is a SLD?

A Specific Learning Disability is “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. A SLD does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.” (34 CFR § 300.8(c)(10)).

What is a PSW?

Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses is a process that is used to determine if a student has a SLD. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:

- The student does not achieve adequately for the student’s age or to meet State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR §300.309(a)(1)(i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student’s age or State-approved grade-level standards.
- The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) to be relevant to the identification of a SLD, using appropriate assessments, consistent with the IDEA Evaluation Procedures and Additional Requirements for Evaluations and Reevaluations.

Source: Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (2010). *Michigan criteria for determining the existence of a specific learning disability*. Lansing, MI: Author.

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