



Principles of The SLD Evaluation Standards

The SLD Evaluation is guided by seven foundational principles; the SLD Evaluation is 1) *interdisciplinary*, 2) *research-informed*, 3) *consequently valid*, 4) *dynamic and iterative*, 5) *whole-child focused*, 6) *strengths-based*, and 7) *universally benevolent*. We believe these principles serve as a foundation for establishing a common ethos among stakeholders with respect to the SLD evaluation and its connection to practice. The SLD Standards that follow derive from these principles.

Principle 1: *Interdisciplinary*

This principle emphasizes the importance of evaluations that are informed by collaboration among multiple disciplines that have relevance to SLD including but not limited to: school psychology, speech and language pathology, special education, literacy education, mathematics education, cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, developmental psychology, medicine, and mental health. An interdisciplinary stance toward the SLD evaluation provides stakeholders the best opportunity to capture the information necessary to accurately identify SLD, to comprehensively understand an individual's strengths and needs, and to provide practitioners with relevant recommendations related to teaching and treatment. This principle does not suggest that separate evaluations should be completed by experts from all relevant disciplines, but it does imply that the evaluation process is collaborative and informed by the quantitative and qualitative approaches of various relevant professionals.

Principle 2: *Research-Informed*

Closely aligned with Principle 1, Principle 2 emphasizes the importance of the SLD evaluation being informed by the most current research from multiple disciplines which are relevant to SLD. This research informs what should be included in SLD evaluations (i.e., what should be assessed), how the evaluations are implemented (i.e., the practices used by evaluators), how information is analyzed and interpreted, and how the results of SLD evaluations are translated to practice (i.e., teaching and treatment). The research considered should be valid and reliable/credible, dependable, and trustworthy, and should include research that incorporates quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and mixed methods.

Principle 3: *Consequentially Valid*

The overarching result of SLD evaluations should be positive outcomes for individuals who are evaluated, regardless of whether an SLD identification is made. The term *consequential validity* refers to the consequential outcomes of an assessment and whether those outcomes are aligned with the purpose of the assessment. When the consequential validity of an SLD evaluation is considered, stakeholders are

motivated to reflect upon the evaluation-to-intervention process itself, and the extent to which the evaluation process is resulting in greater clarity regarding a child's learning challenges and how those challenges can be supported. Consequential validity closely couples the SLD evaluation to what is done based on the results of the evaluation, thereby ensuring that the evaluation and the resulting teaching/treatment are not viewed as separate practices.

Principle 4: *Dynamic and Iterative*

Like the vision of RTI and building upon Principle 3, Principle 4 emphasizes that it is critical that the SLD Evaluation is dynamic rather than static in nature. In other words, the evaluation-to-teaching/treatment process should be envisioned as fluid and ongoing. When the evaluation-to-teaching/treatment process is fluid and ongoing, the evaluation and teaching/treatment phases inform one another in an iterative and cyclical fashion (Figure 1). This principle also relies upon the interdisciplinary collaboration of stakeholders across the evaluation-to-teaching/treatment continuum.

Principle 5: *Whole-Child Focused*

Principle 5 recognizes that the whole of each child should be considered across the evaluation-to-teaching/treatment process. Therefore, it is critical that the SLD Evaluation incorporates assessments that result in a whole person view. This includes but is not limited to a cognitive/learning perspective, a content knowledge and skill perspective, a cultural and linguistic perspective, a physical and mental health perspective, a strengths perspective, and a social and family perspective. When pertinent information is obtained that represents the whole child/person in a comprehensive way those using the results and recommendations of the evaluation to plan and implement instruction and intervention, have a rich context to personalize teaching/treatment more effectively.

Principle 6: *Strengths-Based*

Although it is critical that the SLD Evaluation reveals difficulties that a person is experiencing, it is also critical that equal attention is applied to a person's academic and personal strengths. The field of positive psychology has increasingly identified how identifying and cultivating an individual's strengths can result in positive educational and life outcomes. Therefore, this principle emphasizes the importance of leveraging this research and knowledge base to promote individual strengths and to leverage them to support growth and success academically, socially, and emotionally.

Principle 7: *Universally Benevolent*

Universal benevolence affirms a strong and equal concern for all people. In the context of the SLD Evaluation and the evaluation-to-teaching/treatment continuum, stakeholders embrace and put into action the notion of universal benevolence, avowing that all individuals are treated and viewed with strong and equal concern regardless of circumstance, culture, physical or mental limitation, linguistic difference, learning, social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties, etc. It also implies that the evaluation process be used to benefit students regardless of identification decisions.