

# **GAINESVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION OPERATING PROCEDURES: SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY**

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The Gainesville ISD has entered into an Interlocal Agreement to cooperatively operate its special education programs under the authority of Tex. Ed. Code § 11.157. The Denton County Special Education Services Cooperative may provide for the efficient delivery of legally required special education and related services to the Gainesville’s eligible students with disabilities as set forth in the Interlocal Agreement, including the implementation of these Special Education Operating Procedures.

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**Gainesville ISD Board Policy along with these *Special Education Operating Procedures* constitute the Policies and Procedures of Gainesville ISD, designed to be consistent with the State policies and procedures developed pursuant to the IDEA. Gainesville ISD *Special Education Operating Procedures* are not to be for the purpose of creating a requirement that is not otherwise imposed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (“IDEA”), together with its implementing federal regulations, state statutes and rules, as they shall from time to time be amended, and shall not be construed to create a higher standard than that established by IDEA. These *Special Education Operating Procedures* will be posted on Gainesville ISD’s website. These *Special Education Operating Procedures* should be interpreted consistent with the IDEA. Gainesville ISD’s *Special Education Operating Procedures* are reviewed and updated, as needed, on at least an annual basis. Gainesville ISD will make timely changes to policies and procedures in response to IDEA amendments, regulatory or rule changes, changes to state policy, or new legal interpretation as are necessary to bring Gainesville ISD into compliance with the requirements of IDEA. Gainesville ISD maintains systems to ensure that all students with disabilities residing in the District, including students with disabilities attending non-public schools, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated and provided a free appropriate public education. Gainesville ISD maintains systems to ensure that students with disabilities and their parents are afforded the procedural safeguards required under the IDEA (and its implementing federal regulations, state statutes and rules) including with respect to the confidentiality of records and personally identifiable information.**

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## **SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY**

Prior to conducting an initial evaluation of a student suspected of having a specific learning disability, in order to ensure that underachievement in a student suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or mathematics, the group of qualified professionals will consider the following:

- Data that demonstrates the student was provided appropriate instruction in reading and/or mathematics within general education settings delivered by qualified personnel.
- Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction, which must be provided to the student’s parents.
  - Documentation of the repeated assessments may include RtI progress monitoring data, in-class tests on grade-level curriculum, or other regularly administered District or classroom assessments. Intervals are considered reasonable if consistent with the assessment requirements of a student’s specific instructional program.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)(9)

In order to qualify as a student with a specific learning disability (SLD), the student—

- has been determined through a variety of assessment tools and strategies to meet the criteria for a specific learning disability;
- does not achieve adequately for the student's age or meet state-approved grade-level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, or mathematics problem solving when provided learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or state-approved grade-level standards, as indicated by performance on multiple measures such as in-class tests; grade average over time (e.g. six weeks, semester); norm- or criterion-referenced tests; and statewide assessments;
- does not make sufficient progress to meet age or state-approved grade-level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, or mathematics problem solving when using a process based on the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention; or
- 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 to be relevant to the identification of a specific learning disability, using appropriate assessments.<sup>2</sup>
- Except that the student is not one with a specific learning disability if the findings specified above are primarily the result of: a visual, hearing, or motor disability; an intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or emergent bilingual skills.

When considering a student for eligibility as a student with a specific learning disability, the student must be observed in the student's learning environment, including the regular classroom setting, to document the student's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.

The ARD Committee must decide to either:

- use information from an observation in routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the student's performance that was done before the student was referred for an evaluation; or
- have at least one member of the group of qualified professionals conduct an observation of the student's academic performance in the regular classroom after the student has been referred for an evaluation and the school has obtained parental consent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; 34 C.F.R. § 300.309

<sup>3</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 300.310(b)

The group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having a specific learning disability will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD Committee to make an eligibility determination.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

In Texas, eligibility is determined by the student's Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee.<sup>4</sup> The phrase *multidisciplinary team* refers to the group of District staff tasked with using a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, academic and developmental information about the student, including information provided by the parent, as part of the special education evaluation process.<sup>5</sup> For more information, please contact the Director of Special Programs.

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**Demonstrations of this procedure's implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:**

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or Response to Intervention Data
- Student specific data collection and monitoring
- Observation data
- Evaluation reports
- Collection of information from parents and independent service providers
- ARD committee reports

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<sup>4</sup> 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(b); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1050(a)(5)

<sup>5</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 300.306