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Specific Learning Disability Identification Practices in the U.S.A: A Survey of Special Education

Administrators

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Abstract

Specific learning disorder (SLD) identification is arguably one of the most significant controversies in school psychology. One component of this issue is that guidelines and practices vary substantially across professionals and states, which leads to inconsistent identification rates and outcomes for students. To assess the extent of this problem at the district level, we surveyed special education administrators from 725 U.S. school districts regarding their districts' current specific learning disability (SLD) identification practices in the United States. Significant differences in SLD identification methods were reported across districts. Significant differences in SLD identification methods were also found across regions and between districts that used different educators to collect academic achievement test data. Curriculum based measures were also used more frequently in districts that identify SLD using Response to Intervention. Implications of these findings for policy and for practice are considered.

Keywords: specific learning disability, identification methods, eligibility

Specific Learning Disability Identification Practices in the U.S.A: A Survey of Special Education Administrators

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is the largest eligibility category within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ([IDEA], 2004), representing more than a third of all special education students during the 2017-2018 school year (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). SLD is described in IDEA as a disorder related to an individual's psychological processes that leads to unexpected underachievement in one or more of following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving. There is no universally accepted model for understanding SLD, nor a gold-standard method for identification (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019). Misclassification of an SLD can have long term negative consequences that can follow students throughout their lives (Higgins, et al., 2002), may lead to underperformance due to self-fulfilling prophecies (Gentrup et al., 2020) or lack of appropriate services and instruction (Fletcher, 2012). Furthermore, different SLD identification methods lead to varying rates of student identification (Maki et al., 2017). Due to the high-stakes nature of SLD classification and the absence of an agreed upon method for identifying SLD, continued research into current practices in the identification of SLD is needed. This current research attempts to examine current SLD identification methods across U.S. school districts to identify the factors that influence method use.

SLD Frameworks

While federal law defines eligibility in broad terms, various SLD identification methods exist, including the Ability-Achievement Discrepancy (AAD), Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW), and Response to Intervention (RtI) model (Maki et al., 2015). However, key

to all methods of SLD identification is the presence of unexpected underachievement (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019). AAD, the first general framework for understanding unexpected underachievement, was codified in the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. AAD operationalizes unexpected underachievement as a significant discrepancy between overall cognitive ability and a specific area of academic achievement as measured by norm-referenced academic achievement tests (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019; Lichtenstein, 2014; Maki & Adams, 2018). While this method has been in use for decades, it has been criticized for having issues related to reliability (Barnett & Macmann, 1992; Francis et al., 2005; Maki & Adams, 2020) and a lack of instructional relevance (Burns et al., 2015; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

A second set of methods based upon the cognitive discrepancy framework are those associated with the PSW models (e.g., Dual Discrepancy/Consistency model; Flanagan, et al., 2013). Like the AAD model, PSW methods require a discrepancy between standardized scores of cognitive ability and academic achievement, with the addition of a corresponding neuropsychological processing deficit that explains the underachievement (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019). Despite significant differences between these methods, one commonality is that both PSW and AAD generally use norm-referenced, standardized tests of cognitive ability and academic achievement in order to make an identification (Flanagan & Alfonso, 2018). While PSW is a relatively new adaptation of cognitive profile analysis, there is a significant amount of evidence that suggests it is not effective for SLD identification due to issues related to reliability and validity (Kranzler, et al., 2016; Maki & Adams, 2020; Miciak et al., 2014; Miciak et al., 2016; Miciak et al., 2015; Stuebing et al., 2012), and like AAD, that the process lacks instructional relevance (Burns et al., 2015; Maki & Adams, 2020).

In contrast to the cognitive discrepancy framework utilized in AAD and PSW, the instructional framework identification methods based on RtI posit that unexpected underachievement is documented as inadequate instructional response to intensive evidence-based interventions (Miciak & Fletcher, 2019; Vellutino et al., 2006). In a RtI framework, students are provided with research-based interventions of increasing intensity and their progress is monitored frequently to assess whether those interventions have produced a desired change in academic outcomes. While there is no universally agreed upon method for identification of SLD using RtI, a failure to respond to adequate interventions is a key component to all RtI approaches. Progress monitoring during RtI is typically conducted using curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) and assessment of cognitive ability is not required (Maki et al., 2015; Miciak & Fletcher, 2019). Like AAD and PSW, RtI has been criticized as being an unreliable approach to SLD identification (Brown Waesche et al., 2011; Maki et al., 2015, though one recent study by Maki and Adams (2018) suggested that RtI may be the most consistent of these approaches. Additionally, by the very nature of the assessment of curriculum, RtI is highly relevant to instruction.

Method Use

Several studies have examined the use of these SLD identification methods. For example, Maki et al. (2015) examined state regulations regarding the use of AAD, PSW, and RtI following the reauthorization of IDEA (2004). They found that AAD was allowed in 67% of states while PSW was allowed in 27% of states for the identification of SLD. According to the Maki et. al. study, RtI was the sole method used in 16% of states, was allowed in combination with other methods in 17% of states and allowed “as required by IDEA” (p. 462) in the remaining states. Maki et al. also found that 20% of states explicitly prohibited the use of AAD while another 13%

did not specify whether or not this method could be used. Additionally, Maki and colleagues indicated that roughly half of states prohibited the use of PSW while 24% did not specify whether this method may be used. Of note, Maki and colleagues did not specify which states use or allow each method. Benson et al. (2020) also examined SLD identification regulations by state and noted that 35 states and Washington DC allowed the use of AAD, 18 states allowed the use of PSW, nine states required RtI in isolation (seven states require RtI in isolation for all grades), and seven required RtI in combination with one of the other two approaches. In sum, these studies suggest that SLD identification guidelines vary significantly across states and are often vague or non-existent. Neither of these studies explored practices at the district level.

Several studies have also examined the reported use of SLD methods by school psychologists. In their survey of 471 school psychologists, Cottrell and Barrett (2016) also found opaque results. These authors discovered that AAD was required by approximately 30% of participants' schools, RtI by 24%, and only 9% required PSW. Cottrell and Barrett also found that 26% disallowed AAD, 24% disallowed RtI, and that 48% disallowed PSW for the determination of SLD eligibility. Additionally, these researchers found that schools in the South were less likely to require or allow AAD than Midwestern schools and that Southern schools were more likely to require or allow PSW compared to Western schools. No differences in the use of RtI between regions were noted. However, there were several limitations of this study. First, only nine participants were from the Northeast and therefore no comparisons were made for this region which comprised 16% of the student population in 2015 (NCES, 2017). Also, nested data were gathered (i.e., multiple participants were recruited from the same district), but the data was treated as independent in an ANOVA, which may have led to inflated risks for Type

I and II errors (Scariano & Davenport, 1987) and does not allow for interpretation at the district level.

More recently, Maki and Adams (2018) surveyed 461 school psychologists and found that roughly a third of practitioners indicated primarily using each of the three methods (i.e., 35% used PSW, 35% used RtI, and 30% used AAD). Additionally, Benson and colleagues (2020) surveyed 1,317 school psychologists and found that 53% of participants reported using PSW, 51% RtI, and 37% used AAD. Benson et al. noted that many participants used multiple SLD identification frameworks but acknowledged that it is unclear whether these different methods are used in concert or separately depending on the particular student. Also, of note, all of these studies focused solely on school psychologists and did not gather information on practices across professionals (e.g., special education teachers, educational diagnosticians). Furthermore, neither study reported the extent to which different states or geographic regions were represented and did not collect data on a district level.

In summary, several studies have sought to describe the SLD identification practices of school psychologists in general and of state guidelines specifically regarding SLD (e.g., Benson et al., 2019; Benson et al., 2020; Cottrell & Barrett, 2016; Maki & Adams, 2018). However, no studies have (a) examined practices from the perspective of special education administrators nor have they (b) examined practices at the district level. To understand the complexity of practice in the field, it is important to obtain data at the district level and the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Regarding the first of these claims, a recent survey of 725 special education administrators found that school psychologists only conduct the norm-referenced tests of academic achievement used in AAD and PSW frameworks between 43-50% of the time and that they almost never administer the CBMs used in an RtI framework (Lockwood et al., 2021). As a

result, focusing primarily on the perspectives and practices of school psychologists may skew the overall perspective of SLD practices in general. For instance, certain states (e.g., Louisiana) do not generally include school psychologist in the evaluation of SLD (Louisiana Department of Education, 2009) and other states (e.g., Texas) do not require their inclusion in the process, instead largely relying on educational diagnosticians (Schultz & Stephens, 2015). Additionally, focusing on state-level guidelines potentially ignores heterogeneity within states.

Current Study

The purpose of this study was to expand upon the current research base by examining special education SLD identification practices (a) at the district level (b) as reported by special education administrators across the U.S. and (c) across professionals. Thus far research has focused solely on the practices and perspective of school psychologists (e.g., Benson et al., 2019; Benson et al., 2020; Cottrell & Barrett, 2016; Maki & Adams, 2018), though survey research suggests that school psychologists are not solely responsible for testing when it comes to SLD identification (Lockwood et al., 2021). As there is a shortage of school psychologists, especially in rural areas (National Association of School Psychologists, 2017) and Western states (American Association for Employment in Education, 2016), an additional purpose of this study was also to determine if locale (i.e., rural vs urban), geographic area, and the inclusion of school psychologists in academic achievement data collection impacted which SLD identification method was used. Additionally, we wanted to gather a sample that was representative of school districts geographically and without the possibility of multiple participants per district. Furthermore, as CBMs are generally used within an RtI framework, we hoped to determine if CBM use was associated with SLD identification method. Specifically, we hoped to answer the following questions at the district level across states:

1. What methods of SLD identification are currently being used across professions?
2. Do SLD identification methods vary depending on:
 - a. Region?
 - b. Locale?
 - c. Profession of primary academic achievement tester?
 - d. CBM use?

Method

This data was gathered as part of a larger survey of district special education eligibility and assessment practices. The study was approved by the lead author's Institutional Review Board. Participation was voluntary and consent was provided electronically. It is important to note that as part of the larger study, in addition to demographic questions, participants were asked: a) whom in their district "administers the majority of academic achievement tests used for initial special education eligibility determinations," b) whether their district uses "standardized curriculum-based measures (e.g., AIMSweb, DIBELS, EasyCBM, edcheckup, Yearly ProgressPro, FastBridge Learning)," c) their district locale and d) their state, as these variables are used in this current study. Additionally, to ascertain the SLD identification method used, all participants were asked "In your district, what is the primary method of determining a specific learning disability (SLD)?" and were allowed to select one option only.

Participants

Participants included 725 special education administrators from 48 states. Administrators were chosen for this study for several reasons: a) we wanted to gather data regarding practices across professions (not just school psychologists), b) recent research (i.e., Boccio, 2016; Cottrell and Barrett, 2016) has suggested that administrators often dictate the eligibility methods and

assessment practices used and c) they have insight into special education practices in their district across professions (Lockwood et al., 2021). Participants were largely were Caucasian, (88%), female (80%), and held a title of Director of Special Education or the equivalent (92%; e.g., director of student support services). Data regarding education level, age, and years working in education can be found in Table 1.

Participant Recruitment

A link to our survey was emailed to a special education administrator from each U.S. districts with 3000 or greater students during the 2018-2019 school year. This inclusion cutoff criterion was chosen as we wanted to gather data about the majority of students served in the United States without the hardship of soliciting participation from the over 18,000 school districts listed on the NCES website that year (2020). Sampling school districts with 3000 or more students is good compromise (Levenson, 2012) as more than 70% of U.S. children are served in districts of this size. Based on this criterion, a survey recruitment link was emailed to 3,401 participants between April and May 2019. In total three participation email requests were sent per district. Seven-hundred twenty-five participants representing 21.3% of contacted districts completed the survey.

Survey Design

The survey consisted of 37 items designed to assess district-level SLD identification methods and assessment practices. Skip logic was used to limit response time. Survey items were generated based on recent peer-reviewed articles (e.g., Maki et al., 2015). The survey was reviewed by nine content experts (i.e., with expertise in academic assessment or special education administration). Revisions, deletions and additions to survey items were made based on their feedback. The questionnaire was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey software

platform. A PDF version of the full survey is available at <https://osf.io/wcuvz/> and is open access.

Analysis

Data were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported to SPSS v. 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated to answer question one. A series of chi-square tests were used to answer question two. States were coded into U.S. Census Bureau regions to allow for meaningful analysis. Post-hoc analyses using adjusted residuals were used to determine the contribution of each cell to the statistically significant findings. Because multiple post-hoc analyses were conducted, the criteria of Garcia-Perez and Nunez-Anton (2003) was used to control for family-wise error. Specifically, significance values for region and profession were set at .0025 (.05/20), and at .005 (.05/10) for CBM use.

Results

Current Methods of SLD Identification

To determine how well the sample generalized to the U.S. student population geographically, a one-sample chi-square test was calculated. Results indicated that the sample proportion of participants was not significantly different than the projected student population for Fall 2020 as reported by NCES (2020), suggesting that participants were proportionate to the students served (χ^2 (df = 3) = 2.66, $p = .45$). Participants were asked to indicate the *primary* method of identifying a SLD. They indicated that norm-referenced tests, both academic achievement and cognitive, continue to be heavily relied upon for the identification of SLD. The AAD (referred to as simply “discrepancy model” in the survey) appears to continue to be the most relied upon method used by 29% of participant districts. This method was followed by PSW (20%), RtI only (19%), a combination of RtI and AAD (15%), and a combination of RtI

and PSW (15%). Roughly 1% of participants indicated that they used another method (e.g., AAD *and* PSW). State-by-state responses varied greatly as did within state data. Upon examining states with 10 or more participants, the use of AAD in isolation for SLD identification varied from 88% (Pennsylvania) to 5% (Ohio), the use of PSW in isolation ranged from 82% (Michigan and Texas) to 2% (Pennsylvania), and the use of RtI in isolation varied from 100% (Wisconsin) to 1.7% (California). Hybrid models also varied greatly with RtI *and* AAD ranging from 56% (Georgia) to 5% (California) and RtI *and* PSW ranging from 60% (Connecticut) to 2% (California). For states with more than one response, only participants in Delaware, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin reported using the same identification method in all sampled districts. Additionally, at least one participant from 27 states indicated the use of AAD in isolation, at least one participant from 23 states indicated PSW in isolation, at least one respondent from 31 states indicated the use of RtI in isolation, at least one participant from 29 states reported RtI *and* AAD, and at least one respondent from 30 states indicated RtI *and* PSW. State-by-state SLD information is provided <https://osf.io/wcuvz/>, though this data should be interpreted with extreme caution due to the low sample sizes per states.

Differences in SLD Identification

Chi-square statistics suggested that there were significant differences in SLD identification methods across regions ($\chi^2(12, N = 713) = 100.01, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .216$) and across professionals responsible for academic achievement testing ($\chi^2(12, N = 712) = 94.21, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .210$) but not across locales ($\chi^2(16, N = 710) = 13.09, p = .67$, Cramer's $V = .067$). Post hoc analyses indicated that AAD was significantly more likely to be used in Western and Northeastern states and significantly less likely in Midwestern and Southern regions. AAD was also significantly more likely to be used in districts that relied on special

education teachers to administer tests of academic achievement. RtI was significantly less likely to be used in Western states and more likely in Midwestern States. RtI was significantly more likely in districts that relied on school psychologists to administer tests of academic achievement. A PSW approach was significantly more likely in Southern states and was significantly less likely in the Northeastern region. A PSW approach was significantly more likely in districts that used educational diagnosticians and significantly less likely in districts that used special education teachers to administer tests of academic achievement. Additionally, a combination of RTI and AAD was significantly more likely in districts that use educational diagnosticians to administer tests of academic achievement. More detailed information can be found in Tables 2-4.

Districts were also asked to indicate whether they administer curriculum-based measures. Results indicated that there were significant differences in SLD identification methods depending on their use ($\chi^2(4, N = 694) = 15.464, p < .005$, Cramer's $V = .149$). CBM was significantly more likely to be used in districts that relied on RtI as their identification method and significantly less likely in districts that used PSW. More detailed information can be found in Table 5.

Discussion

SLD is the most common disability category for special education eligibility in schools. However, state regulations for identifying SLD are inconsistent (Benson et al., 2020; Maki et al., 2015). Additionally, state identification guidelines greatly predict assessment practice in public schools (Benson et al., 2020). Given the influence of state identification guidelines and inconsistencies between states, this suggests great inconsistencies in identification practices between states. Thus, it is conceivable that a child may be found eligible for special education services under SLD in one state, but not when crossing the border into an adjacent state.

Moreover, federal and state laws may be interpreted differently by various school districts. The purpose of this study was to better understand SLD identification practices at the district level and determine what variables may influence which methods are used. By better understanding current practices in school districts throughout the United States, we hope to inform policy and practice regarding the identification of SLD.

According to our results, the number of sampled districts that primarily use AAD in isolation is 29%. These data suggest that AAD continues to be frequently used as the sole method for identifying an SLD. RtI and PSW appear to be used less frequently in isolation (both roughly 20%) though RtI is used in combination with AAD and PSW in roughly 30% of districts (15% and 15%, respectfully). These data differ considerably from Maki and Adams' (2018) study, which suggested that each method is used equally. Our data also differed from the results of Benson et al. (2020), which suggested that PSW is used 53% of the time followed by RTI (51%) and then AAD (37%). While it is not entirely clear why our results differed from these previous studies, one probable explanation is that we provided the option for alternative responses (e.g., hybrid methods). Additionally, we sought out the perspective of one special education administrator per district rather than school psychologists as a whole. The latter approach likely sampled multiple school psychologists from some districts and did not represent practices of other professionals (e.g., educational diagnosticians) that are key in the determination of SLD identification and may use different methods than school psychologists. As such, these data may be answering slightly different, though related, questions.

Demographic regions appear to impact which approach will be used. Identification using RtI was most prevalent in the Midwest, though, even here, less than a third of participants reported that this method is used in isolation. RtI was especially underused in Western states

with less than one in ten participants in this region reporting its sole use. These findings differ from Cottrell and Barret (2016) who found no differences across demographic regions in the use of RtI for SLD identification. AAD was very prevalent in Western states where it was endorsed by more than half of participants. AAD was not nearly as prevalent in the Midwest and South where it was used by roughly 18% and 21%, respectively. Of note, this was also different than Cottrell and Barrett's study which found that school psychologists in the South were less likely to use this method but only when compared to Midwestern school psychologists. We also found that PSW was more prevalent in Southern states and used by 28% of districts and less prevalent in Northeastern states (used by only 6% of districts). This finding was somewhat in line with Cottrell and Barrett's study which found that Southern school districts required or allowed the use of PSW significantly more than Western schools.

The disparities between our findings and Cottrell and Barrett's (2016) may have been methodological as these researchers used a series of ANOVAs and had a much less stringent criterion for clinical significance ($p < .05$), while we used chi-square statistics with p values of .005 and .0025. Also, due to their limited sample from the Northeast they were unable to make comparisons from this large region. These differences may also be due in part to how our study was framed as we focused on the primary method used, while these researchers focused on what was required and allowed. These differences may also have been impacted by our inclusion of hybrid methods (e.g., RtI *and* PSW) that provided a more nuanced picture of SLD identification. Additionally, these inconsistencies may have been influenced by the fact that we surveyed administrators and their participants were school psychologists. As noted earlier, several Southern states (e.g., Louisiana, Texas) rely heavily on educational diagnosticians (Lockwood et al., 2021). As we intentionally sampled one special education administrator per district

minimizing the risk of sampling multiple persons from within the same district, we believe these data provide a more reasonable estimate of policies across districts.

We also found differences in SLD method based on whom was responsible for conducting academic achievement testing. RtI was more prevalent in districts relying on school psychologist, endorsed by approximately a quarter of these districts. AAD was more prevalent in districts that used special education teachers as test administrator and was used in close to 40% of these districts. PSW was more prevalent in districts that relied on educational diagnosticians, used by approximately half of these districts. Districts that used special education teachers tended to shy away from PSW, using it in slightly more than one in ten of these districts.

No differences in SLD identification method were noted across locales suggesting that SLD identification is impacted by region and professionals who collect academic achievement data regardless of whether the school is rural, urban or suburban. Not surprisingly, the RtI identification model was significantly more likely in districts that use standardized CBMs as these measures are generally used in this identification framework. As these measures were used in roughly 91% of these districts, it does suggest that close to one in ten districts that use an RTI identification method do so using non-standardized measures. Interestingly, only districts that used PSW were significantly less likely to use standardized CBMs, though they still did so in more than three fourths of these districts. This suggests that most districts use standardized CBMs regardless of the SLD identification method they use.

In sum, significant variation in SLD identification methods were reported between regions and professionals. Perhaps more troubling, the use of different methods ranged significantly across districts; for states with more than one response, only three states reported using the same identification method in all sampled districts. These results are fairly consistent

with the previous research (e.g., Benson et al. 2020; Maki & Adams, 2018; Maki et al., 2015), which suggests limited consensus regarding what SLD method should be used. As such, we can conclude that not only could a student be identified inconsistently between states, but a student may be identified inconsistently between districts within the same state. Even more surprising, participants from eight states indicated that their districts used SLD identification methods that Benson et al. (2020) noted were not allowed in their respective states. Most noticeably, of the seven states that require RtI in isolation for all grades, only participants in Wisconsin reported this consistently. This apparent disregard for state guidelines is likely underestimated due to the small sample sizes we obtained from many states; nevertheless, the data indicated cognitive testing persists even in states that prohibit its use for the identification of SLD. However, due to the small sample sizes obtained from many states, it is hard to say with any certainty how practices vary within any specific states with the exception of the larger states such as California.

Limitations & Future Directions

This survey relied on self-report, which is always prone to bias due to social desirability, recall and measurement error (e.g., the items are not clear to participants; Althubaiti, 2016). For this reason, future research should consider examining SLD evaluation reports or other permanent products (e.g., district policy guidance or actual eligibility reports) to determine which methods are used across districts. As our survey focused on districts with 3000 or more students, the results may not generalize to smaller districts. Future research may wish to target small districts and standalone school districts such as charter schools to gain an understanding of SLD identification methods in these settings.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Our data suggested that questionable methods for the identification of SLD, most notably (though not exclusively) the use of AAD (Benson et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2005), continue. This is in part because there is no consensus regarding which method is defensible and therefore districts are depending on methods that rely on instructionally irrelevant tests (i.e., tests of cognitive ability; Burns et al., 2015) that lead to unreliable identification (Maki et al., 2017). Relatedly, while most districts report administering standardized CBMs, roughly half indicated that they do not use this data in the majority of SLD determinations. Districts that engage in AAD or PSW are highly encouraged to shift to a hybrid model that incorporates RtI data into their SLD identification method. Finally, as previously noted, identification methods vary greatly between districts. This lack of consistency may prove problematic for students relocating from one district to another as they may lose services simply by moving a few miles away. To address the use of problematic practices and inconsistency in determination methods, it would appear necessary to adopt uniform SLD identification criteria across the U.S. or at least within individual states.

Conclusion

SLD identification is an important process. Failing to accurately identify a student with a SLD can lead to denial of services, stigmatization, and lost instructional time. Despite the centrality of identification practices to education, as well as the repercussions of inaccurate identification practices, there is no consensus and great variability in SLD identification methods across the country and even within states. This appears to be true even in some states that have clear guidelines that do not allow for variation.

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Table 1 *Demographic Variables*

Respondent Characteristics	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Female	576	79.9
Male	141	19.6
Prefer not to say	4	0.6
District Type		
Traditional/regular school district	687	93.9
Regional district	7	1.0
State district	9	1.2
Charter school	10	1.4
Component school district	1	0.1
Special Education Cooperative	13	1.8
Other	4	0.6
Locale		
Urban	59	8.2
Suburban	224	31.0
Large town	160	22.2
Town	236	32.7
Rural	43	6.0
Racial/Ethnic Identity		
White (non-Hispanic)	636	88.1
Hispanic/Latino	25	3.5
Black/African American (non-Hispanic)	32	4.4
Native American/American Indian	1	0.1
Asian	7	1.0
Multiracial	1	0.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.3
Middle Eastern or North African	1	0.1
Some other race, ethnicity, or origin	2	0.3
Prefer not to say	15	2.1
Region		
West	129	17.8
Midwest	184	25.4
South	265	36.6
Northeast	147	20.3
Highest educational level		
Bachelors	4	0.6
Masters	320	44.3

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Specialists	174	24.1
Doctorate	197	27.2
Other	28	3.9
Years working in education		
2-4	2	.2
5-9	8	1.1
10-14	46	6.4
15-19	148	20.5
20-24	185	26.4
25-29	160	22.2
30-34	96	13.3
35-39	54	7.5
40-44	16	2.2
45-49	4	0.5
50-53	2	0.3
Years in current district		
1-4	225	31.3
5-9	135	18.8
10-14	109	15.2
15-19	98	13.6
20-24	77	10.7
25-29	36	5.0
30-34	31	4.3
35-39	4	0.5
40-46	4	0.5

Note. Locales were based on U.S. census definitions and were defined on the survey as: Urban = city with population greater than 250,000, Suburban = included in an urban metro area but not within city limits. Large town = population greater than 25,000 and not part of a greater metro area, Town = population between 2,500 and 24,999, and Rural = rural or town with a population of less than 2,500.

Table 2

<i>Primary SLD Identification Method by Region</i>						
	RtI	AAD	PSW	RtI and AAD	RtI and PSW	Total
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	
<i>Region</i>	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	<i>N</i>
West	10 (8.0) -3.6*	65 (52.0) 6.0*	20 (16.0) -1.3	18 (14.4) -0.4	12 (9.6) -1.8	125
Midwest	56 (31.1) 4.4*	32 (17.8) -4.1*	41 (22.8) 1.0	18 (10.0) -2.3	33 (18.3) 1.5	180
South	53 (20.2) 0.2	56 (21.3) -3.8*	74 (28.1) 4.0*	41 (15.6) 0.1	39 (14.8) 0.0	263
North East	22 (15.2) -1.6	59 (40.7) 3.2*	9 (6.2) -4.7*	33 (22.8) 2.7	22 (15.2) 0.1	145
Overall Sample	141 (19.8)	212 (29.0)	144 (20.2)	110 (15.4)	106 (14.9)	713

Note. $\chi^2(12, n = 713) = 100.01, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .216$. *Significant after Bonferroni-correction.

Primary SLD Identification Method by Locale

Locale	RtI	AAD	PSW	RtI and AAD	RtI and PSW	Total <i>N</i>
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	
	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	
Urban	7 (12.1) -1.5	18 (31.0) 0.2	15 (25.9) 1.1	12 (20.7) 1.2	6 (10.3) -1.0	58
Suburban	50 (22.7) 1.4	66 (30.0) 0.1	47 (21.4) 0.5	30 (13.6) -0.8	27 (12.3) -1.3	220
Large town	27 (17.4) -0.8	46 (29.7) -0.1	30 (19.4) -0.3	28 (18.1) 1.1	24 (15.5) 0.2	155
Town	46 (19.6) -0.1	68 (28.9) -0.4	46 (19.6) -0.3	31 (13.2) -1.1	44 (18.7) 2.0	235
Rural	10 (23.8) 0.7	14 (33.3) 0.5	6 (14.3) -1.0	7 (16.7) 0.3	5 (11.9) -0.6	42
Overall Sample	140 (19.7)	212 (29.9)	144 (20.3)	108 (15.2)	106 (14.9)	710

Note. $\chi^2(16, n = 710) = 13.09, p = .67$. Cramer's $V = .067$. Locales were based on U.S. census definitions and were defined on the survey as: Urban = city with population greater than 250,000, Suburban = included in an urban metro area but not within city limits. Large town = population greater than 25,000 and not part of a greater metro area, Town = population between 2,500 and 24,999, and Rural = rural or town with a population of less than 2,5000.

Table 4

Primary SLD Identification Method by Test Administrator Profession

	RtI	AAD	PSW	RtI and AAD	RtI and PSW	Total
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	
<i>Profession</i>	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	<i>N</i>
Special Education Teacher	37 (19.1) -0.3	75 (38.7) 3.2*	24 (12.4) -3.1*	30 (15.5) 0.0	28 (14.4) -0.2	194
School Psychologist	88 (24.7) 3.3*	90 (25.3) -2.6	60 (16.9) -2.2	59 (16.6) 0.8	59 (16.6) 1.3	356
Educational Diagnostician	12 (11.3) -2.4	22 (20.8) -2.2	50 (47.2) 7.5*	5 (4.7) -3.3*	17 (16.0) 0.4	106
Other	4 (7.1) -2.5	25 (44.6) 2.5	9 (16.1) -0.8	16 (28.6) 2.8	2 (3.6) -2.5	56
Overall Sample	141 (19.8)	212 (29.8)	143 (20.1)	110 (15.4)	106 (14.9)	712

Note. $\chi^2(12, n = 712) = 94.21, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .210$. *Significant after Bonferroni-correction.

Primary SLD Identification Method by CBM usage

<i>Method</i>	Yes	No	Overall Sample
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	
<i>Method</i>	Adj. Res.	Adj. Res.	<i>n (%)</i>
RtI	126 (91.3) 2.7*	12 (8.7) -2.7*	138 (19.9)
AAD	165 (80.5) -1.6	40 (19.5) 1.6	205 (29.5)
PSW	107 (76.4) -2.7*	33 (23.6) 2.7*	140 (20.2)
RtI and AAD	94 (87.9) 1.2	13 (12.1) -1.2	107 (15.4)
RTI and PSW	91 (87.5) 1.1	13 (12.5) -1.1	104 (15.0)
Total (<i>N</i>)	583 (84.0)	111 (16.0%)	694

Note. $\chi^2(4, n = 694) = 15.464, p < .005$, Cramer's $V = .149$. *Significant after Bonferroni-correction.