

Aligning C-SEP with New Mexico's Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual



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What is C-SEP

The Core-Selective Evaluation Process (C-SEP) is a strengths and weaknesses (PSW) model that was introduced in 2015 (Schultz & Stephens, 2015). Since its conceptualization, C-SEP has steadily gained popularity and has been recognized as an accepted practice for identifying the presence of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). In the simplest of terms, C-SEP is constructed upon a set of best assessment practices, including the use of professional judgment (Schultz & Stephens, 2009), a thorough consideration of exclusionary factors (Stephens et al., 2013), and the use of multiple sources of data (MSD) to establish a pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW; Schultz, Simpson, & Lynch, 2012). C-SEP's framework is established on, and advocates its users adhere to, federal and state legal requirements as well as the professional standards that guide evaluations. In addition, C-SEP users are implored to maintain the rigorous protocols established for standardized testing, including but not limited to test publisher's recommendations when conducting testing and interpreting the data acquired.

A Data-Driven Model

C-SEP is a targeted assessment model that uses a variety of tools and strategies to conduct *full* and *individualized* SLD evaluations. The model is founded on the premise that the most efficient and effective way to identify SLD is through the collection, merger and interpretation of multiple sources of data (MSD). MSD includes, among numerous other elements, school history, instructional response data, informal input (Kwaitek & Schultz, 2014), student benchmarks and grades, observations, as well as norm-referenced test results. This combination of data is collected, combined, and analyzed vis-a-vis PSW eligibility criteria. This process occurs within the boundaries of recognized best practices, adherence to federal and state legislation, as well as additional standards applicable to our profession. For instance, norm-referenced tests must be administered and its data processes and interpreted in accordance with the test publisher's instructions and training.

Careful Use of Norm-Referenced Tests

There are two unique features of C-SEP when it comes to Norm-Reference Tests. Foremost, when norm-referenced tests are utilized, C-SEP recommends they be used in a manner that goes beyond discrepancies and “the scores” (see Schultz & Stephens-Pisecco, 2018). When the model was introduced, Schultz and Stephens (2015) implored diagnosticians “to go beyond standard score analysis and instead interpret and investigate the test and task demand analysis.” We recommended that evaluators integrate the scores with other data sources, including informal data, and to use their professional judgment to holistically consider the combination. Schultz and Stephens (2017) later argued, “simply using individualized norm-referenced tests to obtain scores to run statistical analysis leads to superficial analysis and diminishes the interpretive value of the test.”

While we believe norm-referenced tests, and the data obtained from them, are valuable and sometimes necessary, we have always maintained these scores should not be independently used to inform decisions. More recently, Schultz, Rutherford, and Cavitt (2021, p. 105) reiterated:

When assessing intellectual development using a PSW framework such as Core-Selective Evaluation Process (C-SEP), discrepancies and standard scores from norm-referenced testing (NRT) data inform decision-making and professional judgment and are not determinative. In addition, a task demands analysis for each set of scores fully exploit the norm-referenced data (Schultz & Stephens-Pisecco, 2018).

Stated differently, standardized tests alone are not determinative, and consequently should be merged with alternative, and equally important, data sources to increase the accuracy of decisions.

The second unique feature of C-SEP in terms of its approach to Norm-Reference Tests is in how the tests are utilized. We believe that all testing, including the use of core instruments from Standardized Tests, should be administered in a purposeful and deliberate manner (Schultz and Stephens-Pisecco, 2018). Moreover, we believe that testing should only be

conducted to acquire new or previously unknown information. Thus, we believe that an examiner should target their standardized tests to focus on the area of suspected disability as opposed to broadly testing. Within this framework, time should be dedicated to interpreting and integrating multiple sources of data as opposed to overly administering formal testing that will not provide additional insight into a student's area of concern or their needs within this context.

Similarly, and related to the above, academic underachievement, in our opinion, is best determined using multiple sources of actual achievement data (e.g., curriculum-based assessments, assessments-based on state standards, work samples, classroom data, etc.) as opposed to repeatedly administering formal tests. In this frame, standard scores obtained from norm-referenced testing should be used to understand the relationship between cognitive and language constructs. At the same time, standard scores of achievement should be interpreted with an appreciation of the limitations that are inherent in norm-referenced achievement measures (i.e., curriculum alignment, item density, score interpretation, normative make-up) (Schultz & Stephens, 2017, p. 151).

Multiple Methods of Evaluation are Essential

C-SEP advocates the utilization of multiple methods of assessment and recommends the data collected be analyzed and leveraged to plan necessary intervention and instructional accommodations (for a comparison, see Schultz, Simpson, et al., 2021; Schultz & Stephens, 2015). Both "task demand analysis" and "integrated data analysis" are cornerstones of C-SEP and can be found in our earliest publications (Schultz & Stephens, 2015; Schultz & Stephens, 2017, Schultz & Stephens-Pisecco, 2018). The overarching goals of C-SEP are to be comprehensive, strategic, and deliberate in the evaluation process. This ensures that we maximize our testing session by focusing on deeper analysis (task demands) and the integration of multiple sources of data.

Language is Foundational

According to the C-SEP framework, language is a fundamental component of an evaluation. This is one of the unique characteristics that set our model apart from the other SLD identification models. However, federal guidelines require we be “comprehensive” in our evaluations. For this reason, we argue that one cannot assess SLD without assessing language.

In a past publication, we argue that:

Expressive (Oral Expression) and Receptive Language (Listening Comprehension) [should be] formally tested and considered with every evaluation. These results [should then be] compared with cognitive measures, academic measures, and classroom functioning. In addition to providing diagnostic information, language assessment also provides insight into teaching and learning (Schultz and Stephens-Pisecco, 2018, p. 151).

Similarly, we have equally suggested:

The imperfect ability to listen, think, or speak are salient features of the SLD definition and are critical assessment areas when identifying a PSW and the instructional implications of a student’s profile (Schultz and Stephens-Pisecco, 2018, p. 151).

Consequently, C-SEP advocates broad language skills as a part of the assessment process. While this feature is distinct among other PSW methods, we recognizes the importance of language to learning.

Evaluations as a Collaborative Partnership

Educational evaluations are labor intensive, collective endeavors. For this reason, C-SEP strongly endorses collaboration among all stakeholders involved in an evaluation. We advocate strong partnership and participation of the student, their parents, in addition to classroom teachers, Team members, and the multitude of other professionals and stakeholders that may become involved. We hold this position for two primary reasons. First, only through broad support and participation can a comprehensive evaluation be conducted. Each stakeholder has an important role in the collection and interpretation of the data. Each should utilize their position and provide their unique knowledge and insight to ensure that the evaluation acquires as much insight and knowledge into the student as possible.

Second, collaborative participation during an evaluation process is essential to ensuring efficiency. Teamwork can significantly reduce duplication and redundancy across the assessment workflow. For instance, if a speech pathologist and a diagnostician do not collaborate, there is a chance that they may conduct duplicate tests and/or use similar instruments that measure the same set of traits. To minimize overlap, we recommend collaboration to formulate a comprehensive but streamlined testing plan for the student based on the referral question. In this manner, relevant stakeholders can agree on which tests should be administered and who will administer them. Thereafter, the educational diagnostician and speech pathologist, for instance, should come together again to share their expertise and interpret testing results. Such an approach saves time, reduces redundancy, ensures a comprehensive evaluation is conducted, and provides valuable insight into student learning. Collaboration is equally beneficial to the creation of services and supports to better assist the child being assessed.

An Adaptive and Flexible Model

C-SEP is a set of assessment practices designed to streamline the assessment process in terms of collection, integration and interpretation of data. For this reason, the model easily integrates into diverse settings and environments. Moreover, while C-SEP has its own set of resources, the model is flexible and can readily absorb external resources, such as those provided by New Mexico's *Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual: The New Mexico T.E.A.M.* Revised December 2017. The sections that follow detail how C-SEP aligns and can be integrated into New Mexico's existing legal framework.

C-SEP and Its Critics

From its inception, the pillars of C-SEP have endured, as has the model's ability to withstand (both fair and unfair) peer scrutiny and criticism. Nevertheless, we recognize our professional and ethical responsibility to clarify and defend our research and practices. Unfortunately, the harshest critiques hitherto have been individuals seeking to delegitimize PSW by decontextualizing and misrepresenting C-SEP to advance their objectives. For instance, Fletcher and Miciak (2019)

mischaracterized C-SEP as a “discrepancy” model, while Benson et al. (2018) used contextomy and quote mining in an attempt to discredit the model. The latter criticism was refuted in a published response (Schultz & Stephens, 2018). What is important is that despite time and critique, C-SEP continues to be a viable model for identifying students suspected of SLD. Equally important, it has been recognized as a viable method of SLD identification in the *Essential of Specific Learning Disability*, 2nd Edition (Alfonso & Flanagan, 2018). It is similarly represented in textbooks (Dombrowski, 2020), trade materials (Flanagan, Alfonso, & Dehn, 2020) and state-produced evaluation documents (Virginia Department of Education, 2021). Combined, C-SEP is proving resilient as an increasing number of school districts and diagnosticians take note of its benefits.

Conclusion

C-SEP is a purposeful, targeted PSW assessment framework that follows a four-step process for SLD. Table 1 outlines each step and provides a description. The C-SEP process has multiple features that distinguish it from other PSW models (see Schultz & Stephens-Pisecco, 2018). These include our elevation of oral language, going beyond standard score analysis (i.e., task demands analysis, curriculum-based measures), using actual achievement data to assess “lack of adequate achievement,” targeted ruling out of exclusionary factors, and the identification of emerging PSW through a comprehensive analysis of MSD and formal test results. These characteristics set C-SEP apart from other discrepancy models. At the same time, the model is adaptive and flexible, and easily integrating into other state practices and capable of absorbing external resources.

Table 1. The Four Steps of C-SEP

Steps	Description of Each Step
Review	<p>Collect, organize, and analyze the referral MSD. Any missing data must be collected. The MSD is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish underachievement. • Establish a student's response to instruction. • Preliminarily identify the emergence of PSW using actual achievement data. • Preliminarily rule out exclusionary factors. • Establish a testing hypothesis.
Plan	<p>Create a Focused Referral Question (FRQ) from the testing hypothesis. The FRQ should guide the Targeted Testing Plan (TTP). When creating the TTP, the evaluator must determine which achievement areas and/or intellectual development to test based on the review (In short, it should seek to acquire the additional data needed to further identify possible PSW). During this stage, the evaluator should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the FRQ based on the testing hypothesis. • Determine the TTP (based on which achievement and intellectual development areas that need to be tested). • Choose the battery of tests that will serve as the foundation of the formal assessment. • Choose the core tests based on the FRQ and the test publisher's guidance. • Choose the core tests needed to accurately measure intellectual development, achievement, and language abilities.
Assess	<p>Administer the core tests identified in the TTP. Following test administration, score and conduct the necessary task demands analysis. Test scores should then be merged with all of the previously acquired MSD. After reanalyzing the MSD, it should be decided whether additional selective testing is required to answer the FRQ/and determine eligibility. Should selective testing be deemed necessary, its findings should be incorporated into the accumulation of MSD and reinterpreted.</p>
Decide	<p>Integrate and analyze <i>all</i> of the accumulated data within the Legal Framework to determine whether SLD criteria have been met. An eligibility recommendation is then presented to the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee or the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team (for more details, see Schultz and Stephens-Pisecco, 2018; Stephens-Pisecco et al. 2019).</p>

Comprehensive Evaluation Considerations:

- Student Background
 - Culture
 - Familial
 - Socio-Economic
 - Educational History
- Academic skills and performance;
 - Language of Instruction
 - Language of Assessment
 - Grades
 - Benchmarks
 - RtI
 - Accommodations and/or Modifications
- Physical considerations;
 - Vision / Hearing / Motor
 - Illness and/or hospitalizations that may impact
 -
- Social skills;
- Emotional;
- Behavioral;
 - Discipline
- Adaptive;
- Communication;
 - EL Status
 - Student's Dominant Language
 - Student's Receptive Language Skills
 - Student's Expressive Language Skills
- Exclusionary Factors

Data acquired from:

- Parent;
- Student;
- Teacher(s);
- Student support staff (e.g., teaching assistant; language assistant);
- Observation(s);
- School Nurse;
- School Counselor;
- Healthcare professional (e.g., physician; therapist);
- School staff (e.g., principle);
- Etc.

Data collected via:

- Interviews;
- Questionnaires and/or Formulas;
- Records Reviews (e.g., RtI; Benchmarks, Grades);
- Work Samples;
- Informal Assessments;
- Formal Assessments;

Aligning C-SEP with New Mexico's (2017) Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual

New Mexico (2017)	Core-Selective Evaluation Process
ROLE OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE TEAM IN THE ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS	
RtI Framework	RtI Framework
<p>RtI Framework Essential Understandings (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality instruction and differentiation for all students are essential components of all three tiers. • Interventions become more targeted and increase in intensity in each successive tier. • There is a team approach of support for teachers, students and families at each tier. • Each school and local education agency (LEA) shall have an RtI implementation plan based on the New Mexico RtI framework. The implementation of RtI at each LEA and school may vary based on their individual implementation plan 	<p>C-SEP is compatible with multiple methods of progress monitoring, including RTI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-SEP can be used at any point in the RTI process and its principles and practices remain constant. • C-SEP targets the assessment process according to student performance as indicated by multiple sources of data. • C-SEP recognizes that monitoring and evaluation is a team effort, and C-SEP appreciates that each stakeholder has a unique responsibility, talent and insight into a particular student. Under C-SEP, the team of actors includes teachers, evaluators, parents, family members, and other professionals according to state law and individual case requirements. • C-SEP is a flexible and legally defensible method of collecting, merging and processing data. It demands its users adhere to both federal and state regulations and applicable best practice. As a result, C-SEP is easily adaptable to individual states.

PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT	
Use of Professional Judgment in the Eligibility Determination Process	Use of Professional Judgment in the Eligibility Determination Process
<p>Two models for professional judgment are offered in New Mexico’s protocol (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 13). One focuses on the use of professional judgment in the eligibility determination process (Bagnato, SmithJones, Matesa, & McKeating-Esterle, 2006). This model “attempted to isolate what mattered most in terms of accurate decision making using clinical judgment as an assessment practice and procedure.” The second model examines professional judgment strategies across both assessment and intervention (Shalock & Luckasson, 2005). Professional judgment is characterized by being: systematic (i.e., organized, sequential, and logical), formal (i.e., explicit and reasoned), and transparent (i.e., apparent and communicated clearly). However, professional judgment should not be thought of as a justification for abbreviated evaluations, a vehicle for stereotypes or prejudices, a substitute for insufficiently explored questions, an excuse for incomplete or missing data, or a way to solve political problems (Schalock & Luckasson, 2005). When making an eligibility determination decision, the team must follow the regulations in IDEA (2004) and professional judgment must be used within the context of the evaluation findings (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 13).</p>	<p>From it’s conceptualization, C-SEP has embraced the use of professional judgment when evaluation students and making educational decision. However, it is essential to define professional judgment as C-SEP operationalizes the term. In its broadest sense, professional judgment is defined as the leveraging of the accumulated knowledge and technical awareness a professional has acquired from their education, training, and work experience. Exercising professional judgment, in general, requires an accumulated knowledge of the profession for which the individual is working (e.g., certification to teach); a qualification to collect and assess the data required to evaluate a student and make a decision concerning the possible existence of a disability (e.g., adequately trained to administer and interpret standardized assessments); a thorough assessment of multiple sources of data on the student and, with consultation with other team members, has discussed and determined the strengths and weaknesses of the child as well as their needs based on the existing data.</p>

KEY COMPONENTS OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

Preparation (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 14)

- Define the behavior(s) or academic concerns constituting the focus of evaluation.
- Identify the methods and procedures needed to obtain assessment data.

Information Gathering

- Obtain the assessment data using multiple methods and procedures.
- Gather the assessment information across multiple settings and individuals (i.e., professionals, parent(s), and child).

Decision Making

- Analyze and aggregate all of the assessment data from the different tools, people, and settings, using a team-based approach.
- Reach consensus on eligibility determination based on evaluation information

Preparation

- C-SEP requires a clear definition of the behavior(s) and/or academic concerns be clearly articulated so the evaluation can be focused.
- Once the areas of concern have been clearly identified, C-SEP users must determine the most appropriate methods and procedures needed to obtain any additional assessment data that must be acquired.
- Naturally, as the evaluation progresses and more information is collected and processed, any additional data collection required will become increasingly targeted.

Information Gathering

- C-SEP requires the use of multiple sources of data collected through numerous methods.
- Data collection begins with existing data and expands to include targeted data that must be acquired.
- C-SEP advocates that all data be collected across multiple settings to thoroughly and accurately determine a student's strengths and weaknesses.

Decision Making

- C-SEP requires that all assessment data collected from multiple sources and acquired through multiple methods be combined and integrated before being interpreted by the evaluator and an evaluation team.
- According to C-SEP and federal law, consensus on eligibility determination must be based on the data collected and the evaluation team's decision.

Competent Professional Judgment: Six Strategies
(Adapted from Schalock & Luckasson, 2005) (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 13)

1. Conduct a thorough social history that focuses on the individual's strengths and limitations, and provides a context for formulating hypotheses about the individual's present and future behaviors.
2. Align data and its collection to the critical question(s) by working with the eligibility determination team (EDT) to clearly articulate the referral question(s) and to identify the most appropriate data collection methods to answer those questions.
3. Apply broad-based assessment strategies that include standardized and non-standardized measures from a variety of sources across settings.
4. Implement intervention best practices to provide appropriate instruction to children before, during, and after the evaluation and eligibility determination process.
5. Plan, implement, and evaluate supports throughout the evaluation and eligibility determination process to include supports to participate in academic and non-academic activities.
6. Reflect cultural competence and diversity by collecting information about the child's home environment and/or language, examining the relationship between the child's environment and possible disability, using evaluators who are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the child's

C-SEP adheres to Schalock & Luckasson's (2005) six strategies of professional judgment. They recommend:

1. Thorough histories should be collected to determine their specific strengths and weaknesses. This information is then utilized to formulate a hypothesis and to structure the assessment plan whereby further assessment can continue if necessary.
2. Once the areas of concerns have been clearly defined, C-SEP advocates this data steer the referral and assessment process to determine if the student is eligible for services. Hence, the concerns articulated in the referral, the data available, and the data required will naturally guide the selection of methods used.
3. C-SEP recognizes the importance of collecting both formal and informal data when evaluating a student. It is a combination of data, we believe, that provides the most comprehensive and accurate picture of student performance.
4. Once multiple sources of data have been analyzed, using professional judgment, it is possible to determine a student's strengths and weaknesses. C-SEP then recommends that these findings be utilized to determine a student's needs and their eligibility.
5. Both professional judgment and the comprehensive data collected should guide the decision of which services or supports are required to help the student advance in the curriculum and environment.
6. C-SEP advocates the collection of information from the student's background and existing environment. This includes, but is not limited to, acquiring a home language survey and conducting a survey of economic and cultural domains. Such data are necessary to better understand the student's background, to limit

<p>cultural and linguistic background, and ensure that the evaluation and eligibility determination decision are implemented consistent with legal and ethical guidelines.</p>	<p>bias, and to accurately determine whether they meet federal and state eligibility criteria (e.g., consideration of all federally mandated exclusionary factors).</p>
<p align="center">MULTILINGUAL ASSESSMENT ISSUES</p>	
<p>Critical Information for Eligibility Determination</p> <p>As part of the evaluation and eligibility determination process the Eligibility Determination Team (EDT) must review and consider information from the SAT including the following (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 15-17):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural information. Collect information on whether socio-cultural factors are contributing significantly to the suspected learning/behavior problem. • Parent involvement and input. Gather educational, linguistic, and cultural background information from the parents, as well as pertinent and critical student history information. • Targeted interventions. Document what interventions were implemented, including appropriate multilingual instructional supports, which have not resulted in sufficient student progress. • Pre-referral information. 	<p>C-SEP is constructed upon federal legislation. It therefore recognizes the importance of collecting data from numerous sources to thoroughly document and measure a student's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, cultural and linguistic differences must equally be considered during an evaluation to ensure that students are accurately and fairly assessed, and to prevent these characteristics from producing a misidentification. To manage the latter concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural data should be collected from parents, the student, teachers, observations, and so forth to provide a clear picture of the student and the potential impact of language/culture has on the student. • Parents should be queried about the dominant language used at home; the student's dominant language; the student's familiarity and comfort with the school's dominant culture; the student's educational history; and so forth. • Interventions implemented, such as multilingual interventions, should be thoroughly documented as well as the outcomes of their use, as these help the team better understand a child's strengths and weaknesses, and provide insight into potential instructional changes that might be tried in the future. • MSD should naturally include pre-referral data.

<p>Reducing bias in assessment (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 17-18)</p>	<p>C-SEP prioritizes the collection and interpretation of multiple sources of data, including the identification and qualification of language and cultural of the child. Obtaining a clear understanding of the child’s language and culture must be used to determine: how these factors impact student performance; which language should be used in the evaluation; the types of instruments that should be used; and to ensure that past accommodations, when utilized, have been implemented with fidelity; to compare the student’s performance versus their language/cultural peers; to ensure that nondiscriminatory practices are used throughout the referral and assessment process.</p>
<p>Eligibility Determination (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 18)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each child that is Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, including students in dual language programs, involves a study of issues beyond standardized assessments. Attention must be given to language and cultural issues throughout the evaluation and eligibility determination process. All evaluation findings, including standardized test measures, should be analyzed and interpreted in an individual and comprehensive manner. • These impacts and their findings should be explicitly articulate in the FIE, as should the FIE explain how language and culture was considered and assessed. 	<p>C-SEP recognizes the importance of language in learning and assessments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluators must carefully identify and qualify the language and cultural of the child. Obtaining a clear understanding of the child’s language and culture necessary to determine whether and how these influence a child’s performance. • The FIE should comprehensively detail the language and cultural data collected on a given student and which, if any, learning needs are present (and not the result of the language or culture). The FIE should explain which language and culture data was collected, how it was acquired and interpreted, and which determinations were gleaned from it. • C-SEP advocates federal and state standards be followed to the letter, which includes, but is not limited to, examine the “critical information for eligibility determination” outlined by the New Mexico’s Technical Manual (p. 15-18).

USE AND INTERPRETATION OF STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS AND OBTAINED SCORES

General Cautions Regarding the Selection and Administration of Standardized Assessments (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 19-20)

- Selecting Assessment Tools
- Administering Assessments
- Repeated Administration

When standardized assessments are utilized, C-SEP requires:

- Instruments be carefully selected according to their specified purpose;
- Tests that are normed be selected for the student being assessed.

General Cautions Regarding the Interpretation of Scores (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 21-22)

Selecting Scores for Eligibility Determination

- All scores must be considered within the context of other data sources and other information about the child.
- All decisions regarding the use of particular scores in the eligibility determination process should be based on professional judgment. These decisions must be clearly documented and the rationale for the decisions must be clearly outlined in a written report.
- In general, when using a cognitive test as part of an eligibility determination decision, most test authors and experts recommend using a full-scale cognitive score (e.g., an FSIQ, GCA, etc.).

Great care must be taken when interpreting scores acquired from standardized testing.

When determining eligibility, C-SEP dictates:

- Scores never be used alone. Instead, they must be merged with and considered within the context of MSD.
- The combined data should be interpreted while following best practices and professional judgment. Decisions made must be documented and explained in the FIE.
- When utilizing cognitive assessments, full-scale scores should be utilized. These should, nonetheless, be merged and considered with MSD whenever possible in the C-SEP framework.

Selecting a Normative Sample

When norm references instruments are utilized during an assessment, they should be normed to the student being tested.

<p>Formula-Based Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmental Delay, Intellectual Disability, Specific Learning Disability, and Speech Language Impairment. The implementation of these formulas must always be guided by professional judgment. 	<p>When making formula-based decisions, C-SEP recommends both the use of professional judgment and the incorporation and consideration of MSD to the greatest extent possible.</p>
<p>The Use of Age- and Grade-Equivalency Scores (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 22-23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be used with caution and can be easily misinterpreted. These scores should not typically be reported in comprehensive evaluation reports and should not be used as part of the eligibility determination process. 	<p>C-SEP advocates the caution when interpreting scores and data. Moreover, C-SEP teaches that no single score or piece of data should be used to make a determination, but rather decisions should be based on a preponderance of data and viewed from the perspective of an established pattern of strengths and weaknesses.</p>
<p>Use of Standard Error of Measurement (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 23-24)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variability in scores may either under- or over-estimate a child's true abilities, therefore it is important always to consider the standard error of measurement (SEM) when interpreting scores from standardized assessments, regardless of the areas assessed and/or reason for the referral. 	<p>C-SEP teaches and variations in scores must be explained rather than ignored or dismissed. This demands that the evaluator or evaluation team carefully examine why the discrepancy appears. Making such determinations requires examining the preponderance of data, carefully considering issues such as task demands associated which may contribute to the variability, and identifying other factors that explain the discrepancy.</p>

Use of Base Rate and Co-Normed Assessments (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 25)

- Base rate is described as the frequency in the difference between scores when comparing cognitive and academic skills. The greater the difference between scores, the less commonly it occurred in the standardization sample. Base rates that occur 10% of the time or less are considered statistically unusual and may suggest the presence of a specific learning disability. Base rates that occur more frequently than 10% are considered common and not typically representative of a specific learning disability.
- Caution should be made when determining what scores to use in making comparisons. Full Scale, General Conceptual Ability, Mental Processing Index, General Ability Index, Non-Verbal Index, and other cognitive composites can reliably be considered a predictor of a child's academic achievement. However, composite scores such as Processing Speed and Working Memory, for example, are generally thought of as measure of processing skills and should not be used to generate base rate comparisons with achievement scores.
- Most test development companies have designed their achievement tests to measure the specific learning disability areas defined within IDEA (i.e. basic reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, math calculation, math problem solving, oral expression, listening comprehension). As such, subtest and composite scores can be used, along with other lines of evidence, in determining the presence of a

C-SEP requires standardized assessments, when they are utilized, be selected in accordance with the specific needs of the child being assessed and utilized for the specific purpose upon which the instrument was designed by the test publisher. This includes, but is not limited to, taking into consideration norming data, potential bias, and the skills or behaviors that an individual test is designed to assess. Once an instrument or instruments have been selected, examiners are expected to follow the publisher protocol and established professional standards and best practices when selecting, administering, scoring, and interpreting test results. Once collected, however, test scores must be integrated and considered in relation to multiple sources of data whereupon a better understanding of student functioning can be determined. If core testing fails to produce the data required to answer the referral question, and/or if additional questions are raised as a result of the data collected, further selective testing is conducted to acquire the information required. The data collected from selective testing is merged with all existing data and carefully considered collectively to make informed determinations about eligibility and to identify how the individual needs of the student can be met.

specific learning disability.	
CONDUCTING INITIAL EVALUATIONS	
<p>Professional Judgment (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 27)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional judgment plays a significant role and must be utilized within the context of the law, and throughout the entire evaluation, beginning with the referral and continuing through to the final eligibility determination. Although each step in the eligibility determination process has certain requirements that must be met in order to be consistent with IDEA and NMAC, decisions regarding how each of these requirements is met for an individual child must also be guided by professional judgment. Teams need to define the behavior(s) and/or academic concerns that are the focus of the evaluation, identify the methods and procedures needed to gather assessment data, obtain the assessment data using multiple methods and procedures, and collect and analyze the assessment information gathered across multiple settings and individuals (i.e., professionals, parent(s), and child). Each of these steps and decisions will be guided by the professional judgment of the evaluation and/or EDT and teams must be able to document their decisions and the rationale and data used to support these Decisions. 	<p>C-SEP recognizes the value of professional judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional judgment, exercised within the existing legal confines and professional best practices recognized by our profession, should guide the referral and evaluation process. Professional judgment, however, should never be used as an excuse to cut corners, expedite decisions, or justify poor evaluation standards or practices. The latter actions are unacceptable, unethical and destructive to our profession and undermine the opportunities a child has. C-SEP emphasizes the importance of clearly identifying and articulating the academic or behavioral areas of concerns so that a comprehensive and targeted assessment can be conducted. C-SEP conceptualizes a comprehensive assessment as the collection, integration and interpretation of MSD acquired using multiple methods and procedures from various sources. Individuals and teams should comprehensively collect, document and interpret the data according to the law and the highest professional standards. Decisions should then be made based on what the data and professional judgment determines, and these determinations, their support, and implications should be thoroughly explained in the FIE.

<p>Purpose of Evaluation (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 27-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine whether a child is eligible. • Regardless of eligibility, an evaluation should be used to plan intervention. 	<p>Purpose of an Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overarching purpose of an evaluation is to determine whether a child is eligible for services according to the standards set by federal and state law. • The data collected and findings gleaned from the evaluation, whether the child is eligible for services or not, should be leveraged to plan individualized interventions to help the child achieve their highest potential.
<p>Evaluation Requirements (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 28-29)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By federal law, an evaluation must be focused on each child and his unique needs, include obtaining all functional, developmental, behavioral, and academic information that may be relevant to this child. • The evaluation must be sufficient in scope to identify the impact of the disability on the child's educational performance and to "identify all of the child's special education and related service needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified." • Assessment can be initiated by a parent or LEA. • Informed consent must be acquired 	<p>C-SEP adheres to federal and state regulations that specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive and individualized evaluation be conducted. • The evaluation must test all areas of concern to determine if a child qualifies for services or supports by identifying a child's strengths and weaknesses and ruling out exclusionary factors, including language, cultural and socio-economic, among others. • Since C-SEP is an assessment process, it is not impacted by which stakeholder initiates the assessment. Nonetheless, federal and state law should be followed. • Since all federal and state laws must be adhered to, C-SEP demands that informed consent be acquired prior to initiating an assessment. C-SEP users are likewise responsible for terminating assessment if consent is withdrawn at any time.

Evaluation Procedures (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 29)

- Not relying on a single evaluation measure;
- Using a variety of tools and strategies (including formal and informal);
- Reflecting information from a variety of sources (parents, teachers, specialists, and the child);
- Documenting the child's functional, developmental, behavioral, and academic performance;
- Assessing all areas of suspected disability;
- Providing relevant information to assist in determining the child's educational needs;
- Selecting assessments on an individualized basis;
- Ensuring that assessment methods are non-discriminatory, technically sound, and administered appropriately; and
- Recognizing that screening tools cannot be used for a substitute for comprehensive evaluations conducted as part of the initial evaluation.

C-SEP principles mirror New Mexico's evaluation procedures:

- No single measure can be used to make decisions. Contrary, MSD is required.
- A variety of tools, strategies and sources should be used to acquire the data necessary to make informed decisions.
- Evaluators should leverage all available sources and resources to build a comprehensive understanding of the student and their strengths and weaknesses.
- A comprehensive evaluation assesses and documents a child's foundational, developmental, behavioral, and academic performance.
- By law, all areas of suspected disability should be comprehensively assessed.
- The evaluation process should offer relevant and actionable information whereby a student's educational needs can be addressed whether or not they are eligible for services.
- Assessments should be carefully selected for the student being assessed to prevent discrimination or bias due to race, language, and/or socio-economic, or cultural factors.
- Assessments utilized should be designed to measure the construct being tested and be viable for use with the student being assessed (e.g., normed for the student; in a language they understand).
- No single screening tools or single test score can be used in isolation to make eligibility decisions. Contrary, MSD must be collected in a comprehensive manner and then combined and interpreted to make decisions.

Components of an Evaluation (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 30)

- For each eligibility category, the Initial Evaluation section in NM TEAM outlines the assessments, observations, and data that must be gathered throughout the initial evaluation process. The Potential Additional Components are those that evaluation teams will most commonly identify as other areas of need for a particular child when considering a specific category. However, evaluation teams need to remember that these two lists are not all-inclusive. Each evaluation is unique and should reflect the specific child's needs as identified by the evaluation team.
- In addition, teams should remember that in some cases, standardized measures may not provide the most accurate representation of a child's abilities or there may not be an appropriate standardized measure for the area being assessed. In these cases, evaluation teams may find that it is necessary to use alternative methods to obtain the data that they need. These decisions and their underlying rationale must be clearly documented.
- With rare exception, the evaluation team must include all of the elements outlined under Highly Recommended Components and must also consider the Potential Additional Components, as appropriate for each individual child. A team must document any deviation from these guidelines.

Components of an Evaluation

- C-SEP is compatible with New Mexico's thorough evaluation framework and can absorb the worksheets and resources provided by the department of education. C-SEP likewise adheres to both federal and state laws, and the model recognizes that an evaluation must be comprehensive and targeted to the individual student being assessed.
- While standardized assessments can offer valuable insight in particular instances, C-SEP advocates that they be utilized in decision making in tandem with other multiple sources of data. Moreover, any data considered should accurately reflective a measure of the constructs the team wishes to understand. Regardless of the data acquired, it must be clearly explained how the data was collected, why it is relevant, and precisely what the data indicates.
- C-SEP recommends that all state procedures be followed and the model adheres to New Mexico's standards and protocols. Hence, in the case that all of the elements in the Highly Recommended Components and/or Potential Additional Components are required, C-SEP accommodates this. Naturally, the team must thoroughly document the data and how it was used, as well as any deviation from the guidelines that regulate an evaluation.

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION DECISIONS	
Definitions of disability categories are established by Federal and State norms (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 31)	Federal and state eligibility must be adhered to in C-SEP and students should be comprehensively evaluated to determine the student's disability status.
Characteristics and Educational Impact (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 31)	C-SEP requires that all academic and/or behavioral challenges be clearly identified as well as their impact on student performance.
<p>Special Considerations for Evaluation (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 31-32)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Children: The impact of the family, home environment, home language, and early childhood development history must be considered carefully. It is essential to have knowledge of early childhood development and early childhood assessment that will contribute to an appropriate evaluation, including observing the child in play-based activities across multiple settings and times (i.e., both familiar and unfamiliar to the child). 	<p>C-SEP recognizes the importance of developing a thorough background on the child being assessed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regardless of the age of a child, collecting and considering language, culture, socio-economic data is essential to understanding how a student's background and history might impact on performance. To collect this data, parent and family interviews and questionnaires are valuable, as are teacher resources, observations, student data reviews and student interviews.
<p>Eligibility Determination (New Mexico TEAM, 2017: 32-33)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize and document a thoughtful process that is consistent with IDEA and NMAC when making eligibility determination decisions. The EDT must document that the child demonstrates a need for special education and related services because, as a result of the disability, the child requires specially designed instruction in order to: 	<p>Eligibility Determination under C-SEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C-SEP evaluations should be thoroughly planned and conducted according to federal and state regulations, as well as adhere to professional best-practices. Under C-SEP, evaluators must thoroughly document and explain a child's (non-) eligibility and any services or supports they required in detail. When a child is deemed eligible, documentation should include:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum (or for a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities); 2) Participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and/or 3) Be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Measures recommended to ensure the child progresses in the general education curriculum 2. How the student can participate in nonacademic or extracurricular activities 3. How the student can be educated and integrated with other children whether with or without a disability.
<p>Reevaluation</p> <p>A reevaluation of a child with a disability must occur at least once every three years, but not more than once a year, unless the parent and LEA agree otherwise. A reevaluation must also occur before changing a child's eligibility to receive special education services (except as noted below). The evaluation team must inform parent(s)/guardian(s) that a reevaluation is due.</p>	<p>Reevaluations under C-SEP occur according to established federal and state protocol. C-SEP users should check the guidance and adhere to the established timelines and rules.</p>
<p>Discontinuation of Services</p>	<p>Discontinuation of Services under C-SEP occurs according to federal and state protocol.</p>

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