

Exposing Educational Propaganda: A Response to Benson et al. (2018) “Critique” of C-SEP

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Abstract

An article written by Benson, Beaujean, McGill, and Dombrowski (2018), entitled “Critique of the Core-Selective Evaluation Process,” was recently published in *Dialog*. The essay claims to be a critical examination of Core-Selective Evaluation Process (C-SEP) and recommends that the model of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) evaluation be “eschewed.” Their conclusion is problematic considering that Benson et al. (2018) base their essay on a false premise, multiple distortions of facts, and a blatant misrepresentation of C-SEP and its authors. Equally concerning, Benson et al. (2018) make three fundamental errors in their interpretation of basic special education law to support their unsubstantiated claims. While drafting our rebuttal, it became clear that Benson and colleagues have repeatedly criticized patterns of strengths and weaknesses (PSW) models utilizing similar tactics. This article is designed to correct the inaccuracies and fallacies leveled against C-SEP through the provision of verifiable facts and a review of basic special education policy in Texas.

As regular consumers of, and contributors to, academic literature, the authors of this rebuttal recognize the theoretical and practical value of having our research professionally analyzed and critiqued by our peers. Scholarly debate regarding special education assessment practices, among others, is healthy and beneficial to improve, expand, and advance the field. Meaningful headway is assured when discourse is governed by honest, ethical, and fact-based critique. However, the recent article by Benson et al. (2018) published in the Fall 2018 *The Dialog* (Journal for the Texas Educational Diagnosticians Association [TEDA]), entitled “Critique of the Core-Selective Evaluation Process,” falsely represents C-SEP and its authors.

Within this framework, the purpose of this article is multiple. Foremost, it is a rebuttal that will expose the deliberate inaccuracies, misstatements, and false information presented about C-SEP and its authors by Benson et al. (2018). Second, it raises awareness of the use of educational propaganda that has infiltrated scholarly discourse concerning the identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). It should be noted that the scholarly merits of SLD identification methods, PSW or C-SEP, are not the focus of this

article since Benson et al.’s (2018) essay is based upon misstatements and accusations that the authors of C-SEP have never embraced nor promoted. Third, this text will identify and address three factually incorrect statements regarding special education law and policy advanced by Benson et al. (2018).

Educational Propaganda

Cambridge Dictionary (2018) defines *propaganda* as information or ideas that are spread by an organized collective or government to influence people’s opinions. The practice has negative connotations because it often incorporates the selective withholding of facts or surreptitiously advances a distorted view of the facts. Propagandists use techniques such as “quote mining” (quoting out of context), lies, and “straw man” tactics (asserting that a person holds a view that is actually a distorted version of what the person believes). These techniques are often referred to as fallacies, an argument, or belief based on erroneous reasoning (McGlone, 2005a). Propaganda in many forms has been used for centuries to shape opinions (e.g., political, consumer, religion) and to justify wrongdoing. Some countries, such as China (Landsberger, 2001), North Korea (Waller, 2017) and Saudi Arabia (Kurtz, 2007) in-

corporate propaganda into their societies and educational systems.

Unfortunately, the practice is becoming increasingly evident in academic literature in the United States. In education journals, propaganda, often masked as “scholarly critiques,” are being published about evaluation processes. In these instances, misinformation, academic dishonesty, and distortions of truth are utilized to devalue or disqualify specific practices. Such publications can have a detrimental impact upon the integrity of the research and researchers being targeted, and if left unchecked, can undermine advancements in the field of education as well as taint the general perception of published research among its consumers.

Since the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) reauthorization, the use of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW) language for identifying SLD has been incorporated in special education law and deemed as an allowable identification method in Texas. With the reauthorization of IDEA came increased academic scrutiny about the use of PSW models within SLD identification. However, there is a notable and concerning pattern developing as these PSW “critiques” utilize unethical and unprofessional practices. While researching this rebuttal, the authors have uncovered a series of articles written by scholars who oppose the use of a PSW approach through the promotion of propaganda and misinformation (see Beaujean, Benson, McGill, & Dombrowski, 2018; Benson, Beaujean, McGill, & Dombrowski, 2018; McGill & Busse, 2017; Kranzler, Floyd, Benson, Zaboski, & Thibodaux, 2016). All of these academic publications rely heavily on falsities and misrepresentation to discredit PSW models and their advocates.

Among the techniques deployed is “equivocation” and distortion of the authors’ intended meaning (Flanagan & Schneider, 2016). Equivocation (e.g., “straw man”) occurs when an argument is made based on a false premise or a meaning is altered through quote mining

(Browne & Keeley, 2018), "selective quoting," or other misrepresentations (Christo, D'Incau, & Ponzuric, 2016). Understandably, the essays being referred to have been countered with prompt responses by those authors whose character and work were being attacked. In their rebuttals, the PSW authors eloquently identify the propaganda techniques used by their critical peers to discredit the substance of the critical analysis.

Defending C-SEP Against Educational Propaganda

C-SEP is a set of sound educational practices that utilize multiple sources of data, special education policy, norm-referenced test publisher guidance, and PSW techniques to identify SLD (Schultz & Stephens-Pisecco, 2017; Schultz & Stephens, 2015). Like all theoretical work, its merits are subject to constructive, academic critique by professionals using meaningful, solid, and factual research methodology that adheres to a high standard of academic integrity. According to the American Psychological Association (APA)'s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, General Principle C, psychologists should "seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practice of psychology" (APA, 2017, p. 3). Further, Principle C mandates that psychologists not steal, cheat, or engage in fraud, subterfuge, or intentional misrepresentation of a fact" (APA, 2017, p. 3).

However, these principles are not met in Benson et al.'s (2018) essay as its core critiques of C-SEP are based upon misrepresentation, misinformation, and other propaganda. In the sections that follow, we define and examine several instances of the use of hedging, contextomy, and misinformation extracted from their brief essay which create the foundation for their critical analysis of C-SEP. In addition, we demonstrate how Benson et al. (2018) misinterpret Texas Special Education law, which governs SLD identification practices, to support their critique. The combination of exposed inaccuracies proves that Benson et al.'s (2018) criticisms of C-SEP are baseless, and, when taken into consideration as a whole, the essay fails to meet the rigorous standards expected in academia.

A Hedged Introduction to Justify and Taint

Benson et al. (2018) purposefully introduce their critique with a hedge to justify the articles

lack of substance and to taint the reader's opinion of C-SEP and its authors. "Hedging" is a literary device used to advance propaganda that is commonly found in modern day political discourse (Sumanat, 2016). It is also a technique utilized in scholarly writing to denote caution or a probability of error, frequently when an author is referring to their own work. Benson et al. (2018), nonetheless, deploy it when they introduce C-SEP in their essay. Quoted below in its entirety, this paragraph establishes the tone and premise for the authors' analysis. The authors write:

The C-SEP developers have made a variety of statements about it, seemingly to justify its development and promote its use. Some statements seem reasonable, while others appear problematic. Due to space considerations, we only provide a selective critique of what we contend are the most problematic statements (p. 16).

With their hedged assessment that "some statements are reasonable, while others appear problematic," the authors are deliberately vague about what is problematic about C-SEP and what is not. While the deployment of modal and lexical verbs including "seemingly" and "seems" are non-committal in tone and substance, the statement is very beneficial for clouding the reader's judgment by discrediting the subject matter.

Albeit, immediately following the hedge, Benson et al. (2018) excuse their vacillation by utilizing a second stage setting line that justifies the absence of theoretical substance. Specifically, the authors attribute "space" considerations as the rationale for providing a "selective critique of problematic statements." This justification, nonetheless, is hollow for two reasons. Foremost, Benson et al. (2018) are accomplished writers. While this paragraph may seem trivial and insignificant to some readers, when considered in context with the quality of the remainder of the article, it foreshadows a scathing essay constructed upon conjecture and misrepresentation designed to discredit C-SEP and its authors without basis.

In short, the hedge becomes a cornerstone which subtlety and effectively prejudices and distracts the reader while dismissing the absence of in-depth analysis. From this point, the authors promise to level specific criticisms against C-SEP. However, the four primary criticisms which follow in the Benson et al. (2018) text are manufactured; created through "quote mining" and the pairing of a "partial real quote" with a "false or misleading statement" to

misrepresent C-SEP. We will address these instances in turn and clarify the C-SEP position through facts.

C-SEP Does Not "Obviate" the Need to Render an Identification Decision

Benson et al. (2018) begin their critical assessment by falsely attributing statements to the authors of C-SEP. More precisely, they inaccurately claim:

The C-SEP developers have stated that it allows clinicians to avoid dichotomous identification decisions because it utilizes a normative-developmental perspective that allows diagnosticians to go beyond classifying and sorting students by offering explanations more precisely and comprehensively (Schultz & Stephens, 2015 p. 9) (p. 16).

In propaganda terms, the above quote is a textbook example of contextomy. McGlone (2005a, 2005b) defines contextomy as the "selective excerpting of words from their original linguistic context that distorts the source's intended meaning. The practice is also referred to as "quote mining," "selective quoting" or "quoting out of context." Effective propaganda campaigns use contextomy to create "straw man" arguments. A "straw man" argument is a common fallacy in which a line of reasoning is based on a distorted version of someone's words or position (McGlone, 2005a, 2005b). This practice is usually reserved for political purposes and certain media (McGlone, 2005a, 2005b) and is not commonly found in SLD research. However, we will demonstrate that Benson et al. (2018) repeatedly apply "straw man" throughout their assessment of C-SEP and have done so in previous journal articles.

The "straw man" argument in this instance is found in Benson et al.'s (2018) fabricated assertion that Schultz and Stephens (2017) "obviate" the need to render an identification decision. The first part of this statement is false because the developers of C-SEP have never stated or written that the model allows clinicians to avoid dichotomous identification decisions. Such an accusation demonstrates Benson et al.'s (2018) lack of knowledge and understanding of the C-SEP model, and to our knowledge, none of the authors have received formal training in C-SEP methodology. Ethically, and according to APA's Competence Principle 2.01, Boundaries of Competence, psychologists should only provide services, teach, or conduct research within the boundaries of their competence, based on their educa-

A Response to Benson et al. (2018) "Critique" of C-SEP

tion or training (APA, 2018).

Nonetheless, and contrary to their accusations, C-SEP provides a framework for a targeted, purposeful assessment process, and advocates a thorough evaluation be conducted to identify whether a student meets criteria for one or more of the eight SLD eligibility areas (e.g., Basic Reading, Reading Comprehension, Math Calculation, etc.). Further, in addition to core testing, C-SEP advocates for more in-depth selective testing in areas of weakness to obtain diagnostic information regarding the learner. Through the analysis of multiple sources of data (e.g., background information, work samples, criterion-referenced assessments, health information, parent/teacher information, observations, norm-referenced assessments, etc.), not only is a PSW established to determine whether an SLD exists but a plethora of information is made available to help establish program planning.

Nevertheless, to support their charge that C-SEP "obviates" the need to render an identification decision, Benson et al. (2018) inaccurately and incorrectly reference a partially true quote that has been taken out of context, was selectively edited, and then inaccurately cited. To demonstrate, we encourage the reader to reference the original source of the partial quote (Schultz & Stephens, 2015, p. 11). The statement is actually framed around a discussion that claims the integration of data not only identifies the learner (dichotomies) but goes *beyond* identification to understand the learner and design individualized educational programming. Although misciting page numbers is not uncommon in academic literature, misrepresenting someone's work and citing the wrong page should be concerning in academia. Hence, in this first example raised by the authors, we find that their critique is based upon a false statement that was supported by manipulating sources to wrongly suggest that C-SEP allows clinicians to avoid dichotomous identification decisions.

C-SEP Expects Clinicians to Have Specialized Training

The second critique analyzed from Benson et al. (2018) concerns the amount and type of training clinicians are expected to have. They assert the following:

The C-SEP developers wrote that because cognitive tests provide insights about neurological functioning, clinicians do not need any specialized training in neuropsychology to make inferences about neurological func-

tioning (p.16).

This is a false statement. Developers of C-SEP have never suggested, written or orally, that clinicians do not need specialized training. Contrary, appropriate training is essential to ethical and quality job performance. At the same time, however, we also do not believe that clinicians need to be neuropsychologist to qualitatively perform their job. Likewise, we also do not believe that untrained clinicians should assume the role or function of a trained neuropsychologist, just as we do not believe it to be appropriate or ethical for individuals to utilize, implement, or make assertions about a model in which they have not received formal training. According to C-SEP, both clinicians and neuropsychologists are expected to manage their assigned tasks according to their mandate and training.

Nonetheless, Benson et al. (2018, p.16) pair their false assertion that "C-SEP developers wrote...clinicians do not need any specialized training in neuropsychology to make inferences about neurological functioning" with a "selective" quote that has been edited and taken out of context in a bid to prove their assertion. They continue:

Major cognitive batteries were developed and informed by the field of neuropsychology. By using the test publishers' organizational structure and applying it to referral concerns, tests are already organized. In other words, the "neuropsychology" has been done for you (Schultz & Stephens, 2017, p.16).

Prior to analyzing the misrepresentation within this quote, we wish to first draw attention to the stylistic use of quotations around "neuropsychology." These quotations are purposely designed to convey irony and to acknowledge that the word or idea is being misused by the original authors. This practice is pivotal for constructing a "straw man" argument whereby Benson et al. (2018) can discredit C-SEP by manufacturing doubt in Schultz and Stephens' professionalism and judgment. However, readers should be aware that the above quote is only partially referenced and has been taken out of context.

Benson et al. (2018) mined the quotation from an unpublished draft of a C-SEP manual. Nonetheless, the information provided in the unauthorized copy is true, correct, and applicable when applied in the context in which the words were extracted. To provide contextualization, the actual source of the quote is email correspondence. Initially, an evaluator sent a message expressing her interest in using

C-SEP and uncertainty about her ability to use "selective testing" procedures. She wrote, "I am not a neuropsychologist; I do not feel adequately trained to implement some of the Cog-PSW models." Dr. Schultz responded to the email and his response is quoted in full below.

He writes:

C-SEP is an educational classification model that adheres to educational policy. The approach uses a single core battery of tests which the publishers have organized in a manner that has construct validity and psychometrically sound. Each instrument contains specific instructions on administration and interpretation. Major cognitive batteries were developed and informed by the field of neuropsychology. By using the test publisher's organizational structure and applying it to the referral concerns, tests are already organized. In other words, the "neuropsychology" has been done for you. This not only aids in the decision-making capabilities but meets the letter and spirit of the procedural guidelines for evaluations.

In short, this response is directed to an individual who expressed feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy when using "selective" testing procedures. Recognizing these challenges, among others, Schultz and Stephens (2015) stress using a strong "Core" assessment process when using C-SEP. As demonstrated in the email, Dr. Schultz's response is clearly in reference to test design and not training contrary to what Benson et al. (2018) are suggesting.

Combined, the second critique is a Benson et al. (2018) "straw man" argument developed through a misrepresentation and select quoting to imply that Schultz and Stephens instruct evaluators to practice outside their boundaries of competence. This accusation suggests incompetence and unprofessional behavior among C-SEP founders. For the sake of clarity, we do not, and have never, encouraged educational diagnosticians or school psychologists to conduct neuropsychological evaluations. Notwithstanding this fact, we believe educational diagnosticians are highly trained and capable of conducting targeted and purposeful testing designed by neuropsychologists when testing guidelines are adhered to, as pointed out in Dr. Schultz's email response. In fact, educational diagnosticians and other evaluators have an ethical responsibility to follow special education policy, publisher guidelines, and should utilize their professional judgment and training throughout the assessment process. We liken

this to a patient that can read the directions on a bottle of prescription medication, and properly take as directed, without being a chemist or a doctor.

Data Collected Using C-SEP Can Help Differentiate SLD and ID

A third critique extracted from Benson et al. (2018, p.16) likewise incorporates partial truth and fiction to devalue C-SEP and its authors. They state the following:

Schultz and Stephens (2017, p.18) suggested that C-SEP can be used to differentiate students with SLD from those with intellectual disabilities (ID). They noted that students with ID display little variation in their cognitive profiles since all or nearly all scores are < 70 (a possible exception of scores derived from tests with low g loadings).

Schultz and Stephens (2017, p.18) do suggest that C-SEP can be used to differentiate students with SLD from those with ID. This statement is made in reference to IDEA's legal definitions and criteria necessary for SLD and ID eligibility. A key differentiator between students with SLD and those with ID is the general intellectual functioning score obtained from a norm-referenced test. A student with SLD typically demonstrates average or higher intelligence, whereas a student with ID must have sub-average general intellectual functioning. Texas regulations define sub-average general intellectual functioning as obtaining an overall test score of cognitive functioning that is at least two standard deviations below the mean (< 70) when taking into consideration the standard error of measurement of the test (IDEA, 2004). Variations may occur in the cognitive profiles of students with SLD and ID (we all have strengths and weaknesses), however, the law clearly differentiates between a student with SLD and a student with ID (e.g., sub-average overall cognitive ability) that occur concurrent with deficits in at least two areas of adaptive behavior (e.g., communication, self-care, home living, social and interpersonal skills, etc.). Additionally, C-SEP requires evaluators to consider multiple sources of data and utilize professional judgment when distinguishing eligibility.

However, foregoing theoretical arguments on this topic, the contextomy deployed by Benson et al. (2018) to make their argument is built upon the use of a partially and poorly cited unpublished draft document to create

the quote above. More specifically, Benson et al. (2018) extracted a single line out of a table from a draft version of the C-SEP manual (and out of context) to complete the above referenced statement to prove their manufactured inference. However, individuals properly trained in special education law and assessment understand the differences between the definitions and eligibility criteria for SLD and ID. Additionally, they know that determination goes beyond the use of norm-referenced standard scores and both require the integration of multiple sources of data and professional judgment in the determination process.

From this point, Benson et al. (2018) proceeded by taking a position on intelligence score profiles. Interestingly, Benson and colleagues neglected to mention the disclaimer located above the table where they pulled the partial information in question (from the original authors). The disclaimer actually states:

Instructions for use: This information is intended to guide assessment teams and should be considered along with the team's knowledge of the student as well as assessment data. Decisions about assessment and eligibility should not be based solely on this document.

Contrary to Benson et al.'s (2018) assertion, Schultz and Stephens (2015) advocate adhering to special education policy and publisher guidelines, as well as the use of professional judgment when using C-SEP or alternative SLD identification models. In fact, the guidelines provided by the C-SEP framework is informed by both special education policy and test publisher recommendations, in collaboration with a recommendation for evaluators to refer to their professional judgment throughout every step of the evaluation process (Schultz & Stephens, 2009). Concerning the latter point, we believe educational diagnosticians can draw from their extensive training and years of experience working with students with special needs while making educational decisions. Since educational diagnosticians have teaching and assessment experience, they are well versed in both learning and assessment practices.

C-SEP Uses Integrated Data Analysis to Establish SLD and Relies on Test Publisher Research to Ensure Abilities in the CHC Taxonomy are Measured Reliably

A fourth critique of C-SEP that uses con-

textomy is found in Benson et al. (2018, p.16) concerning integrated data. They assert:

Schultz and Stephens (2017) stated the use of integrated data analysis ensures that abilities in the CHC taxonomy are measured reliably (p.16).

This is a false statement. A thorough review of published and non-published works demonstrate that Schultz and Stephens have never implied or written such assertions. Contrary, we argue that evaluators should follow test publisher guidance and utilize test norms when using norm-referenced tests since test publishers conduct extensive research regarding the reliability and validity of the tests and the test results. When using C-SEP, integrated data analysis techniques are conducted to establish PSW; but we have never claimed the use of data analysis techniques ensures that abilities in the CHC taxonomy are measured reliably.

In the second phase of their critique on this particular issue, Benson et al. (2018) question standard score reliabilities (a related but separate issue). In fact, Benson et al. (2018) and his colleagues (Kranzler et al. 2016, Floyd et al. 2016; McGill & Busse, 2016; Beaujean et al. 2018) have written extensively against PSW methods that rely on standard score discrepancies which may explain their focus and perseveration on test reliabilities, as well as their "misunderstanding" of the definition of integrated data analysis. For the sake of clarity, Schultz and Stephens (2017) and Schultz, Simpson, and Lynch (2012) have defined the use of integrated data analysis, which involves taking multiple data sets and pooling them into one. Integrated data analysis is a technique borrowed from mixed-method design educational research and has proven its effectiveness and reliability (Curan & Hussong, 2009).

Clarifying Special Education Law in Texas

In addition to the above misrepresentations, Benson et al.'s (2018) likewise misinterpret special education law in Texas to further their critique of C-SEP. Since adherence to the law is a pillar of C-SEP, it is paramount to identify misrepresentations of Texas special education law that were used to reinforce the "straw man" arguments outlined above. In particular, three issues are identified in Benson et al.'s (2018) interpretation of the law: 1) their reference to the assessment of language when assessing for SLD; 2) their understanding of what constitutes a PSW; and 3) their understanding of exclusionary factors. We address each in turn.

Concerning the first, Benson et al. (2018) incorrectly state that language assessment is not required as part of an evaluation of SLD. Contrary to their assertion, language plays an important role in academic learning and must be considered whenever a student is referred for SLD evaluation. In fact, language is specifically mentioned in the SLD definition. SLD is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using *language* that is spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, speak, think, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations (IDEA, 2004). Further, Listening Comprehension and Oral Expression are both eligibility areas under SLD. Table 1 illustrates areas in which language is addressed as part of an SLD evaluation and which are included in the Texas Legal Framework (2018)

Hence, contrary to Benson et al. (2018), language assessment is required as part of an evaluation of SLD.

Secondly, Benson et al. (2018) create a "straw man" theoretical argument to define a PSW. However, regardless of the perspective of Benson and colleagues, Texas policy trumps their opinions and clearly supports what Schultz and Stephens (2017) have argued, "The pattern is evident by significant variance: Among specific areas of cognitive function such as working memory and verbal comprehension; or between specific areas of cognitive function and academic achievement" (Texas Legal Framework, 2018). Since a brain positron emission tomography (PET) scan is unavailable in most schools, and educational diagnosticians certainly lack the training to use them, the most suitable alternative for evaluation is the use of norm-referenced cognitive assessments to study these relationships and make decisions to meet the procedural requirements.

Finally, Benson et al. (2018, p. 16) assert that exclusionary factors cause SLD. This is a partial truth. Exclusionary factors can result in learning difficulties, no doubt, but they are not the cause of SLD. Individuals with a general understanding of basic special education law, specifically SLD, know that a set of exclusionary factors (e.g., vision, hearing, motor, emotional disturbance, limited English proficiency, cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantage, and appropriate instruction) must be *ruled out* as being the *primary cause* of the student's struggle prior to being found eligible for SLD. In other words, if one of these exclusionary factors is found to

be the primary cause of academic problems, the student cannot be found to have an SLD (Stephens, Dykes, Proctor, Moon, Gardner, & Pethick, 2013).

The Pattern and Dangers of Proving a Non-Existence

Benson and colleagues' work, like the article being rebutted, often exercise the logical fallacy of "proving a non-existence." This occurs when one demands non-existence of something (e.g., empirical evidence) as opposed to providing evidence for the existence of something. For example, there is no empirical evidence that a well-planned assessment leads to better decisions. Nevertheless, the non-existence of

empirical evidence does not make "planning your assessments carefully and thoroughly" a practice which should be renounced. In this frame, the authors repeatedly conclude their "critique" of PSW models like C-SEP with a recommendation that they be "eschewed." The obvious problem with this recommendation, as other authors have correctly pointed out (e.g., Flanagan, CASP), is that PSW detractors never offer suitable alternatives for SLD identification. If the authors have the capacity to identify dangerous flaws in PSW models, they should design a replacement model, or at the very least, offer recommendations for improving existing models. This constructive approach, however, is notably absent from their work.

Table 1 Texas Policy Related to Required Language Assessment

Texas Legal Framework	C-SEP Guidance
The child is assessed in all areas of suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance , communicative status , and motor abilities	C-SEP follows special education policy. According to the law, if appropriate, academic performance (i.e., written language, oral expression, listening comprehension), communicative status should be assessed.
	For the construct of SLD it is ALWAYS appropriate and necessary to assess language to properly identify SLD and follow the letter and spirit of the law.
The evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related service's needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified	There is significant overlap between speech and language eligibility and is commonly linked to SLD. Therefore, it must be assessed.
Specific learning disability (SLD) is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language that is spoken or written , that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations:	In evaluating specific areas of cognitive functioning to determine a pattern of strengths and weaknesses, schools should take into consideration the federal definition of SLD as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language " (CFR §300.8(c)(10)).
There are 8 possible areas of SLD eligibility, two specifically involving language are:	These are qualifying areas of SLD and must be assessed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral expression; • Listening comprehension; 	

More concerning, Benson et al.'s (2018) advocacy that "diagnosticians, school psychologists, and other assessment specialist eschew the C-SEP methods until sufficient evidence emerges," is problematic. If one were to summarize their recommendations based upon their recent evaluation of C-SEP, then we can deduce that Benson et al. (2018) counsel that evaluators should:

NOT measure language

NOT use the assessment publisher's calculations

NOT use a variety of assessment tools and strategies available

NOT use professional judgment

NOT follow Texas policy closely

NOT review all data available

Such advice places diagnosticians in a precarious position because Benson et al. (2018) are denouncing existing frameworks and the training diagnosticians have mastered, yet do so without offering legitimate, proven reasoning or offering viable alternative solutions.

C-SEP is Viable Method of SLD Identification and Should Not be Eschewed

It is important to underscore the pervasiveness of propaganda in the form of contextomy found in Benson et al.'s (2018) C-SEP critique. We have examined four examples extracted from one brief manuscript and all of them encompass what the authors tout as specific criticisms of C-SEP. Nevertheless, each criticism has been disproven above through the provision of verifiable facts, by referencing accurate sources, and by re-contextualizing maladaptive quotations. In addition, we have identified three misrepresentations of Texas special education law in Benson et al.'s (2018) essay and countered these with references and clarification of Texas law in defense of C-SEP and its authors. Consequently, this article demonstrates that Benson et al.'s (2018) criticisms are hollow and their recommendation to "eschew" C-SEP is unwarranted and based upon misrepresentation. Contrary to what Benson et al. (2018) assert about C-SEP, Schultz and Stephens (2017) developed C-SEP to provide a comprehensive framework for SLD identification and C-SEP remains a viable assessment model until researchers can ethically and professionally demonstrate otherwise.

Conclusion

Scholarly debate regarding special education

assessment practices, among other educational practices, is healthy and necessary to push the field forward. However, critiques must be constructed upon honest, ethical, and fact-driven methodology to healthily expand and improve the field as dictated by APA standards. We have repeatedly demonstrated that Benson et al.'s (2018) critical analysis of C-SEP and its authors falls short of these parameters as their essay is constructed using a combination of false accusations, misrepresentations, and half-truths. In fact, multiple concerns leveled against C-SEP are rooted in uncontextualized and unsubstantiated claims. Alarming, prior to writing their "critique," Benson and colleagues had never obtained formal training in the C-SEP methodology, a problematic issue in that it is unethical to implement or represent a model without formal training (APA, 2017). In addition, this text has demonstrated how Benson et al. (2018) misinterpret three basic aspects of Texas special education law to buttress their call to eschew C-SEP. In combination, we have proven that there is no meaningful substance to Benson et al.'s (2018) critique.

Contrary to what Benson et al. (2018) assert, C-SEP is a viable PSW model that incorporates a collection of sound educational practices that help diagnosticians make SLD decisions in a legally defensible way (Schultz & Stephens, 2018). C-SEP was developed by analyzing and critiquing all other SLD methods. While C-SEP provides guidance for SLD identification that is based on special education policy and test publisher recommendations, the evaluator must utilize his/her professional judgment at every stage of the process. To verify these assertions, readers are invited to personally evaluate the scholarly merits and practical applications of C-SEP by reviewing previous editions of the *Dialog* (Schultz & Stephens, 2015; Schultz & Stephens, 2017) and *Assessment Services Bulletins* (Schrank, Stephens, & Schultz, 2017; Stephens, T., Mather, N., Francis, C., & Moon, G., 2017).

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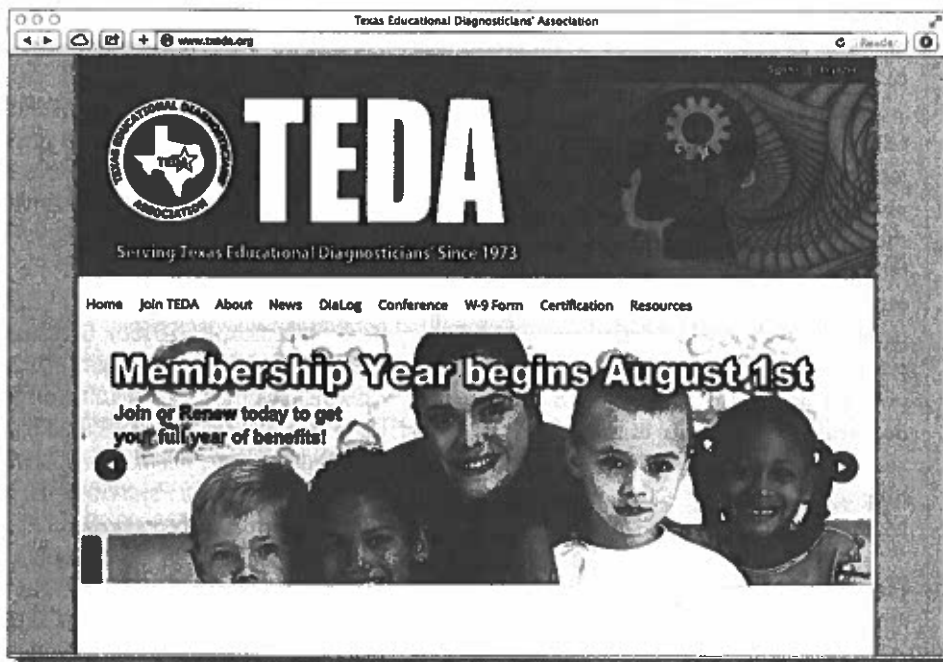
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