

Criteria for the Identification of a Student with a Developmental Delay

Recognizing the many factors involved in appropriately identifying students with Developmental Delays (DD), Middlesex County Public Schools' Office of Special Education, has established criteria to be used by eligibility committees for the purpose of decision-making.

The term of the educational disability developmental delay is acknowledged for some children, prior to age 7, when there may be insufficient data to make an eligibility determination other than with the category of developmental delay. Any child found to have a **clear categorical diagnosis** should not be found eligible for special education services using the label of developmental delay. It is the eligibility committee's responsibility to determine that the delay is directly related to an educational disability that would cause the student to be found eligible for special education services.

State Definition:

Regulations Governing Special Education Programs For Children With Disabilities in Virginia (2009)), defines "developmental delay" as a disability affecting a child ages two by September 30 through six, inclusive - (1) who is experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; or (2) who has an established physical or mental condition that has high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

Assessments:

If the student is suspected of being developmentally delayed, then assessments should include, but are not limited to, the following:

For chronological ages of 2-6 years:

- Developmental (ages 2-6) – Written report of an assessment of how the child functions in the major areas of physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, and/or adaptive development.
- Hearing Screening – The hearing of each child suspected of having a disability shall be screened during the eligibility process prior to initial determination of eligibility for special education and related services.
- Educational – Written report describing current educational performance/achievement and identifying instructional strengths and weaknesses in academic skills and processing performance.

- Psychological – Written report from a qualified school psychologist or other qualified professional based on the use of a battery of appropriate instruments which may assess cognition, emotionality and processing disorders.
- Classroom Educational Documentation Form – Written report from the classroom teacher(s) describing the child’s level of academic functioning, including strengths, weaknesses, and other factors which affect educational performance.
- Hearing Screening – The hearing of each child suspected of having a disability shall be screened during the eligibility process prior to initial determination of eligibility for special education and related services.
- Sociocultural – Written report from a qualified visiting teacher or school social worker based on the use of information collected through social appraisal instruments which will include background and social/adaptive behavior in the home, school, and community.
- Speech-Language – Written report of an evaluation which may assess the child’s articulation, voice, fluency, and expressive and receptive language skills.
- Medical – Written report from a licensed physician or nurse practitioner indicating general medical history and any medical/health problems which may impede learning.
- Observation – Written report of the child’s academic performance and behavior in the child’s learning environment (including the general education classroom setting) to document the child’s academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.
NOTE: This observation should take place in a class where perceived weaknesses are indicated. *In case of a child less than school age or out of school, a group member shall observe the child in an environment appropriate for a child of that age.

Eligibility Criteria:

Guidelines in Middlesex County Public Schools indicate that a delay under this category is expressed by a twenty-five (25) percent delay in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development. The percentage of delay is calculated using the student’s chronological age and level of functioning at the time of testing and should be determined using standardized instruments administered by qualified personnel. The use of checklists completed by parents can be utilized in conjunction with other diagnostic instruments, but will not be used as the sole determinant for a disability.

The following criteria will be utilized when deciding whether a student, ages 2 (on or before September 30) through 6 years of age qualifies for services under the category of developmental delay:

1. _____ All of the following educational disabilities have been ruled out (check all that apply):

- _____ autism
- _____ deaf-blindness
- _____ emotional disturbance
- _____ hearing impairment/deaf
- _____ specific learning disability
- _____ mental retardation
- _____ multiple disabilities
- _____ orthopedic impairment
- _____ other health impairment
- _____ severe disabilities
- _____ speech or language impairment
- _____ traumatic brain injury
- _____ visual impairment

2. _____ A 25% or more delay has been documented in one or more of the following areas (check all that apply):

- _____ physical development
- _____ cognitive development
- _____ communication development
- _____ social or emotional development
- _____ adaptive development

3. _____ There is a documented need for specially designed instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability.