

Criteria for the Identification of Students with an Intellectual Disability

Middlesex County Public Schools is committed to providing appropriate special education services to students who have been identified as intellectually disabled. In order to accurately identify and appropriately serve students with intellectual disability, Middlesex County Public Schools' Office of Special Education has established criteria to be used by the eligibility committees for the purpose of decision making.

Definition

Regulations Governing Special Education Programs For Children With Disabilities in Virginia (2009), defines an “**intellectual disability**” as, “significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, which adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” **Developmental period** is defined as the period of time between conception and their 18th birthday. **Adaptive behavior** is defined as the individual’s effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, and/or social responsibility that are expected for his or her age level.

Assessments:

If the student is suspected of having Intellectual Disability, then assessments should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Classroom Educational Documentation – Written report from classroom teacher(s) describing the child’s level of academic, developmental, social, or adaptive level of functioning including strengths, weaknesses, and other factors which affect educational 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, processing performance, adaptive skills, and social skills.
- Educational – (when appropriate) Written report describing current educational performance/achievement and identifying instructional strengths and weaknesses in academic skills and processing performance.
- Developmental (ages 2-5) – (when appropriate) 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.
- 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 (must include an assessment of adaptive skills completed by the parent).

- 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.
- Hearing Screening – Written report to assess the child’s hearing.

Eligibility Criteria:

The following criteria should be met when determining a student eligible for services for the programs serving students with an intellectual disability:

1. The child’s age falls within 2-21 years of age, inclusive.
2. Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, which should be indicated by at least two standard deviations below the mean on an individually administered, standardized test assessing the student’s intellectual/cognitive ability
3. An adaptive skill assessment utilizing an appropriately normed and standardized instrument completed by the school psychologist through an interview with the classroom teacher(s) indicating adaptive skills being approximately two or more standard deviations below the mean for the test in comparison with age-peers (will be contained in the psychological report)
4. An adaptive skill assessment utilizing an appropriately normed and standardized instrument completed by the visiting teacher through an interview with the parent(s)/guardian indicating adaptive skills being approximately two or more standard deviations below the mean for the test in comparison to age-peers (will be contained in the sociocultural report)
5. Onset before the age of 18
6. Achievement/developmental skills deficit should be indicated by at least two standard deviations below the mean on an individually administered, standardized, test assessing the student’s achievement/developmental skills. Age-based norms will be utilized as the reference for measuring these skills (will be contained in the educational testing report).
7. Low intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior not primarily caused by environmental disadvantages or sensory deficits

It is understood that there may be extenuating circumstances in individual cases that would allow the committee to make exceptions if a score in one area (cognitive, adaptive, or achievement) is higher than required.

In determining a student's level of adaptive behavior, it is important that attention to specific skill areas should be given only in instances where they are age-relevant because several of the areas (e.g., work) focus on adolescence and adulthood. A measure from both school and home must indicate adaptive functioning commensurate with or lower than the student's mental ability. Specific examples of the adaptive skill areas that follow are based in part on a descriptive system developed by Ford and colleagues (Ford et al., 1989). It is not required that an assessment be made in each area listed below.

Communication: Skills include the ability to comprehend and express information through symbolic behaviors (e.g., spoken word, written word/orthography, graphic symbols, sign language, manually coded English) or nonsymbolic behaviors (e.g., facial expression, body movement, touch, gesture). Specific examples include the ability to comprehend and/or receive: a request, an emotion, a greeting, a comment, a protest or rejection. Higher level skills of communication (e.g., writing a letter) would also relate to functional academics.

Self-Care: Skills involved in toileting, eating, dressing, hygiene, and grooming.

Home-Living: Skills related to functioning within a home, which include clothing care, housekeeping, property maintenance, food preparation and cooking, planning and budgeting for shopping, home safety, and daily scheduling. Related skills include orientation and behavior in the home and nearby neighborhood, communication of choices and needs, social interaction, and application of functional academics in the home.

Social: Skills related to social exchanges with other individuals, including initiating, interacting, and terminating interaction with others; receiving and responding to pertinent situational cues; recognizing feelings; providing positive and negative feedback; regulating one's own behavior; being aware of peers and peer acceptance; gauging the amount and type of interaction with others; assisting others; forming and fostering of friendships and love; coping with demands from others; making choices; sharing; understanding honesty and fairness; controlling impulses; conforming conduct to laws; violating rules and laws; and displaying appropriate socio-sexual behavior.

Community Use: Skills related to the appropriate use of community resources, including traveling in the community; grocery and general shopping at stores and markets; purchasing or obtaining services from other community businesses (e.g., gas stations, repair shops, doctor and dentist's offices); attending church or synagogue; using public transportation and public facilities, such as schools, libraries, parks and recreational areas, and streets and sidewalks; attending theaters; and visiting other cultural places and events. Related skills include behavior in the community,

communication of choices and needs, social interaction, and the application of functional academics.

Self-Direction: Skills related to making choices, learning and following a schedule; initiating activities appropriate to the setting, conditions, schedule, and personal interests; completing necessary or required tasks; seeking assistance when needed; resolving problems confronted in familiar and novel situations; and demonstrating appropriate assertiveness and self-advocacy skills.

Health and Safety: Skills related to maintenance of one's health in terms of eating; illness identification; treatment and prevention; basic first aid; sexuality; physical fitness; basic safety considerations (e.g., following rules and laws, using seat belts, crossing streets, interacting with strangers, seeking assistance); regular physical and dental check-ups; and personal habits. Related skills include protecting oneself from criminal behavior, using appropriate behavior in the community, communicating choices and needs, participating in social interactions, and applying functional academics.

Functional Academics: Cognitive abilities and skills related to learning at school that also have direct application in one's life (e.g., writing, reading; using basic practical math concepts, basic science as it relates to awareness of the physical environment and one's health and sexuality; geography; and social studies). It is important to note that the focus of this skill is not on grade-level academic achievement but, rather, on the acquisition of academic skills that are functional in terms of independent living.

Leisure: The development of a variety of leisure and recreational interests (i.e., self-entertainment and recreational activities) that reflect personal preferences and choices, and if the activity will be conducted in public, age and cultural norms. Skills include choosing and self-initiating interests, using and enjoying home and community leisure and recreational activities alone and with others, playing socially with others, taking turns, terminating or refusing leisure or recreational activities, extending one's duration of participation, and expanding one's repertoire of interests, awareness, and skills. Related skills include behaving appropriately in the leisure and recreation setting, communicating choices and needs, participating in social interaction, applying functional academics, and exhibiting mobility skills.

Work: Skills related to holding a part or full-time job or jobs in the community in terms of specific job skills, appropriate social behavior, and related work skills (e.g., completion of tasks; awareness of schedules; ability to seek assistance, take criticism, and improve skills; money management, financial resources allocation, and the application of other functional academic skills, and skills related to going to and from work, preparation for work, management of oneself while at work, and interaction with co-workers).

Once the eligibility committee has determined that a student has the identified educational disability of "intellectual disability," it is the responsibility of the IEP committee to determine the type of programming that would meet the individual student's needs.