



# TEXAS PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIANS

## *UPDATE*



### Chair Report

The TPED Board of Registry's Spring meeting was held on April 16th at the Embassy Suites in Dallas. Those in attendance included:

Jennifer Vasquez, Chairperson  
Michele Hall, Vice Chair & Professional Visibility Chair  
Melissa Politz, Treasurer  
Jacie VandenBoom, Secretary  
Stephanie Lee, Continuing Education Chair  
Dr. Jeanine Birdwell, Legislative Chair  
Dr. Angie Elkins, Credentials  
Deb Hawkins, Administrative Assistant

Happy Spring and happy end of the school year RegPED's! I hope this finds

you well and able to see the light at the end of this crazy school year.

The Board of Registry met in April and reflected on all of the great things happening in our profession and in TPED. In December 2020, Dr. Ed Schultz was our Symposium guest speaker. Dr. Schultz spent time talking about Executive Functioning and gave us great information to bring back for our evaluations. Plans are in the process to host another Symposium in conjunction with the TEDA conference in December.

TPED continues to share information regarding free webinars for the continued education of our members. Twice a year TPED members will also receive copies of the "This Just In" published by the Walsh law firm.

The change from hosting our TPED examination once a year to offering the exam through testing centers continues to be positive as 16 candidates were approved to test at our April board meeting.

In January 2021 we welcomed two new board members, Dr. Jeanine Birdwell and Jacie VandenBoom, as Leslie Flisowski and Sarah Johnston, rotated off the board. In June we will welcome Cynthia Edwards to the board as Dr. Angie Elkins relocates to Florida and has resigned from her position. We appreciate the service to TPED from all of the ladies who have left the board in 2021 and look forward to great things from the additions to our team.

While we have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is my hope that you and your loved ones continue to stay safe and healthy. Thank you for what you do by serving the needs of students in your districts.

Jennifer Vasquez  
Board of Registry Chair

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**Members Only**



**Texas Professional Educational Diagnosticians –  
Members-only Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tpedmembers>

**TPED Members Only**

## The COVID Effect and Identifying SLD



After a year of school closures, adapting to virtual learning and then back to in-person learning, enduring multiple quarantines for both teachers and students, and adjusting to the new safety protocols for assessments, it looks like we are starting to turn the corner and may possibly resume some degree of normalcy next school year. But with normalcy, comes some trepidation for our younger students-Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup>. The concern is, have they really been able to receive the foundational skills to the extent that they would have had COVID not been a factor in their instruction??? The foundational skills taught in K, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> are critical in developing academic skills.

We have many students that were in kindergarten in the spring of 2020 when schools closed and learning became remote. Then as they entered into 1<sup>st</sup> grade, many schools remained remote for the first 9 weeks in the fall. As the year progressed, many students experienced intermittent periods of remote learning due to quarantines, as well as, substitute teachers when the teacher may have been quarantined.

As a result, many of these students will be referred for special education evaluations due to a concern that they are not making adequate academic progress.

How do we, as diagnosticians, tease out low academic scores that are the result of an SLD and low academic scores that are the result of the pandemic???? While I don't have all the answers, I do think that there are some considerations and digging that diagnosticians can do to help paint a clearer picture for identifying or not identifying SLD.

- Consider whether evidence existed prior to COVID-19 (if available) that might suggest the presence or absence of SLD or other concerns. For example, researching where was the student's reading level was prior to school closures. Have they always been below grade level?
- Consider the child's response to RTI. For example, if the student was already in RTI prior to school closures and was not responding as expected despite the intervention and continues to display a poor rate of improvement now that they have returned to school, this might be evidence that the student's academic challenges are not necessarily the primary result of the pandemic, but have certainly been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Consider what TEKS were possibly missed during school closures and if so, are these the area that the student is showing a deficit?
- Consider whether the student is demonstrating grade level skills in most academic areas and consistent weakness in one area. For example great math skills with reading skills consistently below grade level.
- Consider family history of learning disabilities.
- Consider the level of support and interaction the student received

during remote learning. Some parents did a good job facilitating learning at home, while others were lost and accomplished less.

- Finally, the thing that I consider to be one of the most important sections of an FIE, is the recommendations. Good recommendations that are well thought out should be an important focus of the FIE whether the student will be identified as SLD or not.

I believe that the COVID effect on learning is real and it may take another year to get learning back on track, but I also believe that students can still be appropriately assessed and identifications made despite the unconventional learning and instruction that has taken place this past year and a half.

I also know that diagnosticians are resilient, flexible, and unflappable even during pandemics. We will always get the job done and we will do it well!!

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## Legal Update with Jan Watson



Once per year, TPED Board of Registry has the opportunity to receive legal updates and reminders for best practices from Walsh Gallegos. This year, we had the privilege of hearing from Jan Watson. Based on recent issues that are rising around the country. She cited several case law examples, including the ones below:

### **Child Find**

- **A.B. v. Abington School District, 78 IDELR 1 (3rd Cir. 2021)**
- Student was in the District's special education program until the fourth grade when his parents moved him to a private school.
- The District issued an RWA letter and asked the parent to let them know if she wanted to return to the District.
- More than one year later, the parent contacted the Principal and expressed an interest in "finding out what programs the District can offer."
- Principal referred to parent to the junior high principal who informed the parent regarding general special education services available.
- Parent claimed the District failed to offer a FAPE and sought tuition reimbursement.
- General Inquiries did not indicate an intention to re-enroll or request an evaluation. The documentation in this case included emails. Remind staff to document conversations, including telephone conferences. Documentation in the District's records demonstrated the parent knew how to ask for an evaluation.

### **Classroom Observations for SLD Evaluations**

- **Cynthia K. v. Portsmouth Sch. Dep't, 76 IDELR 278 (D.C.N.H. 2020)**
- The parent was entitled to an IEE at public expense because the

district's evaluation of a student for a specific learning disability was "improperly done." The classroom teacher conducted the "classroom observation" of academic performance. "...[T]he classroom teacher's input is considered separately and does not provide the classroom observation of academic performance that is required under 300.310.

### **Expert Evaluations**

- **Wishard v. Waynesboro Area Sch. Dist., 77 IDELR 65 (M.D. Pa. 2020).**
- "First, the decision noted that Dr. Harty 'presumed that full inclusion is appropriate for every child regardless of unique individual need.' Second, the decision noted that Dr. Harty's conclusions about J.W.'s reading abilities were based on a single assessment conducted over a two-hour period....Third, the decision noted that Dr. Harty did not adequately explain why her assessment of J.W.'s reading ability differed so significantly from the vast amount of evidence suggesting that J.W.'s reading ability was below benchmarks for his age and grade level."
- Always focus recommendations on the individual student's needs rather than personal preferences. Ensure we conduct thorough evaluations. Provide an explanation for significant differences in evaluation results.

The above information was found in the Walsh Gallegos 2021 Brief Legal Update Presentation completed by Attorney Jan Walsh on 04/16/21 to the TPED Board of Registry Meeting.

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## **Time to Renew**

**Texas Professional Educational Diagnosticians  
Board of Registry**

### **Registry Certificate Renewal Application**

*Due for current year (June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2022)*

**Renew at website**

**Renewal form for  
2021/2022**

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## **Relaxing during Summer**



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As the school year winds down, we all begin to think of ways to relax during the summer. The following tips were taken from an article by Sandy Smith.

### **10 Ways to Relax This Summer**

1. Take some time to spend outdoors. When we spend our time in nature, it naturally calms us and gives us a feeling of inner peace. The bonus is natural sunlight, which gives us our vitamin D – great for the bones and a mood booster.
2. Unplug from technology. Use the summer as an excuse to be in vacation mode. Even if you only can do this once a week, take that time to connect to nature by unplugging from technology.
3. Start a fitness program that is fun and adventurous. Go hiking, bike riding, etc. Do something new and fun! Make it better by bringing a friend.
4. Slow down. It's summer; start living mindfully by doing one task at a time, enjoying the beauty around you and living in the moment.
5. Spend time with friends and family. Set up date nights and fun nights! The days are longer, so it's a great time to really go out and have fun!
6. Do activities you really love. Read the book you never had time to, take a day trip to a new town and see new sights or go to the beach and relax. Whatever brings you “flow.” This is the time to do it.
7. Step outside of your comfort zone. Try something new. It can be something simple like trying a new drink or food or going to a new restaurant. Every time we try something new, we take a risk and feel a boost of happiness.
8. Use up your personal time from work and have some free time with no expectations. It doesn't matter if you go on vacation or just take a walk; just enjoy some time off!
9. Create some “me time.” I wake up 10 minutes earlier in the summer to sit outside on my deck with my coffee and just enjoy the silence. All you need to do is take 10-15 minutes a day for you!
10. Breathe. Even with nice weather and longer days, we still can get stressed. So, when you feel the stress coming, take a moment to close your eyes and take a deep breath. It works!

Smith, S. (2013, June 11). 10 ways to relax this summer.

<https://www.ehstoday.com/health/article/21916993/10-ways-to-relax-this-summer>

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# Rethinking Glr

The chief architects of the CHC model would not allow the model to remain static (would not allow the “hardening of the categories”). As scholars, they were devoted to the constant need to critique their own work and to expand and revise the framework (Schneider & McGrew, 2012).

We all know of Glr as long-term storage and retrieval. However, in 2014, Schneider et al. divided Glr into two different abilities: Gl (learning retrieval) and Gr (retrieval fluency). Consistently, in both factor and non-factor analyses, there have been distinct differences between these abilities and other cognitive processes. Additionally, retrieval is a complex process and has lower Glr loadings and higher secondary loadings on Gs. Retrieval really is a different “beast.”

The problem, in my opinion, arises in how to measure one without the other. Retrieval fluency is much easier to “see” and measure. Learning efficiency cannot be assessed unless you engage in the retrieval process. My daughter is in competitive dance and can somehow remember 5 different dances with ease. However, the only way for me to assess her memory of these dances is by having her perform them. With norm-referenced testing, there are limitations in how to measure Glr, because the stimuli are immediate recall or retrieval without much time between input and output. Informal data will be important when making decisions regarding functioning in these areas.

I find that many of the core tests assess meaningful memory (Story Recall on WJ) and associative memory (Atlantis and Rebus on KABC). In order to assess retrieval in more depth, you typically need to go into selective testing, often with achievement measures (Associational Fluency, Object/Letter Naming Facility on KTEA; Speed of Lexical Access on WJ OL, RAN on CTOPP). Academic achievement testing is an evaluation of cognitive processing; thus, academic retrieval tasks should be a big emphasis in an evaluation for SLD.

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## **Retrieval Fluency (Gr)**

Naming Facility  
Ideational Fluency  
Word Fluency  
Speed of Lexical Access  
Expressional Fluency  
Associational Fluency  
Solution Fluency  
Originality  
Figural Fluency  
Figural Flexibility

## **Learning Efficiency (Glr)**

Free-Recall Memory  
Meaningful Memory  
Associative Memory

Sources

McGrew, K. (2016). *Has Glr been incorrectly conceptualized in the CHC*

taxonomy since 1997? A proposed CHC model revision (v2.4) [PowerPoint slides]. Institute for Applied Psychometrics.

<http://www.iapsych.com/glgr062116.pdf>

Flanagan, Dawn P.; Ortiz, Samuel O.; Alfonso, Vincent C. (2013). *Essentials of Cross Battery Assessment*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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## WIAT - 4



If you have not started using the WIAT-4, you are in for a testing treat! Some of the new features include:

A dyslexia index that allows you to screen students for dyslexia in 15 minutes.

Five new subtests:

- Phonemic Proficiency measures speed and accuracy of phonological manipulation.
- Orthographic Fluency measures the speed of irregular word reading.
- Decoding Fluency measures the speed of pseudoword reading.
- Orthographic Choice measures recognition spelling skills.
- Sentence Writing Fluency measures the speed of sentence composition.

New composite scores include:

- Phonological Processing
- Orthographic Processing
- Writing Fluency

Other Improvements:

- The Alphabet Writing Fluency subtest is expanded to 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- Word Reading now includes PK
- The Basic Reading Composite now includes Phonemic Proficiency

New Features Based on client feedback:

- Automated Scoring of the Essay Composition subtest
  - Simplified Sentence Composition scoring rules
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