

Response to Intervention vs. Severe Discrepancy Model: Identification of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Gina Armendariz, Ed.D., & Adrian Jung, Ph.D.

California State University, Fullerton

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of educators on the acceptance of either the Response to Intervention (RTI) model or the Severe Discrepancy (SD) model in the identification of students with a SLD. The study consisted of 160 general education (GE) teachers and 119 special education (SPED) teachers. The study used a survey method to determine participants' acceptance of the RTI model over the SD model. The study results revealed significant findings for SPED teachers versus GE teachers in their acceptability of RTI as an effective method of evaluation for SLD. Overall educators endorsed the use of the RTI model over the SD model. However, GE teachers significantly preferred the RTI model as the more appropriate method to identify student learning problems than SPED teachers. This difference may be due to SPED teacher's ability to interpret data gathered from both RTI model data and SD model data. Both GE and SPED teachers believed that the RTI model was beneficial for a child. The use of the RTI model appears to be the more accepted model for the determination of an SLD. There were no significant differences found among educators with regards to the use of the SD model. However, mean scores did indicate that SPED teachers were more likely to endorse the SD model than GE teachers. Lack of significant findings among educators in their endorsement of the SD model may have been the result of an affinity towards the RTI model in general. Future, use of the RTI model will require specific professional development training in the area of the use of progress monitoring data to guide instruction.

Keywords: Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Response to Intervention (RTI), & Severe Discrepancy Model (SDM)