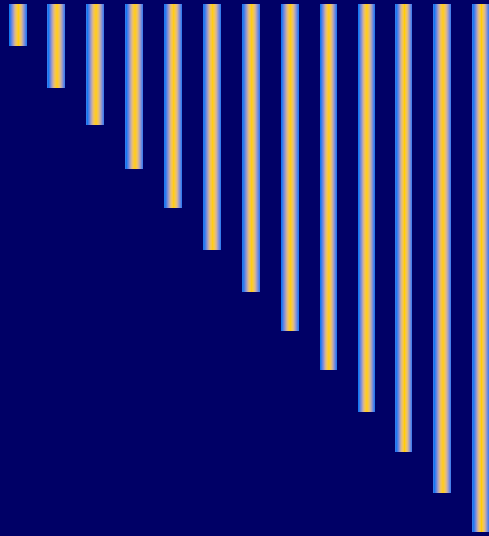


Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities



Part 1: Introduction/Laws & Rtl in Relation to SLD Identification

Watch for a blue box in top right corner for page references from the Colorado *Guidelines for Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*.



SLD Criteria: State & Public Agency Requirements (300.307 of the Federal Regs)

- A State must adopt ... criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability
- The criteria must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement *
- The criteria must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions
- **A public agency must use the State criteria adopted.**

* Preamble discussion in response to comments: "States are free to prohibit the use of a discrepancy model." p. 46646 of the Federal Register

Amended Rules for the Administration of Colorado Exceptional Student Education Act (ECEA) – related to SLD Eligibility Criteria

- ✓ Effective date following final approval by Attorney General and publication in the Colorado Register – December 30, 2007
- ✓ Date by which all Administrative Units (Districts/BOCES/State Operated Programs) must submit an implementation plan– August 15, 2008
- ✓ Date by which all Administrative Units must have implemented the revised SLD Criteria – August 15, 2009 [use of ability/achievement discrepancy no longer an option]

Therefore ...all AUs have been implementing the revised SLD eligibility criteria at least since August 2009.

(Some districts/BOCES were implementing the revised criteria long before it was required.)

However...there is a continued need for increased understanding related to the application of these criteria.

Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities:
amendments to the
*Colorado Rules for the Administration of the
Exceptional Children's Educational Act*
A LOOK AT THE DOCUMENT



Read through the language pertaining to SLD from...

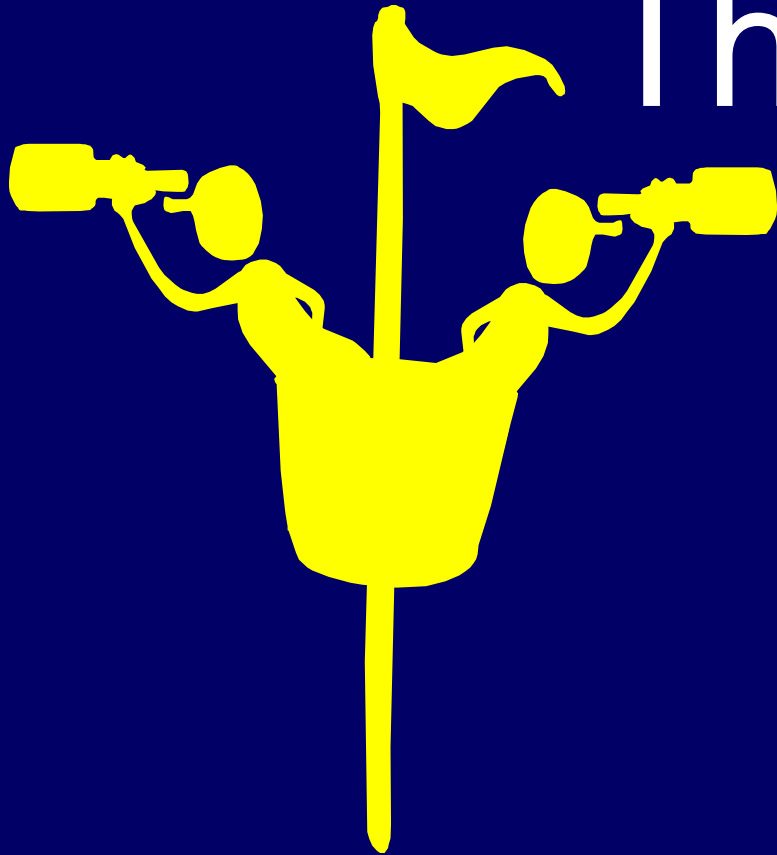
Colorado's ECEA Rules: pages 8-9 of *Guidelines for Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*

&

Federal Regulations: pages 10-11 of *Guidelines* – sections related to SLD that are applicable in Colorado by reference in the ECEA Rules

Shifts in Identification of SLD

Then and Now

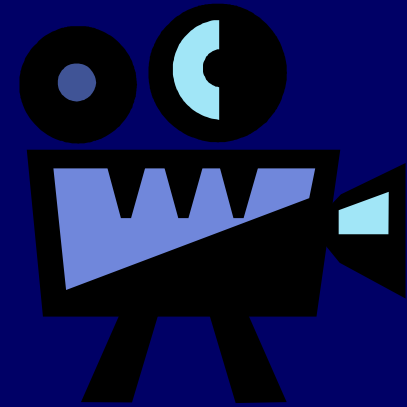
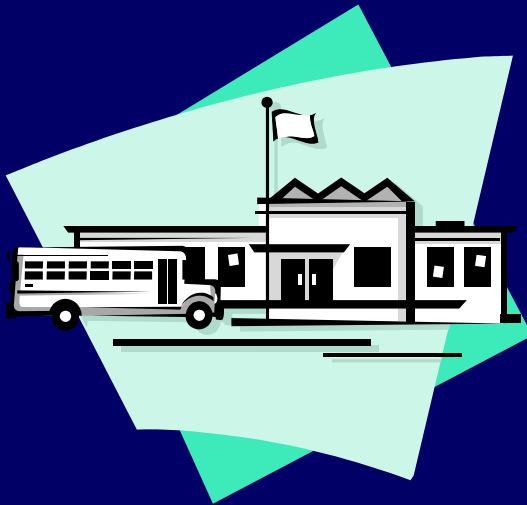


Think about or have a conversation with a colleague about the implications of the “shift” ...

- What are the most positive changes for students in our school/district/BOCES?
- What are the greatest challenges for myself and other professionals in making the shift to the revised eligibility criteria and identification process?

[If you were not yet an educator when the IQ/achievement discrepancy criterion was still being used in your school/district to identify learning disabilities, ask the questions above of someone who was.]

Response to Intervention (RtI) as Systemic Reform



Video available on CDE/RtI Website: “Meeting the Needs of ALL Students”

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/ToolsResourcesRtI.htm>

FYI: At the Federal level, the terminology *Response to Intervention* is being replaced by *Multi-Tier System of Supports* (MTSS) in conversation related to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA/NCLB) as well as the next reauthorization of IDEA.

RtI/Problem-Solving Process

6 Key Components

- Leadership
 - Curriculum, Instruction & Intervention
- School Climate and Culture
 - Problem-Solving Process
 - Assessment/Progress Monitoring
 - Family & Community Engagement

➤ These 4 components, most directly related to the identification of SLD, will be addressed here -- although ALL components are essential to effective RtI implementation.

Curriculum: Guiding Questions (District or School)

- *Is curriculum research/evidenced-based and sufficient?*
- *Is the curriculum aligned to the standards?*
- *How will the effectiveness of the Universal/Core curriculum be monitored and adapted over time?*
- *For which children/students is the Universal/Core curriculum sufficient and not sufficient, and why?*
- *What specific supplemental and intensive curricula are needed?*

Instruction Across the Tiers

Universal

- ❑ Instructional strategies that are proven effective by research
- ❑ Instruction that is systematic and explicit
- ❑ Differentiated instruction

Targeted

- ❑ Involves homogeneous small group or individual instruction
- ❑ Explicit and systematic instruction targeting specific skill/content
- ❑ Research-based instruction responding to such student factors as age, giftedness, cultural environment, level of English language acquisition, mobility, etc.
- ❑ Supplemental to Tier I instruction -- increasing time and intensity

Intensive

- ❑ Explicit, intense instruction designed to unique learner needs
- ❑ Delivered to individuals or very small groups
- ❑ Narrowed instructional focus and increased time

Why is there a particular focus on literacy instruction/intervention?

- Reading difficulties for many students can be prevented/remedied with early and effective instruction or intervention
- Nationally, approximately half of all students identified as eligible for special education are identified in the category of LD (affecting about 5% of the total population)
- 80-90% are referred because of a reading deficit



Effective reading instruction must be explicit and systematic in addressing each of the 5 components...

- ✓ Phonemic awareness
- ✓ Phonics / word decoding
- ✓ Reading Fluency
- ✓ Reading Vocabulary
- ✓ Reading Comprehension

Basic tenets of effective reading instruction within an RtI approach...

- All 5 components of reading are critical to student success
- Alignment of instruction/intervention to specific needs of students is key (e.g., most students identified as having a Specific Learning Disability have significant difficulty in the first two components of reading)
- Levels and intensity of instruction/intervention will vary according to student need

Provision of early interventions in reading...



If RtI is applied successfully in kindergarten through second grade, almost all students will arrive in third grade able to read third grade text accurately and fluently, with variable levels of understanding.

- Dr. Joseph Torgeson, Florida Center for Reading Research



And even with older students...

If the goal is to measure success in “closing the gap” with normal readers, current effective and intensive interventions with older children produce the following effects:

Phonemic Decoding – very large effects

Reading Accuracy– moderately large effects

Reading Comprehension – moderately large effects

Reading Fluency – small effects

- Dr. Joseph Torgeson, Florida Center for Reading Research

- ▶ Define Problem
- ▶ Directly Measure Behavior/Skill

Problem-Solving Process

▶ Evaluate Response
to Intervention (RtI)



- ▶ Analyze the Problem
- ▶ Validate Problem
- ▶ Identify Variables that
Contribute to Problem

- ▶ Develop Plan
- ▶ Implement Plan as Intended
- ▶ Progress Monitor
- ▶ Modify as Necessary

Problem-Solving Videos and Guide

Available on CDE/RtI website under “tools/resources”
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/rTI/ToolsResourcesRtI.htm>

- Academic example
- Behavior example

Roles on Problem Solving Team

Colorado Rtl Guide: pages 25-29

□ Facilitator

- Facilitate and focus meetings
- Maintain a collaborative atmosphere
- Resolve conflicts

□ Recorder

- Complete Rtl Plan
- Record meeting minutes

Roles on Problem Solving Team

- Case Manager/Designated Consultant/Coach
 - Support referring teacher
 - Collect needed data prior to meeting
 - Communicate on weekly basis with referring teacher, interventionist or progress monitor
 - Provide interventions and/or monitor progress when appropriate

Roles on Problem Solving Team

□ Interventionist

- Provide interventions with fidelity
- Communicate with classroom teacher and designated consultant (weekly) about intervention effectiveness

□ Progress Monitor

- Monitor the intervention's progress according to Rtl plan
- Communicate with interventionist, designated consultant and/or teacher
- Graph progress

Assessment Purposes

- Identify academic and behavioral needs of individual students
- Monitor student's progress
- Inform instruction (design and modify instruction to meet student needs)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of instruction at different levels of system (e.g., individual, classroom, school, district)

Assessment Types

□ Screening/Benchmarking Assessments

Universal measures that give a quick read on whether students have mastered critical skills.

□ Diagnostic/Prescriptive Assessments

Provide more in-depth and focused information within specific skill areas to guide appropriate instruction or intervention for individual students.

□ Progress Monitoring Assessments

Determine whether adequate progress in critical skills is being made based on individual goals.

□ Outcome Assessments

Provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and indicate student year-end achievement when compared to grade-level performance standards.

“Screening for instructional purposes is not evaluation. The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services.”

- 300.302, Federal Regulations

Diagnostic/Prescriptive Assessments

- Typically individually-administered, standardized assessments focused on specific area(s) of difficulty
- With effective screening, progress monitoring tools and informal classroom assessments, there should be less need for this type of assessment to determine appropriate instruction/intervention needed.
- Parents should be informed of any individual assessments administered -- recommend obtaining written permission (required for behavioral assessment).
- Do NOT use special education form for this consent unless a referral for special education evaluation is being made.

Progress Monitoring

What is progress monitoring?

Progress monitoring is a researched-based practice that regularly (weekly, biweekly, or monthly) measures students' academic or behavioral progress in order to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices and to make informed instructional decisions.

Importance of Progress Monitoring

- ❑ Evaluates student progress
- ❑ Monitors the effects of interventions
- ❑ Expected rates of progress are identified and compared to actual growth
- ❑ Communication tool between problem solving team, teachers, and parents
- ❑ Provides accountability for the RTI process

Curriculum Based Measurement

(specific type of measure common for progress monitoring
skill attainment)



- Dynamic: sensitive to change over time and differences among individuals with different skills
- Indicators: “representative” of a skill, but does not measure all aspects or applications of the skill domain
- Basic skills: corresponds to the specific domains

Data Required for Problem Identification

- Current Level of Functioning
- Benchmark/Desired Level
- Peer Performance
- GAP Analysis

Progress Monitoring Example: Behavior

- Current Level of Performance:

- Complies 35% of time

- Benchmark (set by teacher)

- 75%

- Peer Performance

- 40%

Since peers are not meeting benchmark, there needs to be a focus on the universal level of support/instruction related to behavioral expectations.

- GAP Analysis: $40/35 = 1.1X$ difference NO SIGNIFICANT GAP with peers

- Is behavior program effective? No, peers have significant gap from benchmark as well.

CBM Example: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

- Current Level of Performance:

- 40 WCPM

- Benchmark

- 92 WCPM

- Peer Performance

- 88 WCPM

A Gap of 2.0 or greater is generally considered to be significant. Caution: significance can vary by age and specific skill involved.

- GAP Analysis: $92/40 = 2.3X$ difference **SIGNIFICANT GAP**

- Is instruction effective? Yes, peer performance is at benchmark.

Additional Progress Monitoring Examples: Secondary

□ Current level of performance

- Attendance- 70%
- Homework completed- 20%
- Class work completed- 60%
- Accuracy-65%

□ Peer Performance

- Attendance-95%
- Homework completed-86%
- Classwork completed 90%
- Accuracy-82%

□ Benchmark- determined for each measure

Important to note: Poor performance in one or more of these areas may be indicative of basic skill deficits (e.g., basic reading, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem-solving) that require intervention and monitoring similar to that in earlier grades.

Data-Based Determination of Expectations

- Data: Current Level of Performance
- Data: Benchmark Level
- Date: # of Weeks to Benchmark
- Calculate:
 - Difference between current and benchmark level
 - Divide by # Weeks
 - Result: Rate per week of growth required
- REALISTIC? Compare to Peer Group Rate

Data-Based Determination of Expectations: Academic

- Benchmark Level: 90 WCPM (words correct per minute)
- Current Level: 40 WCPM
- Difference: 50 WCPM
- Time to Benchmark: 20 Weeks
- Rate of Growth Required: $50/20 = 2.5$ WCPM
- Peer Group Rate = 2.0 wcpm growth
- REALISTIC? Not unless you increase Academic Engagement Time (AEG)

Data-Based Determination of Expectations: Behavior

Same as academic calculations, EXCEPT:

- Benchmark is typically fixed (e.g., 75%)
- To determine realistic expectation: await Rtl to initial interventions
- Use research support for rates of improvement for the type of replacement behavior desired.
- Consider ecological variables when using research
 - Number of students in class
 - Level of support for intervention implementation
 - Frequency of progress monitoring

Problem Analysis: Example of the Determination of Root Cause

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is highly correlated to proficiency levels in other areas of reading.

Further screening is given because a low ORF rate may be due to a breakdown in any one or more of these areas that intervention should then target ...

- phonemic awareness
- phonics/decoding
- vocabulary development
- comprehension strategies
- fluency itself

Decision Rules: What is a “Good” Response to Intervention?

□ ***Positive Response***

- Gap is closing
- Can extrapolate point at which target student(s) will “come in range” of target--even if this is long range

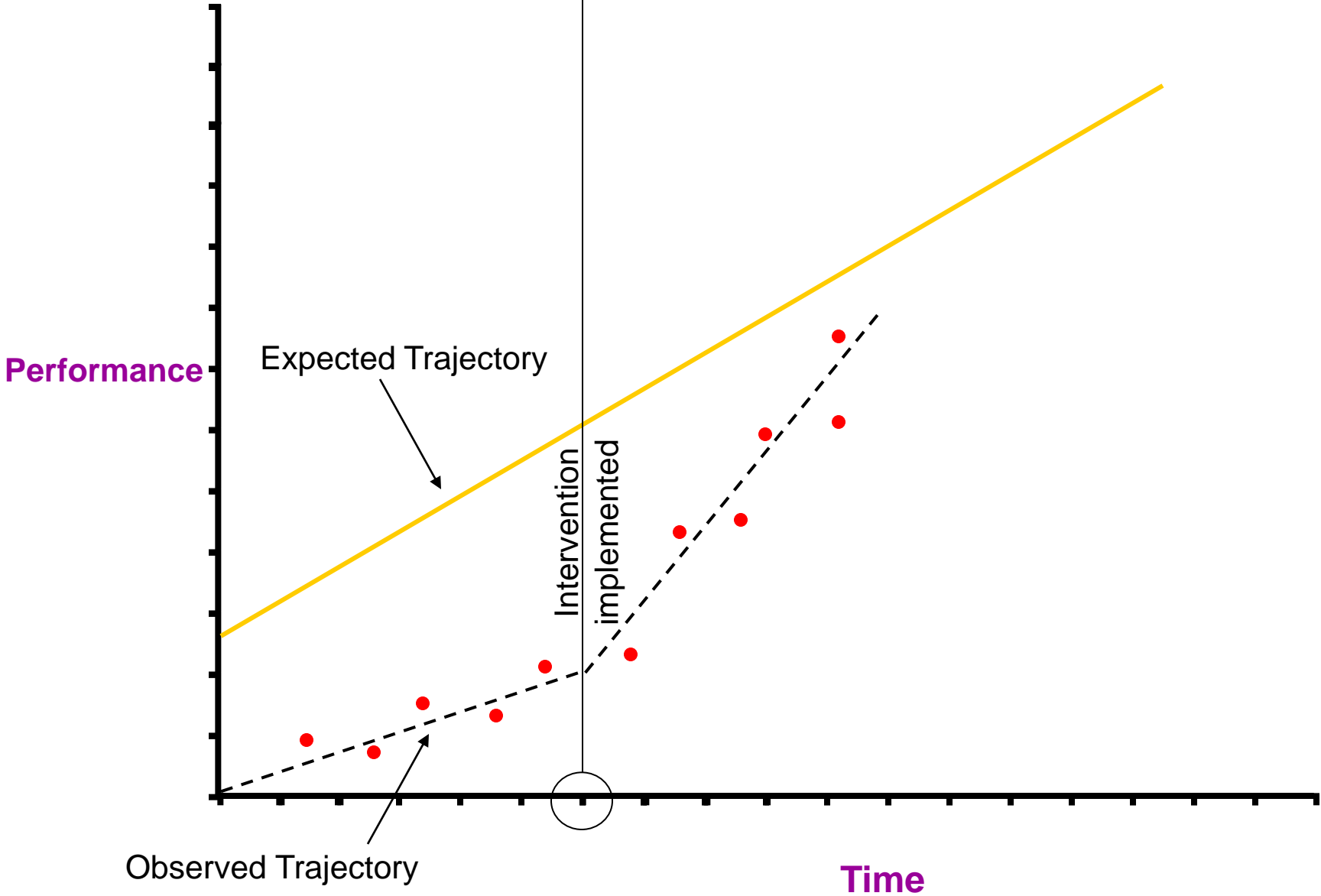
□ ***Questionable Response***

- Rate at which gap is widening slows considerably, but gap is still widening
- Gap stops widening but closure does not occur

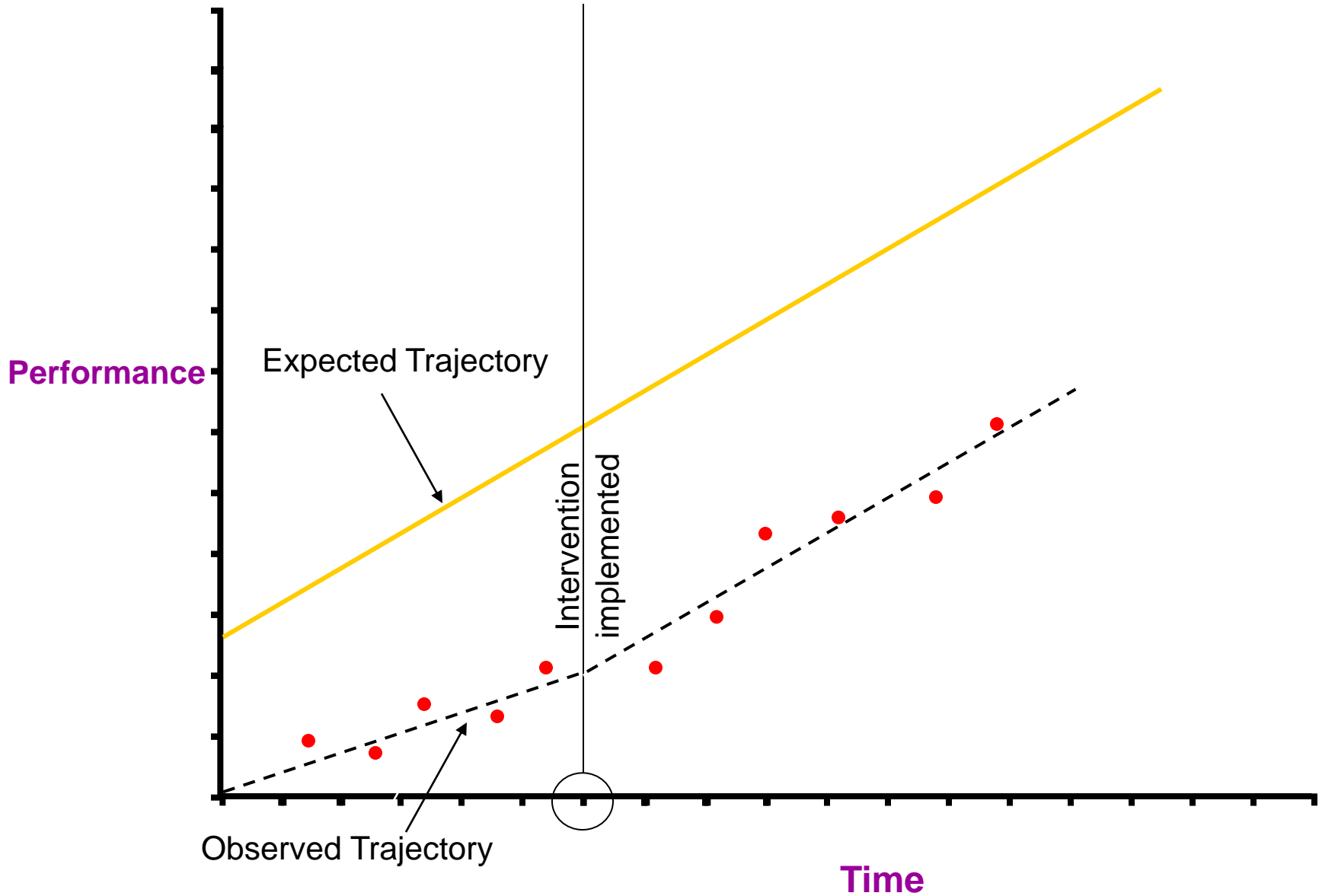
□ ***Poor Response***

- Gap continues to widen with no change in rate

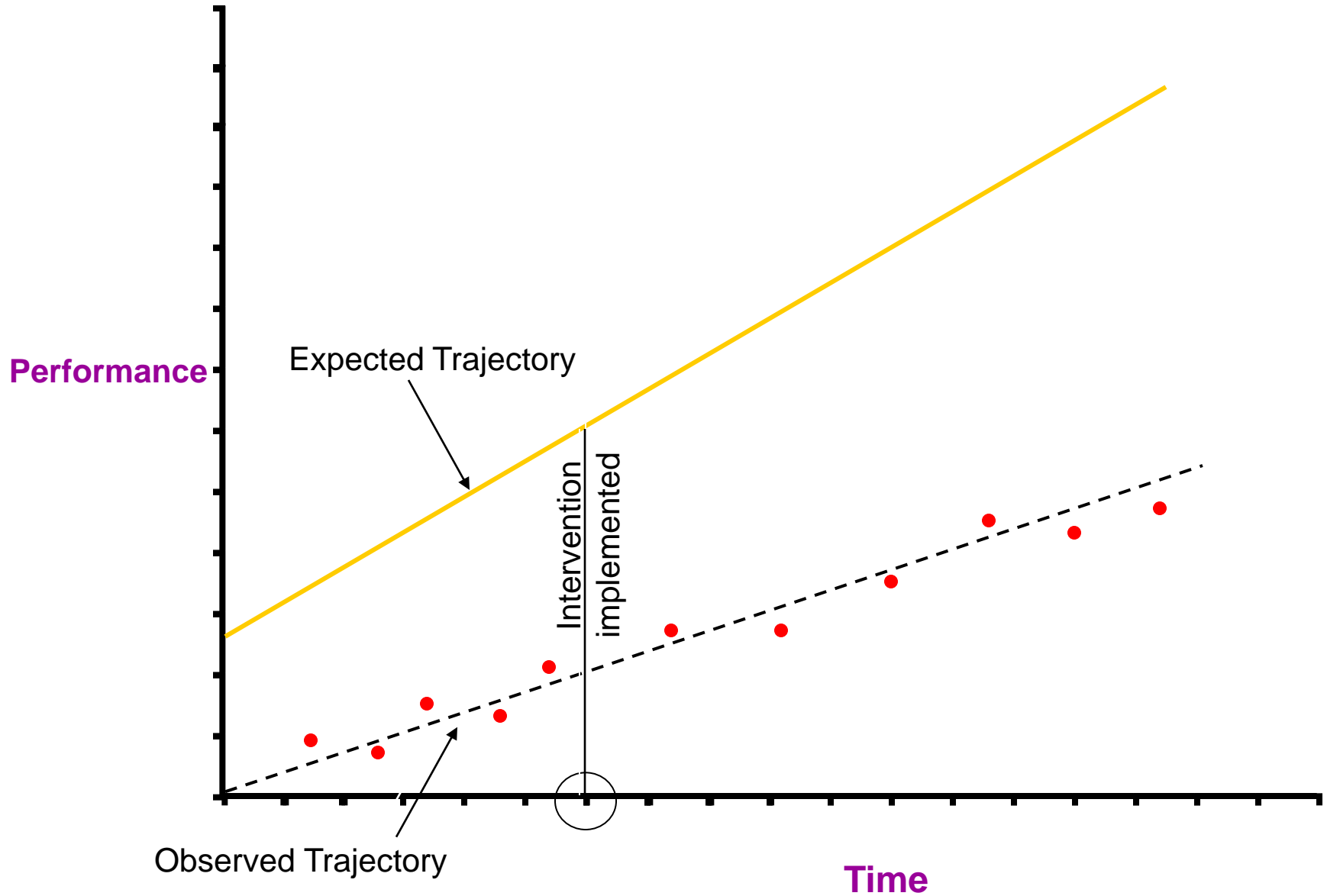
Positive Response to Intervention



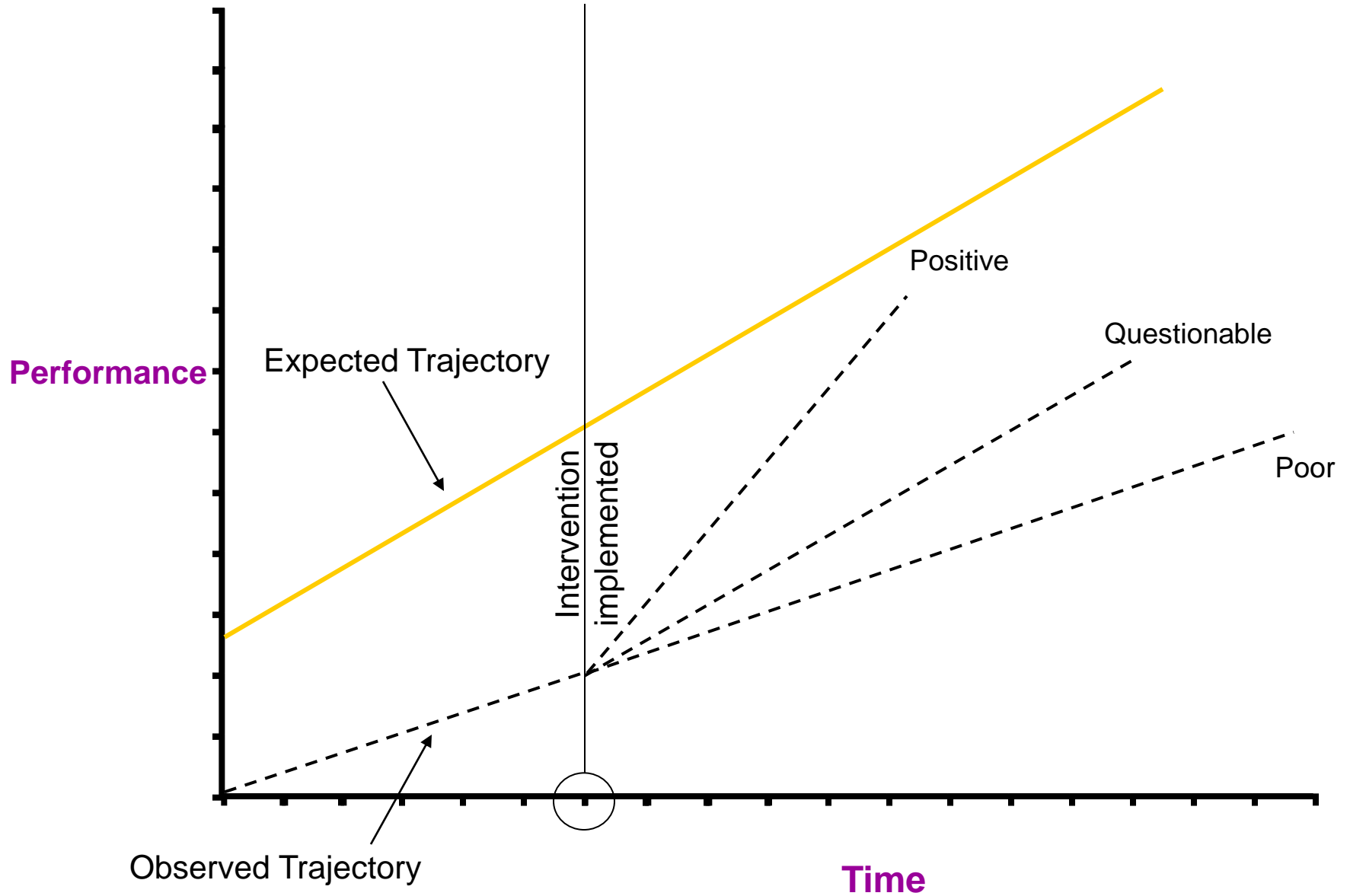
Questionable Response to Intervention



Poor Response to Intervention



Response to Intervention



Decision Rules: Linking Response to Intervention Decisions

General Guidelines

■ ***Positive***

- Continue intervention until student reaches benchmark .
- Fade intervention to determine if student has acquired functional independence.

■ ***Questionable***

- Check for fidelity of implementation
- Increase intensity of current intervention for a short period of time and assess impact. If rate improves, continue. If rate does not improve, return to problem solving.

■ ***Poor***

- Check for fidelity of implementation
- Return to problem solving for new intervention

Fidelity of Implementation = Integrity & Sufficiency

Fidelity of Implementation: **Integrity**

Ensuring that the intervention is implemented as intended/researched:

- Direct observation by trained staff (often not feasible)
- Support through periodic meetings with trained staff: review of student data; review of procedures; barriers identified and resolved

Fidelity of Implementation: Sufficiency

Ensuring that the intervention is provided for a sufficient amount of time:

- Documentation that each student received the intervention for the time (e.g., minutes per week) specified

Family and Community Engagement

- Information regarding RtI/Problem-Solving disseminated to all
- Parents included as equal partners in problem-solving process; students included, as appropriate
- Support parents in collecting and sharing their child's data
- Parents & community service providers involved in implementation of interventions



Parents As Informed Partners

Parents are involved throughout the Problem-Solving Process to provide input and receive information about:

- Amount and nature of data collected & general education services provided
- Strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning
- Results of repeated assessments of child's progress
- Their right to request an evaluation (if a disability is suspected)

This information to be provided to the parent during the RtI/Problem-Solving Process is addressed again in Part 3 as required documentation for SLD eligibility determination.