

Characteristic Checklist of Students with Developmental Delays

To determine a student's eligibility for special education programs and/or services, there must be a significant delay or disability in the student's development. Criteria to consider when determining whether a student exhibits a delay or disability in one or more of the major areas of development are as follows:

Delay or Disability in Cognitive Development

A student with a cognitive delay or disability demonstrates deficits in intellectual abilities beyond normal variations for age and cultural background. This might include difficulties in:

- _____ the ability to acquire information,
- _____ problem solving,
- _____ reasoning skills,
- _____ the ability to generalize information,
- _____ rate of learning,
- _____ processing difficulties,
- _____ memory delays,
- _____ attention, and
- _____ organization skills.

The Factors, Considerations, and Observable Behaviors that Support or Demonstrate the Presence of a Cognitive Delay or Disability are the following:

_____ The student has significant delays in cognitive abilities, as reflected in intellectual assessment scores, neuropsychological findings, teacher or parent/guardian rating scales, and/or results of structured observations in a classroom or other setting.

_____ The student shows significant discrepancies beyond what would be normally expected within or between skill development areas, such as differences between verbal and nonverbal skills, differences within verbal sub-areas, or within perceptual-motor sub-areas. For example, a student with good acuity to visual details may show significant deficits in problem-solving spatial skills.

Delay or Disability in Language and Communication

A student with a delay or disability in language and communication demonstrates deficits beyond normal variation for age and cultural background that adversely affect the ability to learn or acquire skills in the primary language in one or more of the following areas:

- _____receptive language,
- _____expressive language,
- _____articulation/phonology,
- _____pragmatics,
- _____fluency,
- _____oral-motor skills, or
- _____voice (such as sound quality, breath support)

The Factors, Considerations, and Observable Behaviors that Support or Demonstrate the Presence of a Language and Communication Delay or Disability are as follows:

_____The student does not use communication effectively with peers and/or adults. For example, the student does not express needs and wants in most situations.

_____The student's speech and language cannot be understood by others in the student's environment who speak the same language. This may include family members, playmates or other students in the student's preschool program.

_____The student exhibits observable severe or frequent frustration because of communication difficulties.

_____The student exhibits speech sound and/or phonological process errors that impair intelligibility and are not developmentally appropriate. For example, speech sound production impairs listener's ability to understand the student.

_____The student has difficulty understanding and using age-appropriate vocabulary, language concepts, and/or conversation (for example, limited vocabulary, sentence structure, and functional use of language restrict communication). In dual language acquisition, delays in both languages in young students are typical.

_____The student demonstrates specific weaknesses in pragmatic language ability. For example, limited turn-taking, eye contact, asking and responding to questions, or knowledge of the speaker/listener role interfere with communication.

_____The student demonstrates difficulty processing auditory information. For example, following simple directions or answering simple questions present problems for the student.

_____The student demonstrates oral motor difficulty, such as in swallowing or feeding, and/or developmental apraxia, the inability to coordinate speech muscle movement to say words. For example, the student has difficulty combining sounds to say words and/or there is excessive drooling or weak oral muscle movement.

_____The student demonstrates speech dysfluency (stuttering) that interferes with communication abilities (for example, word sound repetitions and/or speech productions that interrupt smooth flow of speech).

Delay or Disability in Adaptive Development

A student with a delay or disability in adaptive development demonstrates difficulty learning or acquiring skills necessary for daily living and learning through play. These occur over time, in a variety of situations, and interfere with the effectiveness of the student's ability to meet personal needs, social responsibility, or participation in developmentally appropriate situations and cultural group. Adaptive behavior demonstrates the effectiveness with which the individual copes with the natural and social demands of his/her environment.

The Factors, Considerations, and Observable Behaviors that Support or Demonstrate the Presence of an Adaptive Delay or Disability are as follows:

Adaptive behavior areas would include activities of daily living such as toileting, eating, dressing, and personal hygiene, as well as development of play skills including the acquisition of developmentally appropriate pretend or exploratory play and engagement in peer and adult social play. Consideration should be given to the following factors:

_____family history, cultural factors, family expectations, and opportunities to develop self-help skills;

_____motor contributions to functional skills, such as fine motor skills necessary for managing, fastening, or engaging in object exploration, oral motor components to eating or the gross motor abilities that support environmental exploration;

_____the student's ability to accomplish activities of daily living adequately and as efficiently as the student's typically developing peers;

_____the necessity for extensive task adaptations needed to support adaptive skills that are unusual for typically developing peers (for example, while the use of a covered cup or diaper is common for two-year-olds, it is not expected of a four-year-old);

_____an inflexibility or rigidity in play behavior (for example, ritualistic self-stimulating behavior or engaging in spinning or rigid horizontal alignment of objects during free play rather than exploratory manipulation that is based on object properties);

_____an avoidance of peer social interaction during play, with a preference for interaction exclusively with adults or observation of peers rather than active engagement with them during free play opportunities; and

_____limitations in the initiation of play activities in either independent or free play (for example, some students will seem passive during free play either unaware of the play potential of a situation or afraid to engage in activities unless invited).

Delay or Disability in Social-Emotional Development

A student with a delay or disability in social-emotional development demonstrates deviations in affect or relational skills beyond normal variation for age and cultural background. These problems are exhibited over time, in various circumstances, and adversely affect the student's development of age-appropriate skills.

The Factors, Considerations, and Observable Behaviors that Support or Demonstrate the Presence of a Social-Emotional Delay or Disability are as follows:

_____The student shows significant observable behaviors such as perseveration, inability to transition, overdependence on structure and routine, and/or rigidity.

_____The student exhibits significant patterns of difficulty in the following relational areas: trust building, aggressiveness, compliance, lack of age-appropriate

self-control, oppositional/defiant behavior, destructive behavior, poor awareness of self and others, or inappropriate play skills for age.

_____The student has significant affect difficulties such as depression/withdrawal, limited range of emotions for a given situation, low frustration tolerance, excessive fear/anxiety, radical mood swings, and/or inappropriate fears (for example, a student who often misinterprets the approach of other students or adults as hostile in intent).

Delay or Disability in Motor Development

A student with a delay or disability in motor development demonstrates a deficit beyond normal variability for age and experience in either coordination, movement patterns, quality, or range of motion or strength and endurance of gross (large muscle), fine (small muscle), or perceptual motor (integration of sensory and motor) abilities that adversely affects the student's ability to learn or acquire skills relative to one or more of the following:

_____ maintaining or controlling posture,

_____ functional mobility (for example, walking or running),

_____ sensory awareness of the body or movement,

_____ sensory-integration,

_____ reach and/or grasp of objects,

_____ tool use,

_____ perceptual motor abilities (for example, eye-hand coordination for tracing),

_____ sequencing motor components to achieve a functional goal.

The Factors, Considerations, and Observable Behaviors that Support or Demonstrate the Presence of a Delay or Disability in Motor Development are as follows:

_____ The student is unable to maintain a stable posture or transition between positions (for example, to go from standing to floor sitting) to support learning or interactive tasks.

_____ The student is unable to move about the environment in an efficient way that is not disruptive to others. Efficient mobility refers to both the time required for moving from one place to another and the amount of energy the student must expend to move.

_____ The student uses an inefficient or abnormal grasp or reach pattern that limits the ability to either explore or use objects. An inefficient grasp or reach is one which does not enable flexible manipulation, limits use of tools such as writing implements or silverware in functional tasks, leads to fatigue, or limits the student's ability to obtain or use learning materials.

_____ The student has problems with learning new gross and/or fine motor abilities or in using motor skills in a flexible functional way. The student does not seem to accomplish motor tasks automatically after practice and attends to the motor aspects rather than cognitive or exploratory components of play or pre-academic programming.

_____ The student may achieve developmentally appropriate skills as measured on formal testing but has significant asymmetry that interferes with bilateral manipulation or tool use (for example, student is unable to transfer objects from hand to hand or stabilize paper when writing or cutting).

_____ The student is unable to sequence one or more motor actions in order to accomplish a goal. This includes the student with clumsiness that consistently interferes with goal-directed social or object interaction.

_____ The student has difficulty participating in gross motor activities, is unable to complete many of the tasks performed by typically developing peers, or may refuse to participate in activities rather than seem uncoordinated.

_____ The student has problems in the neurological processing of information from any of the senses and organizing it for use.