

Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses

What is PSW?

The Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) Model is one of three models outlined in CA Education Code for use in identifying students for special education under the classification of Specific Learning Disability.

The federal regulations were updated in 2004 and indicated that states could not mandate the use of the discrepancy model for identification of students with learning disabilities. CA Education Code (2014) allows for districts to use different models for identifying students with Specific Learning Disabilities

1. Discrepancy Model
2. Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²)
3. Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses

You can find more information about PSW at

www.vcselpa.org

Look for the **PSW tab** under Resources for Teachers and Staff

Consistent with California Education Code, the Ventura County Special Local Plan Area (SELPA) has endorsed the use of the Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) model for identifying a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). For students for whom a special education eligibility of SLD is being considered, using the PSW approach, the student meets all the following criteria:

1. Student exhibits a pattern of cognitive or processing strengths, indicated by a pattern of abilities in the average or above ranges
 - Processing areas examined may include verbal and nonverbal problem solving, short term and long term memory as well as processing speed
2. Student exhibits both significant cognitive and academic weakness(es)
 - The school psychologist and possibly the speech/language pathologist are determining if any processing weaknesses exist
 - The special education teacher is examining whether any academic areas of deficit are present
3. A research-based link exists between the cognitive and academic weakness(es)
 - The team wants to ensure that the profile makes sense. A weakness in phonological processing would explain reading difficulties, but it is not a good explanation for a math problem solving difficulty.
4. The student requires special education to access the core curriculum
 - All students in special education need to demonstrate that they require specially designed instruction in order to access the core curriculum.