

Learning Disabilities:
Actions you can take if you suspect your child is struggling with a learning disability

Common types of learning disabilities

- **Dyslexia** – Difficulty with reading - Problems reading, writing, spelling, speaking
- **Dyscalculia** – Difficulty with math - Problems doing math calculations, understanding time, using money
- **Dysgraphia** – Difficulty with writing - Problems with handwriting, spelling, organizing ideas
- **Dyspraxia (Sensory Integration Disorder)** – Difficulty with fine motor skills - Problems with hand-eye coordination, balance, manual dexterity
- **Dysphasia/Aphasia** – Difficulty with language - Problems understanding spoken language, poor reading comprehension
- **Auditory Processing Disorder** – Difficulty hearing differences between sounds - Problems with reading, comprehension, language
- **Visual Processing Disorder** – Difficulty interpreting visual information - Problems with reading, math, maps, charts, symbols, pictures

Signs of learning disabilities

- **Dyslexia – Reading**
 - Problems with
 - understanding and recognizing letters, words, and ideas.
 - reading speed and fluency
- **Dyscalculia – Math**
 - Problems with
 - memorization,
 - organization of numbers, operation signs,
 - number “facts” (like $5+5=10$ or $5 \times 5=25$)
 - counting principles (such as counting by twos or counting by fives)
 - have difficulty telling time
- **Dysgraphia – Writing**
 - Problems with
 - neatness
 - consistency of writing accurately
 - copying letters and words
 - spelling consistency
 - writing organization and coherence
- **Dyspraxia – Motor Skills**
 - Problems with
 - cutting,
 - jumping,
 - writing,
 - eye-hand motor coordination,
 - buttoning,
 - holding a pencil



Signs of learning disabilities

- **Aphasia/Dysphasia– Language**
 - Problems with
 - understanding and produce spoken language
 - understanding the meaning of words, parts of speech, directions
- **Auditory Processing Disorder – Hearing**
 - Problems with
 - understanding the subtleties of different sounds,
 - hearing sounds at the wrong speed
- **Visual Processing Disorder – Visual Perception**
 - Problems with
 - missing subtle differences in shapes
 - reversing letters or numbers
 - skipping words and lines
 - depth and distance
 - Eye-hand motor coordination



Other disorders that may affect your child’s ability to learn

- **ADHD** – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) - while not considered a learning disability, can certainly disrupt learning.
- Children with ADHD often have problems sitting still, staying focused, following instructions, staying organized, and completing homework.
- **Autism** – Difficulty mastering certain academic skills can stem from pervasive developmental disorders such as autism and Asperger’s syndrome.
- Children with autism spectrum disorders) may have trouble communicating, reading body language, learning basic skills, making friends, and making eye contact.
- **Oppositional Defiant Disorder** – they just won’t listen. Please see the workshop Dealing with Opposition on our It’s Elementary Page bcslibrary.org/elementary



Signs and Symptoms of Learning Disabilities in Elementary School-Aged Children

Note: these symptoms could also be connected to other things and should be seen as only a possible indicator of a learning disability

Ages 5-9

- Trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds
- Unable to blend sounds to make words
- Confuses basic words when reading
- Slow to learn new skills
- Consistently misspells words and makes frequent errors
- Trouble learning basic math concepts
- Difficulty telling time and remembering sequences

Ages 10-13

- Difficulty with reading comprehension or math skills
- Trouble with open-ended test questions and word problems
- Dislikes reading and writing; avoids reading aloud
- Poor handwriting
- Poor organizational skills (bedroom, homework, desk is messy and disorganized)
- Trouble following classroom discussions and expressing thoughts aloud
- Spells the same word differently in a single document

First Steps



- If you suspect your child is struggling due to a learning disability, meet with your school principal
- If you go to a private school, you can meet with both the private school principal and a public school principal
- The principal can call a meeting with the teacher and any relevant special education professionals to discuss your child
- If they agree that there may be a problem, they can request a psycho-educational testing
- If you are having trouble getting the school to start the testing, contact your pediatrician and talk to him or her about getting your child tested

Testing should uncover any problems



- First, the psycho-educational evaluation will describe your child's overall intellectual potential.
- Be sure not to look at the single summary numbers (e.g., the Full Scale IQ) as necessarily the best indication of intelligence. Students with LD have many strengths as well as weaknesses.
- The evaluator should sit down with you and explain your child's results.
- You need to know the areas of strength and the areas of weakness.
- The test results will also describe the student's overall academic skills.
- You will learn whether the student's reading is at grade level and, if not, where the specific deficits lie. The results of these studies might indicate other possible areas of difficulty.



Your child's right to be identified, located, and evaluated

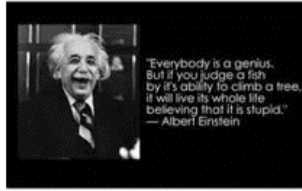
All schools have an affirmative duty to locate, identify and provide services to children who may be disabled and may need special education and related services.

- The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) includes the Child Find mandate. Child Find requires all school districts to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child.
- The IDEA requires all States to develop and implement a practical method of determining which children with disabilities are receiving special education and related services and which children are not. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(3); [Wrightslaw: Special Education Law](#), pages 72, 206-207).
- [Jamie S. v. Milwaukee Public Schools](#) (E.D. WI, Case # 01-C-928)
- Schools are required to locate, identify and evaluate **all children** with disabilities from **birth through age 21**. The Child Find mandate applies to all children who reside within a State, including children who attend private schools and public schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the state. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(3))
- This includes all children who are suspected of having a disability, including children who receive passing grades and are "**advancing from grade to grade.**" (34 CFR 300.111(c)) The law **does not** require children to be "labeled" or classified by their disability. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(3)(B); 34 CFR 300.111(d)).
- [Wrightslaw: Special Education Law](#), pages 72, 206-207]

Child Find contact information

- Bryan ISD
http://www.bryanisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=180531&type=d&pREC_ID=378433
- College Station ISD
http://www.csisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=164859&type=d&pREC_ID=338341
- Hearne ISD
http://www.hearneisd.com/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=206846&type=d&pREC_ID=539670
- Caldwell ISD
https://www.caldwellschools.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=453538&type=d&pREC_ID=979393
- Navasota ISD <https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/need-help/grimes>
- Franklin ISD <http://www.franklinisd.net/>
- Brenham ISD <http://www.brenhamisd.net/>
- Madisonville ISD <https://www.madisonvillecisid.org/>
- Bremond and Hearne
<http://rcssc.org/index.php?section=services&menu=1&sub=1>

Things to avoid when faced with a child who has learning disabilities



- Don't fall into the easy trap of blaming the child nor should you let teachers do this. "He could do better if he tried." "She just does not work hard enough." "If he only paid attention more, he would have less trouble."
- Children want to please their parents and teachers. They want to learn and to succeed. Before you blame them for their problems or allow teachers to do so, be sure to check if there might be a reason for their lack of success.

After your child is tested

- Schools will determine if your child qualifies for services
- If the results of testing confirm that your son or daughter has a learning disability, the principal should call a meeting of the appropriate special education professionals. At this meeting these professionals might suggest a "504 Plan" or an "IEP Plan."
- An IEP Plan is based on IDEA legislation requiring services in school for students with disabilities. After the assessment, three decisions are reached by the school team. Each must be accepted by the school professionals *and by parents*. No decision is finalized without your agreement.
- Once there is agreement on these questions, the third step is to decide where these services will be provided. Ideally, they will be available in your neighborhood school. If more intensive services are needed than are available in this school, another school placement may be necessary. If your child is in a private school, arrangements should be made for him or her to receive services at the nearest public school.
- After there is agreement, a contract is written to outline what the school system will provide. This contract is called an "individualized education program" or IEP. This document must be signed by the school professionals and by parents before it is official.

If you are not satisfied with the test results

- If they determine that your child does not need help, but you believe they do, contact the school again, contact Child Find, and your pediatrician
- Sometimes the services available within your public school may be less than you desire for your child or adolescent. You might want to seek a private consultant and supplement what the school is providing with private occupational therapy, special education, or speech–language services.
- Be patient – with enough help, they can succeed. It just takes time to get the help going.
- You are your child's best advocate, so don't give up!

More resources

<https://www.nclcd.org/> Center for Learning Disabilities

<http://idea.ed.gov/> . Department of Education, Office of Special Education

<http://www.nasponline.org/> Association of School Psychologists

<http://www.ldonline.org/about/partners/njclcd> Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities