

Learning Disability Testing



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Learning disabilities not treated early tend to snowball

Students with learning disabilities have higher high school dropout rates

A learning disability diagnosis is the gateway to receiving special services

Being labeled as learning disabled may cause others to treat you differently.

Children taught using scientifically proven methods improve as their brains are "re-wired".



Should I have my child tested for Learning Disabilities

All children have a right to an education which is appropriate to their needs. The education of students with special educational needs should be the same as children without special needs. Disability and the special needs that arise from disabilities are a part of the human experience which in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Education should be about enabling all children, in line with their abilities, to live full and independent lives so they can contribute to society, their local communities and continue to learn throughout their lives. Education should support children to develop in all aspects of their lives.

Before the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142), one million children with disabilities were excluded entirely from the public school system in the USA. More than half of the children with disabilities did not receive appropriate education services that would enable them to have full equality of opportunity. In addition, there were many children in the US who participated in regular school programs, but their disabilities prevented them from having a successful educational experience because their disabilities were undetected.

The key to providing your child with a good educational start is early assessment and

intervention. You know your child the best. You can see how their skills are progressing at an early age. An assessment of your child is an opportunity to build up a profile of your child's individual strengths and needs. Only by understanding your child's specific needs can an individualized education plan be developed to meet these needs. The term learning disability originated in the 1960s to describe children with normal intelligence who were not achieving adequately in the usual educational settings. Children with learning disabilities simply learn differently due to differences in the structure of their brains. Estimates suggest 1 in 5 children in the US have a learning disability.

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Children with learning disabilities are **NOT** stupid, they just learn in a different way. A specific learning disability is different from a general learning disability. If your child has a specific learning disability, they will experience difficulty in a specific area of learning like reading, writing, spelling or mathematics. Specific learning disabilities generally fall into one of four categories:

Spoken language which includes listening and speaking

Written language which includes reading, writing and spelling

Arithmetic which includes calculation and concepts

Reasoning which includes organization and integration of ideas and thoughts

Specific learning disabilities are not due to other causes that affect learning like defects in sight or hearing, emotional factors, physical condition or intelligence. The level of specific learning disability can also range from mild to severe. Learning disabilities affect different areas including reading, spoken/written language, math, reasoning, memory, social behavior, physical coordination, organization, and metacognition which includes the use of learning strategies and learning from mistakes. Specific learning disabilities include the following:

Dyslexia is difficulty learning to read. Children with dyslexia find it difficult to learn to read the words or to understand what is written. Some individuals with dyslexia have difficulties navigating, finding routes, distinguishing right from left or following compass directions.

Dyscalculia is difficulty learning numbers. Children with dyscalculia find it hard to understand how to count, add, subtract, multiply and divide. They have difficulty understanding and using math concepts and symbols.

Dysgraphia is difficulty with writing and spelling. Children with dysgraphia find it difficult to write legibly and often have problems with spelling. They have difficulty with the physical task of forming letters with a pen and paper. They often find it hard to order their thoughts when writing a story or essay.

Dyspraxia is difficulty with language comprehension. Children with dyspraxia often mix up words and sentences.

Executive function disorder is difficulty with accessing information, thinking about solutions and implementing the solutions. Executive function involves tasks that allow us to learn new information, remember and retrieve previously learned information and use the information to solve everyday problems. Some of the abilities associated with executive function include (1) visualizing outcomes, (2) analyzing physical sensory information like sights and sounds, (3) perceiving and estimating time, distance and force, (4) anticipating consequences, (5) performing tasks needed to carry out decisions, (6) choosing actions based upon the likelihood of outcomes, (7) choosing appropriate actions based upon social expectations and norms, and (8) mentally evaluating possible outcomes of different problems-solving strategies. Most people do many of these things instinctively; however children with executive function disorders have difficulties in one or more of the above areas.

Nonverbal learning disorder is difficulty with motor coordination, visual-spatial organization and social skills. Children with nonverbal learning disorder have difficulty reading between the lines.

The decision to have your child tested for learning disabilities is very important. The diagnosis of a learning disability is the gateway to services that will help your child learn and provide a more fulfilling life for them as a student. To receive the special services available to learning disabled children, federal law requires your child must be tested, diagnosed with a learning disability and “labeled” as learning disabled. Learning disabilities that are not found and treated early on tend to snowball. Over time, children with learning disabilities fall further and further behind in school. As this occurs, they become increasingly frustrated and often feel like a failure. They often suffer from self-esteem problems which can lead to bad behavior and other problems. Students with learning disabilities have a higher dropout rate from high school than do students without learning disabilities according to the National Institute for Literacy. Educational differences affect the job and earnings prospects for people with learning disabilities. An untreated learning disability can cause adult literacy problems. Adults with low literacy levels are more likely to be homeless, unemployed or hold very low paying jobs according to the National Institute for Literacy. Early learning disability identification and good advocacy will increase the chances your child will receive the help s/he needs to reach their potential. With early intervention, children with learning disabilities can learn strategies to achieve as well as other children without learning disabilities. Children who understand their learning disabilities are better prepared to play to their strengths and develop strategies that compensate for their weaknesses. Once diagnosed children are eligible for services and be taught using scientifically proven, evidence-based, teaching methods. Research has shown that these methods can “re-wire” the child’s mind.

Unfortunately, to receive special services, children must be labeled as learning disabled. Many labels are for life, so parents are often concerned that labeling their child as learning disabled will cause people to treat the child in a negative way. Parents, teachers and other children may treat the child in ways that are hurtful or affect the child’s self-esteem. Teachers who don’t understand the learning disability may assume the child isn’t able to perform certain activities and therefore not assign responsibilities to them when in fact the child is more than capable.

You should carefully weigh the pros and cons of having your child tested for learning disabilities as this is a decision that will have a profound effect on their life. Having a learning disability will make your child a stronger person whether they are tested or not.