



Show-Me

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Literacy....

FACTS AND STATISTICS ON LEARNING DISABILITIES AND LITERACY

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FACTS

- Learning disabilities, as opposed to other disabilities such as vision impairment or paralysis, are invisible – or considered a hidden handicap. For this reason they tend to be misunderstood and their impact underestimated.
- Because learning disabilities cannot be seen, they often go undetected. Recognizing a learning disability is even more difficult because the severity and characteristics vary.
- Learning disabilities vary from person to person. One person with LD may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with LD.
- Learning disabilities are real. A person can be of average or above-average intelligence, not have any major sensory problems (like blindness or hearing impairment), and yet struggle to keep up with peers in their ability to learn.
- LD is a lifelong disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways--as in the ability to understand or use spoken and written language, mathematical calculations, coordination, self-control, or attention. These difficulties impact academic skills and can impede learning to read or write, or compute.
- LD is a neurobiological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store, express, and respond to information.
 - a lack of "executive functions," including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy and goal-setting;

The mission of the "Show-Me Literacy Newsletter is to provide professional information-sharing, resources and news about adult education and literacy.

- With LD a person's brain works or is structured differently. Differences interfere with a person's ability to think and remember. Learning disabilities can affect a person's ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason, recall, organize information, and calculate.
- LD affects many parts of a person's life: school or work, daily routines, family life, and friendships or in social contexts. Overlapping learning disabilities may be apparent in some while others may have a single, isolated mild learning problem that has little impact on other areas of life.
- Learning disabilities affect each person differently with characteristics ranging from mild to severe. Sometimes people have more than one learning disability.
- Although learning disabilities can occur in very young children, the disorders are not usually recognized until problems are recognized at school.
- LD is not a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders.

Definitions of Learning Disability

- Learning Disabilities are a general set of disorders that can affect a person's ability in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and mathematics.
- The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities (CCLD), a coalition of national organizations within the learning disabilities community, defines LD as “a neurobiological disorder in which a person's brain works or is structured differently.”
- Bridges to Practice, a national learning disabilities and literacy initiative, defines LD as “a neurological problem often genetic that affects the way that persons process visual, auditory, or other sensory information.”
- The U.S. Office of Education defined LD in 1977 as “a permanent-information processing deficit (disorder) that affects the manner in which individuals with average to above average intelligence learn. Deficits in areas such as reading, mathematics and written language are presumed to be due to a central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities occur regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin and they are not the result of a poor academic background, mental retardation, or emotional disorders.”
- The same definition as above appears in the document, “How to Request Accommodations When Taking the GED High School Equivalency Tests if You Have a Learning Disability” as published by the GED Testing Service of the American Council of Education.

- Hamil defines LD in the 1990 Journal of Learning Disabilities article “On Defining Learning Disabilities: An Emerging Consensus” {23 (2), 74-84}. “LD is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing and reasoning abilities...Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other disabling conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g. cultural differences or insufficient/inappropriate instruction) it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.”
- According to the Learning Disabilities Association of America, “Specific learning disabilities (SLD) is a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin which selectively interferes with the development, integration and/or demonstration of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities...(It exists) as a distinct handicapping condition and varies in its manifestations and in degree of severity. Throughout life, the condition can affect self esteem, education, vocation, socialization and/or daily living activities.”
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law that provides for special education, defines “SLD as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. Skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and/or mathematics may be negatively affected.”
- The Federal definition states that learning disabilities include "such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia." According to the law, learning disabilities do not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Definitions of learning disabilities also vary among states.

What Learning Disabilities Are Not

- Persons with learning disabilities are not “lazy” or “dumb.” In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence. Often they fall within the range or “gifted.” Their brains just process information differently.
- Attention disorders, such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but they’re not the same.
- Learning disabilities are not the same as mental retardation and do not signify low intelligence.
- Learning disabilities are not the same as autism, hearing or visual impairment, physical disabilities, or emotional disorders.
- Learning disabilities are not the same as the normal process of learning a second language.
- Learning disabilities aren’t caused by lack of educational opportunities, such as frequent changes of

- Learning disabilities aren't caused by lack of educational opportunities, such as frequent changes of schools, poor school attendance, or lack of instruction in basic skills.
- Learning disabilities are not caused by economic disadvantage, environmental factors or cultural differences. In fact, there is frequently no apparent cause for LD.
- A learning disability is not a disease, so there is no cure, but there are ways to overcome the challenges it poses through identification and accommodation.
- Dyslexia does not mean that the person sees words "backwards."

What are Characteristics of Learning Disabilities?

- An important requirement in the diagnosis of learning disabilities is the discrepancy between intelligence, or one's ability to perform, and their actual performance.
- There is no one sign that shows a person has a learning disability. Characteristics that may be apparent include:
 - trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, or connecting letters to their sounds;
 - problems identifying individual sounds in spoken words;
 - not reading for pleasure;
 - not making use of reading to gather information;
 - making many errors when reading aloud, and repeating and pausing often;
 - focusing on word recognition to such a degree that it detracts from reading comprehension;
 - not understanding what he or she reads;
 - showing persistent problems with spelling;
 - having sloppy handwriting that is difficult to read or holding a pencil awkwardly;
 - struggling to express ideas and communicate in writing;

- learning language late, lacking complex language and having a limited vocabulary;
- having trouble remembering the sounds that letters make or hearing slight distinctions between words;
- having trouble understanding jokes, comic strips, and sarcasm;
- having difficulty with non-literal or figurative language such as metaphors, idioms and sarcasm;
- having trouble following directions;
- mispronouncing words or using a wrong word that sounds similar;
- having difficulty with verbal memory and processing large amounts of spoken language;
- having trouble organizing what he or she wants to say or not being able to think of the word needed for writing or conversation;
- not following the social rules of conversation, such as taking turns, and standing too close to the listener;
- confusing math symbols, misreading numbers, or difficulty retrieving math facts;
- having visual-spatial deficits and ineffective use of visual imagery;
- having difficulties in language processing that affect math problem-solving;
- difficulty retelling a story in order (what happened first, second, third);
- not knowing where to begin a task or how to go on from there;
- having a distinct gap between the level of achievement that is expected and what is actually being achieved;
- having problems with abstract reasoning;
- making impulsive decisions and judgments;
- difficulties with socio-emotional skills and behavior;

or

- problems with attention, which may be accompanied by hyperactivity, distractibility or passivity.

Statistics

- 30 – 50% of the population has undiagnosed learning disabilities. (Source: National Institute for Literacy)
- As many as 1 out of every 5 people in the U.S. has a learning disability. Almost 3 million children (ages 6 through 21) have some form of a learning disability and receive special education in school. (23rd Annual Report to Congress, U.S. Department of Education, 2001) Source: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities - <http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs7txt.htm>).
- 35% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school. This is twice the rate of students without LD. Of those who do graduate, less than 2% attend a four-year college, despite the fact that many are above average in intelligence. (Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study)
- Only 13% of students with learning disabilities (compared to 53% of students in general population) have attended a 4-year post-secondary school program within two years of leaving high school. (Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study, 1994)
- Approximately 85% of all individuals with learning disabilities have difficulties in the area of reading. (Source: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development - <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/readbro.htm>)
- 50 – 80% of students in ABE and literacy programs with low reading skills (below 5th – 7th grade level) may have either a suspected or diagnosed learning disability (Source: Bridges to Practice - <http://novel.nifl.gov/nald/workplac.htm>).
- 43% of learning disabled are living at or below the poverty level. (Source: Bridges to Practice)
- 48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce or unemployed. (Source: Bridges to Practice)

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