



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Specific Learning Disability

What is a Specific Learning Disability?

According to Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761(34): “Specific learning disability:

(a) Means a specific learning disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations.

(b) Includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and aphasia.

(c) Does not include learning problems which are primarily the result of visual hearing, motor or emotional disabilities, or mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.”

An important change for determining eligibility of children with specific learning disabilities appears in The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), 20 U.S.C. § 1414 (b) (6): “...a local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability...” and “...a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures... ”

How Common is a Specific Learning Disability?

In the 2007–2008 school year, 58,262 Arizona students were classified as having a specific learning disability and received special education services. This number represents 5.49% of the 1,061,095 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of December 1, 2007 and accounts for 45.73% of the total special education population.

What Effect Does a Specific Learning Disability Have on a Child?

Each person with a specific learning disability is unique. Each has a different combination or cluster of characteristics which can range from mild to severe.

Once a comprehensive evaluation has provided a diagnosis of a specific learning disability, effective intervention strategies should include a total approach to meet the educational, psychological, medical, and social needs of the individual.

In addition to strategies and modifications, the use of assistive technology (AT) devices, both low-technology and high-technology, may lessen some of the barriers to learning. Consideration should be given to the need for AT during the comprehensive evaluation.

According to Smith and Strick (1999), some characteristics which are directly related to the definition of learning disabilities are:

- *Problems associating letters with sounds*
- *Difficulty analyzing sound sequences*
- *Poor comprehension for what is read*
- *Difficulty with verbal reasoning*
- *Difficulty making comparisons and classification*
- *Problems with number retrieval*
- *Inability to associate math sign with its function*
- *Trouble memorizing math facts*
- *Short attention span*
- *Difficulty following directions*
- *Poor planning and organizational skills*

Many students with specific learning disabilities go on to vocational education classes, programs or colleges where special help is available. According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, universities and colleges that accept federal funds must provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

Needed accommodations for college entrance tests can be arranged through the appropriate testing service, on a case-by-case basis. Allowable adaptations can include: extended time, a reader or a person to record answers, or an audio cassette edition with regular-type copy. Requests for accommodations must be requested well in advance of the test date and the need must be well documented.

References

Smith, C. & Strick, L. (1999). *Learning disabilities: A to Z: A parent's complete guide to learning disabilities from preschool to adulthood*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Books for Adults

Kranowitz, C.S. (1998). *The out-of-sync child: Recognizing and coping with sensory integration dysfunction*. New York, NY: Perigree.

Mooney, J. and Cole, D. (2000). *Learning outside the lines*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Tanquay, P. (2001). *Nonverbal learning disabilities at home: A parent's guide*. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Levine, M. (2002). *A Mind at a Time*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Books for Children

Fisher, G. & Cummings, R. (2002). *The survival guide for kids with LD (learning differences)*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing

Gehret, J. (1996). *Eagle Eyes: A child's guide to paying attention*. Fairport, NY: Verbal Images Press.

Janover, C. (2004). *Josh: A boy with dyslexia*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com Publishing Service.

Videos

Lavoie, R. *How difficult can this be? A learning Disabilities workshop*. (aka F.A.T. City); *Beyond F.A.T.. City; Learning disabilities & social skills: Last one picked, first one picked on*; and *Learning disabilities and discipline: When the chips are down*. Alexandria, VA: PBS Videos.

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Learning Disabilities, 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704, 888-232-7733, www.cec.sped.org.

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN), www.azed.gov/ess/eapn

Family Center on Technology and Disability, 1825 Connecticut Ave. NW, 7th Floor, Washington, DC 20009, 202-884-8068, www.fctd.info

International Dyslexia Association, Arizona Chapter, P. O. Box 6248, Scottsdale, AZ 85261-6248, 480-941-0308. www.dyslexia-az.org.

Learning Disabilities Association of America, 4156 Library Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349, 412-341-1515, www.lidaamerica.org, Arizona Chapter, 18001 N. 78th Ave., Bldg. E-71, Glendale, AZ 85308

National Center for Learning Disabilities, 381 Park Avenue S., Ste. 1401, New York, NY 10016-8806, 212-545-7510, 888-575-7373. www.nclcd.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, P. O. Box 1492, Washington, DC, 20013-1492, 800-695-0285, www.nichcy.org

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 2384 N. Steves Blvd., Flagstaff, AZ 86004, 928-679-8102, 877-230-PINS (7467), www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals

All Kinds of Minds, 2800 Meridian Pkwy, Ste.,100, Durham, NC 27713, 888-956-4637, www.allkindsofminds.org

Schwab Learning, 1650 S. Amphlett Blvd., Ste. 300, San Mateo, CA 94402, 650-655-2410, www.schwablearning.org

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