



Snapshot of Learning and Attention Issues in the U.S.

1 in 5

children in the U.S. have learning and attention issues.



Only a **small subset** receive specialized instruction or accommodations...

1 in 16

public school students have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for specific learning disabilities (SLD) such as dyslexia and for other health impairments (OHI) such as ADHD and dyspraxia

1 in 50

public school students receive accommodations for disabilities through a civil rights statute called Section 504

...while millions of children with learning and attention issues are **not formally identified**.

What are Learning and Attention Issues?

Learning and attention issues are brain-based difficulties in reading, writing, math, organization, focus, listening comprehension, social skills, motor skills or a combination of these. Learning and attention issues are not the result of low intelligence, poor vision or hearing, or lack of access to quality instruction.

Common Examples

Learning disabilities, such as:

- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia

Other difficulties that affect learning and behavior, such as:

- ADHD
- Executive function deficits
- Dyspraxia
- Nonverbal learning disabilities

Risk Factors

GENETICS

Learning and attention issues tend to run in families. Genes that can affect brain structure and chemistry get passed down from parent to child.

TOXIN EXPOSURE

Exposure to lead and other environmental factors have been linked to ADHD and other issues that impact learning, attention and behavior.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Trauma, such as abuse, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences, can increase the likelihood of being identified with learning or behavior issues.



Barriers to Success

REPEATING A GRADE

Children with learning and attention issues often don't receive early or effective interventions. A third of students with SLD or OHI have been held back a year, which increases the risk of dropping out.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be suspended as those without disabilities, and the loss of instructional time increases the risk of course failure and school aversion.

DROPPING OUT

Students with SLD drop out of high school at nearly three times the rate of all students. The top reason students with SLD drop out? 57% cited disliking school or having poor relationships with teachers or peers.

JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

Unaddressed learning and attention issues lead to conditions that push students into the school-to-prison pipeline. A large study found that half of young adults with SLD or OHI had been involved at some point with the justice system.

NOT FINISHING COLLEGE

Young adults with learning disabilities enroll in four-year colleges at half the rate of the general population. Their completion rate for any type of college is 41%, compared to 52% of all young adults.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Only 46% of working-age adults with learning disabilities are employed. Compared with adults who do not have learning disabilities, adults with these issues are twice as likely to be jobless.

Ways to Help

RAISE AWARENESS

Learning and attention issues can look like laziness or lack of intelligence, but with the right support, children can achieve at high levels. Less stigma and high expectations are key.

EMPOWER PARENTS

With major changes ahead in education policy, it has never been more important to empower parents with information and help them be effective advocates for their children.

EQUIP TEACHERS

Most students with SLD or OHI spend 80% or more of the school day in general education classrooms, and all educators need more resources and strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners.

INTERVENE EARLY

If a child is struggling with academics or behavior, it's imperative to find out why and to provide targeted, evidence-based instruction and intervention as early as possible.

PERSONALIZE LEARNING

Aligning learning with each student's interests, strengths and needs—as well as rigorous standards—helps all children, especially those with learning and attention issues.

INCORPORATE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Embedding SEL instruction into the curriculum and tailoring it for students with learning and attention issues can help develop important skills such as managing emotions and persevering.

BUILD SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS

Helping students understand how they learn and practicing how to ask for accommodations are essential for success and can be fostered through mentoring.

FOCUS EARLIER ON POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS

Helping high-schoolers adjust to changing expectations can promote resilience as they transition to college or the workplace.

ADVOCATE FOR INCREASED FUNDING

Education laws offer protections and can be powerful tools for change, but implementing them requires adequate, steady funding to provide supports and services.