

Specific Learning Disorder Diagnosis in the DSM-5-TR

CW Austin Learning Disabilities Conference
Baton Rouge, LA
March 29, 2025

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Training Goals

This session will focus on:

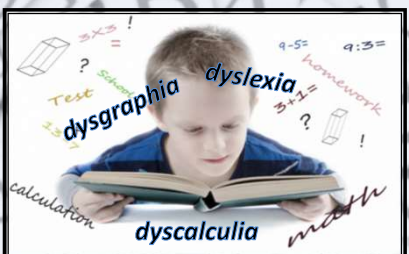
- Diagnostic criteria of Specific Learning Disorder in the DSM-5-TR,
- Culture & gender related diagnostic issues,
- Functional consequences of Specific Learning Disorder, &
- Some treatment options & national resources for individuals with Specific Learning Disorder related needs



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Specific Learning Disorder Definition



A set of specific disorders that relate to having difficulty learning & developing certain skills for at least 6 months.

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Diagnosis

Specific Learning Disorder may only be diagnosed after formal education starts. An individual **must meet** the following **four Diagnostic Criteria (A-D)**:

A) Have difficulties learning & using academic skills in at least one of the following areas for at least six months despite targeted help:

- Reading (e.g., inaccurate, slow & only with much effort)
- Comprehension of what is read
- Spelling
- Written expression (e.g., problems with grammar, punctuation or organization)
- Understanding number concepts, number facts or calculation
- Mathematical reasoning (e.g., applying math concepts or solving math problems)

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Diagnosis Cont'd.

B) Academic skills are substantially below what is expected for the child's age & cause problems in school, work, or daily activities;

C) Difficulties start during school-age even if an individual doesn't experience significant problems until adulthood (when there are more academic, work, & daily demands);

D) Difficulties are not due to other conditions such as:

- intellectual disability;
- vision/hearing problems;
- other mental or neurological condition;
- economic or environmental limitations;
- lack of educational instruction; &
- learning the language (e.g., immigrants)

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"Specific" Learning Disorder



Specific Learning Disorders are usually diagnosed during school-aged years. They are "specific" because they don't stem from other conditions like inadequate academic instruction; adverse home life; lack of proficiency in the official language; medical issues; or a global developmental delay.

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Global Developmental Delay




Global developmental delay is a term used to describe children who are significantly delayed in their physical &/or cognitive development. Other terms associated with global developmental delay are:

- failure to thrive
- intellectual disability
- developmental disability

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Risk Factors



- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Exposure to nicotine in the womb
- Blood parent or sibling with SLD (4x-8x increase)

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Culture-Related Diagnostic Issues

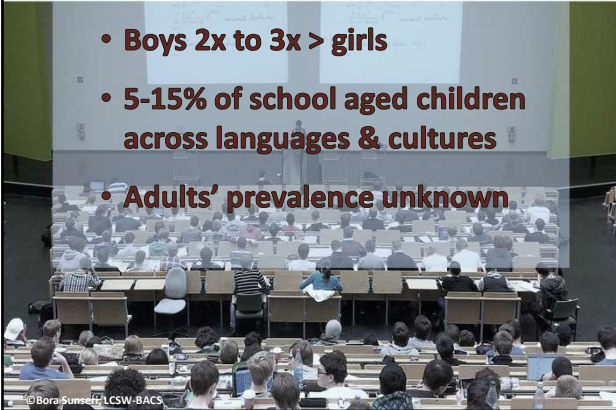


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Prevalence

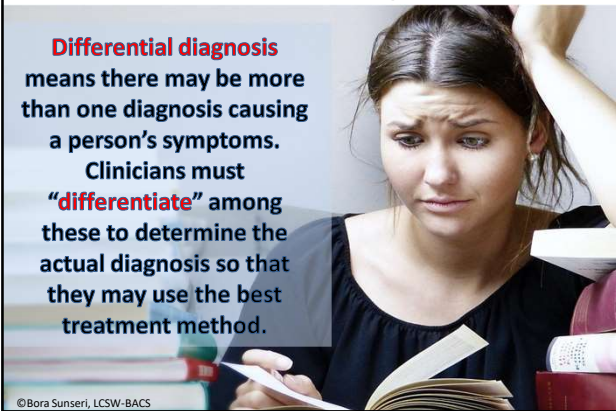
- Boys 2x to 3x > girls
- 5-15% of school aged children across languages & cultures
- Adults' prevalence unknown



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Differential Diagnosis

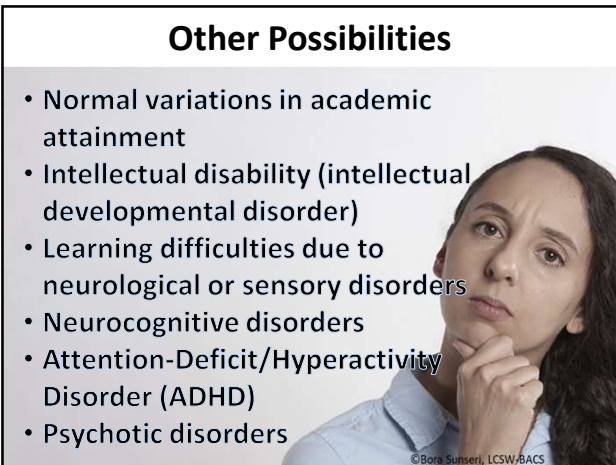
Differential diagnosis means there may be more than one diagnosis causing a person's symptoms. Clinicians must **"differentiate"** among these to determine the actual diagnosis so that they may use the best treatment method.



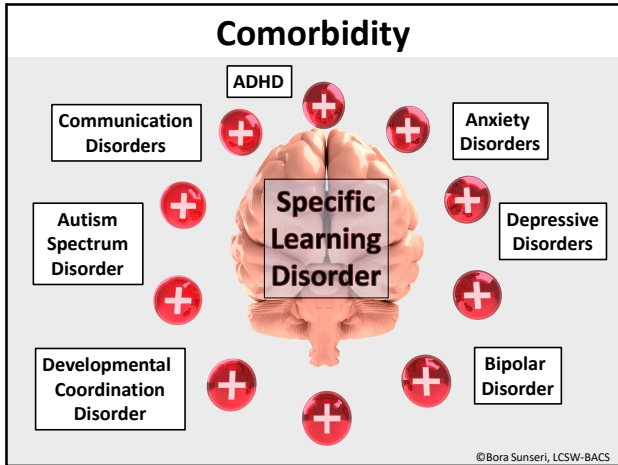
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Other Possibilities

- Normal variations in academic attainment
- Intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder)
- Learning difficulties due to neurological or sensory disorders
- Neurocognitive disorders
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Psychotic disorders



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Terminology

Specific Learning Disorder – used for the clinical or medical DSM 5 diagnosis (also called Learning Disorder by many). Someone with this diagnosis can expect to meet the criteria for a Learning Disability & qualify for accommodations & services.

Learning Disability – used in the educational & legal systems.

Learning Difficulty – a colloquial term used in place of Learning Disorder or Learning Disability.

Learning Difference – another colloquial term often used when speaking with children about their difficulties because it does not label them as “disordered.”

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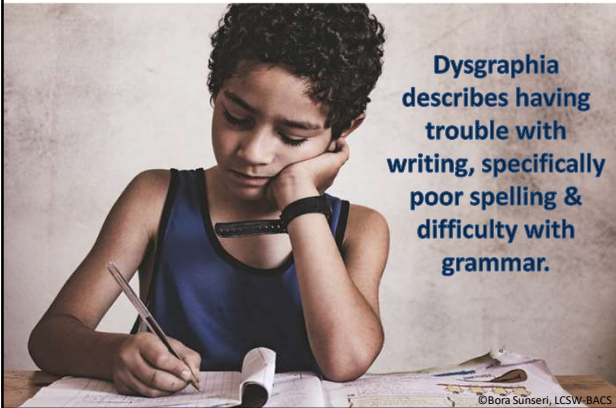
Dyslexia

Dyslexia affects both oral & written communication throughout an individual's life. Individuals with dyslexia often have trouble identifying letters or words which can lead to slow, inaccurate, & strained reading.

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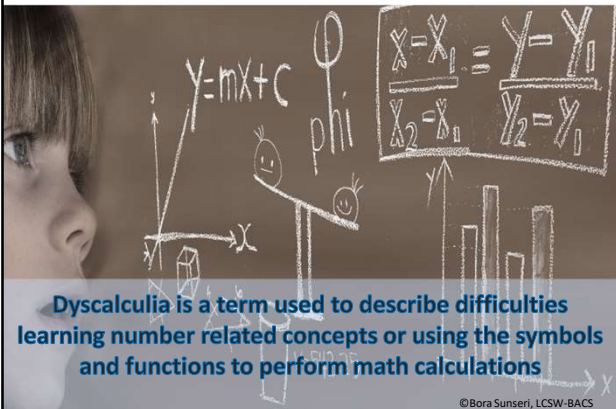
Dysgraphia



Dysgraphia describes having trouble with writing, specifically poor spelling & difficulty with grammar.

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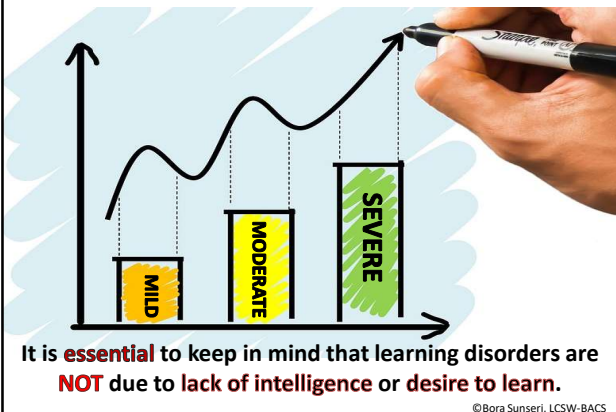
Dyscalculia



Dyscalculia is a term used to describe difficulties learning number related concepts or using the symbols and functions to perform math calculations

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Considerations



It is **essential** to keep in mind that learning disorders are **NOT** due to lack of intelligence or desire to learn.

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Functional Consequences



Specific Learning Disorder can result in negative functional consequences across the lifespan. School dropout & co-occurring depressive symptoms increase risk for poor mental health outcomes, including suicidality. Quality social or emotional support predict better mental health outcomes.

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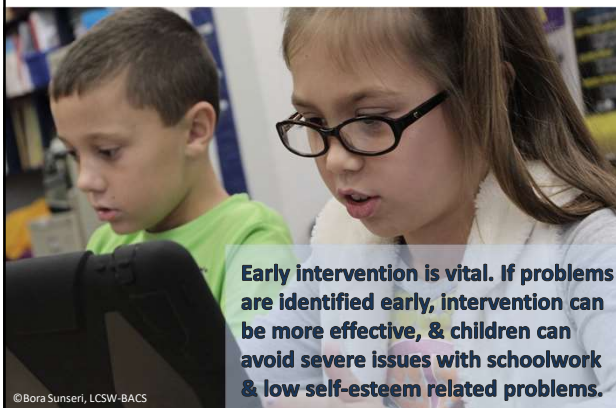


If the disorder is undiagnosed & untreated, a child may dislike school & academic work which could lead to low self-esteem, depression, & other problems. Specific Learning Disorder is linked to increased risk for suicidal ideation & attempts.

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Early Intervention



Early intervention is vital. If problems are identified early, intervention can be more effective, & children can avoid severe issues with schoolwork & low self-esteem related problems.

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| Legal Coverage | | |
|--|--|--|
| ADA | Section 504 | IDEA |
| Covers all individuals with disabilities as defined in a wide range of settings (public, private). | Covers all individuals with disabilities includes in different settings such as preschool, elementary, secondary, & postsecondary public schools as well as employment, health, welfare, & social services that receive federal funding. | Covers certain children with disabilities from birth to age 21 or graduation. This includes early intervention services children can receive before they reach school age. |

Adapted from <https://adata.org/factsheet/disability-rights-laws-public-primary-and-secondary-education-how-do-they-relate>

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IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

A child with specific disabilities who, by reason thereof, needs specially designed instruction & related services.

- Autism
- Deaf-blind
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairments
- Other Health Impaired
- **Specific Learning Disability**
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment including Blindness

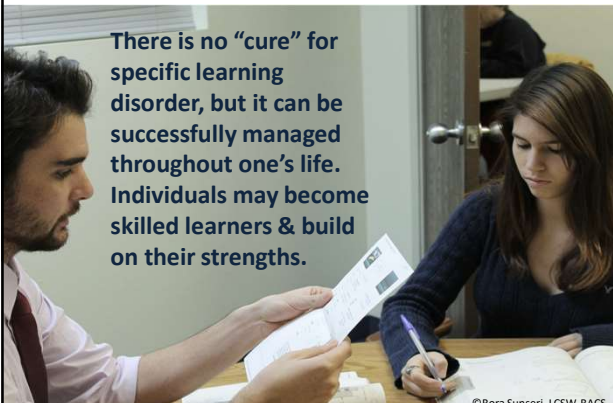
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| Impacts of IDEA, ADA, & 504 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Questions | IDEA (K-12) | ADA & Section 504 (> Gr 12) |
| Who is affected? | All children with a disability until high school graduation or turn 22 y/o | Everyone with a disability, if they are "otherwise qualified" to attend school |
| What rights are guaranteed? | Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) access | Protection from discrimination based on a disability |
| How is disability assessed? | School is responsible for identification & evaluation of students' disabilities legally | Student must provide disability documentation (e.g., medical records, high school Individualized Education Plan [IEP]) |
| How are students accommodated? | School develops & follows an IEP; may offer extra testing time, special education courses, etc. | Student must request "reasonable accommodations" on their own; school must respond to the request for equal access to education for all students. |
| Who is responsible for provisions? | School distributes necessary devices & aids | Students secure their own devices & aids |
| Are parents involved? | Yes | No; students over 18 are legally adults |
| What happens if the school violates a student's rights? | Appeals process with school or legal action | Appeals process with school or legal action |

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Treatment



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There is no "cure" for specific learning disorder, but it can be successfully managed throughout one's life. Individuals may become skilled learners & build on their strengths.

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Effective Intervention Examples

- **Systemic, intense, multimodal (involving multiple senses), individualized instruction**
- **Reading: phonological awareness, decoding skills, comprehension, & fluency**
- **Writing: process of writing & process of composing written expression**
- **Math: blocks, abacus, graph paper, acronyms (BODMAS)**
- **Accommodations: extended time, computers/tablets, smaller class size, shared class notes, oral testing**

Interventions may change over time as a child develops & expectations change.

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Teach Summarization - RAP

READ a paragraph or passage.

ASK questions: What is the topic, main idea & most important details?

PARAPHRASE: Put information in your own words.

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Self Regulated Strategy Development



SRSD encourages students to **monitor, evaluate, & revise** their writing, which reinforces self-regulation skills & independent learning.

<https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teal/guide/strategydev>

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Apps & Tools for Students

GBRLDC's Dyslexia Resources List - <https://ldhelp.org/causes/>

15 Assistive Technology Tools For Students with Disabilities
<https://www.teachthought.com/technology/assistive-technology/>
<https://www.thetechadvocate.org/7-must-app-andtools-students-learning-disabilities/>

- Mod Math
- MyTalkToolsMobile
- Dyslexia Toolbox
- If...The Emotional IQ Game
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- Voice Dream Reader
- Autism Xpress

Search "learning disabilities tools" at www.amazon.com

This is NOT an endorsement for these products.

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Summary

Specific Learning Disorder

- includes the criteria of having difficulty with learning & using academic skills related to reading, writing, &/or math (called dyslexia, dysgraphia, & dyscalculia);
- is diagnosed after the start of formal education, often during early school years;
- is NOT due to lack of intelligence, desire, or effort;
- if left undiagnosed & untreated, may result in negative functional consequences;
- It can **HOWEVER** be improved with use of effective resources, interventions, & building on strengths.

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IDEA

- <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the availability of special services for children with disabilities. Services can include early treatment & support for ages 0 through 3 years, and “free & appropriate” special education funded by the government for ages 3-21 years. <http://idea.ed.gov>

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ADDA & CHADD

- **Attention Deficit Disorder Association** www.add.org provides helpful resource information for adults with ADHD.
- **Children & Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder** www.chadd.org provides education, advocacy, & support, including training for parents & teachers, local support groups, & specialists who support the ADHD community.

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LDAA & NCLD

- Learning Disabilities Association of America**
- www.lidaamerica.org aims to create success opportunities for all people affected by learning disabilities & reduce the incidence of learning disabilities in future generations
- National Center for Learning Disabilities**
- www.nclld.org focuses on empowering parents, & young adults; transforming schools; and creating policy & advocacy impact to improve the lives of individuals with learning disabilities.

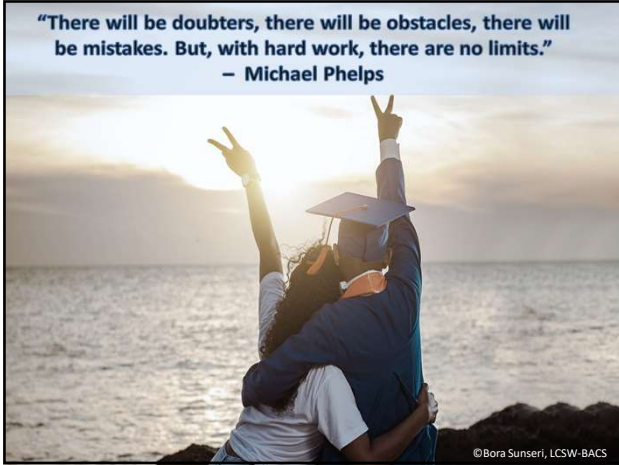
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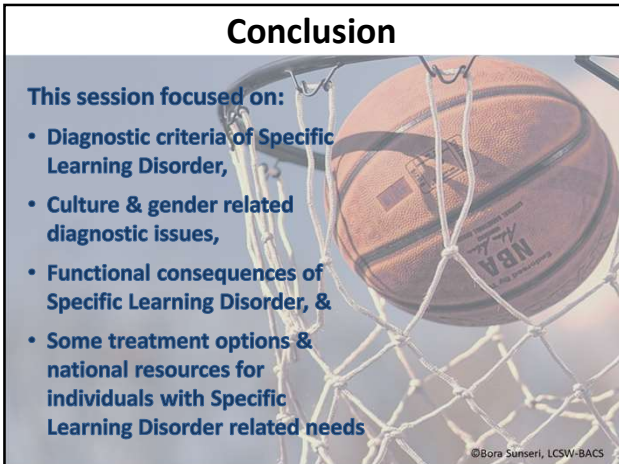


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