**TYPES of LEARNING DISABILITIES:**

Most types of learning disorders can be categorized into four areas of information processing. These include **input, integration, storage and output**.

- **INPUT:** This is the information perceived through the senses such as visual and auditory perception. A disability in this area results in a child having difficulty with recognizing shapes, position or size of items. They can also have problems with sequencing. Auditory perception problems result in the child having a hard time screening out competing sounds in order to focus on one of them, like a teacher’s voice.

- **INTEGRATION:**

Integration is the stage during which perceived input is interpreted, categorized, placed in a sequence or related to previous learning. A child with problems in this area may be unable to tell a story in a correct sequence, unable to memorize sequences of information such as days of the week, or be unable to learn facts. They may also have a poor vocabulary.

- **STORAGE:**

A child with memory problems has difficulty in learning new material without more repetitions that is usually needed. It can also be difficult to learn how to spell.

- **OUTPUT:**

Information comes out of the brain through words, gesturing, writing or drawing. Difficulties with language output results in a problem with spoken language like answering a question on demand. It can also cause problems with written language. Difficulties with motor abilities can cause either gross or fine motor problems. A child with gross motor delay may be clumsy and prone to stumble, fall or bump into things. They may also have problems running, climbing or learning to ride a bike. A child with fine motor difficulties may struggle with buttoning shirts, tying shoelaces or with handwriting.
**SIGNS of LEARNING DISABILITIES:**

- Trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, and connecting letters to sounds.
- Making many mistakes when reading aloud
- Not understanding what they are reading
- Awkward pencil grip and poor handwriting skills
- Trouble understanding jokes and sarcasm
- Trouble following multiple directions
- Trouble organizing thoughts and what they want to say
- Not following social rules of conversation
- Confusing mathematical symbols and numbers
- Not being able to tell a story in order
- Not knowing where to begin a task
- Emotional and/or social issues
- Trouble sleeping or getting along with family

**SYMPTOMS of DYSLEXIA in CHILDREN:**

- Talking later than average, slow to learn new words, and problems with rhyming
- Difficulty in following multiple step directions
- Problem with reading single words
- Problems linking letters with sounds
- Confusing small words
- Reversing shapes of written letters, like b and d
- Writing words backwards.
- Difficulty with learning the alphabet
- Confused by opposites
- Very poor spelling
**DIAGNOSIS:**

Although dyslexia in children may be diagnosed by a medical doctor, because it is a reading disorder, it may first be noticed in school during the primary years. If suspected, a specialist or school psychologist may perform a battery of tests including an **assessment of reading abilities, short term memory, sequencing skills, coding skills and an IQ test.**

**TREATMENT:**

Therapy sessions with a **speech-language pathologist** or tutoring with a **reading specialist** may be recommended. **IEP goals** usually focus on having the child learn to understand how letters are linked to sounds and how sounds make words. The child practices reading aloud and they learn to listen and repeat instructions. Medications are usually not part of the treatment plan.

A child with a reading disability should qualify for **special education** services under the category of specific learning disability. The **individualized education plan (IEP)** should outline the services that best meet the needs of the child. Interventions may include sessions with a reading specialist, school psychologist or a speech-language pathologist.

**There are three main types of symptoms that tend to correlate with ADD and ADHD in children.** Some children will have symptoms from all three categories called COMBINED. Some will have hyperactivity and impulsivity symptoms but are able to pay attention. Those with ADD, do not suffer from hyperactivity.

1. **INATTENTION**

Children with inattention are easily distracted, can’t follow directions or finish tasks, appear not to listen, make careless mistakes, are forgetful about daily activities, have problems organizing tasks, avoid sitting still, lose things and tend to daydream.

2. **HYPERACTIVITY**

ADHD in children can result in squirming, fidgeting or bouncing. They struggle to stay seated, have difficulty playing quietly and are always moving and excessively talking.
3. IMPULSIVITY

These children have a difficult time taking turn, blurt out answers, and often interrupt others.

It is important to remember that many of these symptoms are common to all children and do not necessarily indicate a disorder. ADD and ADHD in children are considered medical conditions and should only be diagnosed by a physician, NOT by your school. It is very difficult to diagnosis this disorder under the age of 6 or as a teenager. It is recommended that children be evaluated for ADD and ADHD between the ages of 6-12 years old.

In order to receive a diagnosis, a child should show **SIX or more of the above symptoms for more than six months** and the symptoms should occur in more than **TWO settings**.

1. **Auditory Processing Disorder:**

This is one of the most common learning disability listed on an IEP. It appears under the category of Specific Learning Disability. Auditory processing disorder means that your child has difficulty understanding sounds. For example, a child will physically hear correctly but doesn't comprehend the words meaning or use. A child with this problem has trouble understanding spoken directions from a parent or teacher or following a conversation. They are also easily distracted by noise.

2. **Aphasia:**

Aphasia is a condition that results in the limited ability to use or comprehend words. Those with mild aphasia might have difficulty remembering the names of objects or people while severe forms can impair the ability to speak.

3. **Dyscalculia:**

This type of learning disability involves difficulty with calculating numbers or grasping mathematical concepts. There is no single type of math disability as it varies from child to child.

4. **Dysgraphia:**

This condition involves problems with handwriting. This can include illegible writing, awkward pencil grip, inappropriately sized or spaced letters or spelling problems. Students with this problem sometimes use a laptop computer at school as an accommodation.
5. **Dyspraxia:**

Children with this problem have difficulties with motor tasks including either large movements or small movements. These can range from walking and balance problems to difficulty with picking up a pencil.

6. **Sensory Processing Disorder:**

SPD is thought to be a neurological disorder that causes difficulties with processing information from one or several of the five senses. The child perceives things abnormally which causes stress and confusion. These children may incorrectly process information which results in inattentiveness, disorganization and poor school performance. Specific behaviors can include a hypersensitivity to clothes rubbing against the skin, the inability to tolerate normal lighting, a dislike of being touched and being uncomfortable with eye contact.

7. **Short and Long Term Memory Problems:**

These children have a problem with creating or retrieving memories. Students have trouble remembering facts, numbers and assignments. They also have difficulty following instructions.

8. **Visual Processing Disorder:**

This disorder involves difficulties understanding visual input. A child doesn’t have sight limitations but has difficulties understanding and using visual information. The child has problem judging physical distances, differentiating between similar letters or objects and understanding spatial relationships.

Many children with common types of learning disabilities struggle with organizational and time management skills. Visit our section on improving study skills to read about effective strategies and techniques that may help improve your child's school performance.