

BRINGING THE IEP TO LIFE



Special Needs Classification Basics



13 IDEA Disability Classification Definitions

1. Autism

Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

2. Deaf-blindness

Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

3. Deafness

Deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

4. Emotional disturbance

Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Classifications

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Intellectual disability
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment

5. Hearing impairment

Hearing Impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

6. Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

7. Multiple disabilities

Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness.

8. Orthopedic impairment

Orthopedic impairment means a severe skeletal or muscular impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

9. Other health impairment

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that—

- (i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and
- (ii) Adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Classifications

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Intellectual disability
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment

10. Specific learning disability

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

11. Speech or language impairment

Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

12. Traumatic brain injury

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

13. Visual impairment

Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Classifications

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Intellectual disability
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment

Classification Overview

ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a subset of the Other Health Impairment classification characterized by symptoms that include inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

DSM-5* Details

- Fails to give close attention to detail or makes careless mistakes.
- Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.
- Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork.
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities (e.g. difficulty keeping materials in order, poor time management or fails to meet deadlines).
- Is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli (which may include unrelated thoughts).

What Teachers Should Look For

- **Type 1: Inattention** Easily distracted; Forgetful; Seems to "space out"; Struggles to follow directions.
- **Type 2: Hyperactivity and Impulsivity** Impulsive; fidgety; is up and about, moving; constantly talking, singing, or humming.
- **Type 3: Combination** Both easily distracted and hyperactive.





What Teachers Can Say

- "Using your positive energy towards (..this..) would be great! "
- "Your creativity is really awesome!"
- "Let's use your energy to motivate your classmates."
- "What do you need help with organizing?"

**SKILL GAPS**

- Attention and Focus
- Engagement and Collaboration
- Listening Comprehension
- Time Management and Planning
- Organization
- Grit

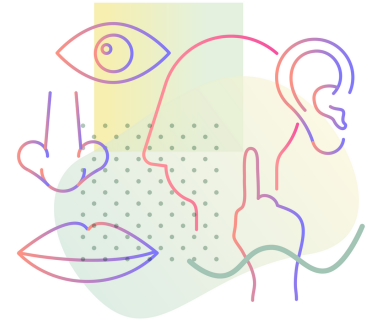
RESOURCES

-  [What is ADHD?](#)
-  [How Teachers Can Help Every Student Shine](#)
-  [ADHD: Signs, Symptoms, Solutions](#)
-  [6 Research-Based Interventions for the Treatment of ADHD in Children](#)

Classification Overview

Auditory Processing Disorder

Auditory Processing Disorder is a deficit in a person's ability to understand auditory information, not the result of other higher-order cognitive disorders or hearing impairment.



What Teachers Should Look For

According to the American Academy of Audiology*, students might exhibit the following:

- difficulty hearing speech in noisy environments
- difficulty maintaining attention
- problems locating the source of a sound
- difficulty following directions
- commonly asking for information to be repeated
- inability to detect subtle changes in tone
- distracted and inattentive behavior
- difficulty learning to read
- academic difficulties, including poor reading and spelling





What Teachers Can Say

- "I'm going to use the catch-phrase 'Here's the thing' to signal that I am about to give really important information."
- "Let's move your seat so you can hear me without distractions."
- "Remember, I always print the directions at the top of your worksheet so you can read them if you need a reminder of what to do."

SKILL GAPS

- Attention and Focus
- Listening Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Working Memory

RESOURCES

-  [What is auditory processing disorder?](#)
-  [Quick Facts on Auditory Processing Disorder](#)
-  [Living with an Auditory Processing Disorder](#)
-  [Maximizing Outcomes for Children with Auditory Disorders: An Evidence-Based Approach to Managing Auditory Processing Disorders](#)

Classification Overview

ANXIETY DISORDER

Anxiety Disorder manifests as excessive and uncontrollable worry, panic, or fear, occurring more days than not about activities such as school performance or work.

DSM-5* Details

- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance

What Teachers Should Look For

- Distress or reluctance to go to school.
- Failure to speak at school or in social situations.
- In younger children, anxiety may be expressed by crying, tantrums, freezing, or refusing to engage in school or social situations.





What Teachers Can Say

- "Take a big breath in through your nose, exhale through your mouth until all the air is gone. Repeat."
- "Walk with me! Let's go on a short walk (around the classroom, playground, etc.) as I watch the other students."
- "Let's add one thing you are grateful for in your gratitude journal."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Attention and Focus
- Engagement and Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
- Task Initiation
- Decision Making
- Self Management

RESOURCES

-  [How Does Anxiety Affect Kids in School?](#)
-  [Classroom accommodations for anxiety.](#)
-  [How to Explain Anxiety to Students](#)
-  [Students with Anxiety in the Classroom: Educational Accommodations and Interventions](#)

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Classification Overview

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a persistent deficit in social communication and interaction often coupled with restrictive and repetitive patterns of behavior not better explained by intellectual disabilities.

DSM-5* Details

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity such as back-and-forth conversation.
- Deficits in non-verbal communication behaviors.
- Lack of empathy or limited response to the emotions of others.
- Difficulty initiating social interaction.
- Inflexible behavior or difficulty coping with change.
- Repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech.
- Difficulty changing focus or switching between activities.
- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Inability to greet classmates or share interests with others.
- Lack of facial expressions and abnormalities with eye contact.
- Behaving the same on the playground as in the classroom.
- Lining up toys or flipping objects repetitively.
- Need to take the same route or eat same food every day.
- Strong attachment to unusual objects.





What Teachers Can Say

- Give routine and transition warnings: "Tomorrow, there will be a change in our schedule. We will be having a fire drill at 10am."
- Give clear, (no more than) 2-step directions: "Please take out your book and open to page 10."
- Provide a social script: "Say HI to your neighbor to the right. Then, tell him/her one thing you did over the weekend."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Interpersonal Skills
- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Social Awareness and Empathy
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Engagement and Collaboration

RESOURCES

-  [Quick Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
-  [The 6 Steps to Success: Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
-  [Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers](#)
-  [Evidenced-based-practices for Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Classification Overview

DEAF - BLINDNESS

Deaf - Blindness is a rare condition in which an individual has combined hearing and vision loss, thus limiting access to both auditory and visual information.

What Teachers Should Be Aware Of

- Deaf-blindness does not necessarily mean complete losses; it describes a person who has some degree of loss in both vision and hearing. The amount of loss in either vision or hearing will vary from person to person.
- Deaf-blind students communicate in a variety of ways, depending on their unique combination of hearing and vision loss. Options include: American Sign Language, tactile sign language, cochlear implant, lip-reading, assistive device, speech and others.





What Teachers Can Do

- Provide optimal lighting to capitalize on your student's residual vision. Reduce glare, increase contrast between materials, and ensure that the size of the materials and print are appropriate.
- Have classmates identify themselves as they answer questions and participate in class discussions so your student can orient themselves to the speaker.
- Use hands-on learning experiences that incorporate a multi-sensory approach and so your student can access information through touch, smell, and movement.
- Positioning your student and the materials based on their acuity and any field loss concerns. For example, a child who has a field loss on the left side will need materials presented on the right side. <https://ttaconline.org/>

**SKILL GAPS**

- Deaf-blindness is a disability of access to visual and auditory information.

RESOURCES

-  [Deaf-Blindness Overview](#)
-  [DeafBlind Resources](#)
-  [Deaf-Blind Awareness](#)
-  [Overview on Deaf-Blindness](#)

Classification Overview

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

A **Developmental Delay** occurs when a child has not gained the developmental skills expected of him or her, compared to others of the same age in the areas of motor function, speech and language, cognitive, play, and social skills.

What Teachers Should Look For

For school age children (4-5 years), teachers might observe an inability to:

- Speak a sentence of more than five words
- Say name and address
- Count ten or more objects
- Name at least four colors
- Distinguish fantasy from reality
- Communicate or socialize with other children

What Teachers Can Do or Say*





- Provide social opportunities by giving your student a 'helping role' such as handing out snacks or distributing work materials to other students. Coach the child to use socially appropriate speech (e.g., "Would you like a snack?") with peers.
- Build motivation by giving your student meaningful choices (e.g. select a reading book, decide what assignment she or he will work on first, choose a place in the room to study, or pick a peer to help as a study buddy.)
- Help students orient themselves in the classroom by using colored tape as boundary markers for different areas (e.g. reading area, play area, snack area.)

*"Teaching Children With Developmental Disabilities: Classroom Ideas." Teaching Children With Developmental Disabilities: Classroom Ideas | Intervention Central, www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/special-needs/teaching-children-developmental-disabilities-classroom-ideas.

**SKILL GAPS**

- Interpersonal Skills
- Attention & Focus
- Working Memory
- Counting & Number Sense
- Concepts of Print

RESOURCES

-  [What are developmental delays?](#)
-  [Developmental Delay Fact Sheet](#)
-  [Developmental Delays Treated With Multi-Sensory Program](#)
-  [Developmental delay: identification and management at primary care level](#)

Classification Overview

DYSCALCULIA

Dyscalculia is a subset of the Specific Learning Disability classification and manifests as a pattern of difficulties characterized by problems processing numerical information, learning arithmetic facts, and performing accurate calculations.

DSM-5* Details

- Has poor understanding of numbers, their magnitude, and relationships.
- Counts on fingers to add single-digit numbers instead of recalling the math fact.
- Gets lost in the midst of arithmetic computation and may switch procedures.
- Has severe difficulty applying mathematical concepts, facts, or procedures to solve quantitative problems.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Difficulty associating number symbols with quantity or oral numbers.
- Difficulty understanding more vs. less and biggest vs. smallest.
- Unable to count backwards.
- Reluctancy to ask for help because can't put math concepts into words.
- Trouble measuring ingredients.
- Struggling to make change at a store.

What Teachers Can Say

- "Let's use multi-sensory strategies ... tap your pencil while you count."
- "It's absolutely ok to use your fingers while making calculations."
- "Here are some simple fun games to play that will help you understand numbers better."
- "You are not alone. There are many other students who struggle with numbers."
- "You can take extra time to complete this exercise if you need it. Don't feel rushed!"


* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.




SKILL GAPS


- Counting and Number Sense
- Arithmetic Accuracy
- Fluency of Calculation

RESOURCES

 [When Math Just Doesn't Add Up: Understanding Dyscalculia](#)

 [What is dyscalculia?](#)

 [What Teachers Need to Know About Dyscalculia](#)

 [Dyscalculia: From Brain to Education](#)

Classification Overview

DYSGRAPHIA

Dysgraphia is a subset of the Specific Learning Disability classification and is characterized by impairment in written expression.

DSM-5* Details

- The term Dysgraphia does not appear in the DSM-5. However, the DSM-5 does refer to impairments in written expression.
- Students may exhibit writing difficulties by 1. making multiple grammatical or punctuation errors within sentences; 2. employing poor paragraph organization; or 3. adding, omitting, or substituting vowels or consonants.
- In general, written expression of ideas lacks clarity.
- Poor handwriting is not caused by being lazy or sloppy.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Inappropriately sized and spaced letters
- Incorrect or misspelled words, despite thorough instruction
- Writing is a slow and frustrating process for the student
- Poor pencil grip
- Difficulty copying visual information accurately






What Teachers Can Do

- Let kids strengthen their motor skills by playing with clay or tracing pictures.
- Give students extra time to complete writing assignments.
- Make sure students use a slightly larger writing utensil and a finger grip so they practice the correct way to hold it.
- Provide alternatives to a written final product, such as an oral presentation.
- Include intensive writing and phonics instruction along with keyboarding skills.

**SKILL GAPS**

- Fine motor skills
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Grammar and punctuation
- Clarity or organization of written expression

RESOURCES

-  [Understanding Dysgraphia](#)
-  [What is Dysgraphia?](#)
-  [What Teachers Should Know About Dysgraphia](#)
-  [Supporting Students With Dysgraphia](#)
-  [Cognitive Profiles of Developmental Dysgraphia](#)

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Classification Overview

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a subset of the Specific Learning Disability classification and manifests as a pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding, and poor spelling abilities.

DSM-5* Details

- Inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading (e.g., reads single words aloud incorrectly or slowly and hesitantly, frequently guesses words, has difficulty sounding out words.)
- Difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read (e.g., may read text accurately, but no understand sequence, inferences or relationships.)
- Difficulties with decoding or spelling (e.g., sounds out words incorrectly, may add, omit or substitute vowels or consonants.)

What Teachers Should Look For

- A persistent sense of anxiety associated with school.
- Avoids reading altogether.
- Avoids school. (Always asking to stay home.)
- A general challenge with attention and behavior.
- A false portrayal of reading skills.
- A struggle to express the written word.





What Teachers Can Say

- "I've heard you are really good at (athletics, art, acting)"
- "You are not alone! 15% of ALL people struggle with reading."
- "It does NOT define you or your intelligence, you are very smart!"
- "College is absolutely an option with dyslexia."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Concepts of Print
- Decoding
- Reading Comprehension
- Spelling

RESOURCES

-  [Classroom Accommodations for Dyslexia](#)
-  [Dyslexia in the General Education Classroom](#)
-  [Dyslexia Awareness Part 1: Module 3 - Dyslexic Challenges](#)
-  [Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading With Commentary for Dyslexia Specialists](#)

Classification Overview

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Emotional Disturbance describes a wide range of disorders and conditions involving anxiety, conduct, eating, mood, obsessive-compulsive or psychiatric that must exist over a long period of time, to a marked degree, and adversely effect the student's educational performance.

What Teachers Should Look For

- An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or other health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

What Teachers Can Say





- "I'm really looking forward to having you in my class."
- "The two of us will work together to make it a great year."
- "I strive to be a fair teacher and treat everyone in my class the same."
- "What are your favorite things to do when you are not at school?" (build rapport on good days)
- "It's ok if you make a mistake. I don't hold grudges. Let's make a fresh start."



SKILL GAPS

- Interpersonal Skills
- Responsible Behaviors
- Self Management

RESOURCES

-  [Students With Emotional Disabilities: Facts About This Vulnerable Population](#)
-  [Reaching Students With Emotional Disturbances](#)
-  [Emotional disturbance in the classroom: don't give up on Bobby](#)
-  [Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies for Students With EBD](#)

Classification Overview

HEARING (AUDITORY) IMPAIRMENT

Hearing Impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

What Teachers Should Know

The Impact of Hearing Impairment in the Classroom

- Hearing impairments can cause delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills including vocabulary limitations.
- Students might struggle with material that is delivered primarily by word-of-mouth. The use of various learning modalities is important to ensure the academic achievement of students with hearing impairments.
- Communication difficulties can lead to social isolation and poor self-concept.
- Early exploration of future vocational opportunities is essential to ensure successful transition from K-12 to college or career.

What Teachers Can Do





- **Clearly Pronounce All Verbal Instructions** keeping in mind that most students have residual hearing ability that needs to be maximized. Remember to not speak while writing on the board.
- **Minimize Background Noises** by closing doors or windows, and incorporating sound absorbing materials such as carpet, curtains, or pillows.
- **Include Visual Aids in Teaching** such as images, charts, graphic organizers, and utilize live demonstrations when possible.
- **Make Maximum Use of Available Technology** including amplification and microphone systems, interpretation software and interactive white boards.



SKILL GAPS

- Attention & Focus
- Social Awareness
- Speaking
- Engagement & Collaboration
- Listening Comprehension

RESOURCES

-  [How to Help Students Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing Succeed in School](#)
-  [Effects of Hearing Loss on Development](#)
-  [Top 10 Tips for Teachers of Students with Hearing Loss](#)
-  [Modifying the Classroom Environment to Increase Engagement and Decrease Disruption with Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

Classification Overview

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intellectual Disability is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. There are four levels of severity, including mild, moderate, severe, and profound.

DSM-5* Details

- Learning more slowly than other children of the same age.
- Difficulty communicating or socializing with others.
- Having problems remembering things.
- Inability to connect actions with consequences.
- Difficulty with problem-solving or logical thinking.
- Inability to do everyday tasks like getting dressed or using the restroom without help.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Most children with intellectual disabilities recognize that they are behind others of their own age.
- Some children may become frustrated, withdrawn or anxious, or act "bad" to get attention.
- Children and teens may be victims of bullying in school and social settings.
- Children may experience underlying medical problems that they cannot tell you about.





What Teachers Can Say

- "I noticed that you are working hard."
- "Well done- you are making progress on your classwork."
- "I am proud of your effort."
- "Let's review the directions together."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Reading Comprehension
- Reading Fluency
- Counting and Number Sense
- Arithmetic Accuracy
- Fluency of Calculation
- Working Memory
- Life Skills

RESOURCES

-  [Mild, Moderate, Severe Intellectual Disability Differences](#)
-  [Frequently Asked Questions on Intellectual Disability](#)
-  [Intellectual Disability Overview](#)
-  [10 Research-Based Tips for Enhancing Literacy Instruction for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

Classification Overview

NONVERBAL LEARNING DISORDER

Nonverbal learning disorder is a neurological condition marked by a collection of academic and social difficulties including trouble receiving and interpreting nonverbal forms of communication, such as body language, facial expressions, the concept of personal space, or when “enough is enough”.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Lack of coordination, balance problems and/or difficulties with fine graphomotor skills
- Poor visual recall, faulty spatial perceptions, and/or difficulties with spatial relations
- Lack of ability to comprehend nonverbal communication, difficulties adjusting to transitions and new situations, and/or significant deficits in social judgment and social interaction
- Extremely verbose and may "speak like an adult" at a young age
- Highly developed memory for rote verbal information





What Teachers Can Say

- "I know that new situations can be scary so I am going to talk you through the transition."
- "As a class, we are going to learn what appropriate behavior is, and practice it together."
- "Always feel free to tell me how you are feeling about your work, so I can help you be successful."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Cognitive Flexibility
- Interpersonal Skills
- Motor Control
- Social Awareness & Empathy

RESOURCES

-  [Quick Facts On Non-Verbal Learning Disorder](#)
-  [Nonverbal Learning Disorder](#)
-  [What Is Nonverbal Learning Disability?](#)
-  [NVLD Project Research Papers](#)

Classification Overview

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT

Orthopedic impairment refers to a severe skeletal or muscular impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance including impairments caused by congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

What Teachers Should Know

There are 3 classifications of orthopedic impairment:

- Neuromotor Impairments: spina bifida, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries
- Degenerative Diseases: muscular dystrophy, spinal muscular atrophy
- Musculoskeletal Disorders: club foot, missing/deformed limbs, scoliosis

What Teachers Can Do

To participate as fully as possible in educational activities, your student may require these accommodations:

- special seating arrangements, larger tables;
- note-taking assistance;
- securing assistive technology and augmentative communication devices;
- extended time to complete assignments, and;





It is so important to be aware of your student's specific condition and its effect (such as tiring easily).



SKILL GAPS

- Motor Control
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
- Attention & Focus

RESOURCES

-  [Orthopedic Impairments and Special Needs Students](#)
-  [Orthopedic Impairment Fact Sheet](#)
-  [The IDEA's Special Education Categories: Orthopedic Impairment](#)
-  [Teaching Students with Disabilities: Orthopedic Impairment](#)

Classification Overview

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that— adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

What Teachers Should Know

- Other Health Impairments are due to chronic or acute health problems such as: asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome.
- Some general characteristics faced by individuals with other health impairments may include but not limited to: Fatigue, Mobility issues, Issues involving attention, Coordination difficulties, Muscle weakness, Frequent absences or lateness’s to school, Stamina, Inability to concentrate for long periods of time.

What Teachers Can Do





- Organize the classroom by keeping all materials well labeled and in permanent locations for easy access.
- Allow extra time for finishing assignments or for testing.
- Simplify directions to make them more manageable.
- Seat the student close to the teacher and away from any peers who might be distracting.
- Post a daily and weekly schedule that clearly delineates each activity. These schedules can then be used as prompts to direct the student back on task.



SKILL GAPS

- Attention and Focus
- Engagement and Collaboration
- Time Management and Planning
- Organization
- Grit / Stamina

RESOURCES

-  [Other Health Impairment Disability Fact Sheet](#)
-  [Comprehensive Overview of Other Health Impairments](#)
-  [Other Health Impairment - The IDEA's Special Education Categories](#)
-  [The Other Health Impairment Category and Health-Based Classroom Accommodations](#)

Classification Overview

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY

Specific Learning Disability is a 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 the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

DSM-5* Details

- Inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading.
- Difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read.
- Difficulty with spelling and written expression.
- Difficulties mastering number sense, facts, calculation.
- Difficulties with mathematical reasoning.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Difficulty reading out loud
- Poor reading comprehension
- Struggling to write papers and essays
- Trouble understanding lectures
- Problems following directions
- Trouble transforming thoughts into written words
- Misreading or miscalculating math problems





What Teachers Can Say

- "I am going to help you learn how to learn."
- "Your brain just processes information differently."
- "With the right tools and strategies, you can be independent and successful in school."
- "You are capable and together we will figure out how to make you a stronger learner."

**SKILL GAPS**

- Speaking and Listening
- Written Expression
- Reading Fluency
- Comprehension
- Mathematical Calculation
- Mathematical Problem Solving

RESOURCES

-  [Successful Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities](#)
-  [Specific Learning Disabilities Overview](#)
-  [What Are Learning Disabilities?](#)
-  [The State of Learning Disabilities](#)

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Classification Overview

SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Speech or Language Impairment is defined as a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

DSM-5* Details

- Reduced vocabulary; both word knowledge and use.
- Limited ability to put words and word endings together to form sentences based on rules of grammar.
- Impairments in the ability to use vocabulary and connect sentences to explain or describe a topic or series of events or have a conversation.
- Difficulty with producing sound and speech that interferes with intelligibility or prevents verbal communication.

What Teachers Should Look For

- Students may have difficulty comprehending and following directions.
- May not be able to fully participate in conversations with peers.
- May struggle with learning new words.
- When speaking or writing, students may misuse verb tenses or incorrectly sequence words in a sentence.

What Teachers Can Say





- "I am going to work carefully to make sure you can understand the directions."
- "It will be important for you to tell me when you aren't sure about what to do."
- "We are going to listen to examples of clear speakers so you have a good role model."
- "I am going to give you lots of chances to practice speaking - both in class with Whole Group Responses - and after school with just me."

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Washington, DC: Author.

**SKILL GAPS**

- Reading Fluency
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
- Listening Comprehension

RESOURCES

-  [Speech and Language Impairments Special Needs Factsheet](#)
-  [How to Help Children With Speech and Language Disorders in Virtual and Modified In-Person Classroom Settings](#)
-  [Signs of SLI in the Classroom](#)
-  [Speech-Language Impairment: How to Identify the Most Common and Least Diagnosed Disability of Childhood](#)

Classification Overview

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

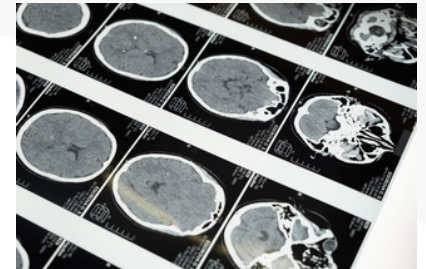
What Teachers Should Know

- Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.
- Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

What Teachers Can Do

Here are some examples of common accommodations for students coming back to class after experiencing a TBI:





- Allowing additional time to complete work
- Allowing for extra or extended breaks
- Grading the quality of work over the quantity of work
- Allowing the student to record classroom instruction for later playback
- Providing clear oral and written instructions
- Implementing assistive technology when applicable
- Assessing knowledge using multiple-choice questions



SKILL GAPS

- Comprehension
- Memory
- Speech & Language
- Motor Movement
- Attention & Focus
- Organization
- Social Awareness

RESOURCES

-  [Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Factsheet \(for Schools\)](#)
-  [Teaching Strategies for Students with Brain Injuries](#)
-  [Michael Wight and Elementary School After TBI](#)
-  [Classroom Interventions for Students with Traumatic Brain Injuries](#)

Classification Overview

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Visual Impairment (including blindness) means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

What Teachers Should Know**3 Basic Limitations on a Person with Visual Impairment / Blindness**

(often referred to as Lowenfeld Losses):

- Loss of range and variety of experiences
- Loss of the ability to get around
- Loss of the control of the environment and the self in relation to it.

The Impact Visual Impairment / Blindness in the Classroom

- Students with vision impairment may feel isolated in the learning environment, which can have an impact on learning.
- Headaches often result from eyestrain. This may reduce considerably the duration of focus time available to these students.
- Participation and interaction in group work may be limited. It is difficult for students who cannot see the body language of others to feel comfortable about participating.





What Teachers Can Do

- Speak to the class upon entering and leaving the room.
- Call the student with a visual impairment by name when you want their attention.
- Work with a student's intervention specialist for specific educational needs such as change in lighting, classroom seating, and print medium, ie Braille.
- Use descriptive words such as straight, forward, left, etc. in relation to the student's body orientation. Be specific in directions and avoid the use of vague terms with unusable information, such as "over there", "here", "this", etc.

**SKILL GAPS**

- Attention & Focus
- Social Awareness
- Engagement & Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas
- Reading Fluency

RESOURCES

-  [Impact of Vision Impairment and Blindness](#)
-  [General Information Access for Persons with a Visual Impairment](#)
-  [How Visual Impairment Affects Learning](#)
-  [Opening eyes to vision impairment: Inclusion is just another way of seeing](#)