

Children with Learning Disabilities or Differences

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Now that children are adjusting to being back at school, notice if there are frustrations or struggles that your children experience as they work on new lessons. There are many children who suffer from a hidden learning disability. We call it hidden because there isn't a physical sign of a disability, and yet these children experience barriers to learning. Your child may be excellent in math but can't read or spell well. Another child may have trouble listening to what the teacher is saying, but can work well when reading an assignment. Children often know that something is wrong, but usually can't explain what it is. There are different types of learning disabilities. If you're concerned about a child we encourage you to get help. You can make a big difference in helping your children be successful in school and in life.

Recommendations:

- Know a child's strengths, and build on them. If a child is a good artist, but has trouble writing, have her draw a picture before the writing assignment.
- Don't tease children for struggling with reading, spelling, or math, since it's not an indication of their intelligence. Many people with learning disabilities are very smart. When a person has a learning disability there is a discrepancy between their capabilities and their performance.
- Advocate. You know your children better than the teachers, so set up times to discuss their work and needs. Ask for a Student Study Team meeting or an assessment for learning disabilities. Put all of your requests in writing and keep a copy. An IEP (Individualized Education Plan) would provide your child with accommodations and modifications that could aid in learning.
- Seek out help from qualified health professionals, tutors, and teachers. Ask your pediatrician for resources and support toward getting your child assessed.
- Talk to other parents of children who have special needs. They can give you support and tips to prevent undue distress. When children feel frustrated on a regular basis, they're more likely to exhibit behavioral or mood problems.
- Avoid homework battles. Ask the teachers to modify assignments as needed. Help children organize and prioritize their work.
- Use "to-do" lists and post-it notes to help your child remember what is expected.
- Give frequent positive feedback. Children with learning differences need to hear about their strengths. Praise your child for their talents.
- Remember that your child's brain works in a unique way. Help children get the tools they need to thrive.
- Enjoy your children, and set aside fun family time.

Resources:

- Disability Rights and Education Fund, www.dredf.org
- The International Dyslexia Association, www.interdys.org
- Great Schools, www.greatschools.net

