

## **What to know about students with special needs**

### **If the school decides to evaluate, then what happens?**

The team meets and goes over everything they know about the student. They talk about any test results. They get up-to-date information from parents, teachers, and anyone else who works with the student (will be discussed thoroughly during department meetings in September).

If the student is 14 or older, or in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or above, the team should also talk about what the student wants to do when s/he finishes school. This discussion should include work, higher education, and other adult issues.

The team decides what information is missing. They figure out what kinds of tests should be done. They think about what kinds of data will help them understand the student and how s/he learns.

The team plans everything about the evaluation. Then they send or give parents an evaluation notice.

In extreme circumstances, we will ask parents to take their children out of Muneer Academy. In less extreme circumstances, we will place students in the Basic Skills classes.

### **What is in the evaluation notice?**

The evaluation notice must:

- √ give the reasons for the evaluation, and explain how the results will be used;
- √ describe anything else the school thought about doing, and why they chose to do this evaluation instead;
- √ describe the tests, records or reports the school used to decide to do an evaluation;
- √ include any other information about why the school decided to evaluate the student and how they will do it;

## Types of learning disability

Name	Affected Area(s)	Characteristics
Auditory Processing Disorder	Processing or interpretation of sound in the brain	Difficulty making sense of sounds Problems with blocking out background noise Trouble telling where sound is coming from
Dyscalculia	Numbers and mathematics skills	Difficulty learning math facts such as symbols and place value Problems with counting Trouble telling time
Dysgraphia	Fine motor skills and handwriting	Illegible handwriting Inconsistent use of letters (e.g., lowercase and capital) Difficulty with spatial planning on paper

<p>Dyslexia</p>	<p>Reading and language processing skills</p>	<p>Reading slowly</p> <p>Difficulty decoding words, especially the order of letters</p> <p>Problems recalling known words</p>
<p>Language Processing Disorder</p>	<p>Language processing skills</p>	<p>Difficulty understanding meaning of spoken language</p> <p>Poor reading comprehension</p> <p>Problems with verbal expression</p>
<p>Nonverbal Learning Disabilities</p>	<p>Nonverbal skills such as motor, visual-spatial, and social skills</p>	<p>Difficulty interpreting body language or facial expressions</p> <p>Poor motor coordination</p> <p>Trouble with multistep instructions</p>
<p>Visual Perceptual/Visual Motor Deficit</p>	<p>Interpreting visual information or drawing</p>	<p>Mistakes in writing, such as reversing letters</p> <p>Too-tight grip on pencil or other writing tool</p> <p>Poor hand/eye coordination</p>

## Dispelling Myths Related to Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities occur in every culture, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Common misperceptions about learning disabilities, however, can impact the way in which students are identified and the services they receive. This section helps to dispel some of the more frequently held myths about learning disabilities.

**Myth #1: Persons with learning disabilities are lazy, do not want to learn, and cannot be successful.** Academic challenges caused by a learning disability do not indicate laziness or an inability to learn. With proper accommodations and supports, students with learning disabilities can succeed in school. Supporting these students in school can help lead to further success, as adults with learning disabilities successfully pursue higher education and work in virtually all career fields.

**Myth #2: Persons with learning disabilities are less intelligent.** Having a learning disability does not affect a student's intelligence. In fact, some students with learning disabilities are gifted.<sup>4</sup> Although students with learning disabilities may "appear to be functioning adequately in the classroom, their performance may be far below what they are capable of, given their intellectual ability" (NJCLD, 2011, p. 2). Having a learning disability does not mean that a student does not have the capacity to learn, but rather benefits from learning materials and concepts using alternative methods.

**Myth #3: People with learning disabilities outgrow them by adulthood.** A learning disability is a lifelong condition (National Institutes of Health, 2017). Although many adults adopt coping mechanisms and strategies to reduce the impact of their learning disabilities, some continue to struggle with learning difficulties throughout adulthood. Learning disabilities are not usually curable, though many adults select careers that reinforce their strengths rather than positions that may be more challenging due to their learning disability.

**Myth #4. Learning disabilities will impact all people the same way.** Learning disabilities can vary significantly from person to person, even within the same type of learning disability (NJCLD, 2010). For example, one person with dyslexia may struggle significantly with reading while another individual may only have problems reading in certain situations, like reading aloud. Students with other types of disabilities (such as autism, students who are blind or deaf, or students with emotional disturbances) may also have a learning disability (NJCLD, 2010). It is important to address all disabilities that a student may have.

**Table 2 Characteristics of learning disabilities, by age**

Age Group	Characteristics of Possible Learning Disabilities
3–4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪Problems pronouncing words</li><li>▪Trouble finding the right word</li><li>▪Difficulty rhyming</li><li>▪Trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, and days of the week</li><li>▪Difficulty following direction or learning routines</li><li>▪Difficulty controlling crayons, pencils, scissors, or coloring within the lines</li><li>▪Trouble with buttons, zippers, snaps, learning to tie shoes</li></ul>
5–9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪Trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds</li><li>▪Unable to blend sounds to make words</li><li>▪Confuses basic words when reading</li><li>▪Slow to learn new skills</li><li>▪Consistently misspells words and makes frequent errors</li><li>▪Trouble learning basic math concepts</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪Difficulty telling time and remembering sequences</li></ul>
10–13 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪Difficulty with reading comprehension or math skills</li><li>▪Trouble with open-ended questions and word problems</li><li>▪Dislikes reading and writing; avoids reading aloud</li><li>▪Poor handwriting</li><li>▪Poor organizational skills (homework and desk are messy and disorganized)</li><li>▪Trouble following classroom discussions and expressing thoughts aloud</li><li>▪Spells the same word differently in a single document</li></ul>