

FORWARD TOGETHER

Actions for Impact: Teachers



In the United States, 1 in 5 students have learning and attention issues. This includes those with identified specific learning disabilities, diagnosed ADHD, or related disorders that impact learning. Despite often having average or above average intelligence, the majority are achieving below grade level. What can be hidden is that the “1 in 5” also have incredible strengths and valuable talents. When their [disabilities](#) are not identified or appropriately supported, their potential goes untapped with lifelong consequences.

[NCLD](#) and [Understood](#) sought to better understand how to support you in unlocking the potential of the 1 in 5 in general education classrooms. We partnered with your colleagues to understand their experiences and insights. And we identified evidence-based actions you can take to more successfully reach and teach students with learning and attention issues—actions that benefit all students.

[Understood](#)



Teachers are clear: They need to be better prepared before they are in the classroom full-time. And once they're there, they need to be better supported so they can better reach and teach the 1 in 5.

There are many paths to becoming a teacher, and some preparation programs are more comprehensive and rigorous than others. However, since most states do not articulate the specific skills, knowledge, or training general educators should have for working with students with learning and attention issues, many general educators report that they did not take courses applicable to teaching the 1 in 5. If they did, most did not find these courses beneficial or relevant once in the classroom. The majority of teachers cited “on-the-job training and trial-and-error learning” as the ways they learned how to teach the 1 in 5. Of teachers surveyed:

Ongoing classroom struggles create a devastating ripple effect for the 1 in 5

The 1 in 5 are more likely to repeat a grade, be suspended, and drop out of school as compared to their peers—and the consequences are compounded for individuals of color, low-income students, English language learners, and students who have additional needs.

- They enroll in college at **half** the rate as peers
- 4 in 10** who attend college complete it
- 50%** are unemployed
- 1 in 2** have been involved in the justice system

Only **17%**

feel very well prepared to teach students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

Only **30%**

feel strongly that, **when they try their best, they can be successful with the 1 in 5.**

81%

recognize that externalized responses – such as disruptive behaviors – **may be signs of learning disabilities and/or ADHD, but...**

Less than **50%**

felt capable attributing these behaviors to internalized responses in students, such as trouble with organizing or not knowing how or when to ask for help.

Yet, your colleagues emphasized that they *want* to learn more to help their students and improve their practice.

We can all do better together—and there is proof we can!

To move forward together, NCLD and Understood conducted a literature review of empirically driven studies—and engaged Understood’s Educator Advisory Council, NCLD’s Professional Advisory Board, and other experts—to identify and capture evidence-based [critical mindsets and key practices](#) educators can take to improve the learning and achievement of the 1 in 5—and all students!

Just flip the page to access resources and find out more. ▶

Actions you can take today to help *all* students:

Build a deep understanding of the science of learning and what learning and attention issues are. Understood.org and NCLD provide user-friendly [resources](#) and [tools](#) that build educators' [understanding](#) of the 1 in 5 and make accessible the complex findings from learning science, so you can [use the information in your daily work](#). You can also find simulations to experience what it feels like to have a specific learning disability, ADHD, and weaknesses in information processing and executive functioning. This dual approach builds both empathy and insights into how students learn.

Learn and implement critical mindsets and evidence-based strategies. The [critical mindsets and key practices](#) will give you a strong start for better reaching and teaching the 1 in 5. Implement the practices, analyze the impact on student learning with colleagues, and adjust instruction as necessary. Visit [Understood for Educators](#) for free, practical, evidence-based resources added monthly.

Be an in-school champion. Take the strategies and [resources](#) you're using to better support the 1 in 5 and develop your teacher leadership by sharing with colleagues and mentoring them on the journey. Advocate with school leadership for your student needs to implement these practices across the school more broadly—and show how they are helping all students.

Advocate for a school schedule that prioritizes time for collaboration and planning with other teachers and specialists.

Partner with families and caregivers. Work together with families by [providing them with resources](#) for their children. Access [tools to improve communication](#) and collaboration.

Push for high-quality professional development. Originally published for parents, this [toolkit](#) is great for teachers too. (Ongoing resources for educator-specific strategies are coming!) Share this report and toolkit with your school, district, and board leadership to advocate for more teacher development and training targeted for the 1 in 5 and beneficial for all students.

Advocate for literacy curriculum and professional development that incorporates explicit and structured literacy instruction including phonics and phonemic awareness.

Reflect on how inclusive your classroom is and make changes. Assess your classroom. High expectations should be communicated for all students, and every student should have a chance to demonstrate their strengths through different modes of learning. Beyond implementing strategies from the eight key practices, make accommodations available for all learners—not just specifically for students with Individualized Education Programs; to meet each student's needs and build strengths.

Break down silos. We all have a role to play in breaking down the silos between policy and practice. Become more involved with [NCLD](#) to learn more and advocate for policy and practice changes that aim to improve how our system serves students with learning and attention issues.


Teachers





Our approach

NCLD and Understood set out to unpack and address the challenges facing the 1 in 5 in the general education setting, in partnership with Lake Research Partners, SRI Education, and EducationCounsel.

 **1,350** teachers surveyed

 **13** teacher focus groups conducted in California, Ohio, and North Carolina

 **150** academic, empirically driven articles reviewed

 **50** states researched for teacher certification requirements

With input and pressure testing by Understood's Educator Advisory Council, NCLD's Professional Advisory Board, and other experts

For more information and to access the full report, visit nclcd.org/forwardtogether

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