A specific learning disability (SLD) is a brain-based disorder that affects an individual's ability to read, write, and do math (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia). Of the 13% of the U.S. school-age population who received disability services under IDEA in the 2020–2021 academic year, 34% received services for SLD as the primary disability. Research shows students with SLD can achieve commensurate with their peers, if given the appropriate instruction and support.

Yet, more than 93% of 4th- and 8th-grade students with SLD are not proficient in math.

Math Scores indicate Black and Hispanic students with SLD experience even greater opportunity gaps than their White and Asian peers.

SLD Compared to All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Below Basic</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SLD Achievement Gaps by Race*

*Data quality was insufficient to include all racial/ethnic categories.

Note: Among 4th-grade SLD students, math scores did not significantly change from 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Grade 4

- On average, SLD students scored 12 points below basic.
- White: 214 Basic
- Asian: 202
- Black: 192
- Hispanic: 180

Grade 8

- On average, SLD students scored 27 points below basic.
- White: 262 Basic
- Asian: 235
- Black: 218
- Hispanic: 197

Note: Among 8th-grade SLD students, math scores significantly declined from 2019 (pre-pandemic).

EALA was a contributing funder in the development of this snapshot.
Extensive intervention research\(^2\) rooted in the science of mathematics establishes an evidence base of effective instructional methods for developing foundational math skills among students with and at risk for SLD, building a bridge to close achievement gaps. When students with SLD receive evidence-based intervention aligned to their needs, the National Assessment of Education Progress and other standardized assessments will accurately portray their full academic potential. To boost math outcomes, funding should prioritize continued research and implementation of effective instructional practices.

You can help fuel the learning rights movement by reading about the current issues and reaching out to your government officials to encourage them to take action on behalf of students with disabilities. Learn more by visiting [ncld.org](http://ncld.org).

References

