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 appropriate instruction and support.

Yet, more than 95% of 4th- and 8th-grade students with SLD are not proficient in reading.

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

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

Note: Among 8th-grade SLD students, reading scores did not significantly change from 2019 (pre-pandemic).
Extensive intervention research rooted in the science of reading establishes an evidence base of effective instructional methods for developing foundational reading 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 reading 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.

References
2. Reading data obtained directly from the U.S. Department of Education and is not available on the Nation’s Report Card website.

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