

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS AND SKILLS

ORAL EXPRESSION:

The ability to convey wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas in a meaningful way using appropriate syntactic, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological language structures. It relates to a student's ability to express ideas, explain thinking, retell stories, categorize, and compare and contrast concepts or ideas, make references and problem solve verbally.

Characteristics - The following may be exhibited by children who demonstrate oral expression difficulties.

- Difficulty with grammatical processes of inflection, marking categories like person, tense, and case (e.g., understanding that the *-s* in *jumps* marks the third-person singular in the present tense), and derivation, the formation of new words from existing words (e.g., *acceptable* from *accept*).
- Difficulty learning and using vocabulary, both academic and conversational.
- Difficulty formulating complete, semantically, and grammatically correct sentences, either spoken or written.
- Difficulty explaining word associations, antonyms/synonyms.
- Difficulty with retelling, making inferences, and predictions.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION:

The understanding of the implications and explicit meanings of words and sentences of spoken language. This includes following directions, comprehending questions, and listening and comprehending to learn (auditory attention, auditory memory, and auditory perception). Listening comprehension also includes the ability to make connections to previous learning.

Characteristics - Children experiencing listening comprehension difficulties may exhibit the following:

- Difficulty with following directions for seatwork and projects.
- Difficulty remembering homework assignments.
- Difficulty with understanding oral narratives and text.
- Difficulty answering questions about the content of the information given.
- Difficulty with critical thinking to arrive at logical answers.
- Difficulty with word associations, antonyms/synonyms, categorizing.
- Classifying difficulty with notetaking or dictation.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION:

The communication of ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Required skills include using oral language, thought, grammar, text fluency, sentence construction and planning to produce a written product. Spelling difficulties alone cannot be considered to represent a specific learning disability in written expression.

Characteristics - The following may be specific indicators of a disability in written comprehension:

- Word omissions (e.g., They ran to bus vs. They ran to the bus)
- Word order errors (e.g., I and my mom were here)
- Incorrect verb and pronoun use (e.g., We is running fast; me and him are here)
- Subject-verb disagreement (e.g., The monster have five eyes)
- Use of simple, rather than complex, sentence structures—particularly at the middle and high school levels
- Word ending errors (e.g., He laughing vs. He laughed; He is hunger vs. He is hungry)
- Lack of punctuation and capitalization
- Discrepancy between oral and written language
- Problems with cohesion (e.g., lack of transition words to link ideas)
- Problems with coherence (e.g., poor sentence organization and intra- and inter-paragraph organization)
- Word-retrieval problems (e.g., use of vague or general words—thing, stuff, good—instead of specific or precise vocabulary)

BASIC READING SKILLS:

A set of skills that develop students' understanding and knowledge of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, word composition (spelling), and fluency. These skills are sequenced and serve as a platform for later proficiency in reading and writing across text types and disciplines.

Characteristics - There are two central features of basic reading skill. The first is the ability to accurately identify unfamiliar words based upon the letters in a word and the sounds associated with those letters. This is often called *phonic decoding*. The second feature of basic reading skill is the ability to efficiently develop a pool of words that are *instantly recognized*. *Students with SLD in basic reading skill typically struggle with both phonic decoding and instant word recognition.*

- Poor phonological skills (difficulty identifying and manipulating sounds within spoken words).
- Difficulty connecting letters and letter combinations with sounds in spoken word.
- Difficulty reading (decoding) words with common consonant/vowel combinations.
- Difficulty reading words with multiple syllables.
- Weak ability to read words with automaticity. Requires additional time to sound out words.
- Poor comprehension due to the amount of working memory required for word-reading skills.

READING FLUENCY SKILLS:

The ability to read words accurately, using age-appropriate chunking strategies and a repertoire of sight words, and with appropriate rate, phrasing, and expression (prosody). Reading fluency facilitates reading comprehension.

Characteristics - Children experiencing reading fluency difficulties may exhibit the following:

- Poor word accuracy in reading connected text. This is often due to a deficit in basic reading skills.
- Difficulty using age-appropriate phrasing. Student reads until out of breath or pauses at unusual places in a sentence or passage.
- Reading rate is unusually slow or unusually rapid.
- Little expression (prosody) demonstrated when reading connected text. Student may read without inflection (tone of voice moving up or down) or may apply inflection incorrectly.

READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS:

The ability to understand and make meaning of written text and includes a multifaceted set of skills. Reading comprehension is influenced by oral language development including new vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, working memory, application of comprehension monitoring strategies and understanding of text structure including titles, paragraphing, illustrations and other details. Reading comprehension is significantly affected by basic reading skills.

Characteristics – Children with a comprehension deficit may display the following:

- Difficulty retelling or summarizing information from a text.
- Difficulty answering questions about a text.
- Difficulty stating the theme or main idea of a text.

NOTE: It is most common for students to have basic reading skill deficits combined with comprehension deficits, and/or fluency deficits. If this is the case, it is critical to instruct on the basic skill deficits as well as the comprehension deficits. It tends to be less common for a student to have a comprehension-only deficit, but these do occur. A reading comprehension deficit assumes that basic reading skills are well-developed, and that the student can read fluently without errors.

MATHEMATICS CALCULATION:

The knowledge and retrieval of mathematical facts and the application of procedural knowledge in computation.

Characteristics - The following may be exhibited by children who demonstrate math calculation difficulties.

- Struggles with basic number sense (counting, place value, number patterns)
- Difficulty solving basic math computations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division).
- Difficulty understanding and applying operations and properties to math calculations (e.g., commutative property, inverse operations).

NOTE: A student who understands basic math concepts and algorithms but has not memorized math facts should not be identified as having a severe delay or discrepancy in this area.

MATHEMATICS REASONING:

The ability to use decision-making skills to apply mathematical concepts and understandings to real world situations. It is the functional combination of computation knowledge and application knowledge and involves the use of mathematical computation skills and fluency, language, reasoning, reading, and visual-spatial skills in solving problems. Essentially, it is applying mathematical knowledge at the conceptual level.

Characteristics – Children with a math reasoning deficit may exhibit the following:

- Difficulty applying procedural knowledge to word problems.
- Struggles with sequencing multiple steps to solve a math problem.

SOURCES:

Wisconsin Dept of Public Instruction:

https://www.wsra.org/assets/Convention/Handouts_2015/a17%20sldruleareas_handout.pdf

Minnesota Department of Education : file:///C:/Users/DECN13536/Downloads/016702_Chapter7-SuspectingDisability.pdf

Colorado Department of Education: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelines_sld_draft_2019-02-25

Tennessee Department of Education: www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/Basic_Reading_Deficit_Resource_Guide.pdf