Dyslexia and General Learning Difficulties

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This session will address profiles/characteristics of learners experiencing general learning difficulties. What are the differences or similarities to students identified with dyslexia? If these students struggle so much, why do they often not qualify for dyslexia services or special education services?
What are General Learning Difficulties?

- A student who has the *ability to learn* necessary academic skills, but at rate and depth below average same age peers
- Students with GLDs need more time, more repetition, and often more resources from teachers to be successful
- Students with GLDs do not meet criteria for an Intellectual Disability
General Learning Difficulties

- not a diagnostic category
- 15% of the population and a far greater proportion of the enrollment in some schools
Special Education Eligibilities

The federal law (IDEA) uses the following terms to define a “child with a disability”:

- Autism,
- Deaf-blindness,
- Deafness,
- Emotional disturbance,
- A hearing impairment,
- Intellectual Disability,
- An orthopedic impairment,
- Other health impairment,
- A specific learning disability,
- A speech or language impairment,
- Traumatic brain injury,
- A visual impairment including blindness, or
- Multiple disabilities.
But Texas....

- Auditory Impairment (AI)
- Autism (AU)
- Deaf-Blindness (DB)
- Emotional Disturbance (ED)
- Intellectual Disability (ID) (formerly called Mental Retardation)
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Learning Disability (LD)
- Speech Impairment (SI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC)
Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC)

It is often difficult to diagnose very young children. With early intervention and appropriate services, children may not need special education by the time they reach first grade. The “Non-Categorical Early Childhood” category allows preschoolers to benefit from special education and related services without being labeled with a specific disability. In Texas, a child between the ages of 3-5 may be described as “NCEC” if he or she has been diagnosed as having one of the following suspected:

- Intellectual Disability,
- Emotional Disturbance,
- Specific Learning Disability, or
- Autism.
General Learning Difficulties

- Little to moderate variation in cognitive ability and processing profile
- Underlying causes of generally low average cognitive and academic abilities are typically not known
- Achievement level is consistent with cognitive ability
- Academic difficulties are expected
General Learning Difficulty

Cognitive Strengths

Below Average Overall Ability

- Cognitive Weaknesses and Deficits are general
- Academic Weaknesses and Deficits are general

Consistent

Cognitive Weakness/Deficit Academic Weakness/Deficit
Dyslexia

- Moderate to high (or statistically significant) variation in cognitive ability and processing profile
- Deficits in cognitive processes of: Phonological / Phonemic Awareness (or history of remediation), Rapid Naming, and/or Orthographic Processing
- Deficits in academic areas of: Reading Words in Isolation, Decoding Unfamiliar Words, Reading Fluency, and/or Spelling Empirical or ecologically valid relationship between cognitive processes and academic deficits
- **Intact** functioning and possible normative strengths in Vocabulary, Listening Comprehension, Verbal Expression, Written Expression, Handwriting, and/or Mathematical Calculation/Reasoning; **ability to learn in the absence of print**
Dyslexia

Strengths
- Listening comprehension, reading comprehension, verbal expression, mathematics, vocabulary, written expression, handwriting, ability to learn in the absence of print

Discrepant
- Phonological Awareness (history of remediation), Rapid Naming, Orthographic Processing
- Reading words in isolation, decoding unfamiliar words, fluency (rate/accuracy, spelling)

Consistent
Specific Learning Disability

- Specific Learning Disability in the area of Basic Reading Skills
- Specific Learning Disability in the area of Reading Fluency
- What about Specific Learning Disability in the area of Reading Comprehension?
If these students struggle so much, why do they often not eligible for Special Education?

- Special Education services are provided for students who have a disability.
- Struggling Learners typically do not have a disability, even though they need extra support.
General Learning Difficulties

- Progress Monitoring demonstrates slow rate of response/learning; may meet typical grade level benchmarks in some, but not all, academic areas
- TIER II and TIER III interventions in General Education; Remedial Programs; 504
- Functional academics; vocational training; accommodations; compensatory strategies; social skills; self-esteem
Resources
