

# Specific Learning Disorder

## SLD Factsheet

### What is a Specific Learning Disorder (SLD)

A Specific Learning Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder which is biological in origin and includes a combination of genetic, epigenetic and environmental factors.

It is the basis for significant, persistent and enduring difficulties in one or more of three academic domains: reading, written expression and mathematics and is unexpected where other areas are developing typically. Despite appropriate teacher instruction and intervention, a student with a SLD will continue to experience difficulty in these areas.

The prevalence of SLD in Australian students is 3-5% (DSF, 2018).

A Specific Learning Disorder is diagnosed by a qualified psychologist, who conducts clinical assessments and collects information from a variety of sources, to confirm the four diagnostic criteria are met (APA, 2013).

- **Criteria A:** Persistent and enduring difficulties in one or more of three academic domains, despite at least 6 months of intensive intervention.
- **Criteria B:** Difficulties are substantially and quantifiably below expected levels and cause significant interference in academic or occupational performance, or activities of daily living.
- **Criteria C:** Difficulties are evident in the school years.
- **Criteria D:** The academic skill deficit is not better explained by other factors such as intellectual disability, sensory impairment, other mental or neurological disorders, social adversity, lack of proficiency in the language of instruction, or inadequate instruction.

**There are three domains and sub-skills within the diagnosis that may be impaired:**

#### SLD with impairment in reading

- Word reading accuracy (difficulties in decoding, even reading simple words);
- Word reading fluency (difficulties in rate, expression and tone); and
- Reading comprehension (understanding literal and inferential meanings in text).

#### SLD with impairment in written expression

- Spelling accuracy (spelling of simple words, usually of two or more syllables);
- Grammar and punctuation accuracy (inability to construct a complete sentence, lack of punctuation or incorrect use of words used to indicate tense); and
- Clarity or organisation of written expression (difficulties in structuring written text, especially paragraphs).

#### SLD with impairment in mathematics

- Number sense (understanding number quantity and numeric symbols);
- Memorisation of number facts (addition, subtraction and multiplication);
- Accurate and fluent calculation (inability to accurately calculate simple sums); and
- Accurate maths reasoning (inability to problem-solve, even simple sums).

## Intervention

It is recommended that intervention occurs in a one-to-one or a very small group setting, for at least 20 minutes, four to five times per week. Programs used in intervention should be evidence based and meet the criteria for a successful intervention, which can be found on page 34 of The Understanding Learning Difficulties Guide by AUSPELD. The Guide also includes examples of accommodations and strategies to support students with SLD across all year levels. It is available on IKON [AUSPELD \(det.wa.edu.au\)](https://det.wa.edu.au).

## What assistance is available to support students with SLD?

### School of Special Educational Need: Disability (SSEN:D)

The SLD Support for Schools Connect Community contains information and resources adhering to current research and evidence-based practices.

[Summary - Staff - Connect \(det.wa.edu.au\)](https://det.wa.edu.au).

The SSEND One Classroom Website contains information, self-paced professional learning (PL) modules and the SSEND PL Calendar.

[Professional learning dashboard \(oneclassroom.wa.edu.au\)](https://oneclassroom.wa.edu.au).

The Support for Students with Diverse Learning Needs resource contains a professional learning module, which is specifically designed for school staff to present in their schools. All sessions within the module contain PowerPoint slides, presenter notes and handouts for the presentation.

[Support for students with diverse learning needs \(det.wa.edu.au\)](https://det.wa.edu.au)

### Dyslexia - SPELD Foundation, WA

The Dyslexia SPELD Foundation, WA, provide support to schools through the provision of information and professional learning at an individual, school or network level. There are a wide range of resources available at [DSF - Home](https://dsf.wa.edu.au). Alternatively, they can be contacted on 9217 2500.

### The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) Website

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and Disability Standards for Education (2005) students with SLD are entitled to both accommodations and interventions as necessary, so that they have access to the curriculum on the same basis as their peers. More information on underpinning legislation can be found here...

[What is the current legislation? - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data \(nccd.edu.au\)](https://nccd.edu.au)

## Funding

Educational Adjustment Funding is provided to schools automatically through the One Line Budget to support students with SLD. More information is available here.

[Disability Allocation - Statewide support services - The Department of Education \(det.wa.edu.au\)](https://det.wa.edu.au)

## SCSA

Students with SLD are entitled to disability adjustments.

[SECTION 1: \(scsa.wa.edu.au\)](https://scsa.wa.edu.au)

## References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>

Dyslexia SPELD Foundation, WA. (2018). *Understanding Learning Difficulties: A practical guide* (Revised). Dyslexia SPELD Foundation, WA.