

Travis Psycho-Educational Services  
407-644-1522  
[www.travisps.com](http://www.travisps.com)

## **Does My Child Have a Learning Disability?**

Learning disabilities are usually tested for and diagnosed when a child's achievement in school is significantly below what you would expect based on age, the child's educational experience and level of intelligence. However, low achievement doesn't mean a child has a learning disability.

Learning disabilities cover a wide range of problems including memory, organization, attention and the ability to retrieve information that has been learned. Current research is finding that there is no one "right" way to help them all. However, research also shows that there are practical strategies parents can use to help children and there are professional approaches that help even more. Learning disabilities never go away, but with early intervention and assistance they can be successfully managed.

Symptoms of a learning disability that usually appear in the first two or three years of school include: Inability to remember telephone number by the end of kindergarten; Difficulty learning letter sounds or learning to write letters and numbers in first grade; Seems to learn something one day and forgets it the next; Low frustration tolerance (your child may crumple papers, cry and not want to go to school).

If you believe your child may have a learning disability, you probably have already consulted the teacher and tried many suggestions. However, if your child hasn't made the progress you expected and you still believe there is a learning disability, a professional can help.

A school psychologist will do a variety of tests to determine your child's strengths and weaknesses. A typical evaluation begins with a general IQ test. The next part of the evaluation looks at how your child learns or processes information. Process tests may show that your child has difficulty remembering what he/she sees. Consequently it is difficult to learn letter or number facts by looking at them. The school psychologist will also evaluate what your child has learned so far by using an achievement test. In addition, a complete evaluation will include interviews to see how your child feels about him/herself as a learner and to understand the kinds of frustrations experienced at school.

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It is important to diagnose learning disabilities early. **Early diagnosis means you and the teacher begin the year with the information you need to help your child succeed. The greatest enemy children have is frustration and repeated failure.** These two things undermine motivation and the ability to persevere with challenging problems. Without some success, it's easy for a child to begin to feel that no matter what he does, he can't learn. Ultimately, the child gives up not only on school but also on himself

### **THREE MAJOR SUBTYPES OF READING-DISABLED CHILDREN**

#### **Auditory-Linguistic Deficits**

- Confuses sounds (e/l, e/a, p/b)
- Omits consonants in simple words (lent=let)
- Omits syllables or parts (polish=plish, ceiling=cling)
- Mispronounces words (chimney=chimley)
- Uses synonyms (mother=mummy)
- Omits endings (ed, s, ing)
- Blends sounds poorly when making words (sounds out letter by letter)
- Makes bizarre errors
- Reverses letters (b/d) (Also occurs in visual-spatial deficits)
- Visual perception is intact
- Verbal IQ < Performance IQ

#### **Visual-Spatial Deficits**

- Spells phonetically (sight=site, cemetery=semetry)
- Mixes capitals & small letters in spelling (cAt)
- Visualizes the beginning and end of a word, but omits the middle (happy=hapy)
- Confuses sequence of letters (guest=geust, bread=beard)
- Guesses at words or says words that look similar or start the same way (surface=surprise)
- Adds words that are not there, reads through punctuation
- Reads word by word
- Reverses words or letters (b/d, oh/no)
- Auditory-visual skills intact
- Verbal IQ>Performance IQ

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### **Mixed Deficits**

- Spells phonetically
- Reverses words and letters
- Bizarre spelling (face=frie)
- Difficulty sounding out words and letters
- Poor reading ability

**Mary A. Travis, Ph.D.**  
**1950 Lee Rd. Suite 213**  
**Winter Park, FL 32789**  
**407-644-1522**  
**407-644-2112**  
[www.travisps.com](http://www.travisps.com)