



Priorities for the Trump Administration & 115th Congress

*Creating Opportunities to Improve the Lives of the
1 in 5 Individuals with Learning & Attention Issues*

For over 40 years, the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) has helped individuals with learning and attention issues – and their families – thrive by empowering parents, students and young adults; transforming schools; and advocating for equal rights and opportunities.

As the new Administration and 115th Congress convene, NCLD has identified 5 high-leverage areas to improve outcomes for the 1 in 5 children with learning and attention issues.

1. Expand Early Screening

Often, early warning signs of learning and attention issues are missed. Far too many children with learning and attention issues –including learning disabilities in reading (dyslexia), math (dyscalculia) and writing (dysgraphia); attentional issues (ADHD) – are undiagnosed until well in their elementary school years, or even later, at which point they are performing behind their peers and struggling to catch up. To address this problem, NCLD urges the new Administration and 115th Congress to:

- **Expand early screening initiatives** through programs such as Early Headstart, Headstart, and those within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Build the **expertise of educators** – general educators, special educators, and specialized instructional support personnel – **to identify risk factors and recognize the early signs** of learning and attention issues.
- **Invest in the ‘National Comprehensive Center on Improving Literacy for Students with Disabilities’ and ‘Literacy Education for All Results for the Nation’, both included in the Every Student Succeeds Act**, to provide parents, educators and the community with evidence based tools to identify early challenges students may have in acquiring literacy skills, and provide educators with the evidence based instructional strategies and professional development needed to support student learning.

2. Empower Students & Families

Today, thanks to the great advances created by IDEA, more students with learning and attention issues are attending college than ever before. However, college enrollment and completion rates for

Supporting Millions of Parents, Educators

In 2014, NCLD and 14 non-profit partners launched Understood (www.understood.org), a free comprehensive online resource to help parents of kids with learning and attention issues help their child thrive in school and in life.

Over **20 million individuals** have used [Understood](http://www.understood.org) as a resource and it is a national campaign of the [Ad Council](http://www.adcouncil.org).

students with learning and attention issues still lag far behind their peers. In fact, only 41% actually complete college. Building a PreK-12 education system that prepares students with learning and attention issues to be successful in their education and career-ready is critical to our nation's prosperity. NCLD urges the new Administration and 115th Congress to:

- **Provide strong oversight of the Every Student Succeeds Act** to ensure its implementation reinforces high expectations for students with learning and attention issues through investment in and rigorous evaluation implementation of Title I state plans and through grants to states under Title II and Title IV.
- **Pass the RISE Act**, NCLD-endorsed bi-partisan legislation designed to expand access to higher education for students with learning and attention issues by easing the process for students with disabilities to be eligible for accommodations in college. The RISE Act authorizes **\$10 million for the National Center for College Students with Disabilities**, authorized by sec. 777 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, to provide young adults with disabilities and their families with the tools and information needed to make critical decisions about college enrollment and support once enrolled.
- **Expand opportunities to foster self-advocacy skills and support students during the transition from K-12 to higher education and the workforce** through access to integrated student supports such as: social emotional learning (SEL), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) programs, community school programming, and programs under the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

3. Cultivate Creative, Informed Educators

Today, general education classrooms are more diverse than ever. Indeed, 60% of students with disabilities spend 80% or more of their day in the general education classroom. Yet, despite this diversity, few general educators receive training – in their preparation programs or once in the classroom – to address the needs of the 1 in 5 children with learning and attention issues. NCLD urges the new Administration and 115th Congress to:

- **Incentivize professional development opportunities for all educators**– including general and special educators and school leaders – to build their expertise in effective teaching strategies to support students with learning and attention issues.
- **Overhaul the Higher Education Act's Title II: Teacher Preparation** program to include more opportunities for residency programs, mentorships and other experiences that prepare future teachers for the classroom realities, including how to identify the early warning signs of learning and attention issues and effective teaching strategies and interventions to use with these students.

4. Drive Innovation for Effective Teaching and Learning

While we have made significant advances in our understanding of the brain and its impact on learning, much remains unknown. With new research and development in this area, we can create

an educational system rooted in the science of learning. NCLD urges the new Administration and 115th Congress to:

- **Invest in brain and education sciences** through continued and increased investment in research and development in: each of the four centers within the Institute of Education Sciences, including the **National Center on Special Education Research** which suffered a 30% funding cut in 2011; the **National Institute for Child Health and Human Development** which conducts research focused on understanding the biological basis for learning disabilities; and **the National Science Foundation**. Finally, for each of these include a directive to expand the brain science research portfolio focused on learning and attention issues.
- **Promote personalized learning environments** where all children receive a customized learning experience that enables all children, including those with learning and attention issues, to thrive and succeed. For children with learning and attention issues, this means including important guardrails so the systems work for them. Increasing opportunities for schools to adopt a personalized approach, with these guardrails and supports such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), will allow students with learning and attention issues, and all students, to learn at their own pace and gain a better understanding of their strengths and thrive.

5. Strengthening and Enforcing Civil Rights Laws through Investment in Public Schools

The overwhelming majority of students with disabilities attend public schools. Today, 1 in 5 children have a learning and attention issue and more than half of all public school students are from low-income families. Students and families need support from a comprehensive public school system. Despite recent gains in graduation rates, achievement gaps remain for these groups of underserved students. Federal and state laws afford most students with learning disabilities and their families rights and protections that must be maintained and enforced. NCLD urges the new Administration and 115th Congress to:

- **Invest in public schools – through programs including IDEA, ESSA, Headstart and Medicaid – and reject private school voucher proposals** to provide resources to promote opportunities for and implementation of evidence-based practices that support student success. Any diversion of resources away from public schools – in the form of private school voucher programs or otherwise – is a disservice to our nation’s children and families. Lastly, schools and students rely on Medicaid to support necessary services and any reduction in Medicaid funding will shift considerable financial costs to states and school districts that they cannot afford.
- **Expand federal and state enforcement of rights and protections** for children with disabilities and their families through investment in the Office of Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education, and upholding IDEA’s strong due process protections.