

FORWARD TOGETHER

Actions for Impact: Families and Caregivers



If your child has specific learning disabilities, diagnosed ADHD, and/or related disorders that impact learning, they are not alone. In the United States, 1 in 5 students have learning and attention issues. Like other students with learning and attention issues, your child might be struggling in school. Too often, adults miss that the 1 in 5 have valuable talents and critical strengths—and that they're smart in a variety of ways.

[NCLD](#) and [Understood](#) sought to better understand how educators can unlock the potential and meet the learning needs of these students—to ensure that they thrive now and into the future. Since 70% of students with learning disabilities and ADHD spend at least 80% of their time in general education classrooms, we partnered with classroom teachers to understand their experiences and insights. And we identified actions that you—the most important adult in your child's life—can take so that teachers will successfully reach and teach *your* child.

[Understood](#)



Teachers shared that they want better training for teaching the 1 in 5 before entering the classroom full-time—and they want to be better supported once there.

There are many paths to becoming a teacher, and some preparation programs are more comprehensive and rigorous than others. However, since most states do not articulate the specific skills, knowledge, or training general educators should have for working with students with learning and attention issues, many general educators report that they did not take courses applicable to teaching the 1 in 5. If they did, most did not find these courses beneficial or relevant once in the classroom. The majority of teachers cited “on-the-job training and trial-and-error learning” as the ways they learned how to teach the 1 in 5. Of teachers surveyed:

It's important to make your schools aware that your child—and all students with learning disabilities and ADHD—have incredible potential

The 1 in 5 often have average or above average intelligence, and some have extraordinary talents. For example, some studies have found evidence to suggest that many people with dyslexia are able to solve visual-spatial problems about impossible figures more quickly than their counterparts without dyslexia. As part of their journey, the 1 in 5 often develop [critical strengths](#): persistence, empathy, courage, and assertiveness.



Only 17%

feel very well prepared to teach students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.



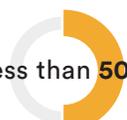
Only 30%

feel strongly that, when they try their best, they can be successful with the 1 in 5.



81%

recognize that externalized responses – such as disruptive behaviors – may be signs of learning disabilities and/or ADHD, but...



Less than 50%

felt capable attributing these behaviors to internalized responses in students, such as trouble with organizing or not knowing how or when to ask for help.

Yet, teachers emphasized that they *want* to learn more to help their students and improve their practice.

We can all do better together—and there is proof we can.

To move forward together, NCLD and Understood conducted a literature review of empirical studies, and engaged Understood's Educator Advisory Council, NCLD's Professional Advisory Board, and other experts to identify and capture evidence-based [critical mindsets and key practices](#) that educators can implement in the classroom. But each of us—anyone who cares about students with learning and attention issues—has a role to play to improve the learning and achievement of the 1 in 5 and *all* students.

Just flip the page to access resources and find out more. ▶

Actions you can take today:

Learn more about learning and attention issues, and access supports and resources you can use at home.

Understood.org and NCLD provide user-friendly [resources](#) that will build your [understanding](#) of how your child learns. You can find [simulations](#) to experience what it feels like to have a specific learning disability, ADHD, and challenges with information processing and executive functioning; find [day-to-day strategies](#); and access tools to get [expert parenting](#) advice.

Hold high expectations for the 1 in 5.

One of the biggest challenges facing students with learning and attention issues is the stigma surrounding them and the low expectations that are often set for them. When we raise the bar, students will very often rise to meet it. Speak out about your [child's strengths](#) and help eliminate [the stigma](#) that can sometimes surround learning and attention issues. Together, we can help every educator, family, and community member recognize the potential in every child.

Maintain [open communication with your child's teacher and principal](#).

Learn more about the practices they are using in your child's school to support the 1 in 5. You can ask about the schedule of the school day, how students are grouped for differentiated instruction, and whether there are schoolwide systems to support the academic, behavioral, and emotional success of each student. Learn about the evidence-based [critical mindsets and key practices](#) that help educators better reach and teach the 1 in 5, and ground your conversations with your child's school in this evidence. Visit [Understood](#) for Educators to explore the free, practical, evidence-based resources educators can use, and [sign up](#) to receive personalized resources for advocating for your child and partnering with the school.

Be an advocate for high-quality professional development and opportunities for teachers and principals.

Not every teacher in your child's school will have taken courses on how to support the 1 in 5 before entering the classroom. It's important for schools to provide professional development—opportunities throughout the year for teachers to learn new skills. You can use the [professional development toolkit on Understood](#) to ask your school or district to invest in training on four strategies that teachers can benefit from learning more about.

Stay involved and receive updates on the latest opportunities to speak out.

To make meaningful and lasting change, we must advocate at every level—in schools, in communities, within states, and nationally. [Sign up for emails from NCLD](#) so you can be the first to know when there's an opportunity to speak out and advocate on behalf of the 1 in 5.

Families and Caregivers



Our approach

NCLD and Understood set out to unpack and address the challenges facing the 1 in 5 in the general education setting, in partnership with Lake Research Partners, SRI Education, and EducationCounsel.

 **1,350** teachers surveyed

 **13** teacher focus groups conducted in California, Ohio, and North Carolina

 **150** academic, empirically driven articles reviewed

 **50** states researched for teacher certification requirements

With input and pressure testing by Understood's Educator Advisory Council, NCLD's Professional Advisory Board and other experts

For more information and to access the full report, visit nclid.org/forwardtogether

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