

# Fulfilling the Promise for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

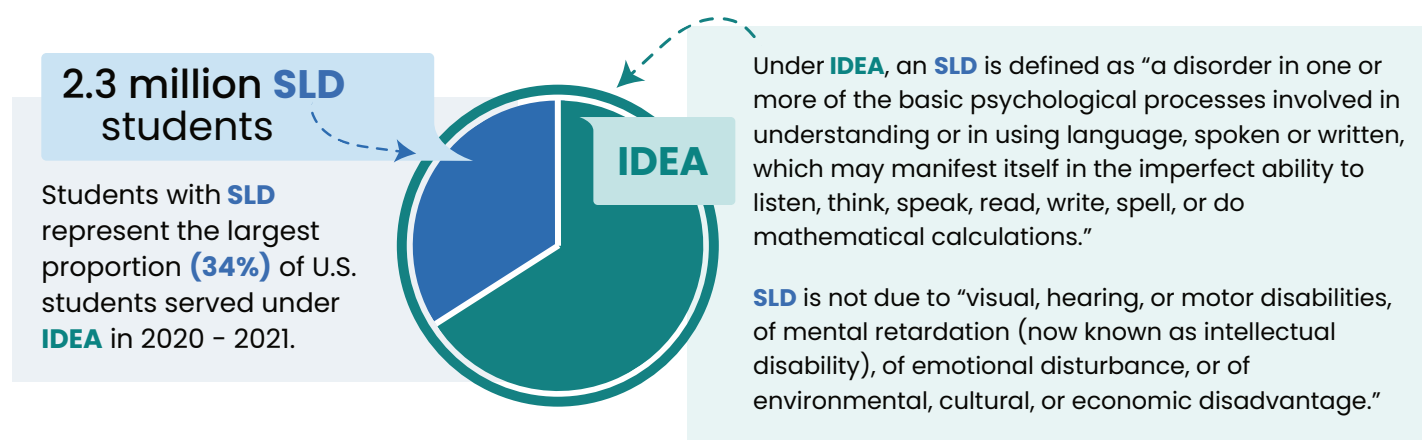
A Snapshot of Federal Data, Terms, & Definitions

## What is a specific learning disability (SLD)?

An **SLD** is a brain-based disorder that affects an individual's ability to read, write, and do math (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia). Students identified with **SLD** receive special education services under the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, a law that provides free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities. **IDEA** requires that schools provide special education services to eligible students as outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Of the **13%** of the U.S. school-age population who received disability services under **IDEA** in the 2020–2021 academic year, **34%** received services for **SLD** as the primary disability.

## 6.6 Million Students Served Under **IDEA** in 2020–2021



## Fast Facts



**More than 90%** of 4th- and 8th-grade students with **SLD** are not proficient in reading or math. Illiteracy and innumeracy have dire implications for future success (including significantly predicting whether a student drops out of high school).



Students with **SLD** drop out at over **twice the rate** as their non-disabled peers. Dropout is linked to many adverse outcomes, such as poverty, unemployment, incarceration, and poor health.

# Fulfilling the Promise: What You Can Do for Students with SLD.

## Act Now

Congress can influence the trajectory for students with learning disabilities:

- **Fulfill funding promises for programs** that support students with disabilities, their families, and their educators such as (but not limited to) the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

**States received approx. \$14 billion for IDEA in FY 2023, only about 12% of the additional costs of educating students with disabilities and a far cry from the pledged 40% full funding level.**

- **Hold education leaders accountable** for school performance and student learning:
  - Maintain the current ESEA accountability framework to improve outcomes for every student subgroup, including students with disabilities.
  - Allocate additional funds to innovate assessments through the State Assessment Grants and Competitive Grants for State Assessments programs.
  - Create priorities focused on assessment in other research and development programs that the U.S. Department of Education administers.
- **Reduce disproportionality** in identifying specific learning disabilities.
  - Closely monitor compliance and enforce the **Equity in IDEA** regulations.
  - Provide comprehensive technical assistance to school districts with significant disproportionality based on race/ethnicity in identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities.
  - Issue guidance to states and school districts on best practices for evaluating students who may have a disability and who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**See NCLD's State Snapshots for data from your home state  
via the QR Code. Learn more by visiting [nclld.org](https://nclld.org)**

