

What is a Specific Learning Disability?

According to Western Australian Government estimates, at least 20% of students currently enrolled in schools in Western Australia are at risk of failing to meet an appropriate level of educational attainment as a result of learning difficulties. For some of these students, the barrier which hampers their learning may be only temporary. Some students may have missed a great deal of school and others may not have received appropriate instruction in reading.

For other students, however, the barrier to effective learning is a component of their developmental make-up. These students, although almost always of average or above average intelligence, suffer with a specific condition which has a significant impact on their learning. These students have a specific learning disability.

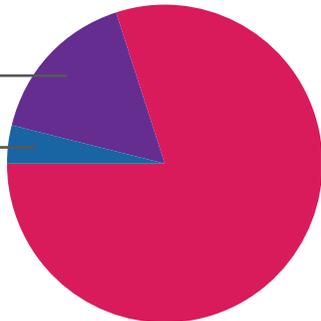
Specific learning disabilities are not intellectual impairments. Students with intellectual impairments are generally assessed as having reduced cognitive capacity, which has a global impact on learning and daily functioning. Students with a specific learning disability have a significant difficulty in one academic area while coping well, or even excelling, in other areas of academic, sporting or artistic achievement.

In other parts of the world specific learning disabilities are also called Learning Difficulties, Learning Disorders or Academic Skills Disorders. In effect each describes the same thing, although the diagnostic criteria may differ slightly. Under Commonwealth and State law, a specific learning disability may be viewed as a disability.

15 - 20% learning difficulties (approx.)

4% Dyslexia (approx.)

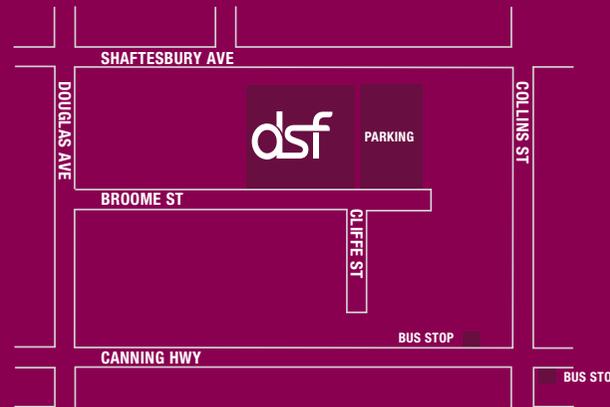
1 student with dyslexia per class (on average)



Assisting children, adolescents and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities

The Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation (better known as DSF Literacy and Clinical Services) provides a range of support, educational and clinical services for families and schools throughout Western Australia.

The Foundation actively supports those students and adults who, as a result of a learning difficulty or an underlying learning disability, struggle to achieve either their academic or professional potential.



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Dyslexia - SPELD Foundation
LITERACY AND CLINICAL SERVICES

DSF Literacy & Clinical Services



Our Role

The Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation has provided vital support to Western Australian children and adults with learning disabilities for over 40 years. It remains committed to improving the level of support provided to children and adults with learning disabilities; and, the community's understanding of specific learning disabilities, in particular dyslexia.

The Foundation continues to focus on ensuring that children and adults with learning disabilities are supported adequately and appropriately, and that all students are provided with the opportunity to achieve their potential. In addition it provides advice and support to families and educators on successful literacy acquisition; evidence-based practice; and, the strategies known to improve literacy outcomes for all students. Our role includes supporting and advising students, adults and families directly, as well as indirectly through the support and advice provided at a school or employment level.

The Department of Education provides approximately 20% of the Foundation's funding to support the delivery of a number of specific services for school-aged students and their families. The balance of our income is raised through the provision of clinical and therapeutic services; professional development courses; membership fees; book sales and corporate & private donations. Our organisation would not be able to operate without the assistance of our very dedicated volunteers, who provide essential administrative and other support.



Our Services

Free Information Evenings

These evenings are held on the first Wednesday of every month from 7.00pm – 8.30pm in the hall of the DSF building at 10 Broome Street, South Perth (off Douglas Avenue). For further details and specific dates, please phone 9217 2500, or visit our web-site at www.dsf.net.au

Consultations

Consultations can be arranged with either a speech pathologist or a psychologist in the DSF Clinic to discuss concerns about difficulties with learning, language development, self-esteem, education or career prospects and other related issues.

Assessments

Psycho-educational or language assessments by a registered psychologist or speech pathologist specialising in the learning disabilities field are available by appointment at the DSF Clinic. An assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of the person's learning strengths and difficulties as well as a number of recommended strategies for both remediation and appropriate support.

Tutors

DSF Literacy Services maintains a register of qualified specialist teachers who provide individual tutoring for children and adults. Members of DSF can apply for access to the names and contact details of tutors on request. In addition, DSF Literacy Clinics have recently been established in Mount Hawthorn, Victoria Park and Albany.

Professional Development

Professional Development courses are conducted throughout the year for teachers, parents and allied professionals. Workshops are either held at DSF or can be structured to meet the needs of an individual school and run as a whole-school PD session, on-site, at the school.

Library

DSF offers a wide range of specialist resources in the on-site library and continues to add high quality books, games and programs to our current collection. The library is open every weekday with the library co-ordinator in attendance Monday, Wednesday and Friday.



Bookshop

The Foundation stocks a wide range of highly recommended evidence-based teaching resources, including: reading books, activity packs, computer programs, text books, and remedial programs for purchase.

Features of a Specific Learning Disability

The most common learning disability identified in schools is a learning disability in reading (commonly known as dyslexia). Some of the most frequently occurring features of dyslexia are:

- A family history of literacy learning difficulties
- Poor awareness of the sounds in words (phonological awareness)
- Difficulty learning and remembering the names and sounds of alphabet letters
- A tendency to read on a word-by-word basis, often inaccurately
- Production of poor written work including a difficulty putting thoughts on paper and inaccurate spelling
- Short-term and working memory problems
- Poor organisational skills
- Difficulty learning sequential information (days of the week, times tables etc.)
- Attention problems – tires easily as a result of learning difficulties encountered throughout the school day