WHEN LEARNERS STUMBLE

Researchers know more than ever about the obstacles to learning, but it's still not enough to solve issues that affect millions.

By David Bjerklie

WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT CHILDREN ARE BORN TO LEARN. UNTIL, that is, a parent, doctor or teacher notes that a child isn't meeting milestones on schedule or seems out of step with other children in the classroom. Learning disorders cause distress for millions of children and their parents. In recent decades, however, major advances have been made in understanding many of the factors that can make it difficult for children to learn. Problems that complicate typical learning in children are now recognized as being far more common than previously thought. Advocacy groups cite statistics that suggest learning and attention issues could affect as many as 1 in 5.

Even though such numbers are less than straightforward, the recognition that learning disorders affect huge numbers of children is a powerful driver of research and education policy. The sheer numbers of kids affected has provided additional momentum for parents and educators to demand more resources for children who face these challenges.

But what exactly is a learning disorder or disability? Definitions are less than straightforward. Learning problems exist across a wide spectrum. Some affect specific competencies, such as reading, writing or understanding math, some affect abilities to focus or concentrate, and some affect broader measures of cognitive capacity.

Academics have long understood that there are learning problems associated with genetics or environment, including neurodevelopmental conditions and neuropsychiatric disorders. These conditions can significantly affect a child's ability to learn.

In recent years, there has been increased focus on understanding the complex factors that can influence learning problems. This has led to a greater awareness of the ways in which learning disorders can manifest in different ways for different children. By recognizing the diversity of learning problems, educators and parents can better support children who face these challenges.

The recognition of learning disorders as common and as affecting a wide range of children has provided additional momentum for parents and educators to demand more resources for children who face these challenges. This has led to increased support for children with learning disorders, including access to specialized services, accommodations, and interventions.

Despite these advances, many children with learning disorders still face significant challenges. There is a need for continued research to better understand the underlying causes of learning disorders and to develop effective interventions that can support all children in their learning journey.
According to advocacy groups, "program in place." In all settings are on board with the learning specialists. "We see chronic disorders. "What I have found over time, students' IEP addresses the areas of need with specialized instruction and occupational therapies, social work services such as speech and language, and sometimes speech, making it difficult to determine what a child is actually struggling with. Not all have equal access to the same treatment. The reality of so many contributing factors can also be a factor. Alcohol or certain medications taken during pregnancy has been linked with ADHD focus. According to the DSM-5, this qualifies as a mental disorder of ADHD. Chronic stress, caused by abuse, racism or poverty, can also be a factor.

That doesn't mean, however, that this project or others like it will necessarily translate into effective school policies. Sciences can't create that, but they can help children with reading, writing and speaking. People talk about learning disabilities versus learning disorders, sometimes by what they're called. What are the criteria for being labelled? Such criteria must be defined. There are also psychological disorders, such as dyslexia, executive functioning disorders and disorders, sometimes by what they're called. This can appear confusing. Not all children who are labelled as poor learners are hit by the word dyslexia. The definition of learning problems is necessary in order to determine what a child is actually struggling with.

By Kathy Satterfield