



At-Risk Indicators Research: **Students with Mild Learning Disabilities**

Overview

The literature review findings indicate that warning signs for school dropout among students with mild learning disabilities include: poor attendance, academic difficulties, behavioral problems and social alienation. Most studies did show a positive correlation between particular interventions and one or several of these variables.



Resources

From Education Resources Information Center

Article: [Preventing high school dropout among students with mild disabilities: A literature review](#)



Key Considerations

- Dropout is most pronounced among students considered "mildly handicapped."
 - This category includes children with learning disabilities, emotional disturbance or with mild mental retardation (pg. 3).
- Multiple studies found over half of learning disabled adolescents dropped out of school (pg. 4).
- Literature suggests that mildly learning disabled student dropouts are more similar to their non-disabled peers than different (pgs. 8-10).

Recommended Indicator: Students with Mild Disabilities

Literature suggests that mildly learning disabled student dropouts are more similar to their non-disabled peers than different.

Similarities between Mildly Disabled Dropouts and Non-Disabled Dropouts

School suspension	63% learning disabled students suspended while enrolled; 72% of non-disabled students
Not involved in extracurricular activities	60% of students in both groups
Grade 9 is key	1/3 of the learning disabled group and 1/4 of the non-learning disabled group reported making plans to drop out at some time during grade 9
Grade retention	Repetition of grade 9 accounted for 58% of the learning disabled students drop-out and 42% of the general education student drop-outs

Differences between Mildly Disabled Dropouts and Non-Disabled Dropouts

Social acceptance/ belongingness to school	Results suggested learning disabled dropouts experienced more feelings of social alienation from classmates and teachers
	Survey of mildly disabled special education students in urban work readiness program, only feelings of belonging to the school culture differentiated among students with low, moderate and high attendance rates



Putting it to Practice

Research shows that “connecting” with someone from the school is important in preventing dropout; there is a statistically significant decrease in the rate of school dropout for students receiving help from a tutor, reader, interpreter or counselor associated with the school. Occupational vocational training was significantly related both to lower absenteeism and a lower probability of dropping out.

If you are creating an early warning indicator system, considering students with mild learning disabilities is important, as well as equipping schools to implement interventions for dropout prevention, including programming around improved socialization and social skills competencies in development of students’ IEPs.