

Matan

Common Disabilities in the Religious School Classroom

A Brief History of Special Education Law

- **1965** – President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the first piece of legislation that addressed the inequality of students (specifically those from low-income families).
- **1966** – ESEA amended to include 2 parts aimed specifically at children with disabilities.



A Brief History of Special Education Law

1975 – Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), passed into law by President Ford:

- Free and appropriate education
- Non-discriminatory identification & evaluation
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



A Brief History of Special Education Law

1990 – Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA):

- Changed “handicapped children”
 - to “children with disabilities”
- Extended laws to offer services starting with toddlers through adult stable employment
- Included requirements for parent/student participation in educational decisions
- Added safeguards to ensure honest communication and protect rights

Why is it so important?

1 in 5

Individuals in the US
have learning or
attention challenges

1 in 36

Children in the US
have Autism

1 in 11

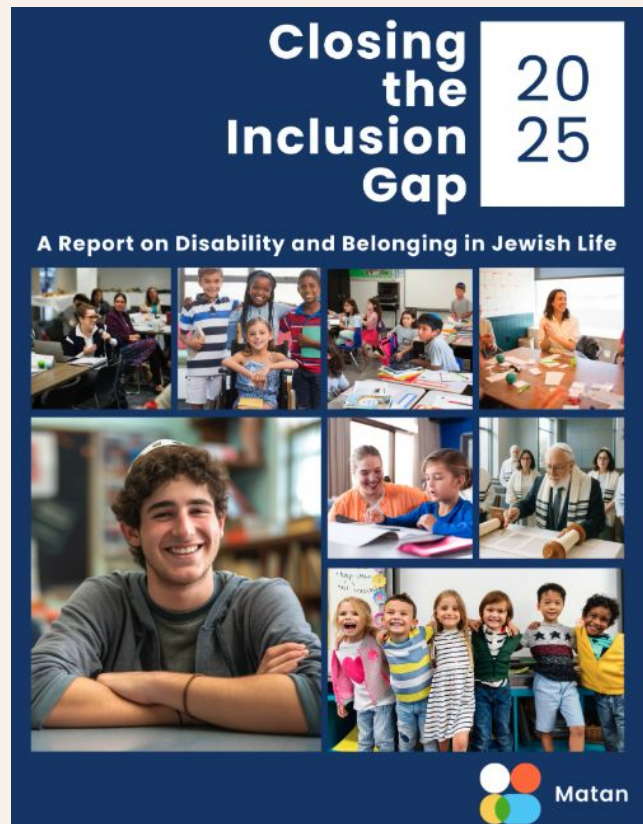
Children in the US are
diagnosed with
Autism, intellectual or
developmental
disability

8.2 million

People in the US are
Jewish

Why is it so important?

- 20–25% of Jewish community members identify as having disabilities
- 1 in 5 Jews with disabilities have been turned away from a Jewish activity



Implications

What are the implications of these statistics – and these evolving laws – for the Jewish community?



The Jewish Context

Educate each child according to their way. (Proverbs 22:6)

Ben Azzai taught: Do not disdain any person; do not underestimate the importance of anything – for there is no person who does not have his hour and there is no thing without its place. (*Pirkei Avot* 4:3)

Congregational Schools

- For children with and without learning challenges, the times that most religious schools meet often present added difficulty.
- Parents may or may not share relevant learning information with you.
- The more you can demonstrate your ability and desire to meet the needs of **all** students, the more likely parents are to be forthcoming with you.

What Does A Disability Look Like?



A Disability Can Impact:

- **Physical development:** The ability to move, see, and hear.
- **Cognitive development:** The ability to think and learn.
- **Self help:** The ability to eat, dress, and take care of oneself.
- **Speech and Language:** The ability to talk and express needs.
- **Social emotional development:** The ability to relate to others.



The Three Major Characteristics are:

ADHD

- inattention (difficulty paying attention)
- hyperactivity (being very active)
- impulsivity (acting before thinking)

Children who are hyperactive and impulsive may fidget & squirm, get out of their chairs when they are not supposed to, run around or climb constantly, have challenges playing quietly, talk too much, blurt out answers, find it difficult to wait their turn, interrupt others when they're talking.





Learning Disability is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning challenges. Skills most often affected: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. Learning disabilities vary from person to person. Researchers believe that learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. People with learning disabilities often have average or above average intelligence, but their brains process information differently.

Learning Disabilities



ASD is the name for a group of developmental disorders and includes a wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability. The areas most commonly affected are communication, social interaction & behavior.

Autism Spectrum Disorders



Autism Spectrum Disorders

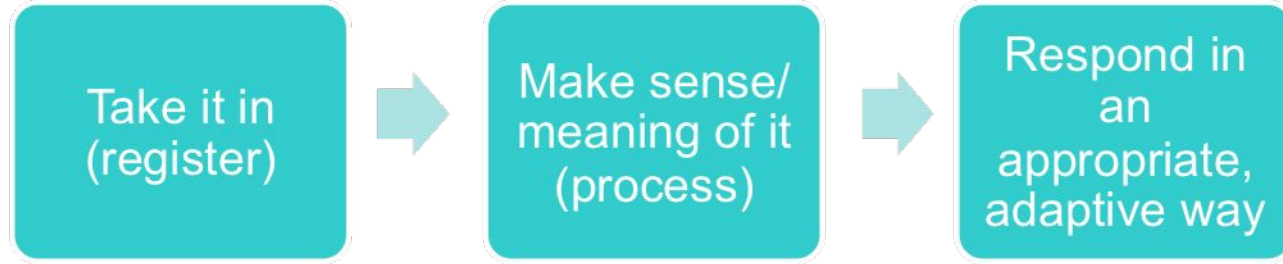
- Ongoing social challenges that include difficulty communicating and interacting with others (eye contact, difficulty with two-way conversations, echolalia, theory of mind)
- Repetitive behaviors as well as limited interests or activities
- Sensitivity or insensitivity to sensory inputs such as bright lights, noises, the feel of clothing, temperature, or touch.
- 46% of children with ASD have above-average intelligence. They may be strong visual and auditory learners, and can excel in math, science, music, or art.

Formerly known as "sensory integration dysfunction" – Sensory Processing Disorder or SPD is a condition that exists when sensory signals *don't* get organized into appropriate responses.

Sensory Processing Disorder



What do our brains do with sensory information?



We will either seek out more sensory input (if we aren't getting enough in order to register), or we may avoid sensory input (possibly even as a "fight or flight" response)....

Processing Disorders



Visual Processing Disorder:

- Cannot receive, process, sequence, recall, or express information in an accurate and timely way, the brain has trouble processing visual information.

Auditory Processing Disorder:

- Refers to how the central nervous system uses auditory information – a deficit in the neural processing of auditory stimuli.



Anxiety Disorders

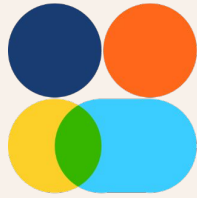
- Anxiety is the most common psychiatric illness in children (and adults)
- 1 in 8 children suffer from anxiety

There are several kinds of anxiety disorders, including:

- Panic Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Selective Mutism
- Separation Anxiety
- Specific phobias

The Jewish Imperative

- The Jewish community lags behind the secular world when it comes to disability inclusion.
- The way we treat a child with disabilities has a drastic effect on how the entire family is included in Jewish life.
- With so much attention on “unaffiliated” Jews, we must recognize that families of children with disabilities have their nose pressed against the window, wanting to be included.



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**Reshaping Jewish
Communities Through
Disability Inclusion**