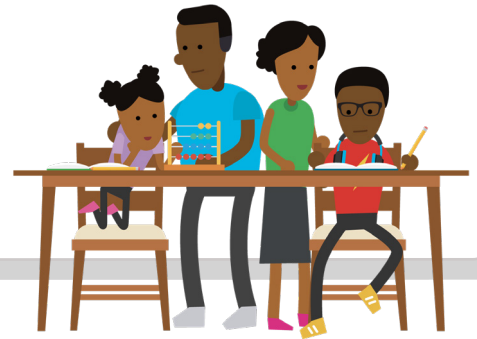


# The Teacher & Principal Lens:

Opportunities for equitable support  
for students with learning differences

Building on The Parent Journey, a 2023 survey of **families** of children with learning differences, this new body of research offers the **educator** perspective, shedding light on actionable insights for districts, schools, and advocates.

*This fact sheet provides key data points and recommendations based on the survey findings.*



## Data Insights

### Educator Training: From Identification to Differentiated Instruction

The majority of teachers report they received training in identifying students with learning differences yet far fewer say they have the knowledge to identify students. And, far fewer are trained on specific learning differences.

#### Key Data Points:

- ★ Six in 10 teachers say there has been an increase in learning differences since COVID.
- ★ Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) teachers say they are the first to report that a child has a learning difference, and 64% of administrators say teachers are the first to report learning differences.
- ★ Seventy percent of teachers report they received training in identifying students with learning differences yet 59% of teachers and 76% of administrators say they have sufficient knowledge to identify a student with a developmental and/or learning difference.
- ★ While almost all educators (90% of teachers and 99% of administrators) report they received professional development on learning differences, less than half are trained on specific learning differences.
  - For example, 83% of teachers and 70% of administrators say they have students with ADHD but less than half say it was covered in training; 63% of teachers say they have students with dyscalculia but only 36% say it was covered in training; only 19% of teachers have received training on executive function disorder.

*(Note: Some teachers may be under-reporting some learning differences because they don't know enough about them.)*

## Equity & Access: Gaps in Teacher and Administrator Perception Around School Supports

Teachers report a bigger gap between the services white families receive vs. families of color. Only half of teachers feel they have sufficient resources to help students with learning differences and their families. There is a significant gap between teachers and school administrators regarding how they perceive their school supports families whose children have learning differences.

### Key Data Points:

- ★ Fifty-eight percent of teachers and 76% of administrators rate their schools excellent or very good in helping students with their developmental and/or learning differences.
  - There is a wide perception gap regarding the amount of sufficient resources. Only 51% of teachers say they have sufficient resources to help students with learning differences compared to 79% of administrators reporting this.
- ★ Teachers report a significant gap between meeting the needs of white families vs. families of color and low-income families. Sixty-nine percent say they can meet the needs of white families. Yet, it is only:
  - 54% for Black families
  - 53% for Hispanic families
  - 50% for families who are not native English speakers
  - 48% for homeless families

Educators in urban and Title 1 schools are more likely to feel as if they can meet the needs of diverse families.

- ★ Only 27% of educators say their school offers small class sizes but 88% say it would be very/extremely helpful.

## Trust & Communication

Educators agree with parents that more concrete information and support is needed for families with children who have learning differences. Both have the same top priorities in terms of opportunities for schools and families to work together.

### Key Data Points:

- ★ The term “Learning Differences” has the most consensus across audiences-parents, teachers, administrators (more than “learning disability”, “neuro-diversity” and others).
- ★ Educators and parents agree on the same opportunities regarding improved communication and support.
  - For example, both are very interested in more information about concrete ways families can help their children with learning differences.
- ★ Seventy-two percent of educators say they need more help building trust with families and more informal opportunities to build trust.

- ★ While 83% of administrators say they feel confident having conversations with families whose student they suspect has a developmental and/or learning difference, this drops to 59% among teachers.
  - This is even lower with teachers in Rural, Suburban, and non-Title 1 schools, which correlates with their lower scores on supporting students with learning differences.

## Key Recommendations

Informed by the data insights from this body of research, the following are recommendations to help build awareness and inform policies and practices focused on improving the support for students with learning and thinking differences, inclusive of deeper training for educators and more effective communication and partnership with families.

*These recommendations include:*

### 1 Build teacher capacity by improving training related to:

- identifying students with learning differences
- deeper training on specific learning differences
- communicating and partnering with families



### 2 Prioritize an equity lens to move toward:

- sufficient resources for students with learning differences
- closing the gaps between services white families receive vs. families of color

### 3 Strengthen partnerships with families of students with learning differences:

- specific policies and practices that foster trust and provide concrete information and communication

## About NeuroEquity Research Collaborative (NERC)

The Teacher & Principal Lens was conducted in collaboration with the NeuroEquity Research Collaborative (NERC). In 2023, Understood established the NERC, a group of leading researchers, experts in neurodivergence, equity-oriented and community-based organizations, thought leaders and advocates. Learning Heroes was asked to join this group of mission-aligned partners committed to initiating an equity-centered research base from which to build. We charged ourselves with convening stakeholders, creating urgency, undertaking new research across varied methodologies, influencing the field of research, and amplifying findings to create meaningful change. The overall goal of the collaborative is to advance equitable conditions for neurodivergent people, especially those who are also marginalized based on other aspects of their identity.