# Scenario #1 – Print Disability

## Defined By...

A student with a print disability is one who is unable to gain information from printed materials at an anticipated level for their grade and needs alternative access or a specialized format to access that information.

Dyslexia is defined by the International Dyslexia Association as *a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.*

## Student Background

Abby is a 2nd grade student who has a recent diagnosis of dyslexia and has been on a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan. After recent completion of an ETR, her educational team has determined that Abby will need an IEP due to a need for specialized instruction in several foundational areas of reading.

Abby is an only child and has attended her primary school since Kindergarten. She walks to and from school with her moms each day along with a group of other neighborhood kids.  Abby’s educational team has noticed the following key characteristics that are often associated with dyslexia:

* Difficulty learning to read, write, and spell
* Difficulty following oral and written directions
* Highly articulate verbally
* Easily distracted
* Learns best with hands on experience
* Easily frustrated
* High test taking anxiety
* High energy levels
* Very low self-esteem

## Scenario Story

Abby is nervous about what having an IEP will mean for her at school and how it will affect her day.

In the morning, Abby’s mom tells her the school lunch options and asks Abby if she wants to buy or pack.  Abby chooses to buy because she loves grilled cheese and is excited about lunch at school. When she arrives to her classroom later that morning, Abby signs in and goes to the lunch board to select her lunch.  Abby confuses grilled chicken salad (another lunch option) for grilled cheese and places her name under the wrong choice.

When Abby arrives at the lunch room later that day, she informs the cashier in the lunchroom that she ordered grilled cheese, but the cashier says that the list submitted by Abby’s teacher states that Abby ordered grilled chicken salad and she is required to stay with the option she selected.

Abby feels frustrated and anxious after this interaction.  She also does not like grilled chicken salad and does not eat most of her lunch.

## What Did You Notice?

* The student felt unsuccessful both in reading and in independently navigating her day
* The cashier missed an opportunity to foster self-advocacy for the student
* The student went without eating lunch, potentially compromising her learning in the afternoon and impacting her mood

## Barriers to Access

* Needs that are not being met: academic needs, social emotional, and physical wellbeing
* Lack of multiple modes of representation (images along with the lunch options, reading lunch options aloud, etc.)
* Preventing student self-advocacy by insisting that Abby must keep her lunch option that is listed on the order form
* Lack of understanding/recognition that reading disabilities are present across environments
* Failure to recognize the emotional impact contrived consequences have on a student

## Strategies

* Implement UDL strategies and provide multiple modes of representation (include images with the lunch options).
* Provide individualized support to the student. The teacher could say “Abby, I see you order grilled chicken today.”
* Recognize that ‘same is not equal’ and allow for some flexibility in rules for students who may need accommodations or alternate options.
* Explore assistive technology devices. (Abby might benefit from a device that can read text aloud to her when a teacher is not present.)

## Continued Understanding

An adult with dyslexia can also experience barriers. Most adults have learned strategies to be successful at reading; however, the following list shows some ways that an adult can still experience barriers:

* Selecting a complex font or poor background color for a team project with a colleague
* Selecting a book for a professional book study that is not available as an audio book
* Providing a long email with several expectations/requirements for your staff without also sharing the expectations verbally at a meeting or other in person conversation

# Scenario #2 – Deaf or Hard of Hearing

## Defined By...

**As defined by IDEA: Deafness** means a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

**As defined by IDEA: Hearing impairment** means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but is not included under the definition of “deafness.”

## As explained by the National Association of the Deaf: The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf or hard of hearing, level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and cultural identity. How people “label” or identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. Some people believe that the term “people with hearing loss” is inclusive and efficient. However, some people who were born deaf or hard of hearing do not think of themselves as having lost their hearing. Over the years, the most commonly accepted terms have come to be “deaf,” “Deaf,” and “hard of hearing.”

## Student Background

Kimberly is a 7th grader who has recently changed schools to a building where she will be the only student who is deaf/hard of hearing. She has a degenerative condition that has meant a gradual hearing loss over time leading to profound deafness. The gradual changes have impacted how Kimberly receives information auditorily. When Kimberly was young, she found benefit from amplification in the learning environment but no longer does due to the decline in her level of hearing. Kimberly’s previous educational team noticed one or more of the following that indicated there had been a change in hearing:

* Difficulty following verbal directions
* Frequent requests for information to be repeated
* Challenges with social/emotional or interpersonal skills which could be attributed to missing incidental information
* Following or watching other students for cues
* Behavior changes due to frustration
* Fatigue

Currently, Kimberly uses a variety of communication modes to express and receive information based on what is happening in the environment, and who she is communicating with, but her preferred mode is American Sign Language. Accommodations being used in the classroom to support Kimberly’s visual access to information include preferential seating, captioning for videos, sign language interpretation, and notetaking.

## Scenario Story

Kimberly’s family recently moved into the district from a different town. Each day so far there have been things everyone, including Kimberly, teachers, and students, have learned to help make communication go a little smoother. The first day Kimberly had trouble finding her room and needed to ask another student for help. The situation was something Kimberly was used to but the other student was initially uncomfortable providing assistance because he didn’t know what to do. The second day the teacher had the class work in stations and move around the room to complete an activity. Although the directions were provided verbally and in written format, Kimberly was not able to fully participate in each station due to the pace. The third day Kimberly asked to sit with a group of students from her class at lunch but had some trouble engaging in the conversation because no sign language was used, very little was written down, and it was hard to follow what people were saying while they were eating or facing different directions.

The fourth day gave Kimberly and the staff a scare during an evacuation of the building due to a small fire. Kimberly was changing classes from science to art and stopped to use the restroom. She saw a group of unfamiliar students talking and continued into the stall. While using the restroom the fire alarm sounded to indicate that the building needed to be evacuated but Kimberly was unaware due to her level of hearing. After exiting the stall Kimberly headed to her art class but found no one in the room. She was confused and unsure what to do. A teacher found Kimberly and directed her outside using gestures once she realized Kimberly was deaf. This provided information about an action that needed to be taken but no information about what or why things were happening. The situation left the staff feeling apprehensive about supporting Kimberly’s needs effectively and it left Kimberly feeling unsure and embarrassed.

## What Did You Notice?

* Direct communication challenges
* Pieces of explicit and incidental information are being missed
* Feelings of uncertainness, apprehension, and embarrassment
* Potential for feelings of isolation

## Barriers to Access

* Limited information being shared regardless of the mode being used
* General awareness issues exist
* Physical Well-Being Needs: Plan for providing supports needs to address safety considerations and more across the building

## Strategies

* General awareness training for staff and students to include:
	+ approaching a person,
	+ understanding preferences,
	+ communicating using an interpreter,
	+ environmental considerations,
	+ and more based on feedback from Kimberly, her family and the needs of staff/students.
* Planning time dedicated to taking a comprehensive look at language, communication and access needs throughout the day at home, school, and in the community.

## Continued Understanding

## An adult who is deaf or hard of hearing deals with issues associated with access in every environment. In their home and community, it is helpful for others to be aware of strategies that help improve direct communication. Understanding the preferences of the person helps to reduce frustration levels and to increase feelings of comfort and confidence. As the person moves on to:

* college: accessing academic content, building peer relationships,
* work force: advocating for access needs, effective communication,
* growing and managing a family: access related to healthcare, being an active parent in their child’s lives, and more.

Considerations for access continue to play a role in each person’s life. By working together to be more aware, and understand what works, we can help one another live our best lives.

# Scenario #3 - Executive Function

## Defined By...

People have a range of Executive Function challenges. These challenges can be associated with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit disorder, gifted and talented, anxiety, obsessive compulsive behavior, brain injury; sometimes they come without an additional diagnosis or identification. Children who have experienced trauma can also experience Executive Function challenges.

Students with Executive Function challenges may show signs of difficulty in the following areas:

* *Goal Setting/Planning*: set unrealistic goals; start work at last minute; do not plan for all the steps on the way toward a goal; fails to anticipate consequences
* *Shift/Mental Flexibility:* have difficulty transitioning from one task to another; changes in routine present challenges; appear to have more rigid thinking
* *Organization*: have difficulty establishing order in a place or activity; appear scattered; can have a disorganized approach to solving problems and materials
* *Initiation:* have trouble getting started with a task or activity; may appear defiant
* *Working Memory:* find it difficult to hold information in mind while performing other tasks; forget assignments, materials, classroom procedures; remember only part of the directions
* *Inhibitory Control:* can be distractible or impulsive; have difficulty delaying gratification

## Student Background

Jaden is a 14-year old who attends high school within the same local school district that he has attended since kindergarten. In second grade, he was identified as Talented and Gifted in the areas of Mathematics and English and has participated in honors class in those two subjects ever since. Throughout his schooling, Jaden’s parents have seen signs of behaviors that are often associated with ADD and anxiety but have not sought a formal diagnosis. Several teachers have struggled to address behaviors in the classroom that have been described as impulsive, distracting, periodically disruptive, nonproductive, and generally inattentive.

Math classes, in particular, have presented challenges for Jaden; it is not a subject that he enjoys and he has long felt that he “does not belong” in the honors class with other Gifted students because he “doesn’t understand the concepts as easily as everyone else”. Over the years, Jaden has developed an intense dislike for the subject and routinely expresses feelings of insecurity and anxiety about it.

In the classroom, his math teachers have described Jaden as follows:

* Not attentive to whole-group instruction by the teacher
* Does not follow directions for independent work
* Distracts others by socializing with peers
* Sometimes doodling or staring into space
* When he “gets into” the work, he does maintain focus and gets things done
* Arrives late to class

## Scenario Story

This year Jaden is enrolled in Honors Math 2 as a freshman in high school. The class period lasts 45 minutes and moves swiftly from instruction to independent work. His teacher gives the class explicit verbal instructions about the day’s assignment and then turns the time over to them to get the work done. While the teacher is speaking, Jaden takes several minutes getting settled at his desk pulling out his materials and checking in with classmates who are also seated at the foursome of desks. When students start working after the lesson, the class is quiet and focused. After 10 minutes, Jaden raises his hand for assistance and asks the teacher to repeat everything already communicated in the initial instructions.

With only 20 minutes remaining in the class, Jaden does not complete the assignment and requests more time to do the work during his academic prep period. When the teacher refuses the additional time, he becomes visibly agitated. He receives a C on the assignment. The next few days in class the same cycle repeats itself with subtle demonstrations of increasing anxiety. By the fifth day, the teacher informs Jaden that she will not answer questions for which information has already been provided and directs him to pay closer attention when instructions are given at the beginning of class.

## What did you notice?

* The student seemed disengaged from the classwork and missed out on instruction and the full opportunity to practice concepts
* The teacher experienced frustration with having to repeat her instruction for one student when the rest of the class followed along
* The same pattern continued to repeat itself without change in approach by either student or teacher

## Barriers to access

* Needs that are not being met: academic, social emotional, and physical wellbeing
* Instructions provided in verbal format only without visual supports that remain while students do independent work
* Lack of recognition that groupings of students at desks present additional demands on attention for some students
* Missed opportunity to address individual student’s needs for math instruction
* Enforcement of timed activity creates artificial constraint on practice and demonstration of learning
* Failure to recognize increasing anxiety levels adds to student stress levels and physical/emotional vulnerability

## Strategies

* Checklist in math notebook for what the student needs out on desk
* Written directions on the board for the day’s tasks with suggested time targets
* Break down steps of the task without assuming the student can do it independently
* Notes from lesson available on Google Classroom or on board for reference during independent work time
* Provide additional time to student for instruction or to complete assignment outside of class, either in school or out of school, and observe progress

## Continued Understanding

Adults can also have challenges with Executive Function with causes including those listed above as well as cognitive impairments that occur in adulthood, such as strokes, and prolonged exposure to stress and sleep deprivation. In the workplace, colleagues may exhibit these challenges in a variety of ways, including:

* Being unprepared for team meetings without work completed because they:
	+ Routinely overcommit to projects or tasks;
	+ Underestimate the amount of work to be done on a project or task;
	+ Initiate work on project or task too late to finish on time;
* Being late to meetings having left materials behind at their desk;
* Having difficulty adjusting to a different schedule, new building-wide protocols, other team teachers’ adoption of tools, or proposed changes to expectations or rules for students.

# Scenario #4 – Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

## Defined By...

Autism is a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. Other characteristics often associated with autism include: engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements; resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines; challenges with emotional regulation; and intensified responses to sensory experiences. People with autism tend to have strong visual skills and demonstrate strengths within routine or predictable tasks.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the overall prevalence is now one in 59 children (aged 8 years) with estimates one in 37 boys and one in 151 girls. ASD knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries, and family income, lifestyle, and educational levels do not affect the chance of the occurrence of ASD.

People with autism exhibit a range of challenges and strengths with cognitive/information processing, social-communication, and emotional regulation. A useful axiom to consider when thinking about the autism spectrum is: “If you’ve met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism.”

## Student Background

Josh is a fifth grader with autism who attends his neighborhood elementary school and spends the majority of his day in general education classrooms learning with his peers. His expressive language and communications skills are strong; however, he often misunderstands nonverbal cues, including facial expressions, and misses the nuance in humor and tone of sarcasm, which can lead to a disconnect and even friction with peers. His strong preference for routines and maintaining “sameness” in his interactions can also present challenges with friends whose interactions are becoming more dynamic and less predictable. In the past, he found many peers willing to talk at length about subjects like dinosaurs and reptiles; as he approaches the end of his fifth-grade year, and nears entry into middle school, he finds fewer and fewer.

The upper grades in his elementary school require students to change classes more frequently, not only for related arts but for each of the core subject areas. The English classroom, in particular, can be challenging for Josh because the teacher has a more relaxed approach to classroom management and emphasizes group-based projects, such as book clubs and writing teams.

## Scenario Story

This morning Josh’s bus arrives late to his stop and encounters unexpected traffic along the route making them late to school. His homeroom teacher quickly helps the students from this bus get settled and start working on their Math assignment. In his next class, Social Studies, Josh is surprised to be greeted by a substitute; he learns that his regular teacher had to stay home with a sick child.

When Josh enters his third class of the day, English, his teacher announces that seats have been changed so students need to look at table signs for their new seating assignment. All materials are kept in a central location so Josh does not have much to do to settle into the new arrangement. Still, there are 3 new students seated at his table, and he now has a different view of the classroom and different path to the materials.

The teacher informs the class that today’s work will be focused on a group discussion about a book they’re reading. She tells them to spend 15-20 minutes with their new table mates discussing chapters 5 through 8 focusing on two questions: What character do they relate to most and why? What do they think the character will do next? At the end of the discussion, one student from the group will share out with the class.

Josh is unsure how to proceed with the group discussion and asks for help from the teacher. When she approaches his table, he takes in a strong scent of shampoo, cologne, or lotion. He’s so overwhelmed by the scent that cannot focus on his teacher’s answer to his question. When he expresses frustration to a table mate asking for more information about exactly what time they should be finished, what order they should do the talking, who should take notes, and how they should figure out who does the “share out” with the class, one of his table mates tells him to chill out and makes a joke about him to another peer.

Josh shuts down at this point and does not engage further in the activity. When the teacher notices his lack of engagement and approaches him again, he immediately leaves the classroom and heads to the restroom without asking permission. The teacher calls down to the office for support, asking for an aide to check in with Josh and bring him back to the classroom.