

## Special Education Has Changed Over Time

by Paul Counts Special education has been assisting students with learning disabilities in the United States education system since the end of World War II. The first push for special education started when a group of parent-organized advocacy groups surfaced. In 1947 one of the first organizations, the American Association on Mental Deficiency, held its first convention. That marked a starting point for special education as we know it today. Started during the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1950s, the United Cerebral Palsy Association, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and John F. Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation were among an increased amount of advocacy groups for assisted learning programs. This strong push helped bring special education into schools across the country in the 1960's as school access was established for children with disabilities at state and local levels. The parent advocacy groups dating back to 1947 laid the ground floor for government legislation being approved by Congress in 1975 that was called the "Education for All Handicapped Children Act" (Public Law 94-142). This act went into effect in October of 1977 and it was the beginning for federal funding of special education in schools nationwide. The act required public schools to offer "free appropriate public education" to students with a wide range of disabilities, including "physical handicaps, mental retardation, speech, vision and language problems, emotional and behavioral problems, and other learning disorders." The law from 1977 was extended in 1983 to offer parent training and information centers. Later in 1986 the government started programs targeting youngsters with potential learning disabilities. The Act from 1975 was changed to the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) in 1990. Since establishment of IDEA more than 6.5 million children and 200,000+ toddlers and infants are being assisted each year. Special education in schools often unintentionally overlooks a key aspect of why students suffer from learning disabilities. The reasons for common learning disabilities are weak cognitive skills. Studies show that 80% of students enrolled in special education at some level suffer from underlying weak cognitive skills. Cognitive skills are the mental capabilities that one needs to successfully learn academic subjects. In more detail cognitive skills are learning skills used to retain information; process, analyze, and store facts and feelings; and create mental pictures, read words, and understand concepts. They are not to be confused with academic skills which would include subjects like math, science, or history. Proper testing to identify these weak cognitive skills will help quality learning centers put together a plan of action to strengthen them. This sort of training will last a lifetime. By not targeting the cognitive skills a student will struggle for the rest of their life until they are trained properly. It is highly recommended that you get your child tested at a learning training center that provides cognitive testing. Once tested a personal, unique training program can be developed for your child to overcome their learning disability.

### About the Author

LearningRx is a child and adult [learning center](#) which provides cognitive skills assessments and training to help students overcome learning disabilities. To find a LearningRx testing center near you, or to take a free self-screening test visit [www.learningrx.com](http://www.learningrx.com).

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