

UNDERSTOOD ANNOUNCES 2022 PREDICTIONS FOR NEURODIVERSITY

Experts in ADHD, Dyslexia, and Other Learning Disabilities Anticipate Increased Workplace Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and Widened Achievement Gap If Learning and Thinking Differences Are Not Prioritized

NEW YORK, Jan. 6, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- [Understood](#), a social impact, nonprofit organization and lifelong guide for those who learn and think differently, today launched its 2022 [predictions](#) for learning and thinking differences. Backed by data and industry analysis related to [neurodiversity](#), Understood experts, including [Yvonne Cowser Yancy](#), Chief Administrative Officer and Head of Workplace; [Bob Cunningham](#), Executive Director of Learning Development; [Amanda Morin](#), Director of Thought Leadership and Expertise; and other special education teachers and school administrators identified key shifts that, if left unaddressed, will dramatically impact people with or affected by learning and thinking differences.

"Learning and thinking differences are increasingly part of diversity and inclusion conversations, but there's still work to do," said [Nathan Friedman](#), Co-President of Understood. "It's important to not only include these differences in these conversations, but also identify actionable steps that organizations, schools, educators, and families can take now to help shape a better world for the 70 million people with learning and thinking differences."

Understood's predictions focus on what will occur in the workplace, in the education system, and within schools next year, and state that:

People with learning and thinking differences make up 20 percent of the U.S. population. If workplaces don't prioritize neurodiversity in their inclusion efforts, they could lose a fifth of their workforce.

Accommodations, like flexible work schedules and dual written and verbal content, play an important role in whether neurodiverse individuals feel supported and valued at work, or if they can work at all. In fact, the [unemployment](#) rate as of October 2021 is 9.9 percent for people with disabilities — more than double of those without (4.1 percent).

If employers aren't willing to be flexible with these supports, they'll miss out on hiring and retaining a massive group of people with incredible talent and perspectives — perpetuating the cycle of inequality for people with learning and thinking differences, and hurting their own inclusivity efforts and bottom line along the way. [Read more here.](#)

"Accommodations seem like big undertakings, but they are often supports that are very simple and affordable to incorporate," commented Yancy. "When you structure your workplace for the 20 percent of people who have learning and thinking differences — whether they disclose them or not — you create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all."

A record-breaking number of special education evaluations will be completed for students without disabilities or learning and thinking differences.

A 2020 [study by McKinsey & Company](#) found that students experienced a three-month loss in learning in math and one and a half months in reading — losses that only deepened over the past year of interrupted learning. Additionally, Understood's 2021 [back-to-school research](#) found that 50 percent of parents were worried about their child facing challenges in the school year ahead because of interrupted learning in the prior year. Given this, families want to do whatever they can to help their children "catch up." That includes pushing for special education evaluations, even if their child doesn't have a learning disability or difference.

If schools use their already-stretched-thin special education resources for students without disabilities, 2022 will see the greatest special education shortage of our time — and those with learning and thinking differences will be hurt the worst. [Read more here.](#)

If schools don't prioritize teachers' mental health, the achievement gap will widen dramatically for students with learning and thinking differences.

According to [research](#) by Understood and the National Center for Learning Disabilities, 58 percent of current teachers report they are burned out from teaching. This number was even greater for teachers who work with students with learning and thinking differences.

If schools and communities don't prioritize teachers' mental health, there will be a second wave of mass teacher resignations, acutely affecting students with IEPs, 504 plans, and special education needs. [Read more here.](#)

"The past 20 months have been challenging for all students and teachers, but particularly for those who need or provide special education," Cunningham said. "From increased co-teaching opportunities to new solutions to streamline evaluation processes, schools must take immediate action in 2022 to better support educators and prevent these achievement gaps from growing any wider."


View the predictions in their entirety on [Understood's blog](#). To request an interview with an expert, reach out to media@understood.org. For more information about Understood's [content and resources](#), [podcasts](#), and [workplace program](#), visit [Understood's Media Center](#).

About Understood

1 in 5 Americans have learning and thinking differences, such as ADHD and dyslexia. They are often misunderstood, undiagnosed, and dismissed, and these differences are viewed as a weakness. This leaves many on a journey that is stacked against them and costs society billions of dollars. Understood is a lifelong guide for those who learn and think differently. Today, we help more than 20 million people each year discover their potential, how to take control, find community, and stay on a positive path along each stage of life's journey. When others join this journey, and people are broadly embraced, everyone thrives. Understood is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation based in New York. For more information, or to become a partner, visit u.org/media and follow us on Twitter [@UnderstoodOrg](https://twitter.com/UnderstoodOrg).

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