

Learning disability may lead to secondary problems

By definition, the term child with specific learning disability refers to a youngster whose achievement in one or more of the basic learning areas of reading, writing, or arithmetic (the 3 R's) is substantially below that which is expected, given the child's chronological age, intellectual level, and grade placement.



Len McCulloch

poisoning in infancy and childhood. Boys seem to outnumber girls by 3-to-1 in the ratio of learning disabilities.

BOYS VS. GIRLS

Years ago, an interesting experiment was begun. It was hypothesized that baby boys' heads, at birth, are slightly larger than girls' heads. One hundred heads of newborns were measured and there was a significant difference in boys having larger heads. It was thought that this could mean more pressure was exerted on the boy's heads in the birthing process. It was further thought that mild and tiny blood vessel bursting could occur in the boys with the larger heads.

Next, one hundred newborns (half girls, half boys) had spinal taps done soon after birth to check for bleeding. There was significantly more non-dangerous blood in the

boys' taps than in the girls' taps. This was thought to be correlated with the greater pressure bearing on the skull as it passed through the birthing canal.

Unfortunately, the study stopped there. More could have been learned.

If the babies in Phase I had been tested for learning disabilities around 3rd grade and the 3 to 1 ratio favoring the boys was seen, interesting conclusions could've been made.

Parents and children with learning disabilities need to understand that the children are not retarded, lazy, crazy or weird. Famous, very successful people have had learning disabilities including Bruce Jenner, the former Olympic Gold Medal winner. It has also been reported that Einstein was a poor student of math, as a young schoolboy and John F. Kennedy was a poor student of history as a high school student.

It is important not to confuse Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) with learning disabilities. The two can be present in the same child but they are different disorders, and one does not cause the other.

Also, the term dyslexia is often misunderstood. Simply, it refers to the instances of severe learning disabilities mainly in reading and writing where letters and numbers are perceived and/or written backward.

It is interesting to note the dyslexic form of learning disability doesn't exist in China since their language is top-to-bottom (vertical), while our English is left-to-right (horizontal).

SECONDARY PROBLEMS

Special attention needs to be given by teachers, parents and friends of the learning disabled student. It is paramount to prevent the development of secondary problems, which can be more devastating than the learning disabilities themselves.

These include low self-esteem, poor self-image, conduct problems, delinquency and depression. School dropout rates are high when self-esteem is not preserved, and a disproportionate number of the prison population versus the general population have been shown to have specific learning disabilities.

If a learning disability is

suspected, a parent or teacher can request an Individualized Educational Planning Committee (IEPC) to convene in their school district. A school psychologist will provide a diagnostic assessment to determine if a learning disability is present or not. If so, the law mandates that Special Education Services be made available in all school districts with children with learning disabilities (as well as other disabilities).

In these programs, classes are smaller, teacher aides are more common, and the teachers are trained in alternative ways of teaching the student with the learning disabled brain.

In addition, it can be very helpful to have an outside the school tutor or "coach" work with the student.

This could be an older high school student or a professional tutor or someone in the family with whom the child bonds well.

Much can also be done in small groups of learning disabled children in schools, to provide support and solidarity and understanding to each other.

If secondary emotional, self-esteem and/or conduct or

other problems develop, professional help can be sought.

In the final analysis, the only thing worse for the child with learning disability is acquiring a secondary poor attitude about himself/herself and the learning problem. Help is available.

RESOURCES

The Learning Disability Association of Michigan, phone (517) 485-8160, internet www.lidamichigan.org, Center for Human

Development at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, provides learning disability assessment and tutoring/treatment in consultation with schools, scholarships are sometimes available. Phone (248) 691-4744.

Within the School System itself, ask for a Consultation with the teacher and the District's School Psychologist.

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Social services agency honors church

On March 22, 2003, Cass Community Social Services (CCSS) hosted its 9th Annual Dinner at the Westin Hotel in Southfield.

Nearly 300 partygoers helped raise over \$38,000 by purchasing tickets and bidding on dozens of silent auction items. Funds will be used to finish construction on a new 1,240-square-foot commercial kitchen inside CCSS' Scott Building. The Annual Dinner provides staff and friends of CCSS with an opportunity to recognize the past year's accomplishments.

Among the highlights, the Church of the Year award, which honors exemplary volunteerism by parishioners of a partner church, went to Farmington Orchard United Methodist Church.

Cass Community Social Services, the nonsectarian outreach of Cass Community United Methodist Church, is dedicated to making a profound difference in the lives of the diverse populations it serves. CCSS is accredited by the Commission on Rehabilitation Facilities



Doug Rick, Farmington Hills, holds the CCSS Church of the Year Award with CCSS Board Chair, Karen Plants, Ferndale.

(CARF), an international accrediting body. The Scott Building, CCSS' main facility, is located at 11850 Woodrow Wilson Street in Detroit.

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