

Socio-Physical Development of Learning Disabled Children: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

Learning disability refers to learning problems which manifest an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, and write or mathematical calculations. Types of learning disabilities include reading disabilities (dyslexia), mathematics disability (dyscalculia) and writing disability (dysgraphia). The learning disabled children suffer from a lot of physical and social problems. Teachers can adopt various strategies to overcome the physical and social problems of learning disabled students. Most children with learning disabilities are just as smart as everyone else. They just need to be taught in ways that are tailored to their unique learning styles. Schools are becoming more adept at working with children with differing types of learning disability and it is hoped that our ability to assess minority children appropriately will also improve.

KEYWORDS: Socio-Physical development, Learning disability, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, etc

INTRODUCTION

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or math. They can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short term memory and attention. It is important to realize that learning disabilities can affect an individual's life beyond academics and can impact relationships with family, friends and in the workplace. Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between the individual's potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as "hidden disabilities": the person looks perfectly "normal" and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person, yet may be unable to demonstrate the skill level expected from someone of a similar age. A learning disability cannot be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong challenge. However, with appropriate support and intervention, people with learning disabilities can achieve success in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community.

Learning Disability

Learning disability refers to learning problems which manifest an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, and write or mathematical calculations which are not primarily due to visual impairment motor handicap, mental retardation, environmental or economic disadvantages, but due to a disorder in the psychological process involved in understanding or in using language. Kirk has defined, "learning disability refers to retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the process of speech,

language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbances and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, cultural or instructional factors”.

Learning disabilities and learning disorders are an umbrella term for a wide variety of learning problems. A learning disability is not a problem with intelligence or motivation. Student’s learning disabilities are not lazy or dumb. In fact, most are just as smart as everyone else. Their brains are simply wired differently. This difference affects how they receive and process information. The disorder can make it problematic for a person to learn as quickly or in the same way as someone who is not affected by a learning disability. People with a learning disability have trouble in performing specific types of skills or completing tasks if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

Types of Learning Disabilities

Learning disability refers to significant learning problems in an academic area. When the term “learning disabilities “ issued, it describes a group of disorders characterized by inadequate development of specific academic, language, and speech skills. Types of learning disabilities include reading disabilities (dyslexia), mathematics disability (dyscalculia) and writing disability (dysgraphia).

Learning disabilities vary from person to person. One person with learning disabilities may not have the kind of learning problems another person with learning disabilities. One person may have trouble with reading and writing. Another person with learning disabilities may have problems with understanding math. Still another person may have trouble in each of these areas, as well as with understanding what people are saying.

Learning disability is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning disability can cause a person to have trouble in learning certain skills. The skills that trouble most often are reading, writing, listening, speaking, reason and doing math. Reading, writing, and math aren’t the only skills impacted by learning disorders. Other types of learning disabilities involve difficulties with motor skills, understanding spoken language, distinguishing between sounds, and interpreting visual information.

Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)

Also known as Central Auditory Processing Disorder, this is a condition that adversely affects how sound that travels unimpeded through the ear is processed or interpreted by the brain. Individuals with APD do not recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even when the sounds are loud and clear enough to be heard. They can also find it difficult to tell where sounds are coming from, to make sense of the order of sounds, or to block out competing background noises.

Dyscalculia

A specific learning disability that affects a person’s ability to understand numbers and learn math facts. Individuals with this type of LD may also have poor comprehension of math symbols, may struggle with memorizing and organizing numbers, have difficulty telling time, or have trouble with counting.

Dysgraphia

A specific learning disability that affects a person’s handwriting ability and fine motor skills. Problems may include illegible handwriting, inconsistent spacing, poor

spatial planning on paper, poor spelling, and difficulty composing writing as well as thinking and writing at the same time.

Dyslexia

A specific learning disability that affects reading and related language-based processing skills. The severity can differ in each individual but can affect reading fluency, decoding, reading comprehension, recall, writing, spelling, and sometimes speech and can exist along with other related disorders. Dyslexia is sometimes referred to as a Language-Based Learning Disability.

Language Processing Disorder

A specific type of Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) in which there is difficulty attaching meaning to sound groups that form words, sentences and stories. While an APD affects the interpretation of all sounds coming into the brain, a Language Processing Disorder (LPD) relates only to the processing of language. LPD can affect expressive language and/or receptive language.

Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities

A disorder which is usually characterized by a significant discrepancy between higher verbal skills and weaker motor, visual-spatial and social skills. Typically, an individual with NLD (or NVLD) has trouble interpreting nonverbal cues like facial expressions or body language, and may have poor coordination.

Visual Perceptual/Visual Motor Deficit

A disorder that affects the understanding of information that a person sees, or the ability to draw or copy. A characteristic seen in people with learning disabilities such as Dysgraphia or Non-verbal LD, it can result in missing subtle differences in shapes or printed letters, losing place frequently, struggles with cutting, holding pencil too tightly, or poor eye/hand coordination.

Physical and Social Development of learning disabled students

The learning disabled children suffer from a lot of physical and social problems. These problems act as major hindrances in the way of their development. The elimination of these problems will go a long way in solving many of the disabilities. These problems mainly include,

- Lack of physical fitness
- Lack of self esteem
- Lack of socialization
- Lack of emotional awareness
- Lack of social interaction

Strategies to overcome the physical and social problems of the learning disabled

Teachers can adopt various strategies to overcome the physical and social problems of learning disabled students. The following are some such strategies:

Strategies for Helping students with Learning Disability to Participate in Physical Activity

- Teach physical activities explicitly, using verbal instructions, diagrams, and modeling.
- Ask if non-competitive sports are preferable to competitive sports
- Hiking, bicycling, martial arts, weight lifting, camping, swimming and canoeing can provide positive experiences of physical activity.

- Provide children with opportunities to be active in non-physical extra-curricular activities like drama, music and clubs.
- Offer positive reinforcement for any attempts by children to carry out physical challenges(reward effort).

Strategies to develop self esteem among disabled children

- Support students to pursue activities in their area of strength or interest.
- Plan activities that will give students the greatest chance of success.
- Experiencing success may give students the motivation to try activities that are more of a challenge for them.
- Be supportive of any signs of progress, even when progress is slow.
- Students need to learn that practice can help develop skills and that success is within their reach.
- Notice the reactions of classmates to a student's academic strengths/weaknesses. Sometimes self-esteem and competence increases when students are in an academic environment with peers who are similar to them academically.

Strategies for Helping students with Learning Disability to Socialize

- Create small, calm and controlled group settings that provide greater safety and Increase the chance for successful social experiences
- Surround children with others who share interests or talents
- Give children verbal direction and instruction. Use kids' strengths with language to help them learn what others can observe and learn more easily.
- Help children to learn, observe and notice others' facial expressions, body language, tone of voice and other social cues.
- Help children to repeat direct teaching several times before kids are able to master the skill. It is important to provide this instruction with kindness and patience

Children with learning disabilities can succeed

Most children with learning disabilities are just as smart as everyone else. They just need to be taught in ways that are tailored to their unique learning styles. Paying attention to normal developmental milestones for toddlers and preschoolers is very important. Early detection of developmental differences may be an early signal of a learning disability and problems that are spotted early can be easier to correct.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. However, with appropriate cognitive/ academic interventions and technology assistance many can overcome the effects of their disability. Individuals with learning disabilities can face unique challenges that are often pervasive throughout the life span. Depending on the type and severity of the disability, interventions and current technologies may be used to help the individual learn strategies that will foster future success. Some interventions can be quite simplistic, while others are intricate and complex. Current technologies may require student training to be effective classroom supports. Teachers, parents and schools can create plans together that tailor intervention and accommodations to aid the individual in successfully becoming independent learners. School psychologists and other qualified professionals quite often help design the intervention and coordinate the execution of the intervention with teachers and parents. Social support may improve the learning for students with learning disabilities.

CONCLUSION

Learning disabilities is a field that is constantly changing. With the advent of techniques that allow scholars to study in action, we may understand not only normal process of reading but also what happens when the system is not working. The hope is that we will be able to prevent learning disabilities or, at the least, to develop innovative and successful interventions. It is also hoped that we will become more adept at identifying children at earlier ages to prevent some of the emotional and social difficulties that can be associated with a learning disability. Families who have a history of learning disability need further to study to provide appropriate support for them as well as to assist with early interventions. Schools are becoming more adept at working with children with differing types of learning disability and it is hoped that our ability to assess minority children appropriately will also improve.

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