



Nebraska Newsbriefs

Helping ADHD Students Get Organized for School

For ADHD children, the ability to organize, prioritize, and manage time is impaired by neurological deficiencies that make it hard for them to stay on top of school assignments. Find out how to help ADHD students master organization at home and at school.

from ADDITUDE Magazine, August 2009

The problem: The child forgets to bring the right books and supplies home or to school. His desk, locker, backpack, and notebook are in disarray. He forgets deadlines and scheduled activities.

The reason: The neurological process that lets us organize, prioritize, and analyze is called "executive function." Children with attention deficit disorder (ADHD) and related neurobiological problems have impaired executive function skills due to abnormal dopamine levels in the frontal lobe of the brain.

The obstacles: Punishment will not change disorganized behaviors that are related to brain pathology. It's confusing to teachers and parents when students with ADHD are inconsistent in their ability to organize because it may seem like the child is just "sloppy" or "lazy." If a child handles one task in an organized way, it's tempting to believe he could always be organized if he wanted to, but that's not necessarily the case.

Solutions in the Classroom

Children who take ADHD medication may show some improvement in their ability to stay organized; however, they still need teachers and parents to provide support and teach them essential life skills. The key to helping kids stay organized is constant communication between teachers and parents.

- **Provide additional supplies.** If possible, provide the student with two sets of books and supplies - one for home and one for school. This way, there is less for the child to remember to bring back and forth to school which will also help conserve the child's mental energy for his most important task: learning.
- **Use the right supplies.** Have ADHD children use assignment notebooks with larger-than-usual spaces in which to write. Also, if the child tends to cram and stuff papers in his folders, a binder with pocket-type inserts in which to stuff papers may work better than the standard three-ring binder with tabbed sections.



- **Give assignments in writing.** If printed instructions aren't possible, check that the child has written down the entire assignment and seems to understand what he needs to do at home.
- **Color-code books and supplies by subject.** For example, use yellow for all geography book covers, notebook dividers, and files. Use red for everything related to history class, and so on.
- **Design a folder system that works.** If ADHD students misplace or forget assignments with your standard folder system, work with the child to come up with an organization system that works for him. It may take time and experimentation, but keep trying, and listen to the student-- kids often come up with their own good ideas.

Solutions at Home

Organizational skills rarely come naturally. Consider yourself and spend some time teaching her the basics of planning and organization. Involve her when setting up organization systems so she is invested and allowed to make choices and decisions. Help your child practice her skills on a regular basis, and follow through with the systems you create together.

- **Enforce time concepts.** Understanding time is essential for ADHD students to learn to keep on task and stay organized. Help your child practice by giving specific verbal cues - first, next, then, before, after - as you develop a routine. Make it fun: "First do ten jumping jacks, then write your name backwards," and have your child give you directions as well. A child who masters the concept of sequence will be better able to organize and prioritize tasks.
- **Make a calendar.** Calendars offer multisensory learning opportunities by being visual record of activities that you and your child write down and cross off, and it prompts auditory reinforcement as you talk about the day's events. Calendars will also help your child develop other skills, like accountability

because he'll see when you will or will not be available to help with a project, and can plan accordingly and assume responsibility for himself.

- **Create a filing system.** Set up a color-coded file system, with colors matching the system devised for school, on your child's desk. He then can easily store all of his science or English papers together in one place. This way, all of his work that doesn't have to go back and forth each day can be easily found in one place.
- **Provide a place for everything.** Keep a box for school supplies, a holder for CDs, a shelf for books, a bulletin board for announcements, an under-bed box for old artwork and papers. If your child rejects your efforts to help him stay organized, impose logical consequences like if he loses a CD he has to be the one to replace it.
- **Emphasize accomplishments and successes.** Praise your child as you continue to work with him on new skills. Your support and perseverance help make organizing a positive and effective experience for your ADHD child, one that will prove to be a lifetime asset.

Solutions at Home: Quick Tips

- **Check assignment books.** Double-check your child's assignment notebooks or planner to make sure that homework is in its proper place once completed. With guidance, she can learn to write down all homework deadlines and avoid last-minute cramming and unpleasant surprises.
- **Keep copies of important papers.** Make multiple copies of permission slips, event announcements, and other paperwork to post in several areas of the house. These will serve as visual reminders of important dates and deadlines.
- **Have a hole-punch handy.** Keeping a three-hole puncher on your child's desk will help him to make sure that important papers can be easily punched and inserted into his school binder.
- **Have a weekly clean-out.** Check your child's belongings daily and help him organize them weekly. Once a week clean out and reorder backpacks, assignment notebooks, and work binders.

Learning Disabilities Association of Nebraska

E-Mail: ldaofofb@yahoo.com

President: Deb Carlson
Omaha
402-731-3039

Vice-President: Sue Schuele
Omaha
402-431-8547

Secretary: Vicky Olson
Omaha

Treasurer/ Sharon Bloechle

Membership: Omaha
402-571-7771

Board Members:

Elkhorn Vicki Olson
Fremont Sara Bigsby
Lincoln Linda Hanigan
Omaha Brenda Elson
Cyndi Muhlbauer
Maureen Penton

Papillion Virginia Weston

LOCAL CONTACTS

Columbus: Nora Tonnies
402-562-1514

Gering: Agnes Larson
308-436-2789

Kearney: Robyn Roth
308-263-3411

Lincoln: Charlene Gondring
402-489-4621

Ogallala: Sue Geischen
308-284-2106

Tekamah: Jane Marquardt
402-374-2065

LDA of Nebraska is a non-profit nationally affiliated volunteer organization of parents and professionals dedicated to helping children and adults with learning disabilities. LDA does not endorse or recommend any institution, school, treatment or person.

We provide support, information and advocacy for our members.

Letters to the Editor may be sent to:

Maureen Penton
5702 Mason St.; Omaha, NE 68106
omahamoe@yahoo.com

From the President...

Fall is a busy time of year for everyone. Seems that everyone is involved in High School football and of course the one and only Husker football team. Many may wish that they did not invest all the time in the Huskers but they still may turn around. Usually, this is the time of the year that LDA holds their annual conference. Due to many unforeseen circumstances we had to reschedule our Conference for the Spring of 2010. Please keep your calendars open for the upcoming announcement of our Conference in the Spring. We hope to have many good speakers available for you with many topics of interest for our patrons. The best part is that we won't have to schedule the conference around Husker football or the High School football.

Fall is still an important time to keep our students minds active on learning. Reading aloud stories about the fall season or the various holidays that occur during this time of year is always beneficial to our children. Students could create leaves out of paper and write leaf poems about the colors of the changing season. Small children can create letters out of sticks or leaves on the grass to practice their letter formations. Nature can provide many materials to use in creative learning. Use your imagination and see what you can think of to help students learn their academic skills.

Deb Carlson; President LDA of Nebraska

Meet a Board Member

The Learning Disabilities Association of Nebraska board includes parents, educators and other professionals. They all have one thing in common: they volunteer their time to inform other parents, educators, professionals and the general public about the hidden handicap of learning disabilities.

In this issue we meet Sue Schuele.

Meet Sue Schuele

Q: *Tell us a little bit about yourself.*

A: I am the Educational Strategist at St. Vincent de Paul, working with students in grades K-4. I have two children age 13 and 11. I am currently working on my masters in reading at UNO. In my free time I enjoy working out at the gym, hiking and reading.

Q: *How did you get involved in LDA?*

A: I contacted the LDA office for information to help me in my position as an Educational Strategist. I was provided with a wealth of information and benefited from the resources the organization provided to me. I knew at that time I wanted to get more involved with the organization.

Q: *What changes have you seen in special education since your child started receiving services?*

A: One of the changes I have seen in the special education system is the move to RTI (Response to Intervention).

Q: *What concerns you most about the current trends in special education?*

A: I worry about the schools moving to the RTI process. It is a big change to special education and change is not always easy. With any new process, it takes time to work out all the kinks and implement the process in a successful manner. I also worry about consistency as the process is implemented in the various school districts.

Put Your Experiences to Work

By Robert J. Gregory (2002)

If you are or will be a job-seeker soon, then you can put your experiences with a disability to work for you and for a prospective employer. In fact, you can also seek to upgrade your existing position if you are currently employed. Learn how to get or create that job that you want by taking advantage of your precious personal experiences.

When you stop and think about it, many people with disabilities manage to survive under conditions of adversity. The sometime negative social responses to "disability," the lack of appropriately designed environments, the fears by some that disability is catching, the imposition of medical models such as institutionalization, and other situations make life difficult for many people with disabilities. Quite naturally, then, a person with a disability must evolve effective strategies and tactics for living that not only permit but enable him or her to cope with the problems that everyone faces.

But, people with disabilities invariably have some extra or additional problems, as well. These strategies mean that people with disabilities have survival skills that others may lack altogether. Here are skills that may be of special interest to employers during highly competitive times and indeed, valued by all members of a community.

Attending to details and planning. Many people wander through their day with relatively little awareness or attention to details. Not so for someone who is a wheelchair user, for example. To get through the day, he or she must plan exactly what to do, when and where to do it, and what energies and equipment the activity may take. The extensive planning necessary is essential to conserve limited energy, to assure that, for example, a return home to get something forgotten is not necessary, for it may take half a day and a lot of energy to manage the additional activity. That attention to detail is important on many, if not most, jobs.

Persuading others. People with disabilities quickly learn to work with others creatively, and because they may be reliant on the good will of other people, they develop skills in being able to empathize with, understand, and persuade or at least get along with, others. People with disabilities may have to maneuver others to get what they need and want, in gentle but persistent ways that keep peace and harmony in interpersonal relationships. Teamwork, getting along with

others, and working together are all mantras for employers, and those with such skills are highly valued.

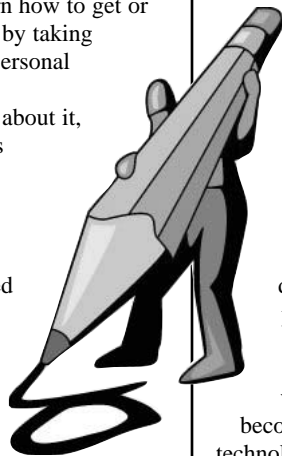
Keeping a proper perspective on equipment. Many people with disabilities need to use equipment - wheelchairs are one such device - but a wide range of other aids, appliances, and pieces of equipment are essential to movement, appearance, and amenities. People who have never relied on equipment may become technology oriented, to the detriment of their own goals and behaviors. Technology, for a person with a disability, quickly assumes a proper place, that is, a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. Being familiar with, able to handle and fix, and use various items of equipment without becoming overly enamored with technology is a valued ability.

Balancing energy levels. Matching energy levels with goals when only a limited budget of energy is available is an increasingly important issue. Given the increasing costs of energy of any and all sorts, the limits of resources available, and the need to conserve, people with disabilities have often thought through the fine balances required to ensure goals are met with minimum energy, expense, time, and use of resources. Most people without disabilities never or only rarely deal with this situation. Such skills are an asset.

Handling adversity. Can you handle adversity? Skills in dealing with problems are important in any business or industry. The ups-and-downs of daily life in business and industry are many. People with disabilities have dealt with, and frequently continue to deal with, adverse conditions.

Coping and managing. Coping and not succumbing are automatic responses of people with disabilities, particularly after coming to terms with either a traumatic onset or congenital disability. Managing to survive, adapt, and cope, becomes a lifelong habit and pattern. People with disabilities have often learned to cope and manage, frequently far better than those who take such skills for granted, and with style and expertise. Adaptability is important in the coping process.

Focusing on the important. People with disabilities focus on what is important. Time, energy, and other constraints may be limited and therefore a clear focus on important matters is essential. As a result, the skills and abilities to focus may be a determining factor in selection for some jobs, and an important factor in most.



Appreciating diversity. Handling diversity is a skill, even in a society often oriented towards conformity. People with disabilities are frequently unique, by virtue of their particular disability, lifestyles, and the patterns of living each uses to cope with an intolerant society. Many people with disabilities have had to handle issues relating to diversity and as a result have an appreciation of the values inherent in diversity. Employers have both jobs that require conformity and some that demand diversity.

Accepting alternative paths. Many people with disabilities realize that following the mainstream is not always the best goal for them, there are alternatives that can and do work. Not only are alternative goals possible, but many alternative means can be found and used to achieve whatever may be required. Creative solutions, as well as meaningful directions different from those of the so-called mainstream, are frequently found among people with disabilities. These skills in devising and following alternative paths are valuable assets.

Trusting others. How are you with trust? Could you walk across a busy street with a blindfold and guide dog? Could you manage to use a blindfold and take a walk? Could you get along with caregivers, attendants, and other professional aides with whom you must establish trust? Many people with disabilities have learned to trust their own senses, abilities, and bodies through wide experiences of interaction with others. They learn to trust other people as appropriate, sometimes carefully assessing a workable level of trust, which is not a simple matter.

People with disabilities may have a special appreciation that life is not always the best that it can be. They can and do appreciate, however, what is good for them. These skill areas do not necessarily apply to all people with disabilities and neither do people without disabilities lack such skills. However, many people with disabilities do have an abundance of skills, abilities, and experiences from which all people can gain.

Employers in particular, who often need to be cautious in selecting appropriate workers, may find that people with disabilities have many exceptional assets and skills that will prove valuable in their setting. If you are currently employed in a less than satisfactory role, you may want to make sure your supervisors know that you do have significant and valuable experiences that just might be of enormous value.

*reprinted from Careers & the disabled
Spring 2002*

A Teacher's Guide to Using Newspapers to Enhance Language Arts Skills

By: Newspaper Association of America Foundation (2007)

Newspapers expand the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for learning activities. Discover new ways to use the newspaper in your language arts studies, with these activities from the Newspaper Association of America.

News develops every day. The beauty of the newspaper in the classroom is that it is also fresh each day. It comes to you with the latest news and information and,

unlike other media, comes beautifully written with lots of detail. Stories unfold as reporters unearth more information to reconstruct what happened. There is truly no better record of the world's happenings than a newspaper.

For teachers the newspaper offers a special attraction. It has been called the living textbook and it lives up to that name. The newspaper can be used to enhance skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, math, social studies and science. Critical thinking is the natural outgrowth of using a newspaper to learn. Unlike textbooks, which are several years outdated by the time they get into students' hands, the newspaper comes alive with information. The newspaper expands the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for learning activities.

These activities will help students improve their skills in reading and writing. These skills are among the ones they will practice: how to find the main idea, how to increase vocabulary, how to compare readings, how to form sentences, how to ask a good question and how to write a great summary. They will employ many critical thinking skills as they are required to interact with the authentic material found in the newspaper.

Sports Glossary

Skill: Student uses a variety of strategies to analyze words.

Have students select an article from the Sports section. As they skim the story, they can make a list of vocabulary words that are used in the sport. Then they should write a definition for each word and draw a picture to illustrate what the word means. They can add any other words they can think of that also have to do with the sport, but that do not appear in the article. Now they have a sports glossary!

Monthly Magazine

Skill: Student uses a variety of reading materials to develop personal preferences in reading materials and locates and organizes written information.



Tell students that they are in charge of planning a cover for an important monthly magazine. They can look through today's paper for the five articles that they think would be best for their magazine. They will design the cover, including titles that will make people want to read the articles and pictures that will catch their attention.

Comics and You

Skill: Student identifies details and uses information to construct meaning and make inferences.

Have students look through the comic strips in today's newspaper for a character who is most like them. They can make a list of the things they have in common with this comic character as well as the differences.

Fun with Nouns

Skill: Student correctly identifies parts of speech-nouns.

Review the definition of a noun with your class. Then have them select a story from the front page of today's newspaper and find the nouns. They can underline the people they find in red, the places in blue and the things in green. Then make a list of nouns you can find looking around your classroom.

Picture Stories

Skill: Student organizes ideas and information for creative writing.

The goal is to use pictures from the paper to tell a story. This activity gives students a chance to explore how photographs can tell stories. Have students look through the photos in today's paper. Students then choose three photos and cut them out without captions. They can paste each picture on a separate sheet of paper and staple the sheets together in the order they will appear in the story. Finally, they should write out each story in the form of captions below each picture.

Before and After

Skill: Student creates a story in which ideas and details are in a logical order.

Have students find a photograph in the newspaper that interests them. Instruct them to think about what is going on in the picture. Have them explain what they think happened just before the picture was taken and predict what they believe will happen afterwards. They should write down their explanation. Then, for creative writing fun, have them come up with the wildest events they can think of for what happened before and after.

On Sale

Skill: Student uses writing process effectively for persuasion.

Display ads are found throughout the newspaper. They are different from classified ads because they are larger and often have pictures and large letters. Have students find a display ad that catches their attention. Have them write a paragraph telling whether or not they think it's a good ad. How did it catch their eye? What would they change about it to make it even better? Have each student create a display ad to sell something in his/her desk.

Picture Punctuation

Skill: Student understands correct usage of punctuation marks.

The message of photos is sometimes like the message in a word sentence. Have students look through today's newspaper and find pictures whose subject could represent a question mark (?), an exclamation point (!), and a period (.). Have them cut out the pictures and write an original sentence for each picture telling why they made this choice.

Secret Pal

Skill: Student drafts writing that conveys a sense of completeness.

Have students pretend they have a secret pal in the class and use the words from headlines in today's newspaper to create a friendly message for their pal. They can cut out the words and paste the message on a piece of paper, or they can just choose the words and write the message on the paper. After that, they can give the message to the pal.

Searching the Paper

Skills: Student effectively skims and scans for information.

Have your students find each of the following in the newspaper:

- someone wearing glasses
- map
- animal
- television listing
- the name of your city
- athlete
- action word
- television star
- cartoon
- story about another country
- letter from a reader
- movie review or ad

Adopt a Pet

Skill: Student uses creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper.

Pets are often in the newspaper. Sometimes they make news by doing something like saving their owner. Often they are found in ads. Have students turn to the classified ads and find the pets section. Have them read the descriptions and decide if one

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Gifted Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

By: Maureen Neihart (2004)

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common behavioral disorder of childhood, and is marked by a constellation of symptoms including immature levels of impulsivity, inattention, and hyperactivity. The National Institutes of Health declared ADHD a "severe public health problem" in its consensus conference on ADHD in 1998.



There are three subtypes of ADHD: predominantly inattentive type, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive type, and combined type. The combined type is most common and best researched. The DSM-IV states that to meet criteria for a diagnosis of Combined Type ADHD, a child must meet at least six of the nine criteria from both lists and exhibit significant impairment in functioning. Symptoms must occur in more than one setting, have been present for at least six months, and have been present before the age of seven. It is important to note that a child who meets the criteria but doesn't exhibit significant impairment is not diagnosed with the disorder. The subjective determination of what constitutes significant impairment is one of several factors that contribute to the controversy regarding diagnosis and treatment, especially in gifted children.

Differences in gifted children and non-gifted children with ADHD

Initial findings suggest two points for consideration. First, Kaufman and her colleagues' work indicates that identified gifted ADHD children are more impaired than other ADHD children, suggesting the possibility that we are missing gifted children with milder forms of ADHD. Second, high ability can mask ADHD, and attention deficits and impulsivity tend to depress the test scores as well as the high academic performance that many schools rely on to identify giftedness. Also, teachers may tend to focus on the disruptive behaviors of gifted ADHD students and fail to see indicators of high ability.

These delays are of concern because early provision of appropriate services is important for academic and social success. Gifted children whose attention deficits are identified later may be at risk for developing learned helplessness and chronic underachievement. ADHD children whose giftedness goes unrecognized do not receive appropriate educational services. It is recommended that children who fail to meet test score criteria for giftedness and are later

diagnosed with ADHD be retested for the gifted program.

As a group, ADHD children tend to lag two to three years behind their age peers in social and emotional maturity. Gifted ADHD children are no exception. This finding has important implications for educational placement. As a group, gifted children without ADHD tend to be more similar in their cognitive, social, and emotional development to children two to four years older than children their own age. When placed with other high ability children without the disorder, ADHD children may find the advanced maturity of their classmates a challenge they are ill prepared for. Also, gifted children without the disorder may have little patience for the social and emotional immaturity of the gifted ADHD student in their midst. This is not to say that gifted ADHD students should not be placed with other gifted students. The research is clear that lack of intellectual challenge and little access to others with similar interests, ability, and drive are often risk factors for gifted children, contributing to social or emotional problems.

Assessing ADHD in gifted children

It is difficult to differentiate true attention deficits from the range of temperament and behavior common to gifted children. There is concern in the literature that clinicians err on the side of pathologizing normal gifted behavior. Common characteristics of gifted children can be misconstrued as indicators of pathology when the observer is unfamiliar with the differences in the development of gifted children. This difficulty can be exacerbated when the gifted child in question spends considerable time in a classroom where appropriate educational services are not provided. The intensity, drive, perfectionism, curiosity, and impatience commonly seen in gifted children may, in some instances, be mistaken for indicators of ADHD. The creatively gifted child may appear to be oppositional, hyperactive, and argumentative. Gifted children with some kinds of undiagnosed learning disabilities will be very disorganized, messy, and have difficult social relations.

Ideally, a diagnosis of ADHD in gifted children should be made by a multidisciplinary team that includes at least one clinician trained in differentiating childhood psychopathologies and one professional who understands the normal range of developmental characteristics of gifted children. Since as many as two thirds of children with ADHD have coexisting conditions such as learning disabilities or depression, assessment must include an

evaluation for these disorders as well. School personnel rarely have the training needed to differentially diagnose ADHD, and few clinicians are aware of the unique developmental characteristics of gifted children. Accurate assessment must be a team effort.

One of the reasons parents may be hesitant to comply with treatment recommendations for their children is because they aren't convinced their child has the disorder. Parents want a thorough evaluation, and parents of gifted children want assurance that their child's giftedness has been taken into consideration when evaluations are conducted. When parents see that their child has been properly evaluated, they may be more willing to participate in a treatment plan.

What is appropriate intervention and support?

The available research suggests that we should not assume that all interventions recommended for ADHD children are appropriate for gifted children who have the disorder. Early findings suggest that there may be some differences in the way we intervene with gifted ADHD children. Treatment matching is crucial. Effective interventions are always those that are tailored to the unique strengths and needs of the individual. There is wide agreement in the literature on gifted children with learning problems that as a general strategy, intervention should focus on developing the talent while attending to the disability. Keeping the focus on talent development, rather than on remediation of deficits, appears to yield more positive outcomes and to minimize problems of social and emotional adjustment.

In addition, there is limited evidence that some of the commonly recommended interventions for ADHD children may make problems worse for ADHD children who are also gifted. For instance, since gifted children tend to prefer complexity, shortening work time and simplifying tasks may increase frustration for some gifted ADHD students who would handle better more difficult and intriguing tasks. Similarly, decreasing stimulation may be counterproductive with some gifted ADHD children who, as a group, tend to be intense and work better with a high level of stimulation.

Conclusion

There has been some concern that problems with inattention or hyperactivity that are better attributed to a mismatch with the curriculum or to characteristics of high creative ability are wrongly attributed to ADHD. Although there are good reasons to

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Dyslexic Parents of Dyslexic Children

By: Dale S. Brown (2006)

Many parents with dyslexia have children with dyslexia. What impact does dyslexia have on the parent-child relationship? Several parents who were dyslexic volunteered to be interviewed at a conference support group at the International Dyslexia Association. All but Rachel De Bellis, Executive Board Member, Parent Empowerment Network, Washington State, wanted to have their names changed.

Blessings of dyslexia

"I am so thankful to be a dyslexic," explained Rachel, "for the understanding it brings in knowing the challenges. Having experienced it first hand gives you the perspective and added knowledge of HOW to utilize the self-taught methods of overcoming many of the characteristics."

Rachel is the parent of 20 year old boy-girl twins and a sixteen year old daughter. The two girls have dyslexia. "Both of my girls know to appreciate the way their brains give them an edge over their common-brained friends and brother. They like the way their brains work, in spite of the difficulties that they face. They consider their brother as being "lazy" because he hasn't had to work hard."

Like many parents, Rachel found out about her own dyslexia when her daughter was identified in the second grade. As she learned about dyslexia, she realized that she was also dyslexic but had not been diagnosed. "I couldn't spell even though I studied my spelling words with my best friend who was a straight A student. She would pass the spelling test, but I wouldn't, even though we studied the same. I had to stay in from recess many times to practice my multiplication tables, which I still don't fully know. I still have to guess some of them."

Parents with dyslexia often become advocates

Rachel became an advocate, "My advocacy started by trying to educate the educators for my daughters sake," she says. She has lobbied at the State House of Representatives and Senate in Washington State to get programs in schools. She is on the Executive Board of the Parent Empowerment Network.

Cynthia Smith (name changed) also became an advocate for her child. She and her

husband, Roger, who is a cowboy, live on a small "Dude Ranch."

She has six children. Three have dyslexia.

One of their sons, Tom, had no disability but was lazy and undisciplined. Roger told him to get his grades up or quit school and get a job. "Stop wasting the time of your teachers and

parents," he said.

Their youngest daughter, Sandy, witnessed this and wrote a letter to her Mom. "I do not think my grades are good. But I do not mean to but I really try. I do. I am sorry. I did not tell you in faith, but I am afraid and I do not want to be punished. Tell Dad if you want. I try, Mom, I really do. Love with all of my heart."

They hired a tutor and requested another IEP meeting. They explained that their daughter was having problems and building walls. She had given up. Before she would always run to win. Now, in a race, she would quit before she started. She had quit trying. She had just given up on herself.

The school tested Sandy and she read at the 2nd grade level in 5th grade. She had dyslexia.

"We pitched fits," Cynthia explained, "and looked for a place to send her for the summer to help with school work. We found a mountain camp. The school paid for her to go. Sandy went there. The camp improved her reading by 1 ½ grades. She learned that she was not stupid and that many people have that problem. They helped with her self esteem. She is going next year. And she is actually excited about going."

Cynthia found that dyslexia helped her be a better parent. "I am more proactive. I am a big believer in education. I learned that a teacher is not always right. You have good teachers and bad teachers, just as you have good (horseback) riders and bad riders. When a problem occurs, I react."

Challenges for parents with dyslexia

"When we discovered that Brittany had dyslexia," Cynthia continued, "I didn't want to go to any of the meetings. It was dragging up memories that I didn't want. That was really hard. I don't want to revisit the past."

Unfortunately, some parents find that their children's experiences bring back disturbing memories of the past. A positive response is

to get their own diagnosis and make their coping skills more conscious.

Homework is another issue. Cynthia Smith explained that she doesn't help her daughter with her studies. She asks her husband to help. Most parents with dyslexia have support, such as tutors or a program after school, to help their children.

Parents with dyslexia work hard at keeping their family lives organized. Rachael DeBellis says, "With kids....it's nuts no matter what! Soccer games, basketball, dance lessons, friends coming and going, bills needing to be paid, it's all crazy and it goes by too fast."

Another parent, Gina Collingsworth (name changed), explains, "You need to get into a system, a routine of things that need to get done. We do wash on Wednesday evening and Saturday morning. Get into a routine and stick to it."

Gina also suggested that families set up support people or a support group. "Mine is my husband, friend, and church. You need to find something or someone to help you. You might need someone to back you up with writing a report, for example." She said it helped that her son was active in sports, dance, and theater. "Offer to be a support parent to help that organization," she suggested. "If you become the team coordinator, you get to meet more parents. If I have to write anything, I get my husband to double check it. Be honest with the person who is coordinating. Say 'I'm great on the phone, I'm good on hospitality, but don't put me with anything that involves writing.'"

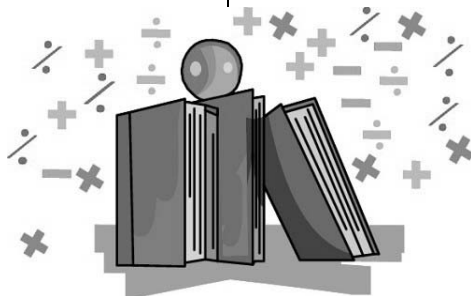
In closing

Many parents find that their dyslexia is a strength that makes them better parents and advocates. Rachael De Bellis says "I had no idea that hearing the word 'dyslexia' could empower a person. I love what I do. I know I am making a difference in the lives of children who are suffering the same way I did when I was growing up. I love helping them see dyslexia as a gift instead of a disability. I love helping them find ways to overcome the challenges they are facing. I love helping them love themselves, dyslexia and all."

About the author

Dale S. Brown is the Senior Manager of LD OnLine. She is a nationally recognized expert on learning disabilities who has written four books on learning disabilities. She received the Ten Outstanding Young Americans Award for her work as an advocate for people with learning disabilities.

Brown, D (Fall, 2006) *Dyslexic Parents of Dyslexic Children, Perspectives Adapted* slightly for LD OnLine



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Gifted Children

Continued from Page 5

believe that misidentifications occur, there are yet no hard data on the frequency with which gifted children are over- (or under-) diagnosed or over- (or under-) medicated. Until systematic studies are conducted, we should be cautious about rejecting ADHD diagnosis in gifted children out of hand because there are serious, long-term negative consequences for under-treating the disorder (Barkley, 1998). The available research on ADHD children indicates that nationally, there is a good deal of under-treatment as well as some over-treatment of ADHD children.

It is a challenge to arrange a good fit in school for gifted ADHD children. They must have an appropriate level of intellectual challenge with supports and interventions to address their social and emotional immaturity. Placement in the gifted program may or may not be appropriate, depending on the nature of the program, the social milieu of the gifted classroom, and the coping ability of the child, but a coherent plan for addressing the student's intellectual, social, and behavioral needs is nevertheless imperative.

reprinted from LDOnline

Maureen Neihart, Psy.D. is a licensed clinical child psychologist in Billings, MT.

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A Teacher's Guide

Continued from Page 4

of these pets would be a good pet for them. They can then write a convincing argument that includes all the reasons they should have that pet.

Something Good and New

Skill: Student writes a concise summary.

The news is often about the troubles in the world. Is there any good news as well? Encourage students to find a story of good news. What makes the news good? Does the story have any impact on their lives? Have them write a brief summary of the good news and share it with your class.

Movie Promoting

Skills: Student organizes information before writing and uses creative writing strategies.

Have students imagine that they are movie promoters and it is their job to get people to come see their movie. They can look through the Entertainment section in today's paper for one of their favorite movies. They will design an advertisement that will promote this film.

Comic Players

Skill: Student speaks with understanding and for various audiences or purposes including informal presentations.

The comic strips are really like little plays. Students can practice reading aloud with expression by reading the dialogue in the comics. Assign parts and have the strips read aloud in your classroom. Have fun and encourage students to really ham it up!

Mind Mapping

Skill: Student determines the main idea and relevant details in a passage.

Assign students to choose an article from the newspaper that they think is interesting. They can write down the main idea in a few words in the center of a piece of paper. Then they will write down some details that support the main idea.

Winning Isn't Everything

Skill: Student writes informal letter expressing mood.

Students should read through the Sports section in today's newspaper and find an article about a game or event. Instruct them to imagine that they are a fan of the losing team and to write a letter explaining the impact of losing and some lessons one can learn from losing.

Newspaper Association of America Foundation, (2007).

Newspapers Maintain the Brain. A Teacher's Guide for Using the Newspaper to Enhance Basic Skills, 5-11. Vienna, VA: Newspaper Association of America Foundation.

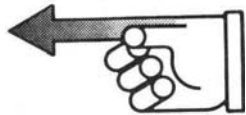
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