

How Parents Can Spot Possible Learning Disabilities in Their Children

1 - INTELLECTUAL REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities usually exhibit intellectual potential within the average range and above. This usually translates into a score of 90 or better. Such potential should only be measured by an individual intelligence test like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised. Even though a score may fall below 90, it needs to be analyzed by an expert for greater potential.

2 - ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities usually exhibit mild academic deficits (6 months-1 year below grade level), moderate academic deficits (1-2 years below grade level) or severe academic deficits (more than 2 years below grade level). These deficits may exhibit themselves in any one of the following areas:

- Decoding (word attack skills)
- Reading Comprehension
- Mathematical Computation
- Mathematical Reasoning
- Written Expression
- Oral Expression
- Listening Comprehension

3 - EXCLUSION REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities are not intellectually disabled, primarily emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, visually impaired, slow learners or the result of inadequate instructional practices, cultural or economic disadvantages.

4 - BACKGROUND REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities usually exhibit a history of learning, social and developmental difficulties dating back to early grades.

5 - BEHAVIORAL REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities usually exhibit several of the following:

- Variability in performance across subject areas
- Attention problems- i.e. distractibility, poor concentration
- Organizational problems with information, space or time
- Poor motivation and attitude due to repeated academic failure
- Memory problems
- Language deficits in listening, speaking or writing
- Poor motor abilities in fine motor (small muscle) or gross motor (large muscles)
- Inappropriate social behavior - i.e. making fiends, poor reactions to social situations

6 - PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS

Children with learning disabilities usually exhibit deficits in the learning process. The strengths or weaknesses in this process are usually measured by process (perceptual) tests such as the Slingerland, Woodcock Johnson, or the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitudes. However, the following list indicates some difficulties exhibited by children with processing problems in the following areas:

VISUAL MOTOR DISABILITY

- Poor motor coordination
- Poor perception of time and space
- gets lost easily
- Poor handwriting, artwork, drawing
- Restless, short attention span
- Awkward, frequent tripping, skipping

AUDITORY-VOCAL DISABILITY

- appears not to listen or comprehend
- responds with one word answers
- may emphasize wrong syllables in words
- offers little in group discussions
- trouble following directions
- trouble with rote memory trouble (i.e. math facts)

AUDITORY ASSOCIATION DISABILITY

- fails to enjoy being read to
- has difficulty comprehending questions
- Slow to respond, takes a long time to answer
- relies heavily on picture clues

VISUAL ASSOCIATION DISABILITY

- unable to tell a story from pictures
- unable to understand what he reads
- fails to handle primary workbook
- needs auditory cues and clues

MANUAL EXPRESSIVE DISABILITY

- Handwriting and drawing are poor
- Poor at game playing, can't imitate others
- Clumsy, uncoordinated
- Poor at acting out ideas or feelings

VERBAL EXPRESSION DISABILITY

- mispronounces common words
- uses incorrect word endings
- difficulty in sound blending
- omits correct verbal endings

AUDITORY MEMORY DISABILITIES

- fails to remember instructions
- can't memorize nursery rhymes, poem
- doesn't know alphabet
- Unable to count

VISUAL MEMORY DISABILITIES

- misspells own name frequently
- inconsistent word identification
- frequent misspellings, even after practice
- can't write alphabet, numbers etc.