

Eight Reasons Why Your Child May Not Be Able to Perform Up to his/her Ability

Introduction

Children are faced with many pressures everyday and as a result these pressures may play a role in their ability to fully concentrate in school. In general there are 8 factors that contribute to problems in performance by students with special needs. Any of these factors, if intense enough, can create classroom symptoms resulting in academic, behavioral or social dysfunction.

Academic Factors

There will always be times when academic deficits will impair a child's ability to function in the classroom. These deficits will make it hard for the child to keep up with the other students and may require added time to complete tasks. Further, a lack of academic skills may also be the cause of resistance and opposition to learning. Knowing what is behind resistance may make it easier to overcome it. Factors that can contribute to academic dysfunction include but are not limited to:

- **Developmental math disorders:** this is sometimes referred to as dyscalculia
- **Developmental reading disorders:** this is sometimes referred to as dyslexia
- **Developmental spelling disorders:** this is sometime referred to as dysorthographia
- **Developmental writing disorders:** this is sometime referred to as dysgraphia

Environmental Factors

Students have lives outside of school and all too often, these lives are filled with turmoil, chaos and dysfunction. When a child is exposed to these factors it drains them of their energy which makes it harder to concentrate and attend while in school. After all, children who may experience violence in the home are more worried about going home after school then concentrating on math problems. Environmental factors are defined as those factors which the child may be exposed to at home or in the community which may have a profound impact on the child's ability to function in school. Examples of these factors may include home issues such as:

- Alcoholism
- Divorce
- Drug abuse
- Economic hardships
- Family illness

Intellectual Factors

There may be times when a child's difficulties in school may be the result of intellectual factors. While a child's ability may vary, it is imperative that as a teacher you have a good idea of each child's true ability level so that you do not frustrate him/her and adapt the curriculum to his/her needs. When these factors are present, a child's stress may be manifested in a variety of symptoms. The factors which fall under this category include:

- Undetected limited intellectual ability
- Undetected gifted intellectual capacity

Language Factors

With so many children coming from other countries and not being able to speak the language, this factor may play a dominant role in a child's ability to perform in school. Further, other children may already have language processing problems even if they are not from another country. Regardless, you will need to be aware of how this factor affects the performance of children in the classroom. Language provides the foundation upon which communication, problem solving, integrating, analyzing, and synthesizing knowledge takes place. Therefore, deficits in language can have a profound impact on the ability of an individual to learn and function competently and confidently as he interacts in the world.

Medical Factors

Medical factors which may contribute to a child's academic dysfunction can be numerous. While teachers are not asked to be doctors, certain medical conditions may manifest certain symptoms in the classroom. For the most part, one would assume that any serious medical condition may have already been identified by the child's pediatrician or parent. However, this may not always be the case, especially in the cases of very young children. However, certain more common medical problems that may impair a child's ability to function adequately in the classroom may include but are not limited to:

- Attention deficit disorder
- Coordination problems
- Hearing problems

Perceptual Factors

There are times when perceptual issues can impair a child's ability to function in the classroom. While perceptual deficits are often misunderstood or undiagnosed, they do account for a large number of high risk children. Being able to identify the symptoms that may be caused by serious perceptual deficits can only reduce a child's frustration, both in and out of the classroom. Perception is a process that involves many different areas. While most of us take it for granted, for some children it represents a very difficult, frustrating and deflating experience.

The learning process is like an assembly line through which information received travels. Information is received in some manner, and is filtered through a series of psychological processes. As information progresses along this "assembly line", it is given meaning and organized in some fashion, and then expressed through a variety of responses. When we evaluate a child's perceptual abilities, we are looking to see if there is a deficit in some area of the learning process that may be slowing down the processing of information, thereby interfering in the child's ability to receive, organize, memorize or express information. Severe deficits in the learning process can have adverse affects upon a child's academic performance.

It is therefore imperative that teachers and other professionals identify those areas which may have a direct impact on a child's ability to adequately process information and possibly interfere in his academic achievement as soon as possible.

Psychological Factors

Tension is a factor that is present in many children and the greater the tension, the greater the impact on a child's ability to learn. As tension rises it affects a child's ability to concentrate, focus, remember and store information, participate, keep things in perspective and remain patient. As tension goes up so may distractibility, impulsivity, and avoidance since all of these factors require energy which is now being drained by tension. Psychological factors which may be contributing to a child's dysfunction in school may include but are not limited to:

- **Anxiety:** Apprehension, tension, or uneasiness from anticipation of danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognized.
- **Brief situational disturbances or adjustment reactions:** An imprecise term referring to emotional or behavioral symptoms that develop in response to an identifiable stressor.
- **Conduct disorders:** A disruptive behavior disorder of childhood characterized by repetitive and persistent violation of the rights of others or of age-appropriate social norms or rules.
- **Depression:** Depression may be a symptom seen in a variety of mental or physical disorders, a syndrome of associated symptoms secondary to an underlying disorder, or a specific mental disorder.

Social Factors

Social factors may contribute to a child's stress and consequently interfere with learning. While social status is a crucial factor at many ages, it becomes more of a factor as one approaches the period of adolescence. Social pressures and peer influence sometimes create an imbalance in a child's functioning. This imbalance may often result in lower available energy for school related issues because of the intense need for energy to cope with his social world or social conflicts. Social factors which may lower available energy and result in academic dysfunction include:

- Low social status
- Peer competition
- Peer rejection
- Preoccupation with boyfriend or girlfriend
- Scapegoat