

Learning Strategies Centre

The purpose of the Learning Strategies Centre (LSC) is to assist teachers and students with learning strategies. Currently there are approximately 30 students in the program. The LSC team consists of our coordinator, Jayne Dold and our support teachers, Jan Potter and Caroline Attard. The individual needs of each student are discussed with the teachers and the Primary Leadership Team. Teachers will then engage in appropriate communication with the parents to ensure all parties are informed and working towards to the same goals.

Testing by professionals is arranged by the LSC team and funding applications are prepared on behalf of the students and parents. The team endeavours to keep abreast of any new developments or programs that may advance the learning of their students by regularly attending professional development sessions.

“Just a Moment ...Let me Think”

We are now a quarter of the way through the ‘not-so-new’ school year, and we are all asking, “Where has the time gone?” Time is important to us. We can begin again and rebuild most things in life - a lost relationship can be restored, lost finances can be recovered, a lost or damaged home can be rebuilt or repaired, lost health can be regained, but the lost minutes and hours of life can never be recovered.

How can we lose time? We can waste it in the pursuit of trivial things. We can lose time by being idle and unmotivated as a result of toxic thinking, or we can lose time by being overly busy. In the rush and hustle of life we can lose our children’s precious childhood years and be hardly aware that all too soon they will be leaving us.

For two weeks this term I have had the privilege of being trained in the Feuerstein Cognitive Enrichment Program. Professor Feuerstein has a motto, which is inscribed on every one of his teaching modules. It simply says, “**Just a moment . . . Let me think!**” Time spent in thinking is not wasted time. It actually saves time by increasing our efficiency and productivity. We often equate quickness with cleverness, but this is not always so. It is the thoughtful, thorough student who will overtake his peers in the long run.

Research has discovered that teachers and parents, as a general rule, only allow children 1.5 seconds to answer a question. However, if we double that time to 3 seconds there are several big payoffs for the student as well as for the parent/teacher.

The result of teachers waiting just 3 seconds for a student to respond was researched by Mary Budd Rowe (1986), and the outcome is summarised in the boxes following:

Children responded with longer and more correct answers

- * “I dunno” responses decreased
- * More students participated in the discussion.
- * Achievement scores went up (Now you’re talking!)

Teachers/Parents improved their questioning strategies

- * The number of questions decreased while the quality and variety increased
- * Questions became higher level - in other words, more intelligent, thoughtful and relevant!

As parents we can also create a ‘thinking’ home by practicing with our children the various cognitive functions - one at a time. Expect more on this exciting challenge next issue.



Meet the LSC Team



Jayne with Dr Jeanne Zehr from the Feuerstein Institute

Jayne Dold

Coordinator
Learning Strategies Centre
Taylors Hill & Mernda campuses
Gilson College

Dip Teach (Primary)
Dip Special Education
Grad Dip Reading and Language

Jayne has taught for over 20 years from Prep to Year 9 in NSW, QLD, Vic and USA, in both the private and public school systems.

Motto – Reach for the stars! With the right attitude everyone can achieve his or her God-given destiny



Jan Potter

Support Teacher
Learning Strategies Centre
Taylor's Hill Campus
Gilson College

Dip Teach (Primary)

Jan has been teaching since 1970, generally in small, one teacher sized schools within Australia, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. Having experience in various Adventist and government schools as well as working with learning disabled adults and children.

Jan says, "I understand there is an imaginary line of average intellect, but everyone spikes above and below it to some degree. That's why learning is a lifelong occupation, there's always something to learn.



Carolyn Attard

Support Teacher
Learning Strategies Centre
Taylors Hill & Mernda Campus
Gilson College

Bachelor Education

Carolyn has been teaching since 1970 taking a break to have a family. Carolyn has experience in various Adventist and government schools including working in the area of Learning Support.

Carolyn believes learning is a continuous, lifelong journey, that we all learn in different ways and we all have the potential to be successful in life.

Students are referred to LSC by the class room teacher in consultation with the Primary Leadership Team (PLT).

Speak with your child's teacher if you have concerns.





Struggle is Good! I Want to Fly!

Once a little boy was playing outdoors and found a fascinating caterpillar. He carefully picked it up and took it home to show his mother. He asked his mother if he could keep it and she said he could, if he would take good care of it.

The little boy got a large jar from his mother and placed plants to eat and a stick to climb on, in the jar. Every day he watched the caterpillar and brought it new plants to eat.

One day the caterpillar climbed up the stick and started acting strangely. The boy worriedly called his mother who came and understood that the caterpillar was creating a cocoon. The mother explained to the boy how the caterpillar was going through a process called metamorphosis to become a butterfly.

The little boy was thrilled to hear about the changes his caterpillar would go through. He watched every day, waiting for the butterfly to emerge. One day it happened, a small hole appeared in the cocoon and the butterfly started to struggle to come out.

At first the boy was excited, but soon he became concerned. The butterfly was struggling so hard to get out! It looked like it couldn't break free! It looked desperate! It looked like it was making no progress!

The boy was so concerned he decided to help. He ran to get scissors, and then walked back (because he had learned not to run with scissors . . .!) He snipped the cocoon to make the hole bigger and the butterfly quickly emerged!

As the butterfly came out the boy was surprised. It had a swollen body and small, shrivelled wings. He continued to watch the butterfly expecting that, at any moment, the wings would dry out, enlarge and expand to support the swollen body. He knew that in time the body would shrink and the butterfly's wings would expand.

But neither happened!

The butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings.

It was never able to fly . . .

As the boy tried to figure out what had gone wrong his mother took him to talk to a scientist from a local college. He learned that the butterfly was SUPPOSED to struggle. In fact, the butterfly's struggle to push its way through the tiny opening of the cocoon pushes the fluid out of its body and into its wings. Without the struggle, the butterfly would never, ever fly. The boy's good intentions hurt the butterfly.

As you go through school, and life, keep in mind that struggling is an important part of any growth experience. In fact, it is the struggle that causes you to develop your ability to fly.



As teachers and parents our gift to you is stronger wings . . .

"The surest path to positive self-esteem is to succeed at something which one perceived would be difficult. Each time we steal a student's struggle, we steal the opportunity for them to build self-confidence. They must learn to do hard things- to feel good about themselves."

by Sylvia Rimm



GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

This year we will continue our discussion about dyslexia since it affects about 13-14% of our school population, and accounts for approximately 80% of children placed in special education classes. The first description of dyslexia appeared in 1896, written by Dr W. Pringle Morgan in Sussex, England. This is what he wrote: "Percy F, . . . aged 14 . . . has always been a bright intelligent boy, quick at games, and in no way inferior to others of his age. His great difficulty has been – and now is – his inability to learn to read."

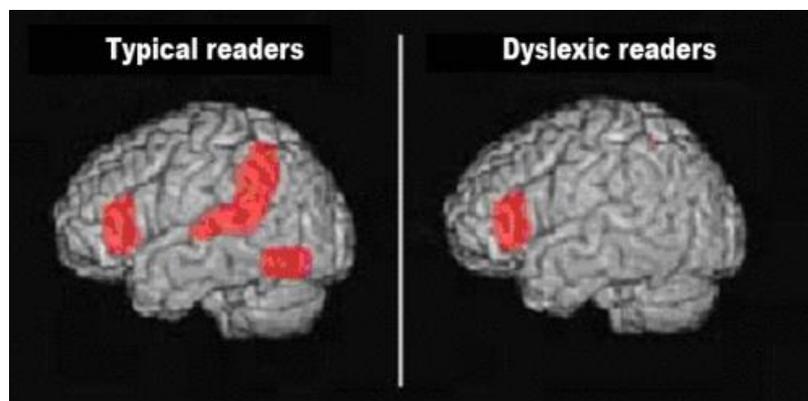
Some of the symptoms of dyslexia include slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. Symptoms have been covered in greater detail in the LSC November 2013 Newsletter (Issue 2) and won't be repeated here. Suffice to say that brain imaging studies show that teaching methods that may work well for the majority of school children may be counterproductive when used with dyslexic children. So, what to do?

As a general rule, students with mild to moderate dyslexia can show real progress with two or three hours per week of direct instruction. Younger children, because of developmental level and attention span, tend to profit from shorter, more frequent sessions.

Does dyslexia run in families?

New results from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics in Oxford, UK have proven that dyslexia is an inherited condition. 'One of the best predictors that a child is going to be dyslexic is that their mother or the father is dyslexic'.

1. **The Inclusion Model** – This model has the advantage of keeping the students of normal intellectual potential in the regular classroom where they can be educated with their peers. The disadvantage is that good classrooms tend to be busy, bustling places with visually stimulating environments. Many students with dyslexia have auditory issues and are easily distracted, and therefore need to work in quiet, un-stimulating environments. They sometimes require instruction that looks developmentally immature (i.e. phonics), and therefore embarrassing for the older child.
2. **Individual Tutorial Work Outside the Classroom** – regular scheduled sessions with a special education teacher can be extremely effective if all the teachers involved with the student discuss his problems and needs, and if classroom modifications are made. (For example Independent Learning Plans, assessments and tests.)



Ordinary readers use left-brain systems, but dyslexic readers rely more on right brain areas. Research shows that for dyslexic readers, the left brain areas associated with phonetic decoding are ineffective.



Regardless of whether the student stays in the classroom or is withdrawn, there are general principles of instruction that apply:

| Involve the Student | Use Multisensory Teaching Methods | Teach Students to use Logic Rather than Rote Memory |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Discuss all aspects of the education plan with the student.</p> <p>People are global learners, and therefore learn best when small pieces of information are placed in a larger context.</p> <p>They tend to focus when interested and actively engaged.</p> <p>Discuss with the student: the goals of the program, the teaching method to be used, and the means devised to track progress.</p> | <p>Multisensory teaching is based on the pioneering work done by Dr Orton, who was influenced by the kinaesthetic method described by Grace Fernald and Helen Keller.</p> <p>Basically this is hands-on learning, and was used very effectively by Ronald Davis as described in his book, "The Gift of Dyslexia."</p> <p>A multisensory approach to teaching means simply to provide opportunities for your student or child to look, listen, read, write, discuss, and do something with the information.</p> <p>They may make, for example, letters, sound combinations, and words out of modelling clay. By combining all these modalities you have a very effective learning environment.</p> | <p>Long and short-term memory is often an area of weakness in a dyslexic child or adult. But a common area of strength is a good intelligence!</p> <p>Therefore teach the student patterns and relationships rather than require him to memorize hundreds of isolated bits of information.</p> <p>In Spelling for example, teach the student the spelling rules and create word families that show relationships. This will help them to eventually figure out the correct spelling for themselves.</p> |

Points to Remember:

- ✓ Find the strongest memory modality for your child (seeing, hearing, writing), and help them to use this as their primary method of memorising. You could also use all three approaches such as seeing the word, hearing the word, making the word, and finally writing the word.)
- ✓ Limit the amount of data to be memorised to the absolute essential.
- ✓ Teach good library and computer skills. Approach fact-finding as a detective experience.
- ✓ For facts that just have to be memorised:
 - Group data to show relationships – such as ‘tion’ and ‘sion’ spelling words grouped separately and together. Use headings to organise material. Create mind maps, draw pictures and diagrams, and create charts - anything that will show the relationship of the part to the whole, and help fix the learning in the memory.
 - Create silly sentences using the first letter of a list that needs to be memorised, such as the order of the planets, or the bones of the leg or foot.
 - Use of visual aides, a picture is worth a thousand words.

If you have any questions on this topic please let me know as I will continue this section in the next issue.
Jayne



Working Collaboratively

In our last two newsletters we looked at the way drinking more water and a good nutritious breakfast can improve brain function and behaviour. In this issue we will look further into the area of nutrition, that of having a balanced diet.

Eating a balanced diet means eating proportionally from the food groups promoted by health education. The best sources of brain energy are from the complex carbohydrates and proteins that we get from fruit and vegetables, whole-grains, nuts and seeds, and from the legume family.

Students who eat these whole-foods will enjoy higher energy levels, better grades, improved morale, lowered medical expenses and better overall health. Protein is essential daily brain food, and good to start the day with. Good supplies come from milk and soya products as well as legumes, fish and eggs.

It is well worth the effort of learning what works best for your family and taking time to prepare delicious and nutritious meals.



Helping the Students

Psychologists

Cathy Catroppa,
Dept. of Psychology
Royal Children's Hospital

Speech

Georgina Lemke
Lemke Speech Pathologist

Mina Pastori,
Speech Pathologist

Occupational Therapy

Louise Ogilvie
Carolyn Ash
Everyday Independence

Reading Recovery

Sharon Vodell

Tutor

Louise Van Der Kraan
The Written Word Tutoring Service

Brain Gym

Jan Potter



For Noting: The exciting news is that by the Fourth Term Jayne will have received sufficient training to formally diagnose dyslexia. This is good news for parents as a formal assessment is costly. One quote received was \$750! Jayne is looking forward to being of greater assistance to parents in this area in the months ahead.



Movement facilitates learning

“Movement facilitates learning,” doesn’t mean that movement is random and uninhibited.

Movement-based learning calls for highly structured, intentional movement, and it most often produces such congruency of thought and action that learning becomes self-initiated.

Brain Gym Paul E. Dennison & Gail E. Dennison

Even regular use of the basic core of Brain Gym Movements, the PACE, has a quieting effect that allows students to focus and listen attentively, ask thoughtful questions and provide amazingly deep answers. As a teacher doing regular release in various classes, I have experienced the effect of Brain Gym on students’ ability to focus and apply higher level thinking to tasks.

Many may think that using Brain Gym in the classroom takes time out of an already busy day, but preparing students to sit quietly, listen attentively and focus for new learning increases the amount of work being done and decreases immeasurably the discipline problems. Students are also able to integrate new concepts into functional use.

Brain Gym movements are not like regular aerobic exercises, but are more related to balance, alignment and co-ordination.

The inclusion (of Brain Gym Movements) in a classroom or on a playing field gives a safe, secure environment where learners can develop sensory, perceptual, and motor skills, achieve cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth, and actively participate in their own learning through explorations of action and balance.

Brain Gym Paul E. Dennison & Gail E. Dennison

There are 26 Brain Gym movements. Choose to use the ones you are most drawn to as many of the movements relate to each other, helping an area of the body and brain in a connected way. The Midline Movements are offered first as they are for sensorimotor coordination. They help alleviate any visual, auditory or manual compensation related to reading and writing. Learners can build other skills by adding in the Energy Exercises, Deepening Attitudes and the Lengthening Activities.

The PACE set of movements will get you on the road providing a set of simple movements useful for general use and very powerful effect.



48 Ways to Improve Your Child's Attention Span and Behaviour

(Dr Ian Lillico, former principal and international educational consultant)

Teach Self Talk Skills

Self talk represents a process whereby an individual develops key phrases that can guide him through a complex situation. He learns to repeat phrases to himself at appropriate times of need.

Self talk can assist in developing self-control of anger by silently repeating phrases such as "keep cool", "chill out", or help to organise themselves using questions such as "now where do I begin" as a prompt, to help a child form a more positive image of themselves by repeating "I can do it if I try".

After allowing the child to choose an appropriate phrase, train the child to use it in four stages:

1. Say the phrase out loud
2. Whisper the phrase
3. Move the lips only
4. Say it silently



Learning Activity – Create a Model Town

You'll need a local map, boxes, milk cartons, cans, and other objects for buildings, construction paper, cardboard, paint, crayons, markers, scissors, glue and tape. Potential discussion topics throughout the build: communities, way of life, neighbourhoods, cultures, routines.

The exercise

1. Look at a local map with your child. Can you find your block? Your school? A park?
2. Draw a map of a town you would like to create. What should be included? Houses? Stores? Schools? Parks and playgrounds? Where should they go? Use this map as a guide for your model.
3. Use a large piece of cardboard as a base for your model town. Your child might want to mark on the base where buildings, roads, and so forth should go. You may also need to decide the scale of your model to make sure that all the buildings fit.
4. Now it's time to make the buildings (stores, houses, schools, and so forth). Your child can paint blocks of wood, cover milk cartons or cans with construction paper, or even use construction paper and tape.
5. Use glue to secure the buildings to the cardboard base.
6. Finally, your child can add finishing touches — trees, grass, cars, street signs, and more.



Coping Strategies for Parents of Children With Learning Disabilities,

By Sheldon H. Horowitz, EdD,

The school year is officially in full swing. Schedules are busy again. Knowing all too well that the next “crisis” is just around the corner, it may be an opportune time for parents to take a moment and do a quick self-assessment: “how will I feel when the phone rings and I hear about homework not being complete, there is a melt-down in math class or a failing grade on a unit test?” How should I react and what steps should I take to ensure that I am making the best decisions for my child?

Actions vs. Feelings

Parents of students with learning disabilities (LD) and other special needs know the importance of establishing close and effective working partnerships with school personnel. Meeting (in person or by phone or email) are standard ways to ensure that expectations are clear, roles and responsibilities are being met, and everyone (including the students themselves) feels empowered to clarify and act upon concerns before they become problems. How we feel about the challenge can have a profound impact upon how effective we are in addressing problems and maintaining the energy and optimism that is so important to everyone's well-being.

Coping Defined

In this article the word “coping” refers to the effort (and action) we undertake to tolerate or minimize the impact of stressful events. Some of the strategies used to cope are problem-solving in nature (we do things to alleviate stress) and others are emotional in nature (we feel a certain way to regulate our reactions). How each person copes with a particular circumstance depends on such variables as their personality style, their sense of urgency, and their perception (or the reality) about how much control can be exerted to change the course of events, stabilize the situation and make it better (or at least prevent it from getting worse!).

How Am I Doing?

Below is a short list of coping behaviours that has been extracted from studies of coping styles and from anecdotal reports by parents and others. It is intended as a reflection upon your coping behaviours and hopefully benefit from the positive (and negative) attributes and behaviours that have been reported by other parents.

Coping Behaviours: Thinking Negatively

- Deny the problem (“It’s just a matter of time before he’ll grow out of it...”)
- Hide (“I know, but I am so embarrassed that...”)
- Become overwhelmed (“I feel helpless because...”)
- Blame yourself (“I feel so guilty; if only I had...”)
- Blame others (“If only his teacher had...”)
- Panic (“We need to change everything right now...”)
- Worry (“I can’t help thinking that...”)

Coping Behaviours: Thinking Positively

- Listen carefully and ask for clarification (“Are you telling me that...”)
- Take good notes (“When last we spoke, we agreed that...”)
- Seek information (“What I need to know is...”)
- Focus on the problem (“My specific concern is about...”)
- Seek social support (“Who can I turn to when I need to talk about...”)
- Become a self-advocate (“What I need you to provide for my child is...”)
- Become an advocate for change (“The system needs to adjust by...”)
- Reduce tension (“It feels good just to...”)
- Focus on the positive (“One good thing is that...”)
- Seek professional guidance (“With her help, I realized that...”)
- Share your wisdom (“What I now know is...”)



DID YOU KNOW

Some of the most brilliant minds of our time have been known to have dyslexia: Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and John Lennon, to mention only a few.



Useful Resources

Have you tried accessing information from the Internet to help your research? There are many different ways to gain support through the Internet such as:

Blogs – these are discussion or informational sites for people with common interests

Internet Forums - discussion boards

Websites – is a set of related web pages served from a single web domain. Websites have many functions and can be used in various fashions; a website can be a personal website, a commercial website, a government website or a nonprofit organization website. Websites can be the work of an individual, a business or other organization, and are typically dedicated to a particular topic or purpose.

Web search engines – software systems designed to search for information on the world wide web. Common search engines include Google, Yahoo, Mozilla Firefox, Bing

Applications (Apps) – computer software that causes a computer to perform specific tasks beyond the running of the computer itself

Have you tried Blogs? Here's a few you may find interesting

<http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2013/10/smart-strategies-that-help-students-learn-how-to-learn/>

blogs to help students learn

www.autismforparents.wordpress.com

Autism for parents with several links

www.theautismhelper.com

some interesting tools for children for free

www.circleofmoms.com

support forum for mums

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/09/25/8-ways-to-help-kids-with-adhd-succeed-in-school/>

blog for students with ADHD

www.ncld.org

great resource for dyslexia and interesting movement

<http://dyslexiaparents.blogspot.com.au/>

dyslexia blog

http://www.pinterest.com/melissa_taylor2/reading-activities-strategies-for-kids/

popular pin board blog, search any topic

Do you have a story you could share with other parents or any feedback on this newsletter? Then let Jayne Dold (jayne.dold@gilson.vic.edu.au) know. If you prefer, you can remain anonymous.

