Free sample from the book The Source for Dyslexia and Dysgraphia (SKU THS52636) available from www.therapro.com

Preface

There is a very long history of development behind this book, even though the phase from outline to printing was only slightly more than a year.

The seeds of this project germinated in 1983 as a result of my frustration in trying to describe my son to his preschool teachers. At that point I had been an educational professional within the community for about a decade. I was running a school and clinic, and I was very active in the International Dyslexia Association. I knew my young son and I understood why he seemed to be "two different kids" to his teachers. The kid they saw during playtime and storytime was very different from the kid they observed during writing and alphabet time.

I experienced a conundrum. Using a label to describe my son led to a great deal of misunderstanding, as every teacher had her own definition for whatever word I chose to use. Describing my son was useful, but time-consuming. For a while I used the phrase "he learns differently," but this was not sufficient as he progressed in elementary school. After all, he could read, but there was a qualitative difference in how he approached and processed language-based tasks. At that point I developed the philosophy that "a label without a description is useless, but a description without a label is not always efficient."

I would describe my son to his teachers, then identify a classification, saying, "These are the characteristics of his *dyslexia* (and later *dysgraphia*) that affect his performances in the classroom" or "This is how his *attention* is affected by the language load of the lesson." It seemed to me that this approach facilitated communication. People like to have a handle, a shortcut, and a reference point. But I needed to be sure that they understood which of my son's characteristics affected his learning, and how the interaction between the characteristics worked.

The philosophy, "a label without a description is useless, but a description without a label is not always efficient," has stayed with me throughout my professional career and has been very useful in my university teaching, my remedial work with students, and especially in explaining students to their parents after an evaluation. I hope that you will consider adapting this philosophy in dealing with your students. Please help avoid the pigeonholing and empty labeling that comes with the mere use of a label. Those practices can be so damaging to students. Be sure to always describe your student, ideally by looking for commonalities among his characteristics, so that you can discuss the patterns that apply. Once everyone is aware of the description, then you can use the label, if it meets your needs for additional communication.

Many of my publications have started out with a desire to share information about my son and how he learns in an effort to help him and other students like him. I used the materials from my practice because I knew from my clinical experience that these methods worked. I initially wrote *LEARN: playful techniques to accelerate learning* in 1993 as a compilation of multisensory learning strategies. That book is now out of print and many of the tried-and-true strategies are incorporated in this new publication. In 1995, after several years of research and exploration, I wrote the

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pamphlet, *When writing's a problem,* to help parents and teachers understand the group of bright students who struggle to produce neat papers. I think this may be among the most misunderstood group of students in our educational system today. Because of multiple requests to expand this pamphlet to include a variety of teaching and remedial strategies, I then wrote *The Writing Dilemma: understanding dysgraphia* in 1998. *The Source for Dyslexia and Dysgraphia* is an expansion of *The Writing Dilemma* and incorporates many of its ideas and strategies. But these strategies are also integrated with a more extensive discussion of and strategies for the basic reading and spelling processes.

Dr. Melvin D. Levine, professor of pediatrics at the University of North Carolina Medical School; Director of the I; and Founding President of All Kinds of Minds, a nonprofit institute for the Understanding of Differences in Learning, wrote a wonderful foreword for *The Writing Dilemma*. His title was *What's Riding on Writing*. A few quotes are pertinent here:

> "Writing represents the ultimate neurocognitive integrative act. It is the supreme accomplishment of a developing young mind. It is in the act of writing and only in the act of writing that a seemingly diverse collection of germinating neurodevelopmental functions and academic subskills coalesce and collaborate. Writing demands the vigorous participation of attention, multiple forms of memory, language, critical and creative thought, brainstorming, motor output, megacognition, progressive automization, organization, synchronization, and even visualization. In addition, writing represents a formidable challenge to problem-solving skills, as exigencies, such as planning, previewing, topic selection, strategy use, self-monitoring, and pacing represent core components of the problem-solving act . . . .
>
> "There exist a multitude of possible reasons (and very common combinations of reasons) for a student's writing failure or reluctance. Consequently, there are as many subtypes of writing disorders. When we come to understand the reasons for a particular child's writing difficulty, we have learned an enormous amount about that individual's intrinsic 'writing' . . . .
>
> "Up until now, writing has been a well-guarded territory, narrowly divided between professional disciplines . . . Clearly, it is time for a holistic approach to the understanding of writing and of problems with writing. *The Writing Dilemma* offers to the educational world an embarrassingly overdue breakthrough, as this most important work acknowledges and describes vividly the multiple possible breakdown points that must be considered in a child who is not developing writing skills . . . .
>
> "No child needs or deserves to suffer writing humiliation, we assert penitently!"

Thank you, Dr. Levine, for putting the problem in such clear perspective. *The Source*

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for Dyslexia and Dysgraphia seeks to expand my holistic approach to the understanding of writing, integrating it with an understanding of reading. This book takes a thorough look at the areas of reading and writing, omitting comprehension because that opens another whole domain.

It is my hope and wish that the information and strategies included in this book are useful in helping you describe and understand the child or children within your sphere of concern, and that you and the children have fun in your work together. To expand on Dr. Levine's marvelous "Tom Swifty" (see chapter 13 for more):

> No child needs or deserves to suffer the embarrassment of being unable to read, I proclaim soundly!

Regina

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