



North Warwickshire and Coventry Dyslexia Association

EARLY INDICATORS

by

Jean Augur

Introduction

In the past it was thought that the earliest a child could be identified as having a dyslexic profile was at about the age of six. This was because, by six, the child was already giving cause for concern particularly as regards reading, writing and spelling, all very important skills in the school curriculum. With experience, however, and from the findings of research studies, it is now evident that there are many signs well before school age which may suggest such a profile and the consequent difficulties ahead.

Parents and pre-school carers as well as educators on those early years are amongst those on the best position to recognise these signs, and to provide appropriate activities to help. Training in some of these activities will help to build firm foundations for later, more formal, training.

Some of the early signs which may suggest a dyslexic profile.

General

- family history of similar difficulties
- may have walked early but did not crawl – was a "bottom shuffler" or "tummy wriggler"
- persistent difficulties in getting dressed efficiently
- persistent difficulty putting shoes on the correct feet
- unduly late in learning to fasten buttons or tie shoe-laces
- obvious "good" and "bad" days, for no apparent reason

- enjoys being read to, but shows no interest in letters or words
- often accused of "not listening" or "not paying attention"

Strengths

- quick "thinker" and "doer" – but not in response to instruction.
- enhanced creativity – often good at drawing – good sense of colour.
- aptitude for constructional or technical toys eg. Bricks, puzzles, Lego, blocks, remote control for TV and / or video, computer keyboard.
- appears bright – but seems an "enigma".



Not all dyslexic children experience all of the difficulties listed above. Moreover, it is important to note that many very young children make similar mistakes to dyslexic children, but it is the *severity* of the trait, the *clarity* with which it may be observed, and the *length of time* during

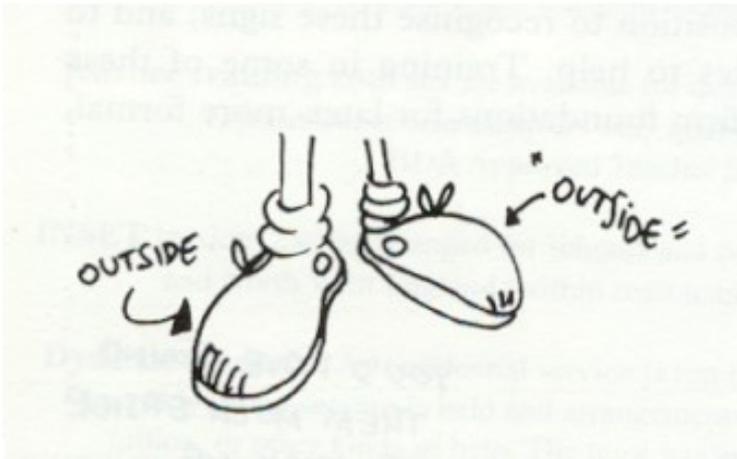
which it persists which gave the vital clues to the identification of the dyslexic learner.

What does the child say?

Young children are very perceptive about themselves and very often the things which they say can alert adults to certain difficulties, providing that the adult is wise enough to listen and learn, for example:

- I think God's put my brain in upside down
- The word is coming
- I'm getting close
- The word's near the front of my mouth
- Is yesterday the day after tomorrow?
- Where is the beginning of the book?
- Where does the book start?
- This book is stupid
- Where's the top of the page?
- Which way does it go?
- I've dropped it again
- What's that word again?
- excessive tripping, bumping into things, and falling over

- difficulty with catching, kicking or throwing a ball
- difficulty with hopping and/or skipping
- difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm



Just marking the shoes with "outside" may help to ease the difficulty. Marking them "L" and "R" may not help because they still cannot distinguish the difference between left and right.

Speech and language

- later than expected learning to speak clearly
- persistent jumbled phrases
e.g. "cobbler's club" for "toddlers' club"; "tebby-dare" for "teddy-bear"; "pence-fost" for fence-post"
- use of substitute words or "near-misses" eg. "lampshade" for "lamp post"
- mislabelling – knows colours but mislabels them eg. "black" for "brown"
- an early lisp eg. "duckth" for "ducks"

- inability to remember the label for known objects eg. table, chair
- persistent word searching
- confusion between directional words eg. Up/down, in/out,
- difficulty learning nursery rhymes
- finds difficulty with rhyming words eg. "cat"; "mat"; "sat"
- finds difficulty in selecting the "odd one out" eg. "cat"; "mat"; "pig"; "fat"
- difficulty with sequence eg. Coloured bead sequence – later with days of the week, or number



In many ways the dyslexic child is at a disadvantage when he enters school. His main strengths are centred in the right hemisphere of the brain. Hence, he is often a random, intuitive, impulsive, sensitive thinker. Unfortunately for him, school is a left-hemisphered environment where he will be expected to read, write, spell, deal with symbols – letters, numbers, musical notation – learn phonics, follow instructions, listen carefully, respond accurately to what he hears and put things in order. The earlier he is given activities which will build a sound foundation for learning such skills, the better chance he will have.

The period between 3 and 7 years is a most important time for learning.

The late Jean Augur was the Education Director of the BDA from 1989 to 1993. A teacher and parent of three dyslexic children, Jean had over twenty years experience.

Reproduced, with permission, from: "The Dyslexia Handbook 1997"

Reproduced by:



North Warwickshire and Coventry Dyslexia Association