

Hi! For those of you who aren't familiar with the Wellington-Alexander Center, please let us introduce ourselves.

We are a neurodevelopmental assessment & treatment center for individuals with dyslexia and other language/learning disabilities.

Our treatment team includes:

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Let's Be Literal

SUMMERTIME AND THE LEARNING IS EASY

The summer is a time to unwind and relax for parents and kids alike, but learning should not come to a halt.

According to the foundation Reading is Fundamental, children who do not read over the summer lose reading fluency and comprehension skills, and students who engage in summertime reading actually gain skills.

Parents can play an important role in encouraging learning throughout the summer months, even if their child is a reluctant learner.

One of the most important gifts you can give your child this summer is the ability to enjoy reading. It is imperative to develop structure while also giving children a choice in their reading material, and the key is to find the right series of books that will pique

their interests. In addition, it's perfectly acceptable for your child to read books he's already read; it helps improve fluency and build confidence.

Magazines and comic books are two other great reading materials to get reluctant readers on the page. The important thing is that your child is reading something!

Also consider books on tape. If your child has a diagnosed learning disability, you can subscribe to Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic, which provides free access to the nation's largest audiobook library of textbook and literature titles.

Kids love computers, so use "screen" time to your advantage by signing your child up in a structured online reading program that's fun and engaging.

As with reading, there are some

easy ways to keep kids writing over the summer as well. Give your child a journal or encourage your child to create a scrapbook and write captions under the photos.

The summer is also an excellent time to hone keyboarding skills; good keyboarding skills are a must for children with handwriting difficulties. It allows them to get their thoughts down on paper quickly with much less struggle.

Giving kids a break this summer is essential, but learning should not be lost. It's crucial to set goals and stick to them. If you find that you need even more structure, a tutor may be the way to go.

Regardless of the approach you take this summer, the main objective is to enjoy learning!

Summarized from "Summertime and the Learning is Easy" by Ann Dolin, 2010, www.idonline.org

WAITING RARELY WORKS: LATE BLOOMERS USUALLY JUST WILT

Up until about a decade ago, the idea of "late bloomers"—the endearing term for a child who was slower than his peers in learning to read—was widely believed among researchers and educators alike.

However, this developmental lag theory, which suggested that learning difficulties would fade as the brain matured and intervention was not necessary, has been recently replaced by an alternate theory of early reading weakness that defines the problem as an actual skill deficit requiring early, direct and intensive intervention to

correct.

Three studies (Juel, 1988; Francis et al., 1996; Shaywitz et al., 1999) have unequivocally revealed that late bloomers are a rarity; skill deficits are almost always what prevent children from blooming as readers, and without intervention these children will almost certainly never catch up.

Juel found that the poor readers lacked a critical skill: **phonemic awareness**. The conclusion of this study was that trouble with decoding, rooted in poor phonemic awareness, appeared to keep the poor readers from improving.

In the Francis study, the data clearly demonstrated that, on average, neither the low-achieving nor the reading disabled students ever caught up to their peers who were not reading impaired. All students' reading improved quickly in grades one through six, but then the rates of improvement slowed.

The Shaywitz study followed students into the 12th grade. As in the Francis study, all of the students improved quickly in elementary school, but then improved very little after 6th grade. Throughout elementary and secondary school, the gap

between struggling readers and their peers remained quite steady.

It's important to note that in each of these studies, the poor readers' failure to catch up indicates that there is no evidence for the developmental lag theory—and none of these studies indicate that it is impossible to intervene with these students. The skill deficit between average and below-average readers can be largely erased with appropriate early intervention.

Summarized from "waiting Rarely Works: Late Bloomers Usually Wilt" by the American Federation of Teachers, 2004, www.idonline.org

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TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT LD: A PSYCH'S PERSPECTIVE

As a school psychologist who has worked with LD children, I have too often encountered genuinely bright children who sincerely believed they were just plain stupid. For most of these children, there was a general misunderstanding about the learning differences they have. It is extremely important to explain learning disabilities to children.

A learning disability is a neurological glitch that creates differences in how the brain is wired. These differences make it difficult to acquire certain basic academic skills. It is not yet known what causes LD; however, it often is a characteristic that runs in families.

The most common LD is dyslexia, a language-based learning disability that causes difficulty recognizing individual sounds in words, which in turn leads to reading and writing difficulties, among others. Children with dyslexia may also have trouble with their ability to make and sustain friendships, which may be due to social immaturity and

difficulty interpreting social cues.

When these bright and motivated kids fail, they often have no idea why. Children who don't understand their learning challenges may be at risk of developing depression and/or anxiety disorders. Other symptoms borne of frustration and negative feelings include ignoring rules, crying easily, sleep and/or eating issues, and suffering somatic pain such as stomachaches and headaches.

Whether parents do it on their own or seek guidance from school counselors or teachers, it is crucial that they help their child understand his learning differences. You can explain to the child that all learning takes place in the brain; it may be helpful to use a metaphor, like describing neural pathways in the brain as highways, and information that travels on those pathways as cars.

You can tell the child that when you have LD, some of the highways in your brain have traffic jams. Not all of your highways

have jams—just the ones that are affected by LD. When cars sit in traffic jams, the passengers (or information, in this metaphor) take longer to get to their destinations.

But they still get there! There are tricks that special teachers or tutors can show these children to make learning easier. These tricks can be called "side roads." Side roads can be unpredictable, but taking a side road is always quicker than a traffic jam.

Using a side road over and over means that the tasks that were once hard, like spelling and reading, get much easier. Using side roads also encourage kids to be creative; maybe that's why so many successful artists, singers, athletes and business people have LD.

Stress to the child that all the parts she needs to be smart are in her brain; nothing is missing or broken. The information may take longer to get to its destination sometimes, but it will get there!

Summarized from "Talking to Children with LD" by Ania Siwek, Psy.D., 2009, www.idonline.org