



All Special Kids

CONTENTS

Visual & Auditory Processing

A Word from the Editor	1
Facts Visual/Auditory Processing Disorder	2/3
What to do?	4
Struggling with Sound	5
C.A.R.E.	7
Social Drama	7
Summer Camp	8
Francophone support	9
ASK Calendar Geneva/Bern/Vaud	10

ASK - All Special Kids

case postale N°147
2-4 Ch. de la Tourelle
1200 Genève 19

<http://www.allspecialkids.org>
info@allspecialkids.org

All Special Kids

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

ISSUE NO.15

MAY/JUNE 2009

Dear Parents,

While food shopping yesterday, my daughter Allegra presented me with a bunch of tulips and a kiss saying it was an early Mothers' Day present. Despite the fact that I ended up paying for the flowers, I was very touched by her gesture and thoughtfulness.

When you are a parent of a child with special needs and your child's progress is measured in yards compared to other children's progress being measured in miles, you really do appreciate the little things no matter how trivial it may seem.

When Allegra first attended the "Heads Up" program at the age of 3 in U.S., I was asked to provide a positive student profile - a "snapshot" of your child which should be reflected in his or her IEP. The basis for this theory was that parents know their children best.

At that time in her life, Allegra's ability to sit down for 20 minutes at one setting and the ability to look in the eyes when people addressed her were considered a few of her strengths. Now that Allegra is about to enter High School, I have to develop another positive profile. Looking at the old profile back when she was 3 years old, and could barely say a word or walk, to seeing her overcome the hurdles that were before her, to what she is able to do today, which was beyond anything I could have imagined, I burst with pride.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunity ASK provides me to assist other parents who have had similar experiences.



My motto has always been to stay strong and keep on hoping for the impossible. To quote Frank Loyd Wright

"The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen"

Keeping that thought in mind, I'm sending a shout out to all the mothers to hang on to your beliefs. If you feel something is not right, go with your mother's instinct and address it immediately. Don't let anyone tell you that it is all in your mind or that your child will outgrow their difficulties or differences. Believe in your child's potential and don't let anyone dissuade you from what you know your child can do.

Your child is counting on you to be their advocate for life. Never give up!!!

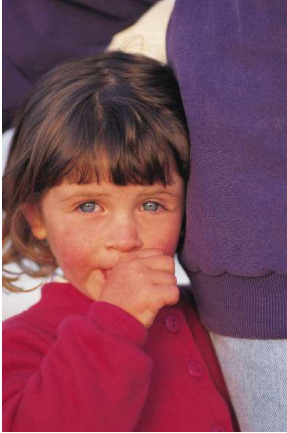
Happy Mothers Day to All.

Hope you enjoy this issue.

Joy and the ASK Team

"The question for each man to settle is not what he would do if he had means, time, influence and educational advantages; the question is what he will do with the things he has. The moment a young man ceases to dream or to bemoan his lack of opportunities and resolutely looks his conditions in the face, and resolves to change them, he lays the corner-stone of a solid and honorable success.

Hamilton Wright Mabie



THE FACTS ABOUT VISUAL AND

If you have ever come across the expression “Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders” with reference to your child’s learning difficulties, it can at first seem quite alarming! Your first reaction might be to rush your child to the opticians to have his eye-sight tested or an ear specialist to have his hearing checked out. Whilst it is obviously prudent to have your child’s eyes and ears checked regularly, in fact these disorders relate to a much deeper problem linked to the function of the brain. The following article, edited from the web site of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (www.ldonline.org/article/6390) explains the two disorders in more detail.

Visual Processing Disorder

A visual processing, or perceptual, disorder refers to a hindered ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes. Difficulties with visual processing affect how visual information is interpreted, or processed by the brain.

It can lead to specific problems with **spatial relationships** and **visual discrimination**, both of which may have implications for a child’s educational development.

Spatial relationships refer specifically to the position of objects in space. They also include the ability to accurately perceive objects in space with reference to other objects.

Reading and math are two subjects where accurate perception and understanding of spatial relationships are very important. Both of these subjects rely heavily on the use of symbols such as letters, numbers, punctuation and math signs.

A child experiencing spatial relationship problems may, as a result, have difficulty in being able to perceive words and numbers as separate units. He or she may also have directionality problems in reading and math, as well as confusion in identifying similarly shaped letters, such as b/d/p/q.

The importance of being able to perceive objects in relation to other objects is often seen in math problems. To be successful in math, you must be able to make the association that certain digits go together to make a single number (ie, 14) and that others remain single digit numbers. They also need to understand not only that operational signs such as “+”, “x” and “=” are distinct from numbers, but that there is also a relationship between them. The only cues to such math problems are the spacing and order between the symbols. All these activities presuppose an ability and understanding of spatial relationships.

Visual discrimination, on the other hand, is the ability to differentiate objects based on their individual characteristics. Visual discrimination is vital in the recognition of common objects and symbols. Attributes which children use to identify different objects include: color, form, shape, pattern, size, and position. Visual discrimination also refers to the ability to recognize an object as distinct from its surrounding environment.

In terms of reading and mathematics, visual discrimination difficulties can interfere with the ability to accurately identify symbols, gain information from pictures, charts, or graphs, or be able to use visually presented material in a productive way. One example is being able to distinguish between an /n/ and an /m/, where the only distinguishing feature is the number of humps in the letter. The ability to recognize distinct shapes from their background, such as objects in a picture, or letters on a chalkboard, is largely a function of visual discrimination. (*continued on page 3*)



“A mother never quite leaves her children at home, even when she doesn't take them along”
Margaret Culkin Banning

AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDERS

Auditory processing disorder

An auditory processing disorder interferes with an individual's ability to analyze or make sense of information taken in through the ears. This is different from problems involving hearing per se, such as deafness or being hard of hearing. Difficulties with auditory processing do not affect what is heard by the ear, but do affect how this information is interpreted, or processed by the brain.

An auditory processing deficit can interfere directly with speech and language, and can affect all areas of learning, especially reading and spelling. When instruction in school relies primarily on spoken language, the individual with an auditory processing disorder may have serious difficulty understanding the lesson or the directions.

There are five common areas of difficulty, which a child with auditory processing problems may experience. These, in turn, may have a variety of implications for his or her educational progress.

Phonological awareness is the ability to understand that language is made up of individual sounds (phonemes) which are put together to form the words we write and speak. It is a fundamental precursor to reading.

Children who have difficulty with phonological awareness will often be unable to recognize or isolate the individual sounds in a word, recognize similarities between words (as in rhyming words), or be able to identify the number of sounds in a word. These deficits can affect all areas of language including reading, writing, and understanding of spoken language.

Though phonological awareness develops naturally in most children, the necessary knowledge and skills can be taught through direct instruction for those who have difficulty in this area.

Auditory discrimination is the ability to recognize differences in phonemes (sounds). This includes the ability to identify words and sounds that are similar and those which are different.

Auditory memory is the ability to store and recall information which has been given verbally. An individual with difficulties in this area may not be able to follow verbal instructions or may have trouble recalling information from a story read aloud.

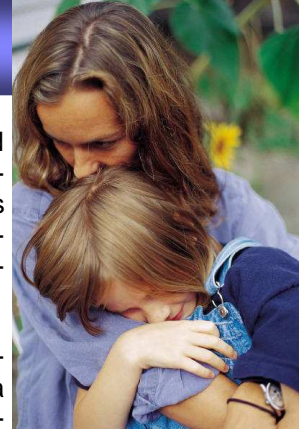
Auditory sequencing is the ability to remember or reconstruct the order of items in a list or the order of sounds in a word or syllable. One example is saying or writing "ephelant" instead of "elephant."

Auditory blending is the process of putting together phonemes to form words. For example, the individual phonemes "c", "a", and "t" are blended to form the word, "cat".

Suggestions for Intervention

If you suspect your child has a visual or auditory processing disorder, and you are about to embark on a program of intervention, first be sure of one thing! Interventions need to be aimed at the specific needs of the child. No two children share the same set of strengths or areas of weaknesses. An effective intervention is one that utilizes a child's strengths in order to build on the specific areas in need of development. As such, interventions need to be viewed as a dynamic and ever changing process. Although this may sound overwhelming initially, it is important to remember that the process of finding successful interventions becomes easier with time and as the child's learning approach, style, and abilities become more clear. The following examples provide some ideas regarding this specific disability. They are only starting points, which are meant to encourage further thinking and development of specific interventions and intervention strategies.

(continued on page 6)





What to do if you suspect your child has a Visual or Auditory Processing Disorder?

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (www.ldonline.org/article/6390) has put together a simple four-point plan, which should help you decide what to do if you suspect your child has a visual or auditory processing disorder. The plan is presented in a specific sequence to ensure that none of your concerns are ignored, and to avoid setting off any premature alarms, which may not be in your child's best interests.

1. Write down the reasons you suspect a problem might be present or developing, carefully documenting examples in which the concerning behavior is taking place.

This will help in two ways. First, it will help confirm or alleviate your concerns. If there is cause for concern, it will help you get a more focused idea of where the difficulty lies. This list will also be helpful if further action or meetings with other professionals are necessary.

2. Contact the school.

Speak to the child's teacher and other professionals who interact with your child to see if they see similar behaviors or have similar concerns. If the child is already working with specialists or receiving special education services, a consultation with these people can be helpful in identifying the problem and working out solutions.

3. If concerns remain, an evaluation by a specialist familiar with these issues could help isolate the problem.

Evaluations can be done via schools or through private practitioners. The evaluation should help identify strengths and weaknesses in general and the therapist should be able to recommend accommodations and strategies to best facilitate your child's learning.

4. If it is felt that special services or accommodations are warranted, arrange a meeting with the school professionals involved in your child's education to make plans for meeting the specific needs of your child.

In some cases, children meet the requirements to be legally entitled to special services. In other cases, children do not meet the criteria for legal entitlement. In either case, it is the school, which will have to arrange and implement these decisions. Legally bound or not, some people and school systems are more responsive to people's needs than others. For this reason, it is important to try to establish and maintain a useful rapport with the people to whom you entrust your child's education. Often there are local resources available to help meet and support the variety of needs, which accompany any person and his/her family when a disability is discovered. These organizations often prove tremendously valuable in providing additional resources and strategies, which can make the difference between your child receiving the help s/he needs or not.

The information provided above has been edited from the web site www.ldonline.org/article/6390, which is representative of the materials available from the National Center for Learning Disabilities Information and Referral System. (Article contributed by ASK parent and newsletter team member -Jenny Jeffreys) Welcome back to the team Jenny.



Struggling with Sounds

Reading is primarily seen as a visual activity: squiggles on a page, which one has to learn to string together to form words. In reality, reading is more complex, as after putting these squiggles together, one must learn to decode them in terms of the sounds, and only then is it possible to decipher whole words.

The English language is made up of 46 sounds. In order to become a competent reader, one needs to be able to differentiate between these sounds and associate each one with their printed representations. Difficulty in identifying these can lead to poor reading skills, such as slow inaccurate reading, leading to poor comprehension, but also poor spelling and writing.

These underdeveloped literacy skills characterise Dyslexia. However, most dyslexic individuals have normal IQ and normal hearing, so why do they struggle with sounds when learning to read?

POOR PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Research shows that the majority of children who have difficulty with written language have difficulties in becoming phonologically aware, a critical phase in reading development. Phonological awareness can be seen through one's ability to break down words into speech sounds, also known as phonemes.

An individual who is phonologically aware is capable of manipulating these sounds and understands how these can be represented by letters. Problems experienced in carrying out this task are key factors in the reading difficulties observed in dyslexics.

Neurological research, including brain imaging studies, notably by Paula Tallal and her colleagues, supports the idea that individuals with dyslexia have trouble processing sounds, thus explaining the difficulties they experience.

WHAT DOES POOR PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS LOOK LIKE?

Children with poor phonological awareness find it hard to:

- Blend sounds or syllables into words (m_a_n / ba_na_na)
- Count the syllables within a word
- Group words with similar sounds (mug, sun)
- Segment a word as a sequence of sounds or syllables (e.g.: fish is made up of phonemes /f/, /i/, /sh/)
- Manipulate sounds within words: sound deletion: knowing that the word plate without the /p/ is late (even if they can read the word plate perfectly well) phoneme substitution: changing the /j/ in cage to /ne/ to form the word cane.
- Recognise rhymes and create their own

REMEDIATION STRATEGIES

Reading difficulties have a neurological basis and individuals with dyslexia may always find reading harder than those do not, however you should never give up, as individuals with dyslexia learn to read and write well and lead successful lives!

To assist your child with their phonological problems, there are many strategies you can use to help them. The following have been suggested by Reading Rockets (http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic#do_parents):

- Check with your child's teacher or principal to make sure the school's reading program teaches phonological, phonemic awareness, and phonics skills.
- If your child is past the ages at which phonemic awareness and phonological skills are taught class-wide (usually kindergarten to first or second grade), make sure he or she is receiving one-on-one or small group instruction in these skills. *(continued on page 6)*





Struggling with Sounds

continued from page 5

- Do activities to help your child build sound skills (make sure they are short and fun; avoid allowing your child to get frustrated):
- Help your child think of a number of words that start with the /m/ or /ch/ sound, or other beginning sounds.
- Make up silly sentences with words that begin with the same sound, such as "Nobody was nice to Nancy's neighbor".
- Play simple rhyming or blending games with your child, such as taking turns coming up with words that rhyme (go – no) or blending simple words (/d/, /o/, /g/ = dog).
- Read books with rhymes. Teach your child rhymes, short poems, and songs.
- Practice the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.
- Consider using computer software that focuses on developing phonological and phonemic awareness skills. Many of these programs use colorful graphics and animation that keep young children engaged and motivated.

This article was based on:

-An interview of Dr. Paula Tallal by David Boulton: <http://www.childrenofthecode.org/interviews/tallal.htm>: Dr. Paula Tallal: Neuroscience, Phonology and Reading: The Oral to Written Language Continuum

- An article by the International Dyslexia Association (2008): Dyslexia Basics http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf

- An article by the Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement: Phonemic awareness (2002-2009) http://reading.uoregon.edu/pa/pa_features.php

-An article by Reading Rockets: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness (2008) http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic#do_parents

(Article contributed by Zoë Caloghris)

Visual & Auditory Processing

Disorder continued from page 2/3

The following suggestions represent a number of common interventions and accommodations which can be used with children in the classroom:

Do not rely solely on an area of weakness.

If instructions are given orally, try to supplement this with written or other visual cues. While it is important to address the area of need directly and try to build up areas of weakness, it is also necessary that the student be able to function successfully in the classroom. A simple accommodation like backing up verbal directions with visual or written cues is one way to facilitate this.

Keep the area of difficulty in mind.

Simplifying verbal directions, slowing the rate of speech, and minimalizing distractions can make a big difference to a person with auditory processing difficulties.

Plan specific activities for the areas of difficulty.

There are many activities that can help build auditory processing skills, whether it be in the area of phonological awareness, auditory discrimination, or any of the other areas in this realm. Rhyming games, for example, can help build phonological awareness as well as discriminating between similar and different sounds. Sorting games can also help build auditory memory, as the number of variables and steps involved in the sorting can be easily controlled to adjust the level of difficulty.

The information provided above has been edited from the web site www.idonline.org/article/6390, which is representative of the materials available from the National Center for Learning Disabilities Information and Referral System.

(Article contributed by Jenny Jeffreys)



2008-2009 C.A.R.E. LECTURES SERIES

A Family Approach

Bi-monthly lectures on parenting issues and coping skills

By **Rachel Melville Thomas**, Psychotherapist
World Radio Switzerland - Kids in Mind

**Letting them grow, Letting them go.
Adolescence and beyond.**

Tuesday, 12th May 2009, Webster Uni, Rm 13/15

Fees: Ask CHF20, Non-ASK CHF40

RSVP: info@allspecialkids.org

Social Drama Group

When: Mondays

Where: Crossroads Church, Ferney Voltaire Time: 16h30 17h45.

May 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th, June 8th, 15th 22nd

A small friendly group open to children aged 6 to 14 years old who enjoy fun activities and games to help them learn or improve on their social intergration skills. Topics covered last term included:

Classroom behaviour, Bullying, taking turns, sharing, developing good manners, just to name a few.

If you feel your child could benefit from a little extra guidance with their Social Skills in a fun, friendly and safe environment then please contact: Petal.Jaffrey@allspecialkids.org or karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org.



2009 ASK SUMMER CAMPS

Educational & Summer Fun Activities

TUTORING &

FastForWord Reading Program (for children ages 7 - 18)

- Do you want to unlock your child's potential?
- Do you want to help your child become an effective reader?
- Do you want to strengthen your child's memory, attention, processing rate and sequencing required to be an effective learner?

First week: July 20th - 24th, 2009

Second week: July 27th - 31st, 2009

Third week: Aug 3rd - 7th, 2009

Fourth week: Aug 10th - 14th, 2009

Tutoring Morning Program CHF550

Early registration discount: CHF50 before 15th May, 2009

Social Skills & Life Skills (for children ages 5 - 14)

- Do you want to develop self esteem in your child?
- Do you want your child to learn conflict resolution techniques??

ASK summer camps offer

- an accepting and welcoming, educational and therapeutic environment
- a low child to staff ratio
- promote development of self awareness, confidence, empathy and assertiveness.
- promote social skills such as cooperation, sharing and conflict resolution

Full day Social Skills activities CHF775

Full day, Tutoring morning & social skills afternoon CHF975

Early registration discount: CHF100 before 15th May, 2009

Contact petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org, mobile: 078 800 1249

Nos activités s'étendent à Genève !!

Dyslexie

**Dyspraxie
Syndrome**



Hyperactivité

d'Asperger

Autisme

- Etes-vous francophone ou bilingue français-anglais ?
- Votre enfant a-t-il des besoins spécifiques et/ou des difficultés d'apprentissage ?
- Votre enfant suit-il l'école en français ?
- Recherchez-vous des contacts avec des parents dans votre situation et qui habitent votre région ?

Alors le groupe de soutien ASK est pour vous !

Vous êtes invités au premier rendez-vous du groupe de parents francophones et bilingues ayant des enfants avec des besoins particuliers et des difficultés d'apprentissage (dyslexie, hyperactivité, dyspraxie, syndrome d'Asperger, autisme...)

Quand : le Jeudi 4 Juin 2009, Heure : 10h-12h

Lieu : Chêne-Bougeries

Notre site ASK en français est en construction. Vous pourrez obtenir des informations sur les écoles offrant une éducation spécifique, sur les spécialistes parlant français, et sur les autres groupes de soutien à Genève et dans la région. Vous aurez accès au calendrier des activités spécialement organisées pour les parents francophones.

RSVP à catherine.papas@allspecialkids.org ou écrire info.francais@allspecialkids.org pour plus d'information.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<http://www.allspeicalkids.org> - contact: info@allspecialkids.org

ASK Geneva Upcoming Events

MAY 2009

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

Thurs, 7th May 10h to 12h
Migros Rest. 2nd fl, Balexert, Geneva

SOCIAL DRAMA CLASS

Mondays, 4th, 11th, 18th 25th, Crossroads Church

CARE Lecture by Rachel Melville Thomas

Tuesday, 12th May 19h to 21h, Webster University

**Letting them grow, Letting them go.
Adolescence and beyond**

MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

(In conjunction with ASK-Vaud)

Sat 16th May, 14h30-16h,
Signal de Bougy ASK Family Fun day

JUNE 2009

MONTHLY PARENTS GET-TOGETHER

- Thursday, 4th June, 10h to 12h
irst ASK Francophone Parents Support meeting
(see page 9 for more details)
- Thursday, 11th June, 10h to 12h
Migros Rest. 2nd fl, Balexert, Geneva

MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

Saturday, 6th June

*Nature Treasure Hunt hosted by the Girl Scouts
Place: Jardin Botanic, Time TBA*

ASSESSMENT WITH DR.GAVIN REID

Wed to Fri, 3th to 5th June (By appointment only)

ASK - Bern Chapter

MAY 2009

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

Venue, Date & Time : TBA

JUNE 2009

Saturday, 20 June

Venue, Date & Time: TBA

RSVP: Jennifer Hockley <hockley@bluewin.ch>

ASK - Vaud Chapter

MAY 2009

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

Thursday, 21st May 2009, 10h - 12h
Chalet de Brie, Chemin de Bendes, 1806 St Legier

MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

(In conjunction with ASK-GE)

Sat 16th May, 14h30-16h,
Signal de Bougy ASK Family Fun day

JUNE 2009

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

Thursday, 18th June 2009, 10h - 12h
Chalet de Brie, Chemin de Bendes, 1806 St Legier

RSVP: gillian.flowers@allspecialkids.org



HAPPY MOTHERS' DAY

*Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn,
Hundreds of bees in the purple clover,
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn,
But only one mother the wide world over.*

~George Cooper