



All Special Kids

Contents

DYSCALCULIA

A Word from the Editor	1
What is Dyscalculia?	2
Fil Came	3
What are you teaching?	4/5
Monthly Kid's Social	5
Geneva Veiv Point	6
Bern View Point	7
C.A.R.E. Program	8
Dyscalculia seminar	9
ASK Geneva Calendar	10
ASK Bern Calendar	10
ASK Activity Camp	10

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GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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Dear Friends,

Though Math was one of my favorite subjects as a child, I now break out in sweat every time I have to work with my daughter Allegra on her Math homework, which usually ends up in the same scenario each time, one of us in tears.

After relegating this homework subject to her dad and a tutor, our mother-daughter relationship regained its previous footing of hugs and kisses.

Dyscalculia is a specific learning difficulty with Math. Though lesser known than Dyslexia, the afflicted children are nonetheless severely affected by this difficulty, which could manifest in many ways; inability to grasp and remember math concepts, rules, formulas, sequence (order of operations), and basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts. Poor long term memory (retention & retrieval) of concept mastery- may be able to perform math operations one day, but draw a blank the next! May be able to do book work but fails all tests and quizzes.

In order to explore this topic in-depth, we invited Steve Chinn and Fil Came, two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from



the U.K for a two day seminar. (Page 9) Steve Chinn and Fil Came also further explained in their articles, the true nature of the difficulties, a child with Dyscalculia faces daily in school. (Page 2,3,4)

One of our missions at ASK is to bridge the gap and establish a better understanding between parents, schools and specialist professionals.

We at ASK are very proud that we achieve this goal quite easily. Many school and specialist professionals, reach out to ASK in support and collaborate with our efforts to inform the community about the different learning disorders by attending several of our lectures and seminars.

We are encouraged that many of our teaching professionals are as concerned as we parents are to find ways to support their students in the classroom. Thank you teachers!

Happy reading!

Joy and the newsletter team

"Don't waste your life in doubts and fears: spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours or ages that follow it." Ralph Waldo Emerson



“Research suggests that dyscalculia as a single, non co-occurring problem affects around 3-6% of the population”



WHAT IS DYSCALCULIA? BY STEVE CHIN

Dyscalculia is a specific learning difficulty that hinders the learning of mathematics. It may occur as a single specific learning difficulty for a child or it may co-occur with other specific learning difficulties, the most likely of which are dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Research on dyscalculia is still minimal, though Prof Brian Butterworth now has a team in London researching this fascinating topic. The research that does exist suggests that dyscalculia as a single, non co-occurring problem affects around 3-6% of the population, which would represent a large number of pupils. As a co-occurring problem with dyslexia, Joffe suggested 60%, but Miles and Chinn both suggest that the figure is much closer to 100%.

As for adults, a recent survey in the UK suggested that 50% of the working population could not do maths beyond that expected of an 11 year old school pupil.

Since numeracy dominates the child's early experiences of maths, it seems likely that the root causes of dyscalculia start with numbers. Dyscalculics will have a very poor sense of numbers. They will not see how numbers work together in patterns. Each number will be seen as a separate entity and maths will be seen as an endless unrelated collection of facts, rules and procedures that have to be committed to memory.

There are three consequences for pupils who cannot remember these basic facts, rules and procedures.

One is a large number of errors that will result in low scores for any work. The second is slow speed of working which is not acceptable in a subject that constantly looks for speed. The third, which is a consequence of the first two, but then makes them even worse, is a sense of failure, high levels of anxiety and loss of self confidence and motivation.

Maths is a developmental subject and any area of failure or insecurity, however small, can have severe implications for future progress.

Children who are failing in maths will first of all need an understanding of their individual problems. They will need encouragement and the experience of success. Clear and alternate explanations (not just the same explanations repeated slower and louder) of fundamental ideas using structured multisensory, multicognitive methods will be essential.

Published books by Steve Chinn

- Chinn and Ashcroft 'Mathematics for Dyslexics: A Teaching Handbook.' 3rd edn. Wiley
- Chinn 'Dealing with Dyscalculia. Sum Hope 2' Souvenir Press
- Chinn 'What to do when you can't add and subtract' Egon Publishers
- Chinn 'What to do when you can't learn the times tables' (also on CD-Rom) Egon Publishers
- Miles and Miles 'Dyslexia and Mathematics' 2nd edn. RoutledgeFalmer
- Chinn, Steve 'The Trouble with Maths' RoutledgeFalmer

JUST ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL? By FIL CAME

Pupils who have literacy problems, i.e. difficulties with reading fluently or understanding the Maths words, may find that it is those same problems that hinder their grasp of Maths. Often it will be the literacy problems that are addressed early but numeracy difficulties may go unnoticed. In fact many problems with Maths only begin to show in Year Three or Year Four. One reason for this is that most of the work done in the early years is oral and it is only later, when they have to write down their methods, that problems appear.

Dyscalculic pupils:

- may have sound technical reading skills but fail to understand the mathematical language
- have difficulty linking mathematical words to numerals
- have difficulty transferring from the concrete to abstract thinking
- have difficulty understanding mathematical concepts
- have problems choosing the correct strategies to solve word problems
- when reading a longer word problem may forget the beginning before they get to the end
- are unable to see vertical tables within a word question
- fail to remember the sequence of calculations needed to solve a multi-step word problem
- have difficulty linking the Maths terms to their abbreviations, e.g. centimetre to cm
- have difficulty remembering to work in the same unit of measure within a question e.g. they may mix together centimetres and metres
- forget the formula
- have trouble recognising symbols and abbreviations, e.g. cm^2 and cm^3
- often forget what the abbreviations mean within the formula
- can have difficulty reading equipment scales accurately
- may be unable to read the time on a clockface, or connect it to digital time
- get confused when reading horizontal and vertical axes in graphs and co-ordinates
- have difficulty with the mathematical language of money which will influence their understanding of questions
- have difficulty making connections between the pictorial representation for a numerical value
- can confuse the vertical axis and horizontal axis in graphs and co-ordinates
- fail to recognise the zero in a graph which results in inaccurate answers
- have difficulty interpreting data patterns - graphs and charts take longer and cause anxiety
- have difficulty handling specific similar vocabulary, e.g. median, mode, mean, range

Learning Maths concepts is rather like building a brick wall. If there is a brick missing, all the bricks above it have nothing to sit on so the wall will be weakened, too many missing bricks and the whole structure might collapse. For the dyscalculic learner, the problem is not only about the number of missing bricks it is also about the foundations upon which the wall is built.

From Ch. 3 *Dyscalculia Working with Dyscalculia*
ISBN 0-9531-0552-0



“Often it will be the literacy problems that are addressed early but numeracy difficulties may go unnoticed.”





What are you teaching? BY STEVE CHIN

When a student is 'behind' in maths they have been making less than 12 months progress in learning maths per year, often for several years. To catch up they will have to make more than 12 months gain per year. This situation is an obvious challenge and from it you can see some consequences.



“The motivation of the student is low, so he may well be less ‘available’ for learning. The body may be there, but the brain may not be.”



Firstly, we expect a great deal of the person providing the intervention. They have to be at least twice as effective as the learner's previous teachers.

Secondly, it is likely that the motivation of the student is low, so he may well be less 'available' for learning. The body may be there, but the brain may not be.

Thirdly, what is taught and how it is taught must be developing the student's learning at an accelerated rate. So, quick fixes and 'What to do on Monday' stuff will not be adequate. The work and how it is taught must fit into an effective maths programme, personalised for that student.

Each lesson must be teaching much more than just 'This is how we do it.' Teachers must ask themselves, 'What else am I teaching?' That is, 'What maths skills and knowledge am I revising, extending, linking and teaching?' Memory is fallible and ideas and facts need to be mutually supporting with each new fact and procedure building from the learner's comfort zone.

For example, working out the 9x table facts on your fingers is a quick fix, but it can be used developmentally as well.

The 9x facts using your fingers.

I have often demonstrated this technique in CPD lectures as a quick and sure-fire way of accessing the 9x facts. I explain that parents tend to love it, but that for some children, as with any intervention, there may be difficulties in performing the method that make it less acceptable. For example, for this method, a dyspraxic child may find difficulty in folding down just one finger at a time.

In case you are unaware, the method works like this:

You hold up all ten fingers and fold down the finger for the number of 9's you wish to multiply. In the diagram it is the 4th finger for 4x9. The number of fingers to the left of the folded finger gives the tens digit (3) and the number of fingers to the right, the units digit (6), so the answer for 4 x9 is 36.

Demonstrated in this way, it is merely a trick. It works and the learner accesses the 9x facts, but it does not teach any maths skills or number sense. But it can.....

It shows that:

There are 10 fingers, which gives a chance to revisit base 10 and place value.

When one finger is folded down, nine are left, so 9 is close to 10, 9 is one less than 10, 10 is one more than 9. relating facts in this way enhances number sense and encourages learners to look for the relationship between numbers (and operations, x, +, - and ÷)



What are you teaching? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

This gives also an opportunity to revisit estimation and the relationship between 9 and 10. For example to show 9 fingers you do not have to count up in 1's to 9, you can start at 10 and work back 1.

So, for 4×9 , you fold down the 4th finger. The 3 fingers left tell you that the tens digit for the answer is 3 and the answer will be 'thirty something'. This allows for more input on place value.

To introduce number sense and estimation skills, the technique tells the student that 4×9 is less than 40, but close enough to be in the 30's. So this links $9 \times$ facts to $10 \times$ facts and reminds the student of the importance of estimation and evaluating the estimate.

(Is it bigger or smaller than the final answer? This simple phrase is a low stress way of evaluating answers.)

The fingers to the right give the units digit, in this case, 6. Since there are a total of 9 fingers used for this strategy, then the tens digit and the units digit must always add to 9. ($3 + 6 = 9$). This is the pattern for all $9 \times$ facts, that is, it works beyond 9×9 , which is where fingers run out!

It is possible to teach 'proper' maths and achieve the goal of 'What else are you teaching?' even with this mechanical quick fix method.

BY STEVE CHINN



ASK Geneva Monthly Kid's Social

A new venture to foster friendship and social skills between children
ANNOUNCEMENT BULLETIN

I have been contacted by Phil Trumper of the Emmanuel church who, with his older youth group, is keen to do something for all the children at ASK. At present, we are trying to arrange a family fun morning in the mountains for all ASK members, their families and guests (your child's friend even) in early February along similar lines to the summer picnic. A number of his church members are qualified instructors who are willing to take your children for either lessons or, if already skiers, accompany them down the local slopes, leaving you to either enjoy your skiing or sit leisurely over a fondue and vin chaud (Ideal for the parents not keen on the winter sports)! Sledding will be offered to the younger children and of course, the outing wouldn't be complete without building an Igloo or snowman! Although February seems a long way in the distance, Phil needs to start planning, so I would like to gauge the number of people who would be interested in this get together as soon as possible.

Please phone Karen Wilkins on 079 630 5270 or email Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org to register only your interest - RSVP's will be taken in January.

ASK SUMMER CAMPS -2008

July 7th-11th; 14th-18th / August 11th-15th; 18th-22nd

Register early and receive discounts. Info: petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org



Geneva Viewpoint

REPORT ON THE FIRST KID'S SOCIAL OUTING

The first Kid's social event of the year started off this month with an evening's bowling in Meyrin. Disappointingly only two children had signed up to go (a 3rd being away on holiday), one of whom was reluctant to attend because she had once been ridiculed by classmates at a bowling Birthday party and was scared it would happen again. I seriously thought of canceling it but the other child was very excited and looking forward to going, so with fingers crossed, the Kid's Social was launched.

With a little instruction and encouragement both children started to bowl, hesitantly at first and learning to wait patiently for their turn; then, cheering each time a skittle was knocked down - it didn't matter if it was one or all ten -and as the number falling increased, gained confidence so they were soon taking the adult's turns as well! No one was laughing or shouting at them, no one was interested in who won or lost, all that mattered was whether the children had relaxed and enjoyed themselves. Had they? The proof was in their smiles and comments at the end of the evening: "That was fun," "I want to do this again," "Can we have a play date?" "Do I have a new friend?" The reluctant child was excited "I liked this bowling because I liked being myself. I think we understood each other. When is the next thing?"

Well the next 'thing' is in November when both children will be getting their hands mucky making their creations out of clay. They will be welcoming another child into their group and it would be great if there were more. Please phone Karen Wilkins on 079 630 5270 or email karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org for more details or RSVP for places by November 3rd.

"That was fun,"
"I want to do this again,"
"Can we have a play date?"



DYSCLACULIA IN PRINT

My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir - by Samantha Abeel
A Kid's Review

In My 13th Winter, Seventh Grader Samantha Abeel is a straight A student, but how is it that she can't tell time, or understand simple math concepts? She has a math-related learning disability which she is ashamed of and wants no one to know about it. As her secrets are revealed she learns that with the help of others she can accomplish tasks that most people strive for their whole life by the age of sixteen. This capturing, well put-together memoir will teach you a valuable lesson of self-acceptance. You will read about how one girl's world will change as she enters the fourth grade and has to struggle through the rest of elementary school. She completes eighth grade and moves on to high school nervous as ever and doesn't know what the pressure of the real world can do to a person, but then again who does?

I enjoyed this book for many reasons. The language is rich and the writing is beautiful. The author did a really great job describing the emotions; there were so many it was crucial to understand. This is most likely one of the best memoirs I have read in a long, long time. I would recommend this to mostly girls between the ages of twelve-through high school age. (Taylor, March 29, 2006)

Memory of an October past..... Bern Viewpoint

"Mom, is it ok if I read some more?"
The night our daughter Elena asked me that I cried with joy, relief and disbelief. It was October 2004, she was 9.5 years old and it was the first time she had ever asked to read "more" on her own. She was reading an enlarged print short story that her teacher had made for her. Her normal reading pace was one enlarged page in 10 to 15 minutes after which she was so tired from the effort and frustrated from the inability that she would just give up. But on that October night Elena continued asking me that question after each page which led to 30 minutes of independent reading and over ten pages! I knew that something big had happened but couldn't explain it. After years of once a week occupational therapy, low vision training and 10 hours a week of "other therapies" at the "School for Vision Impaired and Blind Children" she had never shown such a quick jump in improvement.

We were convinced that it must have come from the new exercise and nutrition program for child brain development that we had learned about through the Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, U.S.A. earlier that year. I wasn't 100% convinced that our Elena "fit" the profile or could benefit from their program but was trying it out some to see what changes it might bring.

Her abilities and behavior had improved so much. The Institutes had introduced us to a neurological centered approach for our daughter's unique differences and difficulties. We were on a new path and Elena's overall improvement was

exceeding any prior expectations or prognoses.

In early 2006 a new neighbor who happens to be a child psychologist in Bern told me about a very interesting course that she had taken that reminded her of our work with Elena. It was from an American Organization called HANDLE. A few days later I stayed up until 2am listening to Judith Bluestone, the HANDLE founder on an Internet Radio interview program. Fascinated by the holistic approach to their method we searched out a therapist for Elena.

Elena worked reluctantly with the HANDLE method before she took a well deserved six month break from all therapies Today Elena is an avid reader and story teller. She goes to the public library with us and pulls books off the shelf to read, something unthinkable two years ago! Elena would like to be able to read anything and everything and finds herself frustrated by small print. She recently asked to see her HANDLE therapist again to ask for exercises that could help her read even smaller print.

As her parents we are hopeful and grateful for any help she receives toward achieving her own unique potential in a happy and healthy way.

We are delighted to have Madeleine Stadler certified HANDLE therapist as our guest speaker at our ASK- Bern Chapter kick -off November 27, 2007.

Looking forward to seeing you there!
Greetings from Bern,
[Mary Kay](#)





“An opportunity to discuss topics of concern, interest, areas of difficulties and sources of conflict in a supportive, empathic and understanding environment while encouraging group cohesiveness and external support.”



C.A.R.E. a family approach

Community Assistance Resource Enrichment

- Are you searching for support and wishing to address the family as a whole in an integrative approach?
- Are the siblings of your special needs kid feeling neglected?
- Are you having a hard time connecting with your teenager?

If you answer yes to one of these questions, you might want to enroll in the discussion forum offered by ASK. C.A.R.E. will provide you and your family the opportunity to discuss topics of concern, interest, areas of difficulties and sources of conflict in a supportive, empathic and understanding environment, while encouraging group cohesiveness and external support. Through the use of games and constructive play, siblings are also given the opportunity to express themselves in an age appropriate manner. At the same time, the children with special needs will have the opportunity to meet and participate in organized activities.

Monthly family Support Group

When: Jan 28th, Feb 18th, March 10th, April 14th, May 14th, June 9th 2008
Time: 6-8 pm - Location: Webster University (room TBA)

Weekly adolescent group

When: Jan 24th, Jan 31st, Feb 7th, Feb 21st, Feb 28th, Mar 6th 2008
Time: 5:30-6:30 pm - Location: Webster University (room TBA)

- Special rates given to ASK members, families and couples
- Ten percent discount for registration received prior to 14th December, 2007
- Registration deadline, Friday 11th of January, 2008.

For registration, fees and any further information please visit the ASK website: www.allspecialkids.org or e-mail nadia.care@allspecialkids.org

How would the groups be simultaneously conducted?

1. Support and discussion group for parents of children with special needs (Couples encouraged) facilitated by Nadia Fakhouri, MA
2. Support and discussion through games and activities for siblings of children with special needs (ages 7-12) led by Petal Jaffrey, MA
3. Fun and activities for children with special needs (ages 5-12) run by participants of the Webster Counseling Program

There are additional weekly sessions for teenage siblings (aged 13-19)

4. Support and discussion for teenage siblings - run by Nadia Fakhouri and Petal Jaffrey .

Note: Babysitting offered for ages 3 to 6 upon request

DYSCACULIA: The Trouble with Maths

Presented by Steve Chinn and Fil Came

Two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from U.K

Date: Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd December 2007, Time: 9:00-16.00hr

Place: Webster University - Jura Bldg. Rm# 13, Route de Collex 15 , CH-1293 Bellevue, Switzerland

Online registration form: http://www.allspecialkids.org/Dyscalculia_Registration_Form.htm

The Trouble with Maths course is directed at:

- Teachers from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools
- Teacher working with children with special needs
- Teaching Assistants who are interested to develop their teaching skills for a career change
- Private Tutors
- Parents interested in developing their own practical knowledge

What is the course aim?

- Identification and Intervention of Math difficulties
- To provide a foundation of understanding
- And a practical framework of strategies for overcoming barriers and difficulties to learning Mathematics.

FEES: Members—CHF300,
School staff—CHF300,
Non-members—CHF400

Last registration date 15th November 2007

Please contact info@allspecialkids.org

ASK-Geneva Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 2007

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

1st November - 10:00 - 12:00hr
R.S.V.P: gehlC@allspecialkids.org

DECEMBER 2007

DYSCACULIA: The Trouble with Maths*

Presented by Steve Chinn and Fil Came
Two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from U.K
Date: Sat 1st and Sun 2nd December 2007,
Time: 9:00-16.00hr
Place: Webster University - Commons Room
RSVP: info@allspecialkids.org

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

6TH December - 10:00 - 12:00hr
R.S.V.P: gehlC@allspecialkids.org

ASK/Bern-Chapter Upcoming Event

NOVEMBER 2007

MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

6th November - 10:00—12:00 hr
RSVP: info.be@allspecialkids.org
Tel: 079 341 4232

ASK/Bern-Chapter KICK OFF

27th November - 19:00 - 21:30 hr
St. Ursula's Church Hall, Jubiläumsplatz 2, 3000
RSVP: info.be@allspecialkids.org

DECEMBER 2007: No scheduled event.

Monthly Kid's Social (Geneva)

10 Nov: Atelier Creations in Prangins
Cost CHF30 -CHF40 including materials
December: Movie (TBA)

Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org 079 630 5270

ASK'S ACTIVITY CAMPS - FEBRUARY 2008

Skills building through constructive play and activities for children aged 5-13 All children welcome

ASK's February Camp focuses on fun in a safe and supportive environment during the school break, whereby children can develop new skills through constructive play and activities, make friends and be themselves. Children will benefit from low child to adult ratio in a program created and run by two therapists, (Petal Jaffrey, MA and Nadia Fakhouri, MA).

Activities include art, drama, team games, exploration of different materials, creative expression, scientific experiments, photography, relaxation and outings. All activities have been chosen to promote social skills, positive self-esteem, self discovery and awareness, cooperation, problem-solving and acceptance of differences in self and others.

- **When:** February 11th to 15th, 2008, 9am to 4 pm / **Where:** (TBA)
- **Cost:** 580 CHF (One to One assistance 300 CHF extra OR assistant provided by parent)
- 100 CHF discounts for ASK members and participants of ASK'S Summer Camp.
- Please contact petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org for registration and more information.

Future Activity Camps (2008)

March 17th - 21st; 24th - 28th / July 7th-11th; 14th - 18th / August 11th - 15th; 18th-22nd