

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD
of
LEARNING DISABILITIES

AN ABSTRACT OF
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The spectrum of education stretches from the unteachable to the highly gifted, with the present process of education emphasizing the value of individuality in learning. Every child learns based on his idiosyncratic abilities to absorb what is being taught. The alert teacher finds clues to implement learning situations by observing how each child learns. Weaknesses in learning abilities or "learning disabilities," indicate areas for development while the strengths dictate the basic modes for learning.

The major purposes of this study are: (1) to investigate and compile the information that is currently available in order to facilitate understanding and practical application by people who are unaware and inadequately informed about these types of learning problems; (2) to bring together sources of information, to identify literature, clarify terminology, and provide concrete suggestions for identification, diagnosis, and remedial techniques; and (3) to focus on what the State of Connecticut is doing to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities.

Procedures used to gather this information included: (1) the reading of available literature; (2) participation in an overview course in learning disabilities; (3) attendance at institutes, workshops, and conferences; (4)

observations of pioneer programs; (5) personal interviews with leaders in the field of learning disabilities within the State of Connecticut; (6) membership in several organizations concerned with learning disabilities; and (7) practical application of techniques of identification and remediation within the classroom.

The thesis has an organizational pattern that follows the historical development of the research orientation, as well as being categorically organized by the areas of symptomology. The information has brought to the fore such important understandings as theories of causality, lack of unanimity in definition and terminology, diversity of symptomology and remedial techniques, and the importance of the need for "differential diagnosis."

The following conclusions are to be drawn from this investigation: (1) Parents and educators of children within the best remedial years of five through nine, must recognize and understand learning disabilities. (2) Parents need to understand their role in the supportive acceptance of their child in the areas of emotional, remedial and educational needs. (3) The State of Connecticut, having legislated requirements for state certification of learning disabilities teachers, has created an urgency for teacher preparation institutions to provide a learning disabilities course on the undergraduate level. (4) The classroom teacher needs (a) to distinguish the symptoms of learning disabilities from similar symptoms due to immaturity of

natural growth and development; and (b) needs the supportive help of a well trained resource teacher diagnostically, materially and evaluatively. (5) Within the field of learning disabilities, and (a) research must continue in the areas of symptomology, causality, and remediation; (b) further clarification is needed in terminology and definition of learning disability; (c) there is a need for continued development of the specialized materials needed to implement remediation. (6) The general public needs to fully understand the importance of supporting the education of these children.