

Child Development Paediatrics

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ASSISTING THE CHILD WHO HAS VISUAL PROCESSING PROBLEMS

These are suggestions for assisting the child within the classroom, but can also be done at home. At home the activities could be carried out in a game, so that the child's interest is maintained. A trial and error approach is recommended to determine what works best for the child.

Assistance with reading:

- 1) These children often have word attack problems. The use of a visually based reading program, such as a colour coded reading system, is often unsuccessful in view of the visual processing problems. Instead a language experience program, a linguistic program or a phonically-based program is more appropriate.
- 2) The use of a marker card or window cut out of the card could be used while reading to encourage the child to focus on a single word at a time. This allows the child to track across the page and encourages visual scanning. It also reduces visual distractibility. For the same reason, finger pointing should not be discouraged.
- 3) Reading in pairs is often useful. One child could model the paragraph or sentence and then the other child could reread the same sentence. This is especially useful if the child has good auditory processing skills as hearing the sentence encourages the child to focus and follow.
- 4) Avoid asking the child to read out loud in class while they are still struggling, because they find reading difficult. This could negatively impact on self-confidence.
- 5) The mechanics of reading is hard for these children. They would be more motivated if they are reading for meaning, for example a story, and if there are contextual clues. Also reading around fun topics of interest to them is helpful.

Assistance with spelling:

- 1) These children have difficulty remembering whole words. They should be encouraged to break words down into their component parts. It is useful to emphasise phonics and structural analysis of the words.
- 2) A multisensory approach to spelling is often helpful. A series of steps could incorporate the simultaneous use of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile modalities. For example, the child is asked to look at the word, pronounce it and then incorporate it in a sentence. Then she/he could trace the word in the air and spell it orally. Then the child is asked to write the word from memory and check against the original word to see if it is correct. Finally the word is covered and the child again writes the word to ensure that the spelling is correct.
- 3) The use of lined paper is best for children that have visual processing problems. Ideally the lines should be widely spaced.
- 4) The child could use a verbal cue when learning a word. For instance, the child could say directions out loud as they write a word or letter (e.g. " up-down-and-around ")
- 5) Individualised worksheets that separate letter formations into categories according to stroke shapes are helpful. Keep worksheets specific to the particular task. Avoid too much written material on the sheet, as the child is likely to be visually distracted by too much written material.
- 6) Activities that emphasise drawing between the lines can be done for fun. This develops the spatial perception of letters and encourages writing between the lines.