

## **Learning Disability Within the Regular Classroom**

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**School Improvement**

## **Problem – Learning Disability within the Regular Classroom**

Learning disability is a neurologically based processing problem which can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and /or math. Within the classrooms there are varying disabilities that the teacher might encounter which was overlooked at some point in the students' lives and has now become a problem with their academics.

### **Symptoms of the Problem**

Within the regular classroom, even though teachers are not trained to deal with disabilities, yet they are able to pick up different signs that tell that students have a learning disability.

The indicators that can be seen in students are:

- Reading below Grade level
- Improper diet
- Behavioural Problem
- Hearing Problem
- Eyesight Problem

When students are reading way below their grade level, in most cases it is because they have a learning disability. They tend to be withdrawn, therefore they participate in little or no activity which will automatically reflect in their academic work. This is seen in most of our students within the school. Improper diet is another indicator that the class teacher uses to realise that students have a learning disability. Students turn up at school hungry haven't had breakfast, neither did they eat the night before. This, which is observed often among many students within the school pose a problem with their learning as they are unable to learn as they either start sleeping because they are hungry, or they start to vomit. Students when not

eating properly, overtime develop a deficiency which affects their brain and in turn their academic work.

When the children display behavioural problems, this is when the teachers note that there is a learning disability. Students who have this problem do so because they are not able to complete task given, therefore they tend to give a lot of trouble which can be very over-bearing at times. There is an overlap of the varying indicators, as when children get hungry and other students know they will tend to fight, and this might occur repeatedly. It will become the norm overtime for students to operate in this manner and sometimes they will see it as nothing. With this type of behaviour, the students become reluctant and do not want to work which affects their work tremendously. They don't see academics as being important.

Students come to us at times with hearing problems unknowing to us. It is sometimes not recognised until maybe third grade when the different skills should have been developed in them. So, with this kind of problem they tend to be withdrawn or being quiet at times because they do not want others to recognise their problem. However, being withdrawn because of a hearing problem will cause them not to participate in any activity which will affect their academics greatly.

Also, you will find students coming to us with eye problems. Sometimes we the teachers find this out because they tend not to be able to see the chalk board unless they are totally up close to it. Apart from that, they must also put their heads close to the books to see what they write. With all this happening, most times they show signs of learning disability as they are also withdrawn and not doing much work, or they work so slowly they are not able to complete the work for the day and this continues on and on.

## **Individuals associated with the Problem**

The persons that are mostly affected by the problem are the teachers who are having difficulty getting children with learning disability on grade level and trying to address their behavioural problems. The principal is also affected, as when students are not performing for whatever reasons they are, it will affect the school in a bad way and the number of students attending might drop because of non-performance. Also, parents are not left out of it as they are the ones that are affected most of all; as they will forever have the problem with them at home. Even though parents sometimes are reluctant in accepting that their child has a learning problem are the very ones that have to deal with the low grades on the report cards and also the behaviour problems.

## **Possible Alternative Strategies to Address the Problem**

Alternative strategies that could be used to address this problem are:

- break learning into small steps – This is where the teacher would take the activity and break it into smaller parts so as to help students to process the learning much better.
- administer probes – The principal in this case would have to do a child find to find those students who enter the system and have a learning disability early so they can be helped before it's too late.
- supply regular, quality feedback – Teacher would have to take on the task of having regular assessments of students learning and record these data and provide feedback to the relevant stakeholders so as to track students progress and where help is needed it is given.
- provide ample independent, well-designed intensive practice – Because students tend to be slow, therefore a lot of practice is needed for them to learn efficiently.

## **My Plan for Addressing the Problem**

My plan for addressing the problem of learning disability in my school would be to:

- Have full assessment of students on entry to school – In this way, I would be able to capture student's ability level and be able to deal with the ones that need attention early. I would approach persons within the private sector to help get these assessments done, since they are very costly and as a government school we cannot afford it.
- Prepare programs to meet their needs – After getting students assessed to see where they are, I would develop a program along with my fellow teachers to suit the needs of my students. With this in place, students will learn at the pace they needed to learn and improve.
- Breakfast Programme – With students who have nutritional problem that is hindering their learning, I would implement a breakfast programme to help address this problem. Breakfast is the greatest meal of the day, so once students are properly fed in the morning, it would be a good start to their day and to their learning. A proper meal will help the part of their brain that enable them to learn.
- Setting goals – In helping students with learning disability, I would allow them to set their own goals. When students set their own goals, they tend to stick to them more. Also, this will help to alleviate their behaviour problems and will enhance their learning
- Self-Monitoring – After students have set their goals, I would give them the chance of monitoring those task that they have set out to do. When students monitor their own work, they will see where they go wrong and will more readily want to address it.
- Incentives - In helping students to learn, I would set up an incentive programme where students would be rewarded for work done. Also, I would praise students for

things done and give encouragements. Students love to be praised and be given things, therefore, it will enhance their learning.

- Guidance Sessions – For students with behavioural problems, they need guidance. Therefore, I would make sure that students get more sessions of guidance and counselling as this will help pave the way forward and making them into better men and women. At present, it has been more than a year that the Guidance Counsellor has not been to any of her classes in the school. Therefore, in helping to get the students behavioural problem down, I would make sure that the Counsellor attends every class she is assigned to go. In doing this, it will allow students to open up more about problems that they are facing which cause them to be reacting in a way which is not right. With the interaction of the students and the Counsellor, they will be more able to handle their problems much better as she will be able to guide them in the way they should go.

Learning disability within the school can be at a minimal level if all the stakeholders involve play their part in attacking the problem at an early stage. As a leader, I would make sure I lead from the back and not the front, so I am able to see all that is ahead of me in order to address what needs to be done to the smooth running of the school. In getting this done, I would make sure academics is at the forefront with the inclusion of everyone no matter their class or race or their social background.