

Daniel Bell

Developmental Research

1/22/08 - 3/11/08

EDTE 629: Teaching Students with LD & ED

L. Lawrence Riccio, EdD

### **#1. What is exceptionality? Who is eligible for special education?**

Even though the terms ‘average’ and ‘normal’ never seem to quite have a realistic definition, the term ‘exceptionality’ is difficult to define because its definition seems just as broad as the previously mentioned terms when regarding education. *Kidsource.com* explains exceptionality in terms of education as students “who have physical, mental, or behavioral handicaps” and who often “need a specially tailored education program to achieve in accordance with their potential.” This is a very broad term because it encompasses all handicaps from severe mental retardation to highly gifted and talented.

Now it would seem that special education is meant for all exceptional students, being that, as *Natomas.k12.ca.us* discusses, special education is “individually planned” education “designed to help learners with special needs achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community.” This is not the case, however. According to *Wrightslaw.com*, “to be eligible for special education, a child must have a disability and must need special education services and related services. If a child has a disability but does not need special education services, the child is not eligible for special education.” The specific determination procedures of whether or not a student needs special education services is different in different states, but the *Learning Disabilities Association of America* website tells us that the “parent of the child and a team of qualified professionals” makes this decision. So even if a student is obviously disabled (or ‘exceptional’), they may never be eligible for special education if they are not deemed eligible by their parents and/or by the state.

## References

Kid Source. (2000). *Who are the exceptional children?* Retrieved January 20, 2008 from [http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/Educating\\_Exceptional\\_kids.html](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/Educating_Exceptional_kids.html)

Learning Disabilities Association of America. (2006). *Who makes the decision about whether a child is eligible for special education and related services?* Retrieved January 20, 2008 from [http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/parents/special\\_ed/eligibility.asp](http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/parents/special_ed/eligibility.asp)

Natomas. (2006). Retrieved January 20, 2008 from [http://www.natomas.k12.ca.us/nusd\\_edserv/edserv\\_glossary.htm#S](http://www.natomas.k12.ca.us/nusd_edserv/edserv_glossary.htm#S)

Wrights Law. (2007). *Who is eligible for special education services?* Retrieved January 20, 2008 from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/elig.index.htm>

**#15. What are three risk factors leading to a learning disability and why (e.g. substance abuse and related problems, conflicts with the law, birthing issues)?**

Raskind (2008) tells us that “a risk factor is any condition, circumstance, or event that increases the likelihood of a negative outcome in an individual’s life.” Even though learning disabilities are not as necessarily debilitating as other disabilities like mental retardation, they can still have a negative outcome in many ways in a student’s life educationally, socially, and psychologically. At *Wrong Diagnosis.com* we find that there are many risk factors that may lead to learning disabilities, though they may not be a direct cause of the disorder. Risk factors do, however, greatly increase the chances of acquiring a learning disability. One major factor is toxins in the child’s environment, including cadmium and lead, both of which are prevalent in old homes and can even make it into the food we eat. Raskind (2008) also discusses chronic poverty and mental illness in a parent as high risk factors for learning disabilities.

Despite the fact that, according to *Help Guide.org*, “it’s impossible to know exactly what cause[s] [children’s’] learning disabilit[ies],” it does seem to make sense that the previously mentioned risk factors can lead to learning disabilities. The factors all have the possibility of causing or giving birth to a child with certain damage to the brain. And Pressinger and Marfo (1997) explain that “scientists and researchers have now confirmed in a number of research studies that children with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder exhibit at least one of several types of damage to the brain structure.”

## References

Help Guide.org. (2007). *Learning disabilities: Understanding the types, causes, symptoms, and diagnosis*. Retrieved February 9, 2008 from [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/learning\\_disabilities.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/learning_disabilities.htm)

Pressinger, R. W. & Marfo, K. (1997). *Environmental causes of learning disabilities and child neurological disorders*. Retrieved February 9, 2008 from [http://www.chemtox.com/pregnancy/learning\\_disabilities.htm](http://www.chemtox.com/pregnancy/learning_disabilities.htm)

Raskind, M. (2008). *Research trends: Risk and resilience in people with learning disabilities*. Retrieved February 9, 2008 from <http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=1113>

Wrong Diagnosis. (2007). *Risk factors for learning disabilities*. Retrieved February 9, 2008 from [http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/l/learning\\_disabilities/riskfactors.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/l/learning_disabilities/riskfactors.htm)

**#16. What are three risk factors leading to ED and why (e.g. substance abuse and related problems, conflicts with the law, birthing issues)?**

Even though learning disorders appear to have some socio-economic risk factors, it seems more likely that LD is more related to risk factors that lead to physical brain damage to some degree. Emotional disturbance, on the other hand, appears to be much more related to socio-economic risk factors. According to Wagner, et al. (2006), students with ED tend to grow up in an environment that leads to “poor life outcomes.” Wagner, et al. goes to discuss how a significant amount of ED youth live below the poverty line in single parent households where the parents are often unemployed and lacking a high school degree, and many live in households where another person has a disability.

Mason, Chapman, and Scott (1999) do not disagree with the above-mentioned risk factor, but they point out that most studies conducted usually only focus on the sociodemographic risk factors and not much else. But as Armstrong, Dedrick, and Greenbaum (2003) point out, the vast majority of young people go through many life-altering changes while entering adulthood, most of which are hard enough to deal with as a “normal” person, but can be detrimental to those at risk for ED. These include behaviors such as substance abuse, driving while intoxicated, and having unprotected sex.

Lastly, Vagi and Delgado (2004) point out that even though they are not the most significant risk factor, consumption of alcohol and tobacco use does play a part. It seems logical that ED risk factors would have to do with emotionally related issues including the living environment. The means of which we are born and raised play an obvious role in our mental well-being.

## References

- Armstrong, K. H., Dedrick, R. F., Greenbaum, P. E. (2003). *Factors associated with community adjustment of young adults with serious emotional disturbance: A longitudinal analysis*. Retrieved February 11, 2008 from <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5001946806>
- Mason, C. A., Chapman, D. A., & Scott, K. G. (1999). *The identification of early risk factors for severe emotional disturbances and emotional handicaps: An epidemiological approach*. Retrieved February 11, 2008 from <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=HwrMRI8NNhLjp526Qqcn1rJkCYLGN0hBhNKnc6Dwvq94M1L2xy2Y!2087687893?docId=5001315633>
- Vagi, S. J. & Delgado, C. E.. (2004). *Perinatal risk factors for emotional problems in preschool*. Retrieved February 11, 2008 from [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=res&cd=2&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.chris.miami.edu%2FPublications%2FResearch%2FEHSED%2520poster%2520with%2520embedded%2520tables%2520and%2520figures.pdf&ei=uO6wR\\_2HEKXaedfE4ZoO&usg=AFQjCNHKzya5hKBiNAhL-Do-pnxGLPG36A&sig2=OljkLoYOPXtCcsvDsiZgeg](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=res&cd=2&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.chris.miami.edu%2FPublications%2FResearch%2FEHSED%2520poster%2520with%2520embedded%2520tables%2520and%2520figures.pdf&ei=uO6wR_2HEKXaedfE4ZoO&usg=AFQjCNHKzya5hKBiNAhL-Do-pnxGLPG36A&sig2=OljkLoYOPXtCcsvDsiZgeg)
- Wagner, M., et al. (2006). *Data trends: Summaries of research on mental health services for children and adolescents and their families*. Retrieved February 11, 2008 from <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=res&cd=5&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdatatrends>

.fmhi.usf.edu%2Fsummary\_139.pdf&ei=yuWwR9HZBZDMeuTruJsO&usg=AF  
QjCNFuuRBCCzw1SpMZFjOIWfnkybUQWw&sig2=7\_RzUxyKWWzf5\_qzgK  
2dyA

**#19. How is technology transforming education as it relates to adaptive devices, assistive devices and as artificial intelligence devices for reading proficiency?**

Technology is greatly transforming education in terms of reading proficiency.

*Access IT* tells us that assistive technology is certain technology for people with disabilities that helps them perform otherwise difficult or impossible functions like electronic walkers, wheelchairs, and computers with large keys for the seeing impaired. But assistive technology has gone even further with technology such as computer software that reads text on the screen out loud for seeing impaired individuals. Devices like this bring reading to whole new level for people with physical disabilities.

Yet there are other disabilities, like learning disorders, where the disabled person may not have any physical ailment, but they still may have severe reading deficits. That's where programs like *Kurzweil*, *Word Q*, *Speak Q*, and *Dragon Naturally Speaking* come in. *Kurzweil's* site tells us that programs like *Kurzweil* assist struggling and disabled students with complete reading, writing and study solutions. Programs like these also assist teachers in providing differentiated educational techniques to disabled students. Among many other helpful functions, *Kurzweil* will read passages back to a student and help them with spelling. *Word Q* acts as an artificial intelligence device in that, as the student attempts to word process into the program, the program will predict what the student is trying to type, which is especially helpful to low reading and writing level learners. There are also many other devices including *Smartboards*, which add a tactile learning style to the technology for literacy mix. Mp3 players are doing wonders to auditory learners and students who have a high comprehension but low reading level.

## References

Access IT. (2008). *What is assistive technology?* Retrieved February 13, 2008 from  
<http://www.washington.edu/accessit/articles?109>

Kurzweil Educational Systems. (2006). *Welcome!* Retrieved February 13, 2008 from  
<http://www.kurzweiledu.com/>

Quillsoft. (2007). *WordQ writing software*. Retrieved February 13, 2008 from  
<http://www.wordq.com>