Visual & Auditory Problems from a Mother's View

V.2 Visual Processing – Copying from the Chalkboard

Ever since Terry was in pre-school, his teachers recommended that we have his hearing checked. We did, at our own expense, just to be told that nothing was at all wrong with his hearing. His kindergarten teacher decided that he was simply a behavior problem and treated him accordingly.

For example, when she would say, "Children, line up at the door," he would remain at his table, working on his seat work. In first grade, after the usual fruitless trip to the audiologist, his teacher, believing that Terry was a sweet child, not at all rebellious, referred us to the special-ed cooperative that our school district belongs to, where it was determined that his ears work fine, but in the presence of background noise, he only "heard" forty percent of what he was supposed to.

He was diagnosed as having a possible auditory perception problem. It was recommended that his desk be placed in the front of the classroom, that

he be spoken to by name with eye contact, and that he do a series of tapes that would help him discern between sounds and following verbal directions. These recommendations were done at school and he was put through a series of tests and interviews by the school psychologist and sociologist, speech therapist and other specialists.

Then, at a multi-disciplinary conference which I attended, it was determined that he was not severely handicapped enough to qualify for special education. Truth is, the tests showed his intelligence to be well above average. But, he was still slipping further behind.

In second grade, he was placed in the second lowest reading class, a half-year below grade level. The teacher felt that there was no reason to allow reading books to go home, since that group wouldn't be motivated to use

them, or to bring them back the next day, which made me a firm believer that teacher's tenure is a policy which should be eliminated.

For me, sitting and listening to him read was a patience-trying time, because it seemed like he couldn't remember phonics we knew he knew and often he couldn't remember a word I told him a page or two later. There seemed to be more than an auditory processing problem, but I couldn't put a finger on it nor could I even really describe it.

I heard about Options Center for Health and Education from friends at church who are teachers. They were excited about the Brain Gym® exercises -- one gave me some papers on a few of them – and were learning the Char-L phonics system, which they began using this year. Then, when another of my friends from church sent her daughters there and the daughter whose problems sounded so much like Terry's had such a dramatic improvement, my husband and I decided to take Terry for an evaluation. We also took him out of public school and put him in a private one until we moved to Kewanee. Also, we decided to let him repeat second grade.

Helen did an evaluation on Terry and determined that he was right-brain dominant, but that all of his sensory input (handedness, eyes, ears) were feeding into his left brain and then not being adequately processed. This evaluation was very helpful to me because it let me know that Terry was not "dumb" or unable to learn, but that he just learns in a different way than some of his other classmates. This information also helped me realize that even though Terry did not have "hearing problems," he does have some auditory and visual processing problems. The information that he takes in with his eyes and ears is not being used as efficiently as it could.

Helen then talked to me about the Brain Gym® exercises which would help Terry with his processing difficulties. I was amazed that something so simple and that my son could do himself could work so profoundly.

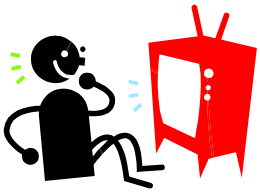
Helen recommended the Thinking Skills class and the Creative Self-Awareness class. We wanted to enroll him in both, but because our house

sold faster than we expected, we did not feel we could get him there at the scheduled time for the Creative Self- Awareness class from Kewanee.

So, Terry is just finishing Thinking Skills with his teacher at Options Center. I didn't get to see just what went on in class, but his "homework" involved just a few Brain Gym® exercises to be done once a day and a manageable number of cross-crawls to be done three times a day.

The Thinking Skills class incorporated the Brain Gym® exercises, visual processing techniques, as well as goal setting. Terry would use positive goals such as "I read easily", "I think clearly", and "I comprehend what I read and hear with ease". He not only began improving grade-wise but his attitude was much better. Terry now has much more self-esteem and self-confidence than before. He's not as easily frustrated while reading or even sitting in class. When Terry does become frustrated, he stops and does a Brain Gym® exercise, such as the Cross Crawls, which help him cross the mid-line. The Earth Buttons and Space Buttons also help him calm down and read with less stress. These buttons also help him cross the mid-line of his body so that both eyes and ears can work together easily. The buttons are points that are held for just a few minutes. Some of the vision therapy, such as tracking horizontally and vertically, helps Terry copy notes from the board faster and easily find his place while he's reading and taking notes.

My "homework" was to write down everything he ate for eight weeks, and one step at a time, eliminate processed sugars, preservatives, etc. until I have become much more aware of what I buy for meals, snacks, etc. I was amazed at how different Terry behaved when I began reducing our intake of refined foods. I never knew food could have such a big effect on how Terry learned and behaved. I'm even noticing a difference in how I think and feel throughout the day.



Also, I have become more aware of how much TV we have been watching. Now we are getting alternative activities going such as playing games, reading to each other, and generally being more active.

Terry is reading much better and with more expression. He's able to copy notes at the same speed as the rest of his class. He enjoys school so much more and feels better about himself. He and his dad and I are very pleased with his improvement and would like to thank Helen, Mary, and all of our friends who helped to steer us their way.

If you would like to communicate with Options, please feel free to email - options@mtco.com.

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