

Let's Talk ABOUT...

Many children have problems learning. For children with a variety of medical conditions that affect the brain functioning, this may be a “nonverbal learning disorder.” Children with a nonverbal learning disorder may be able to sound out words, spell, and learn facts, but have problems understanding what they read and problems with math. They may also have problems with various visuospatial and visual motor skills as well as problems with social skills. These are all explained below.

As a parent or teacher, you can track your child's learning progress and help your child. Learning issues are different in different children. Your child may have learning issues different from those mentioned here.

What are some of the learning issues my child might have?

Some common learning issues are explained below.

- **Visuospatial skills.** Visuospatial skills are being able to recognize and organize information when you see something and then interpret what you see. Examples include reading, recognizing shapes, finding objects in a picture, and following a map.
- **Visual motor skills.** A visual motor skill is a visuospatial skill with movement. Examples of visual motor skills include writing, typing, copying designs with pencil and paper, putting puzzles together, and cutting with scissors. In school, if your child has problems with these skills, he may struggle with math, interpreting graphs and maps, completing written work, and writing neatly.
- **Comprehension.** This is the ability to understand words. Your child may be good at sounding out words but have a hard time understanding words when reads or listens. Examples may be

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trouble understanding a story that she reads or understanding spoken instructions.

- **Attention.** This is the ability to pay attention. This is not the same as hyperactivity. An example is having a hard time paying attention. You should know that sometimes a child can pay attention to an interesting activity for a long time, and still have trouble with attention. When he doesn't pay attention, it doesn't mean that he's not motivated. He just may not be able to pay attention at those times.
- **Memory.** This is remembering something in the past. Your child may have a hard time remembering visual information (things he saw), large amounts of verbal information (things he heard), or math facts. He may also have trouble being quick and accurate in math. Even if he has a memory problem, he may remember how to spell words well and have a good knowledge of common facts and words.
- **Organization.** This is being organized. An example, in an older child, would be having a hard time keeping books, materials, and assignments organized.
- **Problem-Solving and Reasoning.** This is the ability to solve problems and think about how to solve a problem. Your child may not pick up on implied meanings or be able to reason abstractly. This includes social problem solving, math reasoning, and cause-effect reasoning. For example, it may be hard for your child to finish setting the table, follow your instructions, or understand why a joke is funny.
- **Social Skills.** This is the way a person acts with other people. Your child may misinterpret or ignore body language. For example, he may stand too close to a person when speaking to them or not understand when another person signals that they want to end a conversation.

- **Academic Achievement.** This is how well a person does in school. For example, your child may struggle with math, handwriting, and understanding what he reads. As he gets older, he may have a problem writing papers, especially organizing the paper.

How can I find out more about my child's learning problems?

You may be able to find out more about your child's learning problems with a **neuropsychological** (ner-row-sigh-coe-LA-ji-cal) examination. For more information about this examination, call the Pediatric Behavioral Health Intake Coordinator at 801.662.7000.

If your child's learning issues are due to Spina Bifida, these handouts may be helpful:

- *Let's Talk About...Spina bifida and learning problems at home*
- *Let's Talk About...Spina bifida and educational programs*
- *Let's Talk About...Spina bifida and 504 plans*