



## **GLOSSARY of Terminology: Learning Differences** *from Educational Prescriptions for the Classroom*

**Auditory and visual processing**—Using the integrating information acquired separately or simultaneously through the ear and/or the eye, as in following a dictated passage in a text.

**Bypass strategies**—Kinds of behavior children develop to compensate for deficient or “missing” capacities needed to succeed on a given learning task.

**“Chunking”**—The organization of information into small, familiar units to facilitate memory and learning.

**Cloze exercises**—A technique used in assessing and teaching reading comprehension which omits words in a passage and ask the student to insert a word which will make the sentence make sense.

**Cognitive style**—The pattern of general abilities and behaviors that a person brings to a learning situation, thought to be generalizable across academic areas. The way a child learns. Cognitive style also refers to particular problem-solving approaches—e.g., “reflective” or “impulsive.”

**Cognitive task**—Any goal-directed activity which involves processing information and requires the conscious effort of the individual.

**Concrete manipulatives**—Materials used to represent and teach abstract concepts, as in the use of coins to teach arithmetic.

**Deficit**—An absence or underdevelopment of an age-appropriate skill or behavioral capacity. May or may not have an established physical cause.

**Deficits in the storage and retrieval of information**—Problems in one or more aspects of memory, such as memorizing or recalling. Such deficits may affect the information acquired.

**Developmental profile**—A summary of a child’s performance on a range of tasks designed to evaluate intellectual, social, and neurological levels. The child is compared to other children of the same age.

**Developmental weakness**—Below-average performance in cognitive or physiological growth area in comparison to other children of the same age.

**Directional configuration**—The vertical and/or horizontal arrangement of objects or symbols—such as letters or numbers. For example, the letters *b* and *d* are distinguished by their left-to-right directional configuration.

**Dysdiadochokinesis**—Excessive movement of the arms or legs while a student performs rotational movements of the wrist, resulting from a lack of control over some muscle groups. Associated with neurological dysfunction in older children.

**Expressive language**—Oral or written language whose purpose is communication.

**Fine-motor**—Of or relating to the coordinated movement of the smaller muscles involved in precise movements, especially those in the hand. Writing is an example of fine-motor skill.

**Global language difficulties**—Concurrent problems in multiple areas of language, such as comprehension, production, and usage.

**Gross-motor**—Of or relating to the coordinated movements of the larger muscles of the body, such as those involved in walking, sitting, or reaching.

**Impulsive style**—Tending to respond quickly or suddenly during learning tasks, without considering the meaning of the response or possible alternative responses.

**Kinesthetic cues**—Bodily movements, posture, and muscular contractions which provide information.

**Language-experience approach**—The teaching of reading by basing instruction on the student’s life experiences, which the teacher transcribes and uses as curricular content.

**Language processing difficulties**—Problems with reading comprehension or written or spoken work.

**Metalinguistic awareness**—Knowledge of the ways in which the meaning or function of a word changes, depending on the context, the intent of the speaker, etc.

**Modality**—The sensory pathway through which information is taken in by the individual in a given learning situation. Examples are the visual and auditory modalities.

**Mnemonic strategies**—Methods of improving learning and recall by relating new material to more familiar (or easily accessed) knowledge, such as using a song to teach the alphabet or remembering the spelling of a word by its shape.

**Motor planning**—The deliberate, anticipatory coordination of simple motor acts to facilitate more complex actions, such as must occur during handwriting.

**Motor sequential patterns**—Chains of successive movements properly coordinated to achieve a result, such as writing letters or tying shoelaces. With repeated practice these patterns normally require less conscious control.

**Multisensory approaches**—Teaching methods which employ the simultaneous stimulation of several sensory modalities when presenting material to be learned. An example is learning a new word by hearing, seeing, touching, drawing, and saying it.

**Neurodevelopmental examination**—A comprehensive assessment of a child's strengths and weaknesses in a variety of perceptual, motor, and neurological areas, as compared to other children of the same age. The result of such an examination contributes to the developmental profile.

**Oral expressive language**—Spoken language produced for communication with others.

**Perceptual**—Having to do with any of the processes by which information taken in through the senses is interpreted or organized.

**Phonetic decoding strategies**—Techniques for identifying a written word by breaking it into sound units (phonemes) which are then blending together. Their

approach depends upon knowledge of what sounds are made by particular letters and groups of letters.

**Pronation/Supination**—Rapid alternating hand movements in which the palms are rotated up and down and back. Used as an indicator of neurological maturity and at one time considered a predictor of learning disabilities.

**Rapid automatized writing**—Writing so quickly and skillfully that letters are formed with little conscious planning by the student. A retrieval of visual-motor programs for letter formation.

**Rapid retrieval motor memory**—The process of efficient recall of kinesthetic and tactile information while executing a complex motor task. For example the automatized actions of forming letters during expository writing, where these are performed without conscious monitoring by the individual.

**Receptive language**—Language communicated by others in writing or speech and received by an individual. It may thus involve either reading or listening skills.

**Recognition memory**—The ability to recognize information acquired previously; memory triggered by later presentation of the original stimulus.

**Resynthesis**—The organization of sound units into a meaningful word following phonetic decoding during reading and blending.

**Retrieval memory**—Memory which does not depend on representation of the original stimulus for recall; stage in memory processing where information is recalled from storage.

**Right-left orientation**—The way written symbols (numbers, letters) are organized in the horizontal or “right-left” dimension. The letters *b* and *d* are distinguished by their right-left orientation.

**Self-monitoring**—The active evaluation of one's cognitive and behavioral responses during academic or cognitive tasks, especially the detection of errors.

**Sensory processing inefficiency**—Difficulty with the initial encoding of environmental stimuli; the confusion of similar letters is an example of such problems.

**Sequenced readers**—Texts which are written and presented in order of increasing complexity along such dimensions as phonics, vocabulary, and syntax.

**Sequencing deficits**—Problems with the processing of information presented in a specified order (through time), leading to a disruption of this patterning in the student.

**Sequential or successive information**—Information organized by its temporal (through time) order of presentation. Reading words by a strictly phonetic approach involves treating the written word as sequential information.

**Sequential processing**—The manipulation of information presented temporally, such as occurs when comprehending the meaning of a sentence or computing novel arithmetic problems.

**Spatial organization**—The ability to perceive and make use of the dimensions of relative position, shape, and size in information presented visually.

**Spatial orientation**—The inherent physical relationships in information presented visually, of which the dimensions of relative position, shape, and size are representative.

**Strategizing**—The creation and use of efficient, appropriate approaches to manipulating information and solving problems. Mnemonic devices are one example of strategizing to enhance learning.

**Structured auditory environment**—Situation in which auditory stimulation is restricted to that which is appropriate for learning, and distracting stimuli are minimized.

**Symbolic language**—Print (letters, words) and sign language; language represented by symbols which correspond to meaningful units. Print and sign language are examples of symbolic media for communication.

**Tactile aids**—Things which can be manipulated in order to stimulate the sense of touch to aid in the understanding of abstract concepts. For example, wooden letters or numbers that the student learns by “feel.” Especially useful for students who experience difficulty with auditory or visual processing or their integration.

**Template lines**—Lines made by placing tape adjacent to the top and bottom borders of each line on a sheet of ruled paper, which delimits the “writing space.” A handwriting aid.

**Temporal-sequential processing**—Ability to understand and/or memorize information that is presented in a specific order or sequence.

**Vestibular**—Of or relating to the sensory system involved with the detection of bodily motion and balance; involves structures in the ear and in the brain.

**Vigilance-matching task**—Task which requires students to differentiate or to match visual details which differ in subtle ways (e.g., b/d, p/q).

**Visual processing**—Any of the functions by which information taken in through the eye is manipulated and transformed.

**Visual perception**—The identification and interpretation of sensory stimuli received by the eye.

**Visual-motor integration**—The coordination of visual information with the movements of body parts.

**Visual-fine-motor integration**—The coordination of visual information with the movements of the small muscles of the hand, such as occurs during handwriting.

**Visual-spatial organization**—The arrangement of objects or symbols in space, in isolation, and in relation to others.

**Written expressive language tasks**—Tasks which assess an individual’s ability to produce written language skillfully.

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*Educational Prescriptions for the Classroom for Students with Learning Problems*, available from Educators Publishing Service.