

April 2010
Volume 2, Issue 2

Éirim News

Resource and information for schools and individuals interested in assessment & special needs

A quick note:

It has been a busy few months for Éirim. We ran the first course leading to the British Psychological Society's Certificate in Educational Testing in February (which was a huge success) and have been busy carrying out assessment requests for CAO & DARE application forms as well as plenty of assessments under the NEPS/SCPA scheme.

In this issue we have articles on hearing loss in the classroom, how attention difficulties can be exacerbated by classroom organizations and a computer programme based on neuroscientific research used to enhance learning.

As always we are interested to hear your comments and feedback. Also if you are interested in posting an article in the newsletter we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please e-mail us your input to news@eirim.ie

Rebecca James
Director

Educational Testing course is great success!!

There was great feedback from Éirim's 4 day intensive course leading to **The Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (Level A)**. Those enrolled on the course travelled from near and far including the UK, Northern Ireland, France and the four corners of Ireland.

The course took place from the 16th - 19th February in Bewley's, Dublin. The lead presenter on the course was Senior Clinical and Educational Psychologist, Mr. Trevor James. All those on the course agreed that Trevor was a superb presenter - he made the material intelligible, interesting and exciting (this is no mean feat since there were some pretty difficult pieces on the course!) and no question proved too big or small for him. Thank you.

The course days were intensive and the students worked hard. A number of assignments both individual and group were completed daily and homework was also a regular feature. Nonetheless, there were plenty of tea and coffee breaks as well as a hearty lunch to keep energy levels high. The format and small numbers taken on the course gave it a relaxed atmosphere, allowed plenty of time for question and answer sessions and enabled plenty of individual attention to be given. All in all, everyone left the 4 days tired but very happy and much more confident and competent in their ability to work with educational tests.

What they said.....

"This makes things that have read about so much clearer" -
B. Dorrity

"GO! But be prepared to work" -
R. Self

"Worth it to understand why you do tests and how to draw conclusions from scores" -
Anon

"Excellent - you learned a lot in a supportive atmosphere"-
J. McCabe

"Intense week - but so enjoyable and worthwhile. A lot learned"-
B. O'Connor

The Certificate is awarded by the **British Psychological Society**. The course is almost all about psychometric testing - how to pick different tests, what to beware of, how to interpret test results, statistical concepts used in testing e.g. standard scores, reliability, validity etc., practice administering tests and report writing. It is of particular interest to anyone using educational tests or those having to interpret psychological reports. It is the only non-psychological professional qualification available in educational testing.

For those in the UK and N. Ireland - once the CCET course has been completed a follow on online course can be done in Access Arrangements (AAC). The combination of the CCET and the AAC leads to the Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements (CPT3A). This Certificate is recognised by the Joint Council for Qualifications.

Next course: 9th -12th August 2010
Bewley's Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Contact us for more information



Journal Reviews:

In this series we will review some recent research articles of interest to teachers

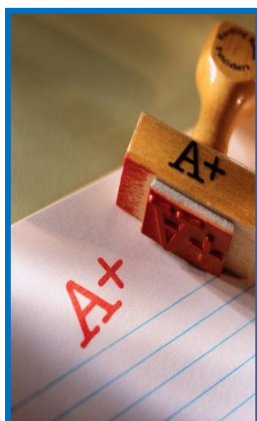
Attention Difficulties....What Attention Difficulties?



“Attention problems at school may result from classroom factors such as poor organization and a high concentration of disruptive classmates”



“we need to annually re-evaluate children diagnosed with attention disorders such as ADHD”



Many elementary-aged children with clinically elevated attention problems in one grade no longer demonstrate these problems the following year in their new classroom, according to a study led by researchers at Duke University.

The findings underscore the importance of annually re-evaluating children diagnosed with attention disorders such as ADHD to avoid treating them for problems at school that may no longer be evident, said David Rabiner, lead author of the study.

The research looked at three independent samples of primary school children. Two samples - 27 first-graders and 24 fourth-graders, respectively -- consisted of children rated as highly inattentive by their teacher but who did not have a formal ADHD diagnosis. The third sample consisted of 28 children who had been diagnosed with ADHD.

In each sample, teacher ratings of inattentive symptoms were completed in successive years - roughly 12 to 14 months apart -- so that the stability of clinically elevated ratings from one grade to the next could be examined.

In all three samples, clinically elevated ratings persisted for less than 50 percent of children, while between 25 percent and 50 percent had ratings that declined to within the normal range. Especially striking was that roughly 30 percent of children reported as showing at least six teacher-rated inattentive symptoms during one year were rated with no symptoms the following year. These declines could not be attributed to children beginning medication treatment,

according to the report.

The authors said the study was not designed to determine why teacher reports of problems with attention decline substantially for many children, but rather to examine the stability of clinically elevated inattentive symptoms at school from one year to the next.

One possibility the authors suggested for the change in symptoms was that attention problems at school may result from classroom factors such as poor organization and a high concentration of disruptive classmates, rather than reflecting an enduring attribute of the child. If children enter a better-organized classroom the following year, they are able to stay more focused and attentive, researchers said.

“ADHD is generally regarded as a chronic condition and it certainly persists over the long term for many children,” Rabiner said. “However, our findings highlight that many children with significant attention difficulties during one grade do not show these problems at school the following year, even children who have been carefully diagnosed with ADHD.”

Authors of the study stressed that their findings in no way imply that significant attention problems in children are simply “in the eye of the beholder” or that ADHD is not a real disorder. However, they emphasized that if children diagnosed with ADHD are not re-evaluated each year, some may continue to be diagnosed with a condition that no longer applies and receive medication treatment for problems at school that are no longer evident.

Useful Websites:

If you have found any websites particular useful please e-mail them to us and we would be delighted to share it with others in the next newsletter.

**All of these websites and more can be found on our website www.eirim.ie under the useful links section

- <http://www.teachers.tv/resource> good resource. Shows video clips to reinforce topics across all subject areas in Primary and Secondary. Resource could be used as an additional teaching tool for all students but especially those that are more visual learners' e.g. dyslexic students.
- www.babybumblebee.com American company offering learning tools for Autistic or PDD pre -school children.

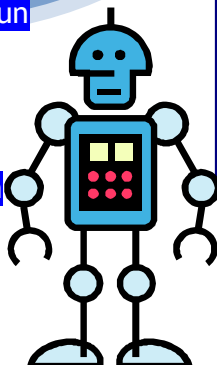
Did you know:

More than 300,000 iPads were sold on April 3rd in American Apple Stores!!

Need an excuse to buy one?.....The iPad App Store is stocked with more than 150,000 downloadable programs, including some that might catch educators' attention. E.g. the periodic table with stunning graphics of each element or a number of different language learning programme.

Cool Science

Looking for something new and fun to do with your science class? A great Irish website focusing on science and robotic teaching. In their own words they "provide innovation and invention through making" (robots). Visit www.spiderfish.ie

**Notes for your Diary**

- 32nd Annual Conference of International School Psychology Association (ISPA)
20th -24th July Trinity College, Dublin

The conference is an opportunity for teachers, psychologists and other interested parties to meet, interact and exchange professional information. Last year it was held in Malta. The conference theme is "making life better for all children". It will cover inclusion, pro-social behaviour, working together etc.

For more information visit www.ispaweb.org

- Training in Educational assessment
9th -12th August – Bewley's Hotel, Dublin 4

Gain a professional Certificate in Educational Testing, awarded by the British Psychological Society. 4 day intensive course run by Éirim.

Contact training@eirim.ie or ph: (01) 6674174



Feature

Fast ForWord: Brain Train Programme by J. Kerins

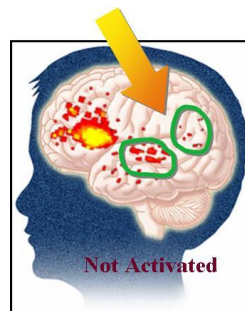


Fast ForWord is a computer based neuroscience program that builds the brain's learning capacity . . . making learning easier and faster. It builds both cognitive skills and fundamental Reading & Language skills. Fast ForWord can be used with all learners or it may be particularly useful for those with dyslexia or those struggling to read.

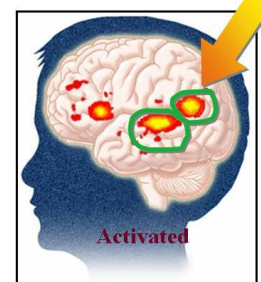
Like two sides of a coin, there are two sides to the learning process: Brain Fitness on one side and Teaching & Content on the other. Both are critical components of a solid foundation for learning success.

The challenge for struggling learners in our schools today is not solved by just better content but also by improving the underlying cognitive skills that build brain capacity (**Memory, Attention, Processing Rate and Sequencing**). Cumulative breakthroughs in neuroscience research reveal that the human brain can continue to develop and improve the efficiency of its processing throughout life. This is called brain plasticity, the ability of the brain to change itself.

Fast ForWord is a computer based neuroscience programme that automates and strengthens the brain the same way a fit athlete builds muscle memory, through repetition. Research carried out by Stanford University showed increases in brain activity after using Fast ForWord.



Struggling Reader



Good Reader

These images are adapted from the research study completed by Stanford University on improved brain activation after use of FastForWord Language [Temple.E.etal. (2003) Proc.Natl.AcadSci USA 100.2860-5]. The complete study can be found at www.scilearn.com

The Fast ForWord programme requires the student to complete hundreds of increasingly more difficult exercises in quick succession each day. Other features include:

- Intensive - 5 days/week (until completion)
- Continually adapts to each individual student's learning needs
- Integrates learning with fun, interactive computer games
- Quick, lasting learning gains
- Recommended by speech and language therapists, education psychologists, teachers, medical practitioners, parents, university researchers, neuroscientists, and audiologists

The reading and language skills strengthened by Fast ForWord include:



“The human brain can continue to develop and improve”



Feature:**Cont: Fast ForWord: Brain Train Programme by J. Kerins**

- Phonemic awareness
- Sound-letter association
- Decoding
- Vocabulary
- Spelling
- Syntax
- Comprehension
- Grammatical structures
- Passage comprehension
- Reading fluency

Fast ForWord is just one of neuron learning's computer based patented products, they also deliver unique, technology training and implementation strategies that build the enduring brain fitness and processing efficiency required for academic, career, and lifelong success.

**TESTIMONIAL**

"Many thanks for all your support both technical - with the Apple Mac, and didactic with the programme. Jill has now done 74% of Reading 3 and I think as a teacher and parent it is a fantastic programme. The grammar, language extension and comprehension is amazing and I am going to recommend to my headmaster that the Year 5 children all complete this. It is much more effective than many grammar lessons and comprehension lessons. I am very impressed."

Kate, Parent, Summer 2009

If you would like a complementary extract from Norman Doidge's book "The Brain That Changes Itself" please contact neuron learning .



John Kerins is a director of Neuron Learning www.neuron.ie a company that supplies learning intervention software schools and clinicians. He can be contacted by email john@neuron.ie or by fax 021 494 3950 or by phone 021 455 4449

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

Gain a professional certificate in Psycho- Educational Testing

Awarded by the British Psychological Society

9th – 12th August 2010

Bewley's Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Book Now: Call (01) 6674174 or visit www.eirim.ie



Feature:

Mild Hearing Loss



“At least one in five schoolchildren will have mild hearing loss”



“In many classrooms you may need to speak at the decibel level of a jet engine taking off”

Most teachers are surprised to learn that at least one in five schoolchildren will have a mild hearing loss (usually through glue ear) at some point during their school career. For some children this persists for a considerable time but it often fluctuates and hearing is fine one day but poor the following day. Indeed it is very likely that one or two children in your class have a mild hearing loss at the moment. Such fluctuating losses can be frustrating for the student and can have a serious effect on learning. A student with even a very mild hearing loss could be missing more than 25% of classroom instruction. Teachers need to be aware of the signs of hearing loss. The following table indicates some typical signs that might alert a teacher to the possibility of a hearing loss although many of these can also be signs of other conditions.

- History of ear infections
- Often absent with colds or is a mouth breather
- Complains of earache or fullness in the ears
- Is more alert when close to the teacher
- Watches speaker’s face for cues and has difficulty listening when there are no visual cues - e.g. a tape.
- Speech is limited in structure or vocabulary and speech sounds are immature
- Misunderstands - particularly if a sequence of spoken

instructions is given.

- Speech is soft or fuzzy
- Inattentive or restless, but more responsive in quiet conditions or small groups.
- Little interest in following a story, particularly in noisy conditions.
- May not turn when called by name unless visible signals are given
- Attention span shortens periodically or the child tires more quickly than usual.
- Discrepancy between verbal and practical skills.
- Particular difficulties in verbally related skills such as reading- particularly in establishing sound symbol relationships, rhymes, sound blends.
- Periodically seems unmotivated or short of energy.

Children with mild hearing losses can usually hear perfectly adequately in a quiet environment but most classrooms are far from being quiet! It is recommended that the speech should be at least 10 times the level of background noise for children with any kind of hearing impairment. In many classrooms that could mean speech needing to be at the decibel level of a jet engine taking off.

Simple classroom modifications to reduce background noise can help a lot and will benefit all children.

- installing carpet;

Feature:**Mild Hearing Loss**

- putting rubber tips or tennis balls on desk/table/chair legs;
- installing curtains;
- installing acoustic ceiling tiles;
- Maintaining ventilation systems, doors, lighting, and windows.
- Keeping the child away from areas of highest noise - e.g. doorways

Teachers also need to be aware that children with a hearing loss may need to see their face when they are talking. The front of the class is not necessarily the best place for a child with a mild hearing loss to sit. This solution assumes that the teacher is going to stay in front of the child. All the time but how many teachers do you know who teach that way? In addition the child is not in a good position to see what others in the class are saying when there is a group discussion. The side of the class is often the best position but the child will usually be the best judge.

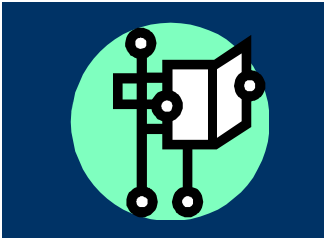
As well as the difficulties that mild hearing loss creates in the school going child, recurring middle ear infections in the preschool child can have a detrimental effect on language and literacy skill development during school years. The peak incidence of middle ear infection (otitis media) occurs when children are between 6 and 18

months, which is the most critical period of language development, when the infant is tuning in to the speech sounds of their language. Fluctuating hearing loss during the early years of life presents the child with an intermittent speech signal that is difficult to process. Recent research has shown that if a child experiences middle ear infections (otitis) during the crucial first years of life, it may have long-term effects on subsequent language and literacy development. There was a general tendency for children with a history of otitis to achieve lower scores on phonological awareness skills of alliteration, rhyme and non-word reading, semantic skills of expressive vocabulary and word definitions and reading. Extensive research has indicated that phonological awareness is a necessary skill children need to begin reading.



“Ear infections in pre-school children can have a detrimental effect on language and literacy development”





Quote Corner

"Old age is compulsory, wisdom is optional." *-Anon*

Éirim
65 Bath Avenue
Sandymount
Dublin 4

Phone:
01 6674174

Fax:
01 6674174

E-Mail:
info@eirim.ie

Sign up to the newsletter online at
www.eirim.ie

About Our Company.....

Éirim: The National Assessment Agency Ltd conducts educational assessments for both private individuals, educational institutions, SCPA/NEPS and the HSE. All of our reports are accepted by NEPS and can be utilized to apply for resource hours/exemptions/SNA's etc.

Éirim is also running online & intensive training courses leading to the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing. This course has been verified by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.eirim.ie

Éirim:
65 Bath Avenue,
Sandymount,
Dublin 4.

