

Centre for Community Child Health

# Assessment of Learning Difficulties Options for support

Associate Professor Jill Sewell AM FRACP  
Centre for Community Child Health RCH Melbourne

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# Options for support

- Clear and simple paediatric report
- Management plan - parents, teachers
- Address specific ND problems
- Role of remedial programs, tuition
- Assistive technology
- Prevention
- Advocacy

# Paediatric Report

- Clear simple language
- Paint a picture of child, **STRENGTHS**
- Acknowledge contribution of school
- List issues and actions
- Provide info about development and effects on learning
- Address comorbidities
- Don't tell teachers how to teach

# Management of learning difficulties

- Description of strengths and weaknesses
- Interpret developmental findings so can plan educational strategies eg language delay, phonological awareness, auditory and visual sequencing, working memory, visual motor integration, attention
- Diagnosis where may be eligible for special resources
- Interpret biomedical findings

# Management cont'd

- Investigations as required eg audiology, genetics
- Specific management of comorbidities eg ADHD and medication
- Discuss complementary therapies
- Provide parent and teacher information handouts
- Learn education system resources
- Learn community resources eg remedial programs, tuition
- Assistive technologies

# Simple advice for classroom

Assume phonological awarenesss, working memory, organisational problems

- Explicit teaching phonological awareness
- Clear simple repeated instructions
- Multimodal input ie tell, show, sensory
- Multimodal output ie talk, scribe, tape, construct
- Assistive technology
- Competence, confidence, self esteem

# Accommodations reading difficulties

- Access to recorded material
- Assistive technology, computers and print to speech software
- Additional time for exams – secondary students

# Encourage children with LD

- Aim for high interest material
- Aim for child's level of understanding
- Praise effort and small gains
- Avoid negative comments
- Develop other areas of competence eg sport, art, music
- Feelings of competence and self esteem will drive further learning



# Development of phonological awareness



# Teaching strategies for reading disability/phonological awareness

- Best practice early years teaching ie phonemic awareness, phonics, alphabetic meaning, meaning of text – reduce base rates of LDs to 5%
- Evidence based intervention small groups
- Explicit instruction for reading disability – phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension
- Early, intensive, sufficient duration

# Classroom support – auditory sequencing (STAM)

- Alert child to listen
- Short simple sentences, check child understands
- Break information down
- Visual approach, whole word recognition
- Revision and repetition
- Set clear goals

# Classroom support – visual sequencing

- Multi modal approach
- Review and repetition
- Organise words by chunking
- Learn alphabet and number sequences through rote memory, games, singing
- Picture and visual cues, practical examples
- Use handouts, not copy from board

# Classroom support - poor working memory



- Be aware of warning signs
- Monitor the child
- Reduce amount of material to be stored
- Reduce difficulty of processing
- Repeat important information
- Encourage use of memory aids
- Help child to use strategies

Susan Gathercole [info@learning-works.org.uk](mailto:info@learning-works.org.uk)

# Teaching strategies working memory

- Help child to remember: brief instructions, repeat, break tasks down, remind in phases, get child to repeat
- Reduce processing demands: reduce linguistic complexity of sentences, simplify syntax, reduce length
- Help in loss of place: break tasks down, provide memory aids, increase access to useful spellings
- Teach strategies: ask for information, train in memory aids, encourage to continue

# Classroom support - visual-spatial organisation

- Teach organisation skills
- Use scaffolding for paper work
- Avoid copying from board
- Colour code components of work
- Avoid open ended tasks

# Classroom support – attentional difficulties

- Seat child near role models, buddy
- Seat child away from distractions
- Routines important
- Allow physical breaks, give responsible task
- Computer holds attention well
- Limit open choices, limit options



# Role of remedial tuition

- Can be helpful
- Careful not to overload child
- Best in partnership with school
- Explicit goals, strategies for specific problems
- Take a break – learn to use new strategies in classroom

# Assistive technologies

- Children with LDs learn better with support of technology
- Provides a multisensory diverse pathway of learning
- Supported by UNESCO – mobile learning
- Software and apps

# Types of programs

- Text help read and write [www.texthelp.com](http://www.texthelp.com)

Printed and spoken text available, listen to material and follow text on screen

- Programs using phonological awareness principles
- Speech recognition software
- Text to speech software
- Spell Checkers
- Mind Maps

# Partnership school and parents

- Shared understanding of LD
- Regular meeting to set, monitor goals
- Communication strategies eg daily/weekly message book, email
- Homework strategies
- Shared approach to stage of curriculum

# Prevention, early intervention

- Early childhood environment
- Language development
- Learning through play
- Reading to young children

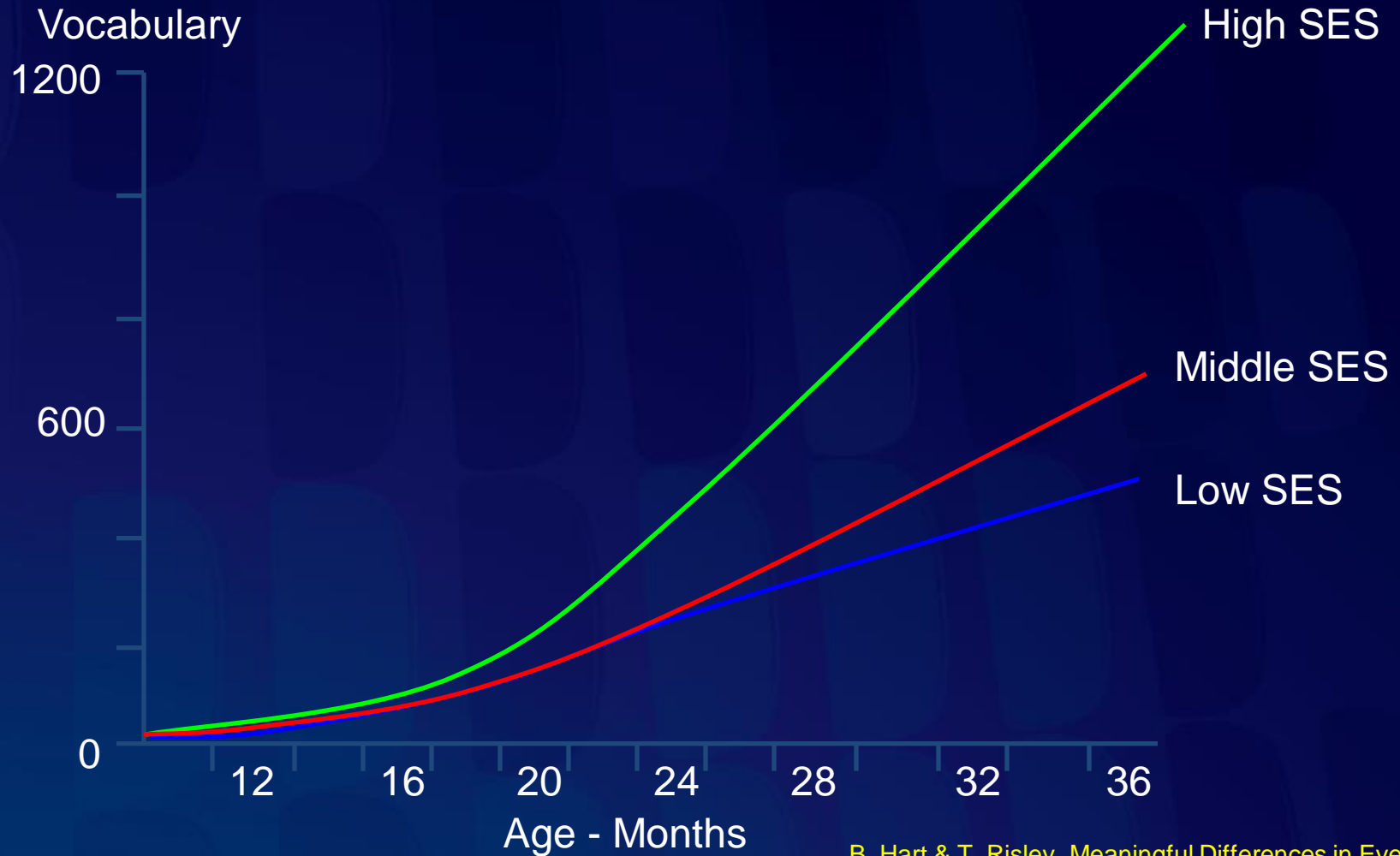
# Metaphor – weaving skills

- Learning is about weaving skills together
- Skill ropes made of individual strands eg people, emotional, thinking skills
- Weave together in different ways to use for different things
- Children should develop strong individual strands, need practice and opportunities to weave and reweave into different ropes for different tasks

# Metaphor – Resilience scale

- Child development is like a scale
- Scale is tipped with positive and negative influences
- Community goal is for children to be tipped to the positive side – stack to the positive side, unload from the negative side
- Help develop coping skills – push the balancing point to one side, make it harder to tip negative = resilience

# Barriers to educational achievement emerge at a very young age



B. Hart & T. Risley, [Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children, 1995](#)



# Advocacy

- NECIC
- Malaysian Paediatric Association
- IPA, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO
- Professional advocacy for training and CME in developmental paediatrics
- Political advocacy
  - child rights perspective
  - social capital perspective