


The Building Blocks of Learning



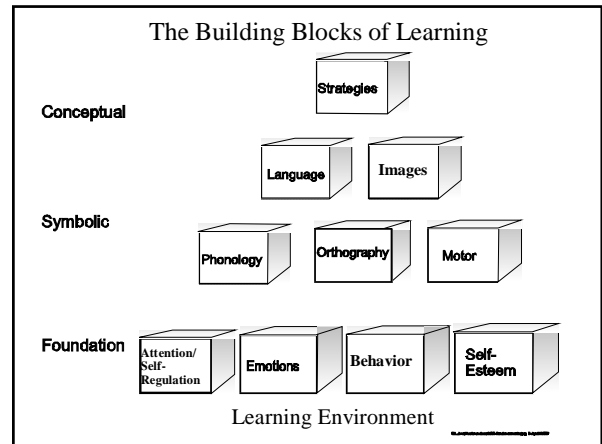
An Informal Assessment for Students with Learning and Behavioral Challenges

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## The Building Blocks

**Conceptual Blocks:** Thinking with language, images, and strategies

**Symbolic Blocks:** Processing information through hearing, seeing, and moving

**Foundation Blocks:** Support systems for all learning


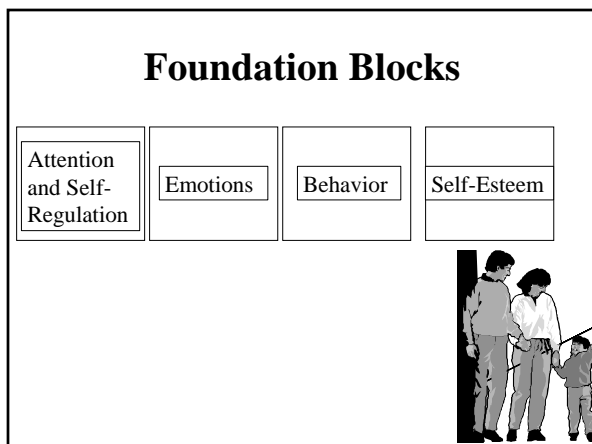
Environment

Environment: Home and School

Amount of structure

Amount of support

Learner style/Teacher style

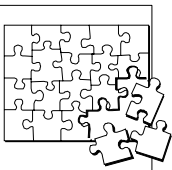



## Attention/Self-Regulation

Excessive activity

Inattentive

Impulsive



## Emotions

Changes mood quickly  
Seems sad or depressed  
Seems bored  
Seems tired

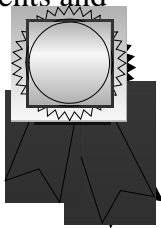


## Behavior

Behaves unpredictably  
Has difficulty getting along with peers  
Seems argumentative  
Bothers others

## Self-Esteem

Has low opinion of self  
Makes negative self statements and criticizes others  
Dislikes school  
Is unaware of own talents



“It is the matter of the highest importance to recognise the cause and the true nature of this difficulty (**dyslexia**) in learning to read which is experienced by these children, otherwise they may be harshly treated as imbeciles or incorrigibles, and either neglected or punished for a defect for which they are in no way responsible.”

**-James Hinshelwood**  
(1898-1914, Glasgow Eye Infirmary)

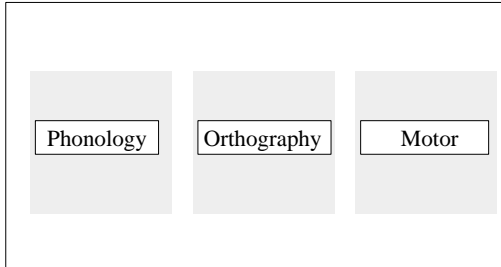
## Foundation Blocks: Accommodations

Adjust the work to the child's developmental level  
Ensure success on classroom tasks  
Modify the amount of work based on attentional capacities  
Surround the student with good role models  
Seat the student near the front of the class  
Modify the amount of homework

## Foundation Blocks: Instruction

Select specific types of teachers  
Select specific types of classrooms  
Provide opportunities for experiential learning  
Grade performance based on personal accomplishment not peer comparisons

## Symbolic Blocks: Processing Skills



## Symbolic Blocks

Difficulty memorizing

Difficulties with basic skills  
(decoding, encoding, calculating,  
and/or handwriting)

Delayed automaticity



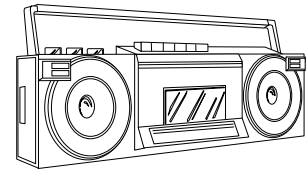
## Early Risk Factors

1. Late speech development.
2. Difficulty pronouncing speech sounds.
3. Limited interest in print.
4. Family history of learning and/or attentional problems



## Phonological Awareness

The ability to hear, manipulate, and think about the individual sounds in words



## Sequence of Skill Development

- Discriminating rhymes
- Producing rhymes
- Isolating initial and final sounds
- Blending sounds
- Segmenting sounds
- Manipulating sounds (e.g., deleting, substituting, transposing)








## A phoneme...

- is the basic building block of speech
- is a single speech sound that changes the meaning of a word
- helps us distinguish one word from another

Pin or pen?

### *How many phonemes do you hear in...?*

- pig** 
- rabbit** 
- rooster** 
- sheep** 
- box** 

### Research Results

Phonemic awareness...

is highly related to reading achievement and causes reading failure

Phonemic awareness training...

reduces reading failure

provides long lasting benefits

### Orthographic Awareness

Rapid and accurate formation of letter images, letter strings, or word images in memory



### Poor Orthographic Processing

Reverses letter and numbers

Has trouble copying

Has trouble remembering sight words

Confuses low-image words (e.g., of and for)

Has difficulty learning how to form letters

Confuses similar-looking letters and words

Spells phonetically and violates rules of

English spelling

Has a slow reading rate



In describing an intelligent 14-year old boy:

“He seems to have no power of preserving and storing up the visual impression produced by words - hence the words, though seen, have no significance for him. His visual memory for words is defective or absent; which is equivalent to saying that he is what Kussmaul has termed “word blind.” I may add that the boy is bright and of average intelligence in conversation...The schoolmaster who has taught him for some years says that he would be the smartest lad in the school if the instruction were entirely oral.” (p. 94).

-Pringle Morgan (1896)

### Dyslexia

a problem with rapid word identification



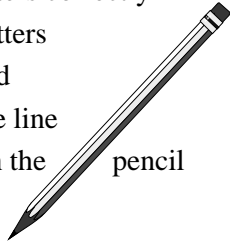
caused by poor phonological and/or orthographical awareness

treatment requires specialized methods and accommodations

## Motor

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- Difficulty forming letters correctly
- Inconsistent size of letters
- Slow production speed
- Trouble staying on the line
- Too much pressure on the pencil



## Symbolic Blocks: Accommodations

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- Reduce amount of material
- Provide additional time
- Do not penalize for poor spelling or handwriting
- Use partner reading/taped books
- Incorporate technology

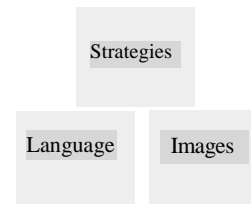


## Symbolic Blocks: Instruction

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Direct instruction (task analysis)  
Systematic and repetitive  
Phonological awareness to phonics  
Mastery of high frequency words  
Tracing techniques  
Procedures for increasing rate

## Conceptual Blocks: Thinking Abilities



## Conceptual Blocks

Weaknesses in language and reasoning

Difficulties with application tasks  
(reading comprehension, written  
expression, and/or math problem  
solving)

Limited use of strategies



## Language Components

**Phonology:** sounds units

**Morphology:** meaning units

**Syntax:** grammar, word order

**Semantics:** word meanings

**Pragmatics:** social aspects

## Language

Difficulties in understanding and expressing language in speaking or writing

Limited vocabulary



Limited background knowledge

## Oral Language

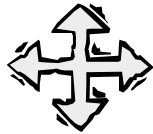
Difficulties with:

Syntax  
Morphology  
Vocabulary  
Ideation  
Cohesion



## Images

Difficulties with directionality



Difficulties with spatial tasks

Difficulties creating mental images

## Strategies

Passive style

Difficulty planning

Poor retention and transfer of concepts

Difficulty with tasks involving abstract reasoning



## Conceptual Blocks: Accommodations

Adjust the difficulty level

Use heterogeneous grouping

Modify and paraphrase instructions

Provide a “study buddy”

## Thinking Blocks: Instruction

Progress from concrete to abstract

Use modeling and think-alouds

Encourage retellings and paraphrasing

Preteach concepts and vocabulary

Provide graphic organizers

Provide study questions and guides