Identifying and Supporting Highly Able Children with Multiple Exceptionalities

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Session Outline

- Types of DME
- Case studies
- Useful identification
- Meeting needs

What do you understand by Multiple Exceptionalities?

High ability and …

… mobility / sensory impairments
… learning difficulties
… autism / Asperger Syndrome
… AD/HD
… social / behavioural difficulties
… cognitive impairment
… cultural disadvantage

Issues of inclusion

NAGC Definitions

- NAGC: three types of pupils with double exceptionality whose needs are not always fully recognised:

  a) ability is recognised, but learning difficulty is not.
  - These pupils compensate through their ability and the problems remain hidden.
  - As they grow older their learning difficulties create an interesting discrepancy between expected and actual performance. How can they be "gifted" if their handwriting is so poor? They seem not to be "trying hard enough" but they get by, just. They may see themselves as a "failure" for the rest of their lives.

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NAGC Definitions 2

b) Learning difficulty is recognised, but ability is not.
- Their disability appears more significant than their ability. The school is so concerned with their learning difficulties that their real abilities are never discovered.
- These pupils often fail miserably at school. The results can be low achievement, low self-esteem and disruptive behaviour, although they may be highly creative at home.

NAGC Definitions 3

- c) The pupil with average results, who uses his or her ability to disguise his or her learning difficulty, and has neither identified by the school.
  - They use energy to achieve "average" results. No-one recognises their ability or their learning difficulty. Their intellectual ability works overtime to compensate for problems caused by an undiagnosed learning difficulty.
  - Their true abilities only surface when a perceptive teacher gives them a task, which unlocks their talent.
  - This is the group which is most at risk of underachievement.
  - Many people only discover the real cause of their difficulties after they have left school.

Montgomery (2003:5)

'Those who have tried to bridge the gifted / special gap over the years have had difficulty obtaining resources or research funding because the topic falls between two stools and could be regarded as too small a population to merit concern.

Equally, from the intervention point of view, the most obvious sign of difficulty is the special need; the other, the giftedness, is regarded as a bonus but they can cancel each other out.'

Whose problem?

… 'the problem is the problem' and rather than being the problem, each person 'has a relationship with the problem'

(Freedman and Combs, 1996:47/66).

Therefore, the essential question in response to the appearance of learning difficulties is, "What's going on here?"

(Dudley-Marling, 2004:489)

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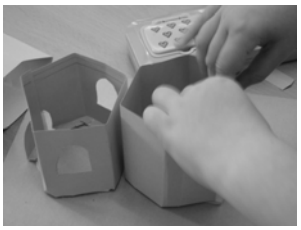
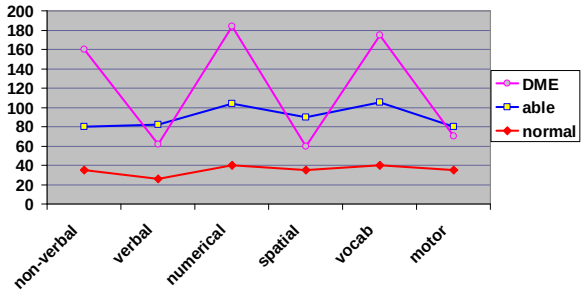
Difficulties with Identification – what do you think they are?

- Attitudes towards ability
- Conventional tests
- Specific problems
- Focus on literacy
- Cultural issues
- Expectations



Spiky Scores



Measures for identification

Tests:
school-based / psychological
formal / informal;
Checklists;
Referrals and nominations:
peers / family / outside helpers;
Observations;
Opportunities;
Learning styles (?);
Interests.

Intelligence Tests (IQ measures)

Wechsler Intelligence Scales: WAIS/WPPSI/WISC-R

Verbal Comprehension
Vocabulary /
Similarities /
Comprehension /
Information

Perceptual Reasoning
Block Design /
Picture Concepts /
Matrix Reasoning /
Picture Completion

More IQ

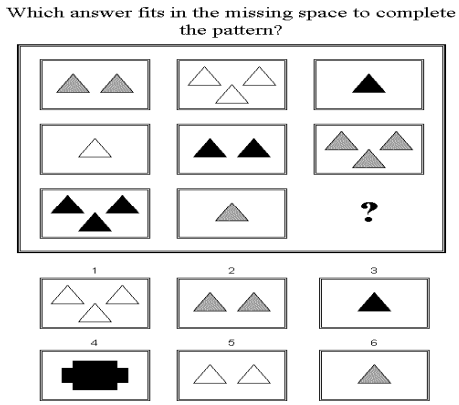
Working Memory

Digit Span / Letter-Number Sequencing / Mental Arithmetic / Symbol Search / Odd-one-out.

Processing Speed

Coding / Symbol Search / odd-one-out.

Raven's Matrices



Related Questions

How important are definitions of abilities?

How important are definitions of difficulties?

How can the achievement-potential gap be demonstrated?

What do we mean by inclusion?

What is ability?

How can we best help multiply exceptional children?

Useful Identification

Understanding of difficulties

A range of measures – beyond tests

Useful systematic, developmental evidence

A wide range of pedagogies and tasks

An eye for unusual abilities

A revolving door policy

An open mind

Flexibility

Inclusion

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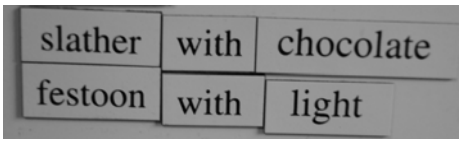
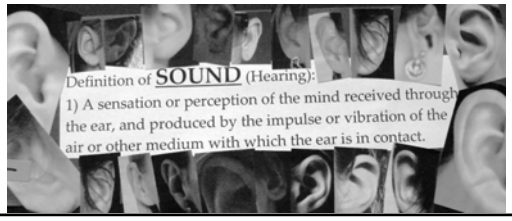
Case Study 1 – reading problem

- High oral ability – low reading/writing ability
- Reluctance to read in school
- Disparity between high level home reading and low level school reading
- *Ability Identification - through oral book reviewing / cartooning*



Case Study 2 – hearing impairment

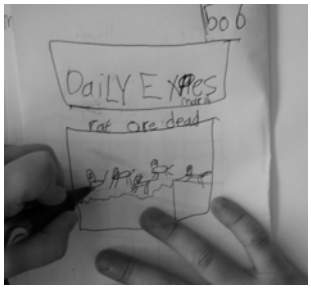
- Sudden change in behaviour
- Drop in vocabulary
- Glue ear diagnosed
- Grommets inserted
- *Ability Identification – personal interests*



Case Study 3 – Asperger Syndrome

- Social difficulties
- Disruptive behaviour
- OCD
- Failure to complete
- tasks
- *Ability Identification - through maths*

Good Practice …



- Recognises strengths and difficulties;
- Allows a range of approaches;
- Links with expertise;
- Facilitates expression of abilities;
- Challenges stereotype.

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