

Winter 2023-24 Extra Special Newsletter for Extra Special Kids

In this issue, you will find some ways that parents and caregivers can help children with disabilities.

Intellectual Disability adapted from the Center for Parent Information and Resources

Matthew's Story

Matt is 15 years old. Because Matt has an intellectual disability, he has been receiving special education services since elementary school. These services have helped him tremendously because they are designed to fit his special learning needs. Last year he started high school. He, his family, and the school should take an in-depth look at what he wants to do when secondary school is over and consider a variety of questions. Does he want more education? A job? Does he have the skills he needs to live on his own?

Answering these questions has helped Matt and the school plan for the future. He has always been interested in the outdoors, plants, and especially trees. He knows all the tree names and can recognize them by their leaves and bark. So this year he is learning about jobs like forestry, landscaping, and grounds maintenance. Next year he hopes to get a part-time job. He is learning to use public transportation so he will be able to get to and from the job. Having an intellectual disability makes it harder for Matt to learn new things. He needs things to be very concrete. But he is determined. He wants to work outside, maybe in the park service or a greenhouse, and he is getting ready!

What is an Intellectual Disability?

Intellectual disability is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communicating, taking care of him or herself, and social skills. These limitations will cause a child to learn and develop more slowly than a typical child.

Children with intellectual disabilities (sometimes called *cognitive disabilities*) may take longer to learn to speak, walk, and take care of their personal needs such as dressing or eating. They are likely to have trouble learning in school. They **will** learn, but it will take them longer and there may be some things they cannot learn.



This newsletter is funded in part from IDEA Discretionary Supplement Parent Services Project to the Holmes County School Board.

In This Issue

- * Intellectual Disability
- * Educational Considerations
- * Tips for Parents
- * Music Benefits



"We become
what we think
about."
Earl Nightingale



Exceptional Student
Education
Holmes County
School Board
701 East
Pennsylvania Ave.
Bonifay, Florida 32425
850-547-9341
www.hdsb.org

Educational Considerations

adapted from the Center for Parent Information and Resources

A child with an intellectual disability can do well in school but is likely to need the individualized help that is available as special education and related services. The level of help and support that is needed will depend upon the degree of intellectual disability involved.

Adaptive Skills

Many children with intellectual disabilities need help with adaptive skills, which are skills needed to live, work, and play in the community. Teachers and parents can help a child work on these skills at both school and at home.

Some of these skills include:

- communicating with others
- taking care of personal needs (dressing, bathing, going to the bathroom)
- health and safety
- home living (helping to set the table, cleaning the house, or cooking dinner)
- social skills (manners, knowing the rules of conversation, getting along in a group, playing a game)
- reading, writing, and basic math
- skills that will help them in the workplace

Transition Planning

IDEA requires transition planning for students with disabilities. Families and schools need to begin planning early for the student's transition into the world of adulthood. Because intellectual disability affects how quickly and how well an individual learns new information and skills, the sooner transition planning begins, the more can be accomplished before the student leaves secondary school.



Tips for Parents

adapted from the Center for Parent Information and Resources

Learn About Intellectual Disability

The more you know, the more you can help yourself and your child. Research your child's specific disability.

Be Patient; Be Hopeful

Your child, like every child, has a lifetime to learn and grow.

Encourage Independence in Your Child

For example, help your child learn daily care skills, such as dressing, feeding him or herself, using the bathroom, and grooming.

Give Your Child Chores

Keep your child's age, attention span, and abilities in mind. Break down jobs into smaller steps. For example, if your child's job is to set the table, first ask your child to get the right number of napkins. Then have them put one in each family member's place at the table. Do the same with the utensils, going one at a time. Tell them what to do, step by step, until the job is done. Demonstrate how to do the job. Help them when assistance is needed.

Give Your Child Frequent Feedback

Praise your child when he or she does well. Build your child's abilities.

Find out What Skills Your Child is Learning at School

Find ways for your child to apply those skills at home. For example, if the teacher is going over a lesson about money, take your child to the supermarket with you. Help them count out the money to pay for your groceries. Help them count the change.

Find Opportunities in Your Community for Social Activities

Check out scouts, recreation center activities, sports, and so on. These will help your child build social skills as well as have fun.

Talk to Other Parents

Connect with parents whose children have an intellectual disability. Parents can share practical advice and emotional support. Find out more about and connect with parent groups in your area.

Keep in Touch

Stay in touch with your child's teachers. Offer support. Find out how you can support your child's school learning at home.

Take Pleasure in Your Beautiful One

Your child is a treasure. Learn from your child, too. Those with intellectual disabilities have a special light within—let it shine!

Health Benefits of Music

adapted from an article by North Shore University Health System

Music can improve mood, decrease anxiety, and provide opportunities for emotional expression. Research suggests that music can benefit our physical and mental health in several ways.

Music is Heart Healthy

Research has shown that blood flows more easily when music is played. It can also reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease cortisol (stress hormone) levels, and increase serotonin and endorphin levels.

Music Elevates Moods

Music can boost the brain's production of the hormone dopamine. This increased dopamine production helps relieve feelings of anxiety and depression. When you are feeling down in the dumps, music can help pick you up like exercise.

Music Reduces Stress

Research has found that listening to music can relieve stress by triggering biochemical stress reducers.

Music Helps People Eat Less

Playing soft music in the background (and dimming the lights) during a meal can help people slow down while eating and ultimately consume less food in one sitting.

Music Increases Exercise Endurance

Listening to those top workout tracks can boost physical performance and increase endurance during an exercise session.



Florida Diagnostic & Learning
RESOURCES SYSTEM

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)

753 West Boulevard, Chipley, FL 32428

(850) 638-6131 ~ (877) 873-7232 ~ Fax: (850) 638-6142 ~ paec.fdlrs.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties

FDLRS is funded by the Florida Department of Education, Division of K-12 Public Schools, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, through Federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B and State General Revenue funds.