

Or Will They...

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motor coordination, visual-motor coordination, time orientation, right-left awareness, sequencing abilities, language, and memory.

Each small patient is seen two or three times over the period of a week or two. This tends to balance out any "bad day" a child might have had; and multiple consultations also show any continuing deterioration.

Most Children Seen Too Late

"Most of these patients are coming in too late," says Michele Shackelford. "Not too late to be diagnosed or helped, of course, but much later than would have been optimal for the child's development."

The trouble with learning disabilities, obviously, is that they often aren't spotted until after the child has already spent some time in school. Yet, there are plenty of signals before school age. Dr. Shackelford would like to see primary care physicians and parents begin to tune in on language difficulties—one of the earliest signs of an impairment which may well lead to learning problems later on.

"By the time they've been in school for a few years, having trouble, failing, feeling left behind," she asserts, "these children are convinced they must be retarded. Most of them aren't."

One of the other difficulties springs from a child's desperate desire not to be thought "dumb." Most children will do anything to cover up—and that includes misbehaving. The idea seems to be that it's better to be bad than retarded.

No Absolute Answers But Lots of Help

As Dr. Rose points out, most conditions can be treated in some way—even the worst of them. Dr. Shackelford's personal technique involves working around problems by first facing them squarely, and then seeing what "tricks" can be used to work with the child's strengths while circumventing weaknesses.

For example, "Kock," a ten-year-old boy of average intelligence, was sent to Downstate Medical Center by a sharp guidance counselor at his school. She had noticed that Jock seemed to understand the schoolwork very well and could talk about anything he had learned. But, oddly, he always did horribly on written exams. One look at his handwriting showed why. It was worse than the scribbles of an infant, totally unintelligible, even to him.

Testing showed that Jock had a neurological problem which, very specifically, affected his ability to copy shapes accurately. He was neither retarded nor lazy. He just couldn't repro-



Michele Shackelford

duce shapes. Not at all.

"There is a school of thought," says Dr. Shackelford. "Which would bombard Jock with repetitious handwriting drills in the hope of overcoming his disability. I prefer a different way."

She gave Jock a tape recorder to use in all his classes. He can, after all, hear and understand perfectly. She then suggested that he learn how to type. "When you use a typewriter, you are not copying shapes. You need only learn to put your fingers onto the correct letters. Jock reads perfectly well and recognizes letters. And there's nothing wrong with the muscles in his hands, either."

"He now does all his homework in this way," explains the neuropsychologist, "and he no longer has to deal with the mental agony of constant struggle."

Not all of the youngerst who pass through her office can be helped so simply. But, yes, most of them can be helped. "Once I get the parents on the side of the child, once they're convinced that the child is really doing his or her very best, and that things can be improved...there's usually an improvement right away."

Campus Life For Blacks Examined

It's not where you are, but who you are that counts when it comes to getting the most out of a college education.

That theme was echoed by several participants in a colloquium on "Black Students on Black Campuses, Black Students on White Campuses" at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

The discussion was sponsored by the University's Black Affairs Council, and chaired by Ernest A. Boykins, president of Mississippi Valley State University.

"An eagerness to learn and teachers who demand a high quality of scho-

larship are two key ingredients in determining the success or failure of a black student on any campus—be it predominantly black or predominantly white," said Malvin E. Moore Jr., professor of educational black or predominantly white," said Malvin E. Moore Jr., professor of educational leadership at SIUC.

"There is measurably greater opportunity for leadership training for blacks on predominantly black campuses than for blacks on predominantly white campuses," said Moore, a former dean at Fayetteville State College in North Carolina and Arkansas A.M. & N. College.

"The president of student organizations, the captains of athletics teams, the dramatic leads in school plays and the soloists in choirs all are black on predominantly black campuses."

Harvey Welch Jr., dean of student life at SIUC, said attending a predominantly white school can help prepare black students for some of the "challenges and harsh realities" they will face later in life.

"The problems black students face on campus are good reflections of many of the problems they will face in the outside world after graduation," said Welch.

"In the early 1950s a black student on a college or university campus clearly had to be an overachiever to succeed. You had to outproduce others, and the experience of having to do so was good preparation for negotiating the harsh realities of the outside world."

Welch said, "The will and confidence to be successful instilled in me by my black teachers in elementary and secondary school were largely responsible for the successes I enjoyed in college and professional life."

Black people should consider application of the knowledge and skills learned in college to be an obligation, according to panelist Richard C. Hayes, associate University affirmative action officer at SIUC.

"There is more to academic excellence than self-satisfaction," said Hayes. "You need to reach out and touch someone, to help others by sharing what you have learned. Otherwise you are wasting your time and somebody else's money."

John E. King, professor of higher education at SIUC, urged black students to resist two temptations: "The temptation to become the house black by allowing oneself to be used in a token manner as part of the facade; and the temptation to become the killer black and play the role model, making it as hard as possible on other blacks just because you went through it."