

Published on mache.org (http://www.mache.org)

Home > Resources > Printer-friendly PDF

Teaching Your Right-Brain Child

Tags: brain special needs spelling

God has a wonderful sense of humor, I believe. He wants us to grow and stretch, and one of the ways He does this is to give us children who are very different from each other. Just as it is very likely that a right brain person will have a left brain spouse, so it is that if our first born is left brain dominant, the next child likely will be right brain dominant. This brain dominance affects both personality characteristics and learning styles.

How do you determine if you are teaching a right brain child? Children tend to display these characteristics at an early age. All children are creative, but your right brain child will seem to be even more imaginative. The right brain learns things in "wholes" rather than parts, so that child will get math concepts well, but may struggle with the "details" like the math facts or checking work. In thinking styles, the right brainer often goes by "gut feel" whereas the left brainer prefers multiple facts before coming to a conclusion. In test taking, the left brainer prefers the black and white choices presented in multiple choice questions, while the right brainer may prefer essay questions, where the whole picture can be given.

Eighty percent of the struggling learners I see are right brain dominant. Does that mean that being right brain dominant is a weakness? Not at all! As you know, Einstein was a flaming right brainer. Then why the discrepancy? It is that most curriculum is designed to teach in a more left brain style. Workbooks, worksheets, rote memorization (math facts), timed tests, lecture, learning facts from a test, learning vocabulary by looking up the meanings of the words in a dictionary and writing it out, are all left brain activities. If you have a child at home who is "balking" at doing the schoolwork that fits the description above, you probably are working with a right brain dominant child. To help this child become successful doesn't require an entire change in curriculum but rather a change in your teaching strategies for this child. It isn't as hard as it sounds. In fact, it's easy, fun, and inexpensive.

SPELLING

Let's look at the teaching of spelling words. We all want our children to be good spellers and are very frustrated when our methods aren't working. The most common complaint I receive is that the child learns the words for the test, but continues to misspell them in other writing tasks. This is one of the easiest problems to solve, and I have regularly seen two years' spelling growth in one year, using a simple method. Have you ever seen a picture in the newspaper of a spelling bee winner? If you have, you may have seen the student with his eyes in an upward position. In other words, it looks like he is looking at the ceiling for the word he is spelling. This makes sense in light of the recent brain research that tells us that we can cause our right brain (the hemisphere that houses our photographic memory) to become more responsive by looking up with our eyes. In other words, we use our eyes to help us think as well as to see. When the student is looking up he is "seeing" the word in his head. Because he is seeing the printed word, he can spell it backwards as easily as forwards. You can train your child at home to use this very efficient strategy. Not only will it be painless, but you will find that the right brain is responsible for visual memory and long term memory, so your child will remember how to spell his words long past the week of the spelling test.

This efficient right brain spelling strategy is simple.

- 1. Give your child a pre-test from a short list of words from the "most commonly used words" list.
- 2. In the words that were spelled incorrectly, take the letters that were wrong, or left out, and color them and "weird" them up.

(An example: If he spelled "Saturday as Saterday" put the Sat-r-day in black marker on a card since he knew those letters. Put the "u" in blue, with wavy lines in it to represent water, and a stick figure diving into the water. You can add a story like, "They all Sat around on Saturday and one of them got bored, so the brothers decided to go

1

swimming.)

- 3. Hold the card straight up in front of your child so his eyes are looking up. (Make sure his chin isn't up, but only his eyes). Have him glance at it, then bring it down while his eyes remain looking up where the card had been. Flash this card in the air five or six times until your child can "see" it in the air and easily spell it forwards and backwards. If your child can't easily "see" it in the air, show it more times or put more "Velcro" on it by putting in more color or a more detailed picture.
- 4. Review the card each day of the week for a few minutes.
- 5. Your child's "photographic memory" will become stronger and stronger as you use this method.

Remember that your child's visual memory is his greatest strength. As you help him develop that using spelling words, math facts, or anything, you will see learning and memorizing become much easier. The success a child feels when he can "see it" is priceless.

Author: Dianne Craft

Source URL (retrieved on 05/21/2013 - 11:56am): http://www.mache.org/resources/article/12-07-2011/teaching-your-right-brain-child