

BOOK REVIEW

Developmental Language Disability: Adult Accomplishments of Dyslexic Boys. Margaret B. Rawson. *Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968. p. 127. \$5.50.*

One of the most perplexing problems to teachers, psychiatrists, and neuropathologists is that presented by the child with specific language-learning difficulty. Children who find it impossible to keep up with classmates in reading, spelling, and penmanship are frustrated, and as a result they often become emotionally upset. Published observations of children with this disorder are difficult to find. For 30 years Mrs. Margaret Rawson directed a program to detect and correct developmental language disabilities at The School in Rose Valley, Moylan, Pennsylvania. She followed the academic progress and the adult achievement of her students. This monograph is a report of her observations.

The School in Rose Valley was founded and operated through the initiative of a small group of parents in Moylan during the late 1920's. On the whole, these parents were well-educated and fairly prosperous. There were 56 dyslexic and non-dyslexic boys who entered the school between the years 1930 and 1947 and had attended long enough to be considered valid subjects for this study. The dyslexic child has a partial disability in the areas of reading, spelling, and penmanship. It is possible that only one area may be affected. More accurately, the term applied to this deficit should be "the dyslexias," and the present tendency to refer to all children with reading difficulties as "dyslexic" should be abandoned. The true dyslexic presents a picture of confusion with reversals, inability to sequence syllables, and general linguistic disorganization. Other non-readers may have emotional blocks, lack of

family motivation, or any number of problems which interfere with reading progress.

For the purposes of this study, the boys were categorized as having Low, Medium, or High Language Facility. The diagnostic criteria employed by Mrs. Rawson to identify the dyslexic boys included: initial failure to read; poor oral reading and word memory; reversals of orientation and sequence; poor response to special language teaching; persistence of characteristic spelling inadequacies; speech delays and inadequacies; poor motor skills often reflected in poor penmanship; difficulties in word finding; immature grammar; auditory and visual perception problems; and lack of strong lateral dominance. Each boy was placed in a category through assessment of his individual learning pattern. The nature and degree of his difficulty was compared with those of others in the study.

Individual language therapy was given as indicated by the diagnostic criteria. Stress was placed upon simultaneous use of the senses of sight, hearing, and muscular awareness in such admonitions as, "Sound it out while you trace it as you look; your ears and your muscles will help your eyes to get it—or to get it back if you've forgotten."

Results of the study show that those with Low Language Facility ultimately attained more "years worth" in colleges and universities and achieved a larger number of academic degrees than those with High Language Facility. The author feels that it is possible to explain this by chance alone, but perhaps it was the effect of the "sustained, systematic effort they are called upon to make." The adult career accomplishments of the dyslexic boys are cause for all who wrestle with the problem to

take heart. Dyslexics are found to have made average and sometimes superior achievement.

Mrs. Rawson has carefully examined the boys' family influences, their general scholastic abilities, their siblings, their speech and language patterns, and their adult achievement. She has included pertinent information which could be of use to others wishing to research in the same area. Review of the literature is thorough.

One thing noted in reading this book was that the subjects were fairly homogeneous. They were from unusually understanding and knowledgeable families. The results obtained at The School in Rose Valley present to the reader irrefutable proof that the dyslexic child need not be "lost" academically. However, a like expectation of progress by the child from the indifferent home background with a degree of cultural deprivation would be unrealistic. In short, this volume demonstrates what can be done to educate the dyslexic child under excellent circumstances. It challenges workers in the field to find new methods of dealing with reading failures and with those whose language learning ability is deficient. It is well worth the reading, particularly for those who have felt the dyslexic child is extremely limited in his chances for progress.

Ann M. Flowers, Ed. D.
Associate Professor
Department of Otolaryngology
Medical College of Virginia