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Becoming Informed About Your LD Child's Strengths and Weaknesses

By Sandy Gauvin

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All too often, children with learning disabilities are seen through their weaknesses.

Like anyone else, however, they have many strengths. It is of the greatest importance to focus on the strengths that your child has and show them to other people. It will not only to help others who are involved in her life understand her better, but it will help the child herself know that she is loved and valued for who she is.

I always found that one of my biggest questions was, "How do I see all of my daughter's strengths, in addition to her weaknesses, so I can get a picture of her as a total person?" The answer lies in what is called 'quality time.'

Here are some important way is to spend quality time with your child.

- 1) Do things with her. What activities do you both like? Do things with her that she likes to do, and ask her to do things that you like to do.
- 2) Go places with her. You don't have to travel far. Just go outside, or downtown, or to the mall, or to a movie.
- 3) Sit quietly with her. Silence says a lot.
- 4) Hear her when she speaks. Don't just listen – hear what she has to say.
- 5) Listen to and try to understand her frustrations.
- 6) Talk with her to find out about her likes and dislikes.
- 7) Know what is going on with her outside the home. Allow her to talk about it without being judgemental.

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8) Provide a safe, understanding atmosphere that allows her to express her feelings and preferences.

9) Provide positive feedback when she talks about the good things she does.

10) Provide a structure that allows her to make mistakes and learn from them.

Allowing your child to have friends play with her at home can give great insight into your child's strengths and weaknesses. When we allowed Michele to have friends over, we could see that she was a great organizer of creative activities and was very social, but we also saw that she got very defensive at times. Having this information allowed us to know what to help her with. We also communicated this information to her teachers, so we could all work together on this issue.

Providing an opportunity for positive, open communication with her teachers and the other professionals that work with her allow you to get a picture of her strengths and we. There may be times when there will be disagreement, but these issues can always be worked out. Listen to the opinions of the others on the team. And don't be afraid to add your viewpoints. It is only through this honest, open communication that you will be able to see the total picture of your child's strengths and weaknesses.

To get a good picture of her academic strengths and weaknesses, the school is the place to go. As your child's parent, you are entitled to have access to her records at school. You have probably received copies of that information, but you do have the right to view what is in her records in the school office. Past and current report cards give you some information, as do any notes, reports, etc., that have been written by her teachers. The results of special education testing are also great indicators of what she does easily and what she struggles with. All this information should be in her school file. If you don't understand what those results or reports are trying to say, talk with the special education professionals who do understand it.

Remember, your child is not just a partial person. She is not just made up of weaknesses. She is a whole person. Her strengths are a large part of her.

Value her strengths; work with her on her weaknesses. But you can't do either of these things unless you know what they are. Take charge. Find out.

For more plain talk about learning disabilities, please visit us at www.ldperspectives.com.

Sandy Gauvin is a retired educator who has seen learning disabilities from many perspectives – as the parent of a daughter with learning disabilities, as the teacher of children with learning disabilities, and as an advocate for others who have diagnosed and unrecognized learning disabilities. Sandy shares her wisdom and her resources at www.LDPerspectives.com

How To Get Your Online Education -- Part Four

By Joe Bingham

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ADVANCED LEARNING

By now you've covered the basics in your chosen field and you've started to apply what you have learned into action. You've got some experience of your own now, and you are learning from your mistakes.

How then do you advance further?

Obviously, if you've been in contact with an expert you can still gain from that contact, but you've also developed another important resource at this point as well. Yourself.

If the world still depended on the knowledge of the first generations of man, you would not be reading this today. Obviously then, it is possible to create new ideas and advance into new ground based on the basics of education that you already possess.

This is creativity.

The key to creativity is to constantly be thinking of ways to improve. Look for holes or rough spots in a process, then think of how you can fill them or smooth them out. Look also at the best points and discern what element makes it the best. Can that element then be used in the entire process?

Asking questions of both others with knowledge and experience and yourself can lead to answers that further your education. Talk things out with someone you respect or learned from in the past. Always maintain a relationship with those you've determined to be good resources.

At this time, however, you've also got to step back and accept the fact that you do have both strengths and weaknesses. While your strengths can move you ahead, your weaknesses will drag along behind you, slowing your progress.

Identify your weaknesses and find ways to make up for them. Either take the time to pursue further education in those areas, or use others

to fill them for you.

For example, an Internet marketer that is great at promotion may be

holding himself back with weak writing skills. He then has two options. Either hire someone to do his writing for him and let him continue to do what he is good at, or seek out an excellent writer to learn from and put in practice time to improve the skill.

Either way, it is the identifying of strengths and weaknesses that allows for further progression in the learning process.

Fortifying your weaknesses is an obvious need, but you can also progress by pushing your strengths. One excellent way to gain from our strengths is by putting them to use in helping others. We'll move on to that subject as this series concludes in part five.

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