



## **Europe's Children Our Concern asbl**

*supporting children and young people with learning difficulties*

Under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Mathilde

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***“Together we can make a difference”***

**ECOC News No. 56 – January 2007**

*If you have news that you would like us to pass on, or if you would like us to publicise an event or mention a resource that you have found useful, please send us the details.*

### **ECOC News**

#### **Speakers' Corners**

ECOC is organising a series of Speakers' Corners and seminars between now and June on such subjects as mind-mapping, music therapy and horse riding for those with disabilities. For more information please contact [ecoc@ecoc.be](mailto:ecoc@ecoc.be)

#### **Other news**

##### **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of European Disability Forum**

To mark its tenth anniversary in 2007, the European Disability Forum is launching a campaign for citizens across the EU. Called *1million4disability*, it aims to collect one million signatures in favour of EU legislation to combat discrimination towards people with disabilities. More information from: <http://www.edf-feph.org/>

### **Event for young people organised by the German Presidency**

This event is going to take place between 13 and 16 April 2007 in Cologne, Germany, under the title *Equality of Opportunities and Young People's Participation in Society*. The idea is to link the event to the European year of equal opportunities for all, as well as to the two upcoming youth events under the Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies, in the second half of 2007 and first half of 2008. Apart from work on recommendations for the declaration to be adopted by the Council of the European Union, held just afterwards, a "market place" will be organised to present projects from 34 European countries (EU member and all candidate countries and EFTA member states). The event will be attended by 3-4 young people from each country. Calls for participants will be issued this month.

### **Industrial chemicals may damage brain development**

A study published in *The Lancet* has found that foetal and early childhood exposures to industrial chemicals in the environment can damage the developing brain and can lead to neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) — autism, attention deficit disorder (ADHD), and mental retardation. The authors conclude that the toxic effects of industrial chemicals on children have generally been overlooked.

Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health and the Mount Sinai School of Medicine examined publicly available data on chemical toxicity. They found that 202 industrial chemicals can damage the human brain, and concluded that chemical pollution may have harmed the brains of millions of children worldwide.

However, despite the knowledge that chemicals can harm children, there has been insufficient research into individual chemicals. To protect children against injury to the developing brain, the researchers urge a precautionary approach for chemical testing and control. Such an approach is beginning to be applied in the European Union. It puts in place strong regulations, which could later be relaxed, if the hazard were less than anticipated, instead of current regulations that require a high level of proof. At present in the US, requirements for toxicity testing of chemicals are minimal. Further details from: [Harvard School of Public Health](#).

### **Research into attention**

Neuroscientists at Duke University have mapped the timing and sequence of neural activations that unfold in the brain when people focus their attention on specific locations in their visual fields.

The findings may point the way for clinicians to address attention-related problems, said study team member Marty Woldorff, associate director of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience and an associate professor in psychiatry.

"There are a number of clinical syndromes where attention is dysfunctional, including schizophrenia, autism and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder," Woldorff said. "Moreover, attentional capabilities change during normal and abnormal aging."

The findings appear in the January 2007 issue of the journal Public Library of Science (PLoS) Biology. The research was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke. For more information, contact: [monte.basgall@duke.edu](mailto:monte.basgall@duke.edu)

### **Australian study into Omega-3 and ADHD**

An Australian study will investigate the effect of omega-3 fatty acids on the brain function of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). As current scientific opinion is mixed on the benefits of the fatty acids the new study is designed to analyze the effects of omega-3s on cognition as well as behaviour.

The trial, being conducted by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, will study the effects of these fatty acids on the learning skills, attention span, memory, reaction time and behaviour of 150 children with ADHD over 12 weeks. The effects will also be explored in 100 children without ADHD.

### **Genetic sequence of dyslexia unravelled**

Scientists from Edinburgh University have helped unravel the gene sequence that determines a person's ability to work with letters and numbers. Their findings - the result of a 20-year study - mean those likely to suffer from extreme forms of dyslexia can be identified before they are born.

Dr Timothy Bates, one of the co-authors of the study, said, "We believe this combination of 13 genes makes all the difference between someone who reads flawlessly and speedily and someone who stumbles on basic words. We are confident these genes explain the bulk of the genetic effect. It tells us that reading ability boils down to the same common biological mechanism."

The geneticists examined 1,300 people aged 12 to 25. By studying their performance in reading, writing and spelling, they identified the genes influencing their performance. They discovered it was the same set of genes that was responsible for dyslexia and milder spelling and reading problems. More information from:

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/letters.cfm?id=402792005>

### **Dyslexia databank planned**

A new EU-funded project is aiming to create the world's largest databank on dyslexia. "The NEURODYS project will also study dyslexia from the cognitive and brain basis but the main emphasis will be on its genetic basis," said Dr Ramus. Specifically, the project will explore the links between the underlying active brain regions and risk-conferring genes.

More information from: [NeuroDys](#)

### **Capacity bottlenecks cause of learning difficulties?**

Eugen Oetringer, computer specialist, discovered that certain therapies for [ADHD, dyslexia and headaches](#) employ techniques similar to those used in large computers to remove capacity bottlenecks.

While observing two unusual therapies for his son's dyslexia, Mr. Oetringer developed a model that explains how information is managed in the human brain; for example, how patterns can connect with each other.

Mr. Oetringer has now put forward a request for research. The request for research, a list of facts, fundamental computer architecture aspects that should also apply to the brain, a downloadable summary and the publication *Surprise Treatment for Dyslexia, ADHD, Headaches and Other Conditions - It's all about Information Management* (ISBN 1-4120 9586 7), are available from [www.onmentalhealth.org](http://www.onmentalhealth.org).

### **Criticisms of Dore dyslexia treatment**

New criticisms have been made of the research methods used to justify the effectiveness of the Dore treatment. Commentaries have suggested that the subjects were not randomised - the experimenters could choose whether to put each child in the treatment group or the control group - and that the two groups were mismatched in a way that could have advantaged the Dore treatment. It was suggested that the control group's treatment was "nothing", which was bound to produce an unfavourable result, compared with the attention given to the group of children having the Dore treatment. The study now being criticised had found "significant and lasting" gains in cognitive and literacy skills and was hailed by David Reynolds, professor of education at Plymouth University and the paper's author, as "the closest thing to a cure that I have ever seen". More information from: [bad.science@guardian.co.uk](mailto:bad.science@guardian.co.uk)

### **Say No to Failure: Dyslexia organisations join forces to demonstrate best practice**

The BBC programme, *The Teacher Squad*, broadcast on 13 December, demonstrated how schools can work with specialist organisations to eliminate failure in reading and writing.

The UK's leading dyslexia organisations: Dyslexia Action, The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, The British Dyslexia Association and PATOSS, joined forces under the leadership of campaigning charity Xtraordinary People, to show the effectiveness of a 'whole school' approach to tackling low literacy standards. Together these organisations worked with a low achieving secondary school, Walworth Community Comprehensive in Southwark, London, to identify and support those at risk of dyslexia, and to deliver awareness training to the whole school. They also provided specialist teacher training for the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator and Teaching Assistants.

The BBC filmed the progress of the school and the twenty-one children who were given specialist tuition, which was delivered twice per week for 12 weeks in groups of four or five. Methods used were based on a multi-sensory, structured, individually targeted team teaching approach and included the use of specialist computer software. A teacher commented: "Initial results are promising and the teenagers involved showed improvements in single word reading and spelling. More importantly their confidence and self-esteem increased, which was reflected in their general attitude and willingness to participate in lessons."

Campaigning charity Xtraordinary People, founded and lead by Kate Griggs, mother of a dyslexic child, appeared in the programme and is spearheading the campaign *Say No to Failure* to press for change. More information from: [www.xtraordinarypeople.com](http://www.xtraordinarypeople.com).

## **Dyslexia Action launches online screening for adults with dyslexia**

Dyslexia Action (UK) has announced its new partnership with Amidyslexic.com, a web-based organisation, to offer adults who think they might be dyslexic an online screening.

Dr John Rack, Dyslexia Action's Head of Assessments and Evaluation, comments, "Amidyslexic.com is one of the very few screeners for adults. It is a performance test, rather than a checklist, so it gives objective information. Abilities are compared with a national representative sample of over 1,000 adults so the screening gives a good indication of areas of strength and weaknesses in relation to the general population."

The test costs £30 and is made up of seven different tests that look at a range of literacy and information-processing skills. The test takes approximately 30 minutes and a full report is provided on completion. More information from: <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/>

## **Resources**

### **Books**

A selection of books on ADHD and adults recommended by one of our members. All are available from Amazon.co.uk

*You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy?!: The Classic Self-help Book for Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder*

by Kate Kelly

*ADD - Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life*

by Judith Kolberg

*Healing ADD: The Breakthrough Program That Allows You to See and Heal the 6 Types of ADD*

by Daniel G. Amen

*Adult ADD, the Complete Handbook: Everything You Need to Know About How to Cope and Live Well with ADD/ADHD*

by David B. Sudderth

*Women with Attention Deficit Disorder: Embracing Disorganisation at Home and in the Workplace*

by Sari Solden

*Attention Deficit Disorder: The Unfocused Mind in Children and Adults (Yale University Press Health & Wellness)*

by Thomas E. Brown

*Understanding Women with AD/HD*

by Kathleen G. Nadeau

***Scattered: How Attention Deficit Disorder Originates and What You Can Do about It***

by Gabor Mate

***Acting Antics; A Theatrical Approach to Teaching Social Understanding to Kids and Teens with Asperger Syndrome*** by Cindy B. Schneider

Foreword by Tony Attwood

This fun and inspiring step-by-step programme provides the full set of tools for developing social understanding in children with Asperger Syndrome (AS) through drama.

Cindy B. Schneider explains how the central processes in acting – including making and interpreting inferences from non-verbal cues, taking another's perspective, and formulating language – can be highly effective ways of addressing social cognition deficits in children with AS. *Acting Antics* contains a wide repertoire of activities and ideas for immediate application at home, in the classroom, in therapy workshops or social groups, ranging from initial warm-up techniques, through paired activities, to larger group scenes and staging an show. Helpful appendices provide questionnaire forms to enable both the child and the programme leader to assess and monitor the child's understanding of their roles, along with reproducible scripts and suitable scene designs.

ISBN-10: 1-84310-845-3 ISBN-13: 9781843108450, 2006, 192pp, paperback, £14.99, \$24.95

***Replays; Using Play to Enhance Emotional and Behavioral Development for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*** by Karen Levine and Naomi Chedd

*Replays* addresses the challenging behaviours of children with autism spectrum disorders through interactive symbolic play. It shows parents and professionals how to help children access their emotions, whether the child is verbal or not, cognitively able or impaired, even-tempered or volatile. The chapters introduce and show readers how to implement Replays, and describe ways of adapting this intervention to address specific issues in different settings and circumstances.

Levine and Chedd present more than just behavioural management strategies in the context of social, emotional and communication development: they have developed a technique that helps children to re-experience, play through and master the complex emotional response states that often lead to ongoing behavioural challenges.

*Replays* is an easy and fun tool that provides numerous step-by-step examples and illustrations. It enables parents and professionals to guide children with autism spectrum disorders towards mastering, and changing, their emotional and behavioural responses.

ISBN: 1 84310 832 1, 2006, 144 pages, paperback, £12.99

## CD-ROMs/DVDs/videos

*ISPEEK at Home* by Janet Dixon

This collection of 1300 picture symbols provides an easy-to-use and enjoyable tool for overcoming communication difficulties in children with autistic spectrum disorders.

The CD-ROM contains symbols for a wide range of situations typically encountered in the home and beyond, from feelings and facial expressions to health and hygiene and holidays. It also provides useful word templates to inspire parents and carers in putting together daily schedules, as well as PDF samples to assist them in setting up visual aids for children with autism, helping them to interact better with their home environment.

ISBN: 978 1 84310 510 7, December 2006, £23.00+VAT/US\$39.95

Further details can be found on the JKP website: <http://www.jkp.com/new/9781843105107>

## Conferences and events

### 9 January 2007

#### ADHD Family Support Group

Brussels

Dr. Anthony Kroeze from the Turning Point European Psychological Institute in Brussels will talk about the institute and what they offer. Dr. Kroeze is a psychologist originally from Holland and has many years experience working with children (and adults) with ADHD.

Turning Point is a private initiative with an interest in learning disorders and specifically in ADHD and dyslexia. Here are their website and contact details -

<http://www.turningpoint.be/splash.asp>. More information from [simon.barber@skynet.be](mailto:simon.barber@skynet.be)

### 10 January 2007 onwards

18.30-20.00

Salle d'Evolution

Centre scolaire Jos Wohlfart

12, rue J. P. Glaesener - Lorentzweiler

Bühnenstücke für Jugendliche und Erwachsene mit Milla Trausch, Logopädin und Theaterpädagogin.

« Bühnenstücke » pour adolescents et adultes avec Milla Trausch, logopède et pédagogue de théâtre. E-mail [info@trisomie21.lu](mailto:info@trisomie21.lu)

### 11 January 2007 onwards

17.30-19.00

Salle d'Evolution

Centre scolaire Jos Wohlfart

12, rue J. P. Glaesener – Lorentzweiler

Spiele mit Sprache, Stimme und Körper für Kinder und Jugendliche von 6 bis 18 Jahre mit Milla Trausch.

Jeux de langue, voix et mouvements pour enfants et adolescents entre 6 et 18 ans avec Milla Trausch. E-mail [info@trisomie21.lu](mailto:info@trisomie21.lu)

**20 January 2007**

**British Dyslexia Association AGM**

London, UK

The British Dyslexia Association will hold its Annual General Meeting – postponed from 18 November – at the Abbey School, Kendrick Road, Reading. Further information from:

[admin@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:admin@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

**23 January 2007**

**"Unwillingly to school"**

The Pickerings Hotel, Garstang, UK

Why do some children find it difficult to go to school? Find out what can be done to break into this negative cycle and overcome school refusal. Further information from:

[carol@achieve4u.org](mailto:carol@achieve4u.org)

**30 January 2007**

**Anger Management**

The Pickerings Hotel, Garstang, UK

If you work with children or young people with anger management problems then this course will provide you with practical and effective ways to engage them in the idea of change, motivate them and help them develop greater control. Further information from:

[carol@achieve4u.org](mailto:carol@achieve4u.org)

**6 February 2007 (repeated on 13 March 2007)**

**Exam nerves - from stress to success**

The Pickerings Hotel, Garstang, UK

Help anxious students to achieve their full potential - you will learn some quick, effective state management skills. Further information from: [carol@achieve4u.org](mailto:carol@achieve4u.org)

**27 February 2007**

**Positive Steps**

The Pickerings Hotel, Garstang, UK

For people who work with children and young people who have reached rock bottom. This 5-step programme will help you to structure the support they need. Further information from:

[carol@achieve4u.org](mailto:carol@achieve4u.org)

**2 March 2007**

**How To Talk So Schools Will Listen**

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, Frensham, Farnham, Surrey, UK

Aimed at parents who want to create a collaborative relationship with their children's schools. Further information from: [courses@arkellcentre.org.uk](mailto:courses@arkellcentre.org.uk)

**9 March 2007**

**Impacting Behaviour: Understanding and Managing the Behaviour of Children and Young People**

This nasen conference aims to equip teaching staff with the knowledge to recognise some of the underlying causes of poor behaviour in schools and provide the support to help manage it. The [conference application form](#) is available here.

**15-17 November 2007**

**European Dyslexia Association (EDA)**

Luxembourg

The EDA is calling for papers for its conference this year. Please send an abstract of not more than 250 words to [Steve.Alexander@pre-school.org.uk](mailto:Steve.Alexander@pre-school.org.uk) if you would like to contribute.

### **Tip of the month**

**BETT 2007**

**10-13 January 2007 Olympia London**

BETT 2007 is the place to see exciting ideas, the latest technology, practical solutions that can have an immediate impact, and new ways to put ICT at the heart of education.

### **Special Needs Zone**

This dedicated zone within the Grand Hall focuses on inclusion and letting learners fulfil their potential. Be inspired and informed from the many sessions taking place in the Special Needs Seminar Theatre.

For a complete picture of BETT please visit the website at [www.bettshow.com](http://www.bettshow.com)