



## Europe's Children – Our Concern (EC-OC) 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”***

### **EC-OC Online News No. 51 – August 2006**

*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.*

## **EC-OC News**

### **Speakers' Corner - Wednesday 20 September 2006**

#### ***Exploring Speech and Language Development – a Practical View***

Are your children challenged with speech, language or communication?

Would you like to find out more? Discover more about:

- Developing early communication and language.
- Promoting language skills.
- Improving attention and listening skills with practical activities.

Come to an interactive presentation by speech and language therapists  
Jennie Branton, Pippa Kerr and Helen Walker.

Scotland House, 6 Rond Point Schumann, Brussels

7.15pm for 7.30pm to 9.00pm

Entry : EC-OC members free – 10€ for non-members

Register as soon as possible – only 50 places!

Email: [ecoc@ecoc.be](mailto:ecoc@ecoc.be) or phone: +32 (0)2 537 48 36

*EC-OC is extremely grateful to Scotland Europa for their support in this event.*

### **EC-OC Conference – 27 October 2006**

#### ***Exchange Today, Include Tomorrow***

The conference will address the challenges of diversity, giving school administrators the chance to clarify the goals they have for their schools and parents and teachers the opportunity to explore techniques for fostering the potential of children who learn differently.

Among the speakers are Matthieu Kleinschmager, who recently led a most successful EC-OC session on mind-mapping; Gordon Pope, who advises London teachers on gifted and talented children and developing thinking skills, and Julian Still, a consultant on organisational learning. Other workshops will present strategies for differentiation in the classroom, ways of communicating effectively with children and "brain-friendly" teaching.

More information is available from the EC-OC office. Email: [ecoc@ecoc.be](mailto:ecoc@ecoc.be) or phone: +32 (0)2 537 48 36.

## Other news

### Computer games detect early signs of autism and dyslexia in children

An experienced team of educators, psychologists and technology professionals have teamed up to develop computer-based games designed to help educators and parents identify children aged 3-9 with early signs of dyslexia, and children aged 3-5 with autism. Learning for Children (<http://www.LearningforChildren.com>) -- The Diagnostic Gaming Company(R) -- has announced the inaugural set of games in its innovative Early Detection Diagnostic Gaming(R) series. The first two games in the series are the Early Detection -- Dyslexia CD(R), and Early Detection -- Autism CD(R). Reviewed by prominent health care and educational professionals, and leading autism and dyslexia advocacy organizations, the entertaining, interactive games are suitable for parents to test individual children or for teachers to use in classroom settings. Feedback on a child's performance, as well as how to interpret results, is instant and confidential. More information at <http://www.kfvs12.com/Global/story.asp?S=5189730>

### University-led dyslexia project wins praise from UK minister

A project led by the UK University of Westminster to highlight barriers many students with conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia face in progressing through to university has won praise from a government minister.

[Bill Rammell](#), Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, said there was a social and economic need to broaden access to higher education – and pointed to the [AchieveAbility](#) project as an example of good practice.

Speaking at a conference at the University to discuss research findings from the two-year project, Mr Rammell said: "We need to be thinking how we broaden access routes through to higher education for those with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs).

"As part of this we do need to see greater partnerships between the further and higher education sectors through initiatives such as lifelong learning.

"However, we can only achieve this if we work together on projects such as the one we are hearing about today," he said.

Research from the project – involving secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges as well as universities and voluntary organisations – presented at the conference included a recommendation that more teaching staff development be available at both

secondary and tertiary level to increase awareness of the problem. It also called for more consistent data collection across the education system.

Project director Katherine Hewlett, of the University of Westminster, said: "At the moment we can never truly know how many highly intellectual learners are being lost from the education system and this is a personal tragedy for those affected.

"We are calling for teachers to be trained in identification and awareness of different learning styles as part of an ongoing career development plan. It's also important that we end the inconsistency and incompatibility of data about SpLD learners."

Research by the [Higher Education Academy](#), commissioned as part of the project, found that a lack of data system standardisation between sectors and institutions makes it very difficult to track SpLD students. As a consequence, "it is difficult to evaluate effectively the progression of learners with SpLD into higher education", the research found.

### **A new search engine developed by Google to aid the visually-impaired:**

For visually impaired users, web pages that are designed to be accessible can be more easily read by screen reading machines or by making the type larger. But well-designed accessible pages are not yet widespread.

Google has now taken a step towards helping users find the most accessible pages on a given topic. It is releasing a beta version of Accessible Search for the Visually Challenged, available at <http://labs.google.com/accessible/>.

Accessible Search is "designed to identify and prioritize search results that are more easily usable by blind and visually impaired users," Google said.

Accessible Search looks at the page's HTML, and favours pages that are more easily understood when images are turned off, as well as those that are most accessible through keyboard navigation. Such a page will also tend to read well when a screen reading machine is used. Web pages that are complex visually, or have much of the information or navigation primarily in visuals, are less favoured.

### **25 ways to encourage reading**

Download this collection of fun and engaging activities you can use to motivate children to read and instill a love of reading. It is full of creative and practical activities parents and children can do at home to make reading seem less of a chore and more of a joy. This easy-to-read booklet is written for elementary school-aged children. More information from [Learn more](#)

### **Date for legal action over epilepsy medication**

The UK High Court has set a date for the action brought against a drug manufacturer by parents who claim an anti-epileptic drug prescribed to pregnant mothers caused disabilities in their children.

Group action by solicitors, [Irwin Mitchell](#), is being brought against [Sanofi-Synthelabo](#) which markets sodium valporate as Epilim.

A trial date has been set for October 2008. The cut-off date for families to register as claimants for compensation has been set for March next year, but claims must be registered with Irwin Mitchell by 1 October 2006 to allow proper investigation of each case.

Families from all over the UK claim that the drug caused problems including ADHD, facial abnormalities, vision defects, dyslexia, dyspraxia, delayed speech and motor development, and learning and social difficulties.

Deborah Mann believes her daughters were injured before birth when she took the prescription drug to control epileptic seizures. "While we do everything we can to ensure the girls have the care and equipment they need, it is expensive and we feel strongly that the company whose products caused these problems should face its responsibilities and meet the extra costs we face."

The campaign is being co-ordinated by [OACS \(Organisation for Anti-Convulsant Syndrome\)](#), formed by Janet Williams. She said, "We want to hear from any family where the mother took this anti-epileptic drug in pregnancy and where a child has had foetal anti-convulsant syndrome diagnosed or suffers from a range of neural, behavioural and physical disorders.

In earlier comments Sanofi-Synthelabo said, "Anti-epileptic drugs are crucial to the health of those prescribed them and have passed stringent medical tests. Sanofi-Synthelabo Ltd has every sympathy for people born with congenital abnormality, and would advise women with epilepsy who may become pregnant to speak to their doctor."

## Resources

### Books

*[That's Life with Autism: Tales and Tips for Families with Autism](#)* edited by Donna Satterlee Ross and Kelly Ann Jolly

*That's Life with Autism* is written by parents for other parents and professionals caring for children on the autism spectrum. The overall message is that those affected by autism are not alone.

Paperback, ISBN-10: 1-84310-829-1 ISBN-13: 9781843108290, 208pp, 2006, £12.99, \$19.95

*[Working with Anger and Young People](#)* by Nick Luxmoore

Understanding the roots of anger and encouraging appropriate and acceptable ways of expressing this are essential skills for anyone working with young people. *Working with Anger and Young People* warns against 'quick fix' solutions to dealing with anger, and draws on the author's experiences of youth counselling and training workshops to propose helpful interventions for addressing anger effectively and moving on from it.

Paperback, ISBN-10: 1-84310-466-0 ISBN-13: 9781843104667, 152pp, 2006, £14.99, \$24.95

## Videos/DVDs

### *Last One Picked, First One Picked On Learning Disabilities and Social Skills*

Every child has experienced embarrassment or rejection in social situations. But children with learning disabilities are often isolated and rejected, and sometimes have a particularly hard time making and keeping friends. Richard Lavoie, a US expert on learning disabilities, explains why this happens – and what parents and teachers can do to help students improve their social skills.

Parent and teacher version available

\$49.95 68 min. (VHS)

Closed captioned

Produced by LD OnLine for WETA. More details from <http://ldonline.learningstore.org/>

## Conferences and events

**31 August–2 September**

**8<sup>th</sup> International Congress Autism-Europe - *A World of Possibilities***

Oslo, Norway

For further information, see <http://www.autismcongressoslo.org>

**2 September 2006**

**Zit Stil's annual family fun day**

Mechelen, Belgium

This event takes place outdoors in a large park area with lots of activities and games for children. Presentations and information provided to parents on ADHD as well and, although this is generally given in Flemish, many people in Flanders also speak English.

For further information, see [www.zitstil.be](http://www.zitstil.be)

**19 September 2006**

**ADHD Family Support meeting**

Brussels, Belgium

Joanne Norris - a specialist in coaching and tutoring for children, adolescents and adults with ADHD, dyslexia and/or related conditions - will lead a discussion about some of the issues parents and children face on a day-to-day basis during the school year. More information from [Donnalea Barber](#)

**20 September 2006**

**EC-OC Speakers' Corner**

*Exploring Speech and Language Development – a Practical View*

See above for further details.

**22-23 September 2006**

**Inclues Conference - *Good practices for integration and inclusion***

Rome, Italy.

It will try to find answers to questions such as "What is good inclusive and good cognitive activation? How can learning processes be activated with children with widely different abilities? What competencies does a good inclusive teacher need? A special pre-conference programme (20-21 September) will show some real examples. We invite everyone to share experiences, by participating in the discussions, bringing materials, presenting videos and

posters. Now is the time to register and **send in abstracts**. This conference also eligible for financing through EU Comenius grants. For more information see <http://www.inclues.org/>

### **29. September - 1. Oktober 2006**

#### **Österreichische Down-Syndrom Tagung**

Diese Tagung wird gefördert vom Bundessozialamt Landesstelle Salzburg aus Mitteln der Beschäftigungsoffensive der österreichischen Bundesregierung (Behindertenmilliarde) für Menschen mit Behinderungen

Kontakt: [tagung@down-syndrom.at](mailto:tagung@down-syndrom.at)

Down-Syndrom Österreich, Fadingerstraße 15, 5020 Salzburg

<http://www.down-syndrom.at>

### **10 October 2006**

#### **World Mental Health Day**

ADHD Europe will participate this year to promote awareness of ADHD in some way. Can the different organisations also come up with an idea of a way to mark this day?

### **27 October 2006**

#### **EC-OC Conference**

Details above.

### **17 November 2006**

#### **British Institute of Learning Disabilities – *Valuing good practice in autism***

Newcastle, UK.

The conference aims to meet the needs of practitioners and parents living or working with individuals with autistic spectrum disorders of all ages. The conference will be of interest to a multi-disciplinary audience of professionals in services provided by health, social services and education as well as parents and individuals with autistic spectrum disorders. It aims to disseminate good practice, raise issues of relevance to practice and facilitate a reflective and evaluative approach. This will be achieved through a selection of stimulating and thought-provoking keynote speakers and workshop sessions which cover a range of current key issues.

More information from <http://www.bild.org.uk>

### **25 November 2006**

#### **Cross Cultural Study Day on Parenting Children with ADHD**

Leuven

Organised by ADHD Belgium, a composite of Flemish, French, German and English speaking family support groups, this project has been made possible with funding provided by the Prince Philip Foundation and the premises have been donated by KBC in Leuven. There will be space for over 200 participants and simultaneous translations of the presentations will be provided in English, Dutch, French & German. For further information, email

[simon.barber@skynet.be](mailto:simon.barber@skynet.be)

## Tip of the month

*What Causes ADHD? Understanding What Goes Wrong and Why* by Joel Nigg

"If we find out that 20 percent of these cases are preventable - and, in the book I argue that 20 percent are probably preventable with attention to the things we already know - that's big news. I hope in 50 years, we'll say 50 percent is preventable."

Synthesizing a wealth of recent neuropsychological research, this groundbreaking book focuses on the multiple pathways by which attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) develops. Joel Nigg marshals the best available knowledge on what is actually going on in the brain and why, tracing the intersecting influences of genetic, neural, and environmental factors. In the process, the book confronts such enduring controversies as the validity of ADHD as a clinical construct. Specific suggestions are provided for studies that might further refine the conceptualization of the disorder, with significant potential benefits for treatment and prevention

Hardcover, ISBN: 1593852673, 422 pp, July 2006, £31.00

See also

<http://www.lansingstatejournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060705/LIFE02/607050329&template=printart>