

01 *Know more about learning difficulties*

Causes of learning difficulties

When we talk about learning difficulties here, we are referring to people of normal intelligence and low learning ability which result in poor academic performance. From the view of children's psychological quality, their temperament characteristic is one of the factors which affect their academic performance. About 10-20% of children with learning difficulties, especially children of low classes, have poor adaptability, poor contact (withdrew in initial contact with new things) and negative sentiments. If they cannot obtain help from parents and teachers timely, the consequence is that their learning progress will be increasingly behind other schoolmates. Secondly, it is about the emotional and behavior problems of children, their attention deficiency and attention disorder obstacles. At least one-third of the children who have behavioral problems are associated with learning difficulties. Emotional problems such as depression and anxiety are harmful to children's learning ability. There are others which include children's personality flaws, such as lack of willpower, laziness, dependence, lack of learning motivation and learning interest; all will greatly affect children's academic performance.

From the perspective of environmental factors, children cannot have a good learning environment and leaning conditions at home when in family, parents do not take high regards on children's learning, improper ways of education, family discord and parents with mental defects etc. In schools, the teaching attitude and ways of teaching will affect children's learning motivation and result directly. Besides we cannot ignore the causes of unhealthy influences from society.

Several common types of learning difficulties

Writing difficulties: A conspicuous trait of this kind of children is that they are always wrong in writing, putting one alphabet more or less in a word. They fail to capture many obvious messages with their eyes. This is the result of their backwardness in visual perception and visual memory. This kind of children will be easily misunderstood by teachers and parents that they have bad learning attitude.

Reading difficulties: These children usually forget the words and sentences when they pick up a pen for writing; sometimes they add words and sometimes miss words in their reading. Their composition language lacks vitality and their reading speed is especially slow. They use to remember words by heart with meaningless graphics. Therefore, they are easily tired because reading uses up much of their energy. If they cannot read effectively, they will find difficulties in every kind of homework. This is closely related to their capabilities on sense of space, visual experience and visual memory etc.

Calculating difficulties: This kind of children has comprehension difficulties in mathematics and quantity concept. They have poor spatial reasoning and cannot exercise reasoning when they encounter calculation in mathematics or complicated physic problem. In regards to this kind of children parents should, pay high attention on the development of their abilities in logical reasoning, to cultivate their ability in spatial imagination and understanding of numerical relationship and to make use of children's language strength.

Attention difficulties: Parents usually suspect that their children have ADHD, medically known as attention disorder. In class they do not listen to the lectures and their concentration lasts for a very short time. They always play tricks and get tired in their learning but they are very excited after class. Their self-control ability is very weak. They often play with children smaller than themselves and look very naive.

Student counseling services provided by the Educational and Youth Affairs Bureau

Students with special learning difficulties

If teachers or parents suspect that student has special learning difficulties, they can call or visit the Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Support and Special Education of the Educational and Youth Affairs Bureau for help. They can also refer the case to this Centre through stationed student counselor in schools. This Centre will arrange professional consultation and assessment services for student. If the student is assessed to be student with special learning difficulties, the Educational and Youth Affairs Bureau will provide support in the ways of integrated education and student will be taught in normal class. According to student special education, teacher will coordinate and work with Bureau's staff in school, student counselor, therapists and parents together to work out an individual educational plan. This plan will be adjusted and complemented according to teaching contents, assessment method and requirement.

In every academic year, the Educational and Youth Affairs Bureau will send staff to schools to provide supports for teachers. They provide suggestions for teaching strategy, curriculum and assessment recommendation etc. Sometimes at the request of teachers, staff will provide training in schools to meet teachers' needs. Some of the schools use integrated educational subsidies to hire teaching counselors to provide training in reading and writing and remedial teaching for students.

Student Counseling Services

The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau's student counseling services are divided into two types: school stationed student counseling services and non-school stationed counseling services. For staff arrangement, in the academic year 2009/2010, the number of school stationed student counselor increased to almost 120. 80 schools received the counseling services, accounting for 80% of the total number of students in secondary and primary schools in Macao. Besides starting from January 2008, the main counseling service was about providing living needs for non-fee school dropouts and their returning to campus. In the academic year 2009/2010, the number of non-stationed student counselors responsible for this kind of work was 12. There was a total number of nearly 130 staff in the front line team providing student counseling services.

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Student counselor's main work

Student counselor's main work includes two forms: counseling activity and case counseling. The counseling activity is for all students, teachers and parents of the school. It is carried out in the forms of seminars, workshops and small team activity. As for case counseling services, it mainly provides services for students who have adaption problems in learning, interpersonal relationship and family. Its purposes are to assist them to build up problem solving ability and to learn the attitude they should have when they encounter problem. Student counselor also provides suggestions for teachers and parents whenever they are in doubt.

“Non-stationed school student counselor”-main work

Non-stationed school student counselor's main work is to contact the school dropouts by visiting their homes, to understand their real needs and arrange suitable counseling activities for them. Therefore most of their works are arranged on weekend or at night.

Assistance provided to schools which have not received student counseling services

Schools which do not have student counseling services are welcome to telephone or make appointment with the Educational Psychological Counseling and Special Educational Centre and Youth activities Centre under the Educational and Youth Affairs Bureau: the Chun Jing Activity Centre at

North region and the Youth Experience Centre at Central region etc. All these Centre have counseling staff providing counseling services.

Parents and teachers who find any secondary or primary children with problems can seek for professional counseling

If there is school stationed counselors in your children's schools, you can contact the student counselors directly or through school referral; if there is no school-stationed counselors in your children's schools, you can contact the Youth Centre of our Bureau to seek answer to related doubts or to ask for assistance. Besides, citizen can make appointment for counseling services through our Bureau's "Website of Macao Youth Studies". No matter you seek assistance from school or centre, absolutely all the information is kept confidential.

For enquiry and further details on Student Counseling Services, please call 28401010 or e-mail to cappee@dsej.gov.mo, or browse the section "Student/Youth" in the website of DSEJ www.dsej.gov.mo . (above information is provided by Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Support and Special Education of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau).

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与孩子齐齐享受 “艺术的生活”

很多家长在孩子开始成长时，甚至有些在行将为人父母时，就注意到艺术教育对孩子成长的重要性。尽管不少家长对艺术只是一知半解，但都相信艺术对孩子的成长具有重要作用，有些更会在孩子仍未诞生便开始进行胎教，让怀孕的母亲经常听听古典音乐，大概大家都相信，古典音乐对孩子能发挥“陶冶性情”的作用。

艺术教育对下一代成长的意义

“艺术能陶冶性情”的说法，是由来已久的，但是否真的有效？如何才能收效？怎样才能证明有效？这些问题对家长来说，好像都不大重要，原因是大家都相信艺术是美好的东西，对孩子成长只有好处而不会有坏处，即使收不到多少“陶冶性情”的效果，亦无坏影响。

这种心态，其实亦反映了今日社会大多数人甚至包括教育工作者、艺术工作者，对艺术功能认知的不足。这亦是为什么艺术在社会上越来越边缘化的原因，艺术成为可有可无的东西，只是橱窗里的装饰品，在政府、政府官员甚至议会议员等社会领袖的眼中，文化与艺术的重要性永远只会排在教育、医疗、环保、交通、治安等等课题的后面。

事实是，艺术的重要性绝非只在于“陶冶性情”。要明白艺术教育对孩子成长的意义何在，可要对艺术的功能具有准确的认知。而这种认知可通过上世纪的“故事”来说明。

话说上世纪50年代，美国与前苏联的“冷战”处于白热化期间，前苏联在1957年成功发射第一颗人造卫星，大大震撼了美国领导层，众多专家组成小组寻找克服美方在太空竞赛方面所存在差距的方法，最后的焦点是教育系统要进行改革。到1961年美国总统甘乃迪在任时，领

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