

Dr. Mel Levine advises parents to be aware of the 7 components where a breakdown in learning may occur:

Many children are better at learning than working. There is a cardiology term called “output failure” which describes what happens when the heart muscle gives up. This is correlated to how the brain functions when for instance a child has trouble getting thoughts on paper. In fact, thought processes are generally more sophisticated than one’s writing skills. To understand the breakdown process it is important to look at the 7 components which can cause it to occur. The culprits are as follows: graphomotor, memory, language production, mental energy, production control, organizational skill, and ideation.

Graphomotor difficulties exist when the motor skills used in writing are not working properly. In effect, the art of actually writing becomes a tremendous challenge for the child who can only seem to scrawl their letters.

In the area of memory, you have retrieval which involves being able to find data in your long term memory rapidly, simultaneously and on demand. For those kids who have a difficult time writing and remembering grammar, my advice is to do a first draft without concern for punctuation and the like. Also, with an active working memory deficit, it becomes difficult to hold several ideas in your mind at once.

Language production involves the language used in school rather than the colloquial kind found with friends. It is important to be able to verbally elaborate on a subject in order to manage in the classroom. There is also something referred to as verbal mediation which is the inner voice that helps you cope with stress.

Mental energy is your mind’s ability to complete tasks and delay gratification. Children who get bored easily, or need to enjoy what they’re doing, often become fatigued when they must do tasks.

There are a number of considerations to production control. One of them is previewing, which is the ability to look ahead yet foresee the outcome beforehand. Response inhibition is exercised when one is trying not to respond to the first reaction, but rather check other options and be selective. Clearly the word, pacing, which is obvious to most of us is also another area of concern. It basically underlines the need to self-monitor to know how you are doing. In the way of reinforcement control, one needs to be able to exercise good judgment and decision-making. To accomplish this, kids should be encouraged to work more slowly.

Organizational skill revolves around time management where parents can often help work out schedules for the week with their kids; material management is the ability to maintain a semblance of where things are all the time; prioritizing is key when there is much to do as is the ability to have a capacity for multitasks.

Lastly, ideation offers the possibilities when kids can do brainstorming, problem solving and choosing topics on their own, all of which give a kid the chance to write their own script.

In dealing with kids weaknesses, it is essential to emphasize the positive. The word affinity is used to describe something kids feel passionate about and desire to develop an expertise in, This in turn will strengthen. Remember, what really counts when you grow up is how strong your strengths are!