



new

futures



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- Sand Hill School

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when something isn't right in school:

Early Intervention to Get Young Learners Back On Track

Aidan, a cheerful, spunky five-year-old boy, loves going to kindergarten. He has many friends and enjoys his playtime out in the yard on the climbing structure. Inside the classroom, however, he has trouble sitting quietly during "circle time." When teachers read a book, they are constantly asking Aidan to keep his hands in his lap as he is prone to touching, poking and bothering the child next to him. He can't sit through circle time activities without being removed. He's also not making progress with reading. He's driven to distraction even in small group instruction. The teacher is not sure if the problem is a behavior or learning issue. What she does know is that Aidan has missed many learning opportunities and something is not right.

Olivia is a polite and kind six-year-old girl. She is quiet and introverted, thoughtful and creative and has always enjoyed going to school. Suddenly, though, her parents have noticed her becoming more disengaged. She doesn't want to go to school and complains of tummy-aches. She often sits by herself at snack and lunch time. Coincidentally, her teachers have noticed that Olivia is having trouble with her reading. One day she'll know exactly the sound a "t" makes, and the next day she's completely forgotten. She is not retaining information from day to day, nor is she making the same progress as her peers.

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Dear Friends,

If you were the kind of student who breezed through school with few challenges, imagine how much differently you'd feel about yourself if every reading, writing or math assignment had been a struggle no matter how many hours you logged. Those who have never struggled in school have difficulty understanding why simply "trying harder" doesn't help kids who have learning challenges.

In this issue, I'm proud to showcase Children's Health Council's (CHC) **expanded educational services** to help kids overcome their challenges in school to reach their potential. Whether a student's learning issues are small or large, diagnosed or undiagnosed, CHC offers a range of solutions.

For evaluations, we are **now evaluating kids in a convenient one-day format**. Parents who want to know more about what is getting in the way of their child being successful in school can schedule all testing with our interdisciplinary team in one day and receive results and an abbreviated report the same day.*

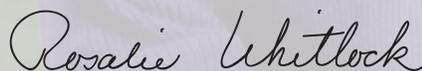
Other new services we offer for learning include **school placement services** and **consulting for parents** who want to talk to a professional about what they can do next to address their child's problems in school. See page 6 for a list of our educational services.

We're also proud to announce the **opening of Sand Hill School** (Grades K-3). The school was founded to meet the needs of children who are often overlooked when they show emerging signs of struggle. For many of these children, as school becomes more demanding and their unaddressed problems grow, they give up and decide "I'm not smart." Sand Hill School is designed to give children support for early challenges so they can begin their school career with a solid foundation to succeed. Read our feature article on page 1 to learn more about the type of students Sand Hill School serves.

Finally, we're excited about how technology can help kids with learning challenges. Not only are we incorporating state-of-the-art technology into Sand Hill School, but we have also added **assistive technology (AT)** to our suite of services. See page 5 to learn more about the power of AT.

Thank you to our donors who help make it possible for us to serve children, teens and families.

Warmly,



Rosalie Whitlock, Ph.D.
Executive Director & Educational Specialist

* Call to find out if the one-day format is appropriate for your child.

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Andre is a dynamic, creative and energetic second grader who is smart and funny and spirited in every way. From the outside, it would seem that Andre would have no trouble making friends. But his outgoing and assertive demeanor is starting to rub kids the wrong way. When he wants to join in on a game of tetherball, for instance, he grabs the ball and holds it away from the kids, stopping the game. He is desperate to join in, but can't find a way to do it that doesn't get on everyone's nerves. Kids at school intentionally leave him out of games because they know he incites negativity. At home, his parents have noticed he no longer wants to go outside and "see if anyone wants to play." He hates school and wants to be alone.

Aidan, Olivia and Andre are examples of children you might recognize. They are children who are showing emerging signs of difficulty in school. Parents may be aware that their child is going through a rough patch, but are uncertain about the scope of the problem. What's typical and what's not? What's causing the problems? For example, does Aidan have a behavior problem or are his behavior problems caused by unaddressed learning challenges and/or attention challenges? What about the social problems Andre is experiencing? How might those problems grow and interfere with his learning? Most importantly, what is the best way to help young learners like Aidan, Olivia and Andre?

Evidence suggests that early intervention is the most effective way to make life easier for that child and the family. Yet many parents opt for a wait-and-see approach and hope their child will "grow out" of the issue. Often, they keep their child in the same school and hope that next year a different teacher will make a difference. But in fact, the opposite can happen. The longer the child is delayed from getting the help he needs, the more difficult it can become for him to overcome his challenges. Joan Baran, Psychologist at Children's Health Council, comments that what becomes even more worrisome is when children start to feel badly about themselves. "They don't feel smart. They see others experiencing success much more easily and behavior difficulties can start."

The research on early intervention programs backs this up. In one study, for example, providing early intervention for skill deficits in grades K-1 built skills four times faster than addressing the same problems in fourth grade or later.* The fact is – early intervention is key. "If you intervene early, the intervention is likely to be shorter and less intense than if you wait to intervene until third or fourth grade," says Cindy Lopez, Director of Sand Hill School. "Even more," Lopez says, "you may be able to alleviate years of frustration for you and your child."

For children like Aidan, Olivia and Andre, the first step is recognizing that something doesn't feel right. Whether it's a teacher commenting on a child's reading delays or behavior issues, or a parent noticing the child's loss of desire to go to school – when a behavior has changed dramatically enough to indicate something may be wrong, that's the time to get help. Other times when intervening should be considered:

- A problem behavior is occurring over and over again.
- There's a developmentally appropriate activity the child should be able to do, but cannot, e.g., sit quietly during circle time and wait his turn to answer.
- The child shows signs of emotional distress, e.g., falls apart after school, complains of stomach aches, says, "I'm not smart," or, "Nobody likes me."

If you intervene early, the intervention is likely to be shorter and less intense.



This is tricky territory, as children may display varying degrees of traits that are part of their personalities. A good teacher can help sort out what is typical and what needs more attention. Jennifer Winters, Director of

The Bing Nursery School, comments, "It is critical for teachers to have a good sense of what child development looks like, to know what the ranges are and to know when to raise an orange flag." When in doubt, parents should trust their intuition and/or talk to a professional.

The next step is to understand how the right learning environment can help a child develop missing skills, shore up self-confidence and put the fun back in learning. For example, a child like Aidan with attention issues is capable of learning and is at risk for inappropriately being labeled a "trouble maker." He simply needs the right support to build skills and learn strategies to cope effectively with his challenges. But imagine his being in a learning environment where he is one of 20 kids. In this typical learning environment, the teacher doesn't have the time to tailor learning to fit his needs. A shy child like Olivia who is having trouble with retention may get lost at the bottom of the heap without receiving the support to reach her potential.

In large classrooms, none of these children's behaviors may be severe enough to raise a flag that they need specialized support. Typically, parents don't see the full impact of their child's problems until third or fourth grade when the work load increases, materials become more abstract and reading skills are expected to be in place. In fact, for children like these there haven't been a lot of in-school options as alternatives to the wait-and-see approach.

As a leader in child development for more than five decades, Children's Health Council (CHC) recognized the lack of options for children like Aidan, Olivia and Andre. Using the expertise of its professionals, CHC designed a school for kids to get the help they need, get back on track and successfully transition to a traditional classroom. Sand Hill School at Children's Health Council opens February 1st and serves children (kindergarten through third grade) who are bright but struggling with some combination of behavior, social and/or learning issues.

Along with academics, the school is designed to teach children how to handle problems not typically addressed in a mainstream setting. For example, how does a high-energy child learn to focus? How does a child learn to make friends when those skills don't come naturally? How does

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a child with emerging learning difficulties keep up with her peers? These are the types of issues that professionals at Sand Hill School are trained to address skillfully and sensitively.

While the teaching methods at Sand Hill School are helpful to any child, they are critical for children who are struggling. Teachers who are trained to work with struggling students deliver instruction that is: 1. multi-sensory, 2. repetitive, 3. systematic and sequential and 4. structured, direct and explicit with regular checks for understanding. *(Read more about the approach and method at www.sandhillschool.org.)*

In addition to its teaching methods, Sand Hill School stands out because of the extraordinary support children receive from child development specialists of all kinds. In addition to two credentialed teachers in every classroom of twelve, an educational specialist is assigned to each classroom to work with children every morning in small groups for instruction in reading, writing and math. Every week, each classroom has an art therapist to teach an art curriculum. Children may also have the weekly support of an additional child development specialist. Dependent on a child's needs, the teacher has the option to call on a psychologist, behavior specialist, speech-language therapist or occupational therapist to work with the child on specific skills. Finally, families will also benefit from the additional support that teachers receive from Children's Health Council specialists who will be called upon to observe children and suggest additional strategies. In addition to teachers, specialists are part of the fabric of Sand Hill School.

Elizabeth Sippl, a client of Children's Health Council and member of Sand Hill School's Advisory Committee, comments that Sand Hill School can give kids "better models on how to deal with behavioral and social challenges and have it modeled every school day for reinforcement." Her hope is that parents will be able to avoid some of the struggle and frustration her daughter and family have had to face by getting daily support early. In her experience, "The older children get, the harder it can be for them to fit in with their peer group."

The goal of early intervention at Sand Hill School is to build a solid foundation to prevent greater struggle as school becomes more challenging in third and fourth grades. Professionals at Children's Health Council are particularly attuned to the challenges that come when one way of learning doesn't fit. Committed to safeguarding a child's self-esteem,

teachers at Sand Hill School and professionals at Children's Health Council collaborate to do everything they can to ensure each child's success. With support, children like Aidan, Olivia and Andre have the chance to fit in, feel successful and reach their full potential.

Visit www.sandhillschool.org to learn more about Sand Hill School.

* National Institutes of Health

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take the struggle out of learning with assistive technology

Kyle is a seventh grader who, despite getting As and Bs, has a tough time keeping up in school. A reading assignment that takes his peers an hour to complete can take Kyle two or three hours. While Kyle is smart, he has to work harder because he struggles with reading.

Caroline has been diagnosed with dysgraphia (she has trouble writing legibly and quickly) and an auditory processing disorder (she has difficulty quickly comprehending what she hears). Now that she's in high school, she struggles to keep up during class lectures. It's difficult for her to listen, understand and take notes at the same time.

Learning challenges take all shapes and forms. Kyle is a student who could fly under the radar as he struggles through school. After all, he's getting good grades, so he must be doing fine. Caroline has diagnosed challenges, but she may be unaware of how technology could help her. Whether a student is having moderate learning challenges or has been diagnosed with a learning disability, assistive technology that is used effectively can level the playing field for kids who struggle.

What if Kyle could use a tool to reduce the time it takes him to finish a reading assignment and Caroline had a tool to help her take notes while she concentrates on a lecture? Assistive technology (AT) provides these tools. Combined with learning strategies and training, AT enables students to lower the barriers to getting work done. Applied well, the right tool can increase a student's confidence and take the struggle out of learning.

Assistive technology
"is like giving kids the power to build a house with a power saw instead of a hand saw."

The Assistive Technology Tool Box

Assistive technology can be anything from a low-tech tool, such as a pencil grip, to a high-tech tool, such as speech-to-text software that translates the spoken word into typed text on the computer.

Some tools include:

- Audio book
- Vibrating watch
- Talking calculator or dictionary
- Text-to-speech software (*the written word made audible*)
- Speech recognition software (*translates the spoken word into text*)
- Graphic organizer software (*outliner for visual thinkers to organize their thoughts*)
- Word prediction software (*suggests correctly-spelled words based on letters already typed*)
- Virtual math manipulatives (*uses visuals to explain abstract math concepts*)



- Livescribe® smartpen (*pen that records what a person writes, what it hears and synchronizes the two for rapid access*)
- Online project calculator (*helps pace completion of large projects*)

Match The Tool To The Student

Running out to buy a tool to help your student who struggles might be your first instinct, but the first step toward finding a solution is to match the tool to the student's learning strengths and weaknesses and to the particular challenges he faces.

Challenges AT Can Help With:

- Slower reading and limited comprehension
- Difficulty brainstorming and organizing ideas for a paper
- Trouble quickly taking notes that are legible
- Difficulty breaking large projects down into manageable chunks
- Trouble getting distracted surfing the Internet when researching a paper
- Difficulty working through math word problems

An assistive technology specialist with training in both educational issues and technology

is equipped to help a student and family choose from a range of possibilities. For example, possibilities for Caroline who struggles with notetaking include notetaking software, portable word processing or a notetaking template supplied by her teacher. But given Caroline's strengths, weaknesses and preferences, Shelley Haven, AT specialist, determined that Livescribe's smartpen is the best solution for her to take notes during class lectures.

Now that Caroline has a tool, she will need to learn how to use it and apply it to address her particular challenges.

Learning Strategies For Effective Use Of The Tool

Teaching Caroline effective notetaking strategies for her challenges is paramount to enabling her to leverage the power of a tool. For example, how can she take abbreviated notes on what's most important so that she can spend more time focused on listening? What about when she doesn't understand a concept presented in a lecture? What should she write down to help her go back and review? And how can she do all of this without having to record and listen to every lecture two or three times?

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learning services

FOR KIDS:

Evaluation: Addresses concerns and identifies strategies to help
NEW: 1-Day Evaluation Clinics

Individual Tutoring, Coaching & Training: Core academic skills, learning strategies (organization and planning, notetaking, time management, self-awareness and self-advocacy), assistive technology

Groups for Kids: Build skills and increase confidence

FOR PARENTS:

NEW: **Parent Consultation:** Understand your student's learning needs and help with assistive technology

NEW: **School Placement Services:** Determine the best fit for your student

Parent Coaching & Education: Increase your knowledge and skill

therapeutic groups for kids

SPOT: A Social, Speech and Motor Readiness Program for Preschoolers / Ages 3 – 5 / P

Is your preschooler struggling with connecting with other children, talking to others, riding a bike and keeping his body calm? Does he have challenges with transitions or circle time? Does he also struggle on the playground or with art? Staffed by speech-language, psychology and occupational therapy professionals, this group mimics a preschool program to build language, motor and social skills.

Kindergarten Readiness Program / Ages 4½ – 6 / P

Your child may have special needs or be a typically developing child who is immature for his age. In this group we mimic a kindergarten program and develop social, communication, pre-academic and fine-motor skills to prepare your child for school routines.

Get it Write & Fun to Write

Group 1: Ages 4 – 5 / Group 2: Ages 6 – 8 / Group 3: Ages 8 – 10

Is your child having trouble with handwriting and drawing? Does he avoid writing and become easily frustrated? Using a multi-sensory approach such as Handwriting Without Tears®, this group will develop essential fine-motor skills and ease frustration while having fun.

Math Busters / Ages 9 – 12 / P

This review group is for students who have not fully mastered memorizing the basic multiplication and division facts. Through memory strategies and a variety of games, kids and their parents practice math facts in a fun, supportive environment.

P = A separate parent component is part of this group.
Groups available based on demand.

Learn more: www.chconline.org

parent education classes

Choosing the Right Preschool / NEW CLASS

Class #20

WED, JAN 19, 6:30 – 8:00PM

with Joan Baran, Ph.D.

Montessori? Play Based? Academic? The choices for preschool can be tough. In this class, the major types of preschools will be reviewed to help parents determine which may be a good fit for their child's temperament and needs. Co-sponsored with the Parents' Club of Palo Alto and Menlo Park (PAMP)

FREE CLASS / PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Other topics coming in Winter/Spring 2011:

Conquering Math Anxiety

Understanding Reading: Identifying & Addressing Problems

Technology to Improve Notetaking & Organization

Technology to Take the Dread Out of Writing

Demystifying Learning Disabilities (LD):

Increase Your Family's Understanding

Autistic Learning Profiles

ADHD series: Learn Strategies for
Organization and Planning Challenges

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A student like Caroline should be taught learning strategies for notetaking before diving into a tool as a solution. Once Caroline starts using the strategy and tool together, she'll benefit by reviewing what's working and what's not with someone who can coach her to get through the bumps of using the new tool.

Avoid Looking Different

Another thing to consider is your student's perspective about using the technology. Will he embrace it as beneficial or will he avoid it because it makes him feel alienated or different from other kids?

"For preteens and teens, fitting in is crucial," says Shelley Haven. "When selecting appropriate technology, it's important to be sensitive to their feelings about how they'll be seen by their peers."

Rosalie Whitlock, Executive Director at Children's Health Council, concurs, "Every time you are dealing with learning challenges, you are also dealing with a student's sense of self. That's why any solution has to also fit with how the student feels about using it."

Fortunately, there are many solutions that allow a student to avoid feeling conspicuous. Kyle, for example, can listen to *A Tale of Two Cities* on his smartphone without drawing attention to his challenge.

Whether a student is having moderate challenges or has been diagnosed with a learning disability, assistive technology can level the playing field.

Simple, Powerful Solutions

AT solutions don't have to be complicated to be powerful. A manual reading guide, for instance, can have a major, positive impact for a child who has trouble visually tracking words while reading. "The simplest solution is sometimes the best solution," says Haven.

But the critical factor to success, Haven emphasizes, is matching the right the tool with the specific needs of the learner and teaching him how to use the tool effectively.

Educational Specialists at Children's Health Council who are accustomed to teaching students learning strategies are now increasing the power of these strategies by combining them with appropriate assistive technology tools. Ann Lyke, Educational Specialist, explains that in the right situation combining a learning strategy with assistive technology "is like giving kids the power to build a house with a power saw instead of a hand saw."

From typically developing kids like Kyle who work extra hard in school to kids like Caroline who have diagnosed learning disabilities, the effective use of assistive technology can be a powerful way to help struggling learners feel empowered and successful.

Shelley Haven provides assistive technology services at Children's Health Council. Services include: assessment for the right tool, training for parents and kids and follow-up support.

special gifts to CHC

The following special gifts were made to CHC in memory or in honor of loved ones between April 1, 2010 and October 31, 2010.

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- Grades K-3
- 6:1 student/teacher ratio
- State-of-the-art technology

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