

# **Understanding Developmental Dyspraxia: A Textbook for Students and Professionals**

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Portwood begins with the issue of defining dyspraxia and drawing our attention to the overlapping nature of dyspraxia and many other disorders, notably, autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia and ADHD. She lists the diagnostic criteria for these disorders and stresses the importance of addressing all the needs of the child rather than focusing on those which are highlighted by one specific label.

Chapter 2 deals with the neurological basis for dyspraxia. While it is quite detailed, it is presented in a manner that is easy to understand. The neurological theme is continued in Chapter 3, in which Portwood discusses the developmental differences between the sexes. She suggests that biological differences should be taken into account when deciding the teaching strategies to be used. The chapter on neuropsychological assessment looks in detail at the Wechsler Intelligence Scales (WISC III).

The author includes lists of observable characteristics to be found at various ages from under three years to adulthood. She stresses the importance of these observations while outlining the essentials of the different types of clinical assessments. Most helpfully, she provides various questionnaires, screening proforma and checklists of motor performance.

She suggests how one might best optimize the educational environment and lists numerous case studies from her own research to substantiate her opinions. While the setting is within the English education system, it should be useful for Irish teachers in informing discussion on this topic. The appendices include Dyspraxia Foundation publications and useful names and addresses.

This is a useful book with a lot of practical information for students and professionals. The focus, however, is on the work of the speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and psychologist. As a teacher, I think a lot more benefit may be derived from Portwood's 1996 publication, *Developmental Dyspraxia: A Practical Guide for Parents and Professionals*, also published by Fulton.

**UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTAL DYSPRAXIA: A TEXTBOOK FOR STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS** by Madeleine Portwood, is published by David Fulton Publishers, London, 2000, and costs Stg£16.00.

