

Perspectives on Teaching Special Needs

One of our children doesn't fit any classical "special needs" categories per se, but let me tell you, that child has special needs which require special treatment! From day one, this is the one that has taken all of our energy and creativity and patience to train and nurture and educate. We have depended heavily on prayer and the Word of God for encouragement.

Over the years, we have researched our child's symptoms and have found some or many of them listed in many special needs categories from simply hyper-emotional and rebellious to ADHD to Asperger's to Sensory Integration and even recently, to being gifted. I just found some good information on gifted children [here](#) which explained many of our child's struggles and abilities all in one place.

One of the first resources that helped me tremendously was the book, *Homeschooling the Challenging Child*, by one of my favorite authors, Christine Field. This book goes over many special needs, what type of learning styles these children have, resources to use, as well as practical ways to homeschool children with these needs.

Whatever the needs of your child, he is made uniquely by the hand of God to be used by Him for His purposes. If they are fighters, they can be trained to be warriors in God's army. If they are quiet and compassionate, they can show forth the mercy and love of God. If they are very childlike and innocent, they may be those who are "pure in heart" and will see God. If they are extremely intelligent or extremely talkative, they can be useful movers and shakers and orators for the Kingdom of God. Each one is God's "poema"--his workmanship--created in Christ Jesus for good works. God desires to use all of our special needs for His Glory!

~Deborah Wuehler

The special needs children I know most about are those with a neurological problem called mixed dominance. That is, they may be right-hand dominant but foot, eye, and ear may not all match. Probably a majority of children labeled dyslexic have some form of this problem. *Dys-* means trouble, *-lex* means words, so *dyslexia* simply means trouble with words. It names a symptom, not a cause or condition. You parents already see the symptoms, and a counselor may diagnose and say "Yes, he has trouble with words," but she speaks doctorese and uses the Greek word. If a counselor will find a cause and suggest a treatment, then that can help.

Why is crossed dominance a reading problem? Because sensory messages from one side of the body go to the opposite side of the brain. If the right eye and left ear send messages to the brain about a phonics sound or word, the messages go to different sides of the brain, and the brain must "stutter" a little to pull them together.

To diagnose mixed dominance at home, use what are called cross pattern exercises. For instance, step forward with one foot and point to it with the opposite hand reaching downward. Then begin walking and point to each step with the opposite hand. If the child cannot do this rhythmically, then work on it a few minutes each day until he can. Try crawling in cross pattern. Make up

more cross pattern exercises. The same exercises that diagnose will also help treat. If one eye needs strengthening, try covering the other eye for a few minutes each day. Eye doctors who work with vision development can help with more complex eye problems. This is not the 20/20 acuity that everybody checks for; it concerns eye dominance, eyes focusing and tracking together, and other necessary abilities.

Pictures and more cross dominant ideas are detailed in an appendix of my book, *A Biblical Home Education*. This treatment seems like magic, usually curing the learning problem in a few short weeks. The ten percent who cannot be cured are those who inherit the condition rather than developing it in early life. Those are the ones who need the multi-sensory phonics and spelling work. They can learn to read but will have to work harder than most children. They gravitate to math and science subjects that require less reading than literature and history do.

God has a plan for each life.

~Ruth Beechick

I have special needs children. In fact, *all* my children are special needs children. First, there's Ben (15) who really needs me to listen to him talk . . . because he talks a lot. Then there's Sam (13) who likes to tease but who needs me to know when it's time to stop teasing and be understanding. Katherine (11) needs me to be extra gentle during these "changing" years.

Ike (9) needs lots of one-on-one attention. Abe (7) needs snuggling and closeness. Maggie Rose (4) needs me to help her use self-control. Cal (2) needs me to read books to him and Jed (7 mos.) needs me to smile at him.

Now before I get an angry note from some well-meaning mother who insists that I'm making light of or minimizing special needs children, let me say that I am not doing that at all. I know some of you have children who demand incredible sacrifice and labor on your part. I know you lie awake at night wondering if you can make it through another day. I'm certainly *not* trying to equate my "special needs" kids with your "special needs" kids. But I am trying to point out that *all* of our children have special needs, and that we've done our children and ourselves a disservice by labeling our special needs children as "special needs." They're just children like all the rest.

Yes, they have special needs, but as I've already described, all children do to some extent. Amazingly, God has given you the abilities to meet those special needs and has given your children the mom and dad just right for them. You don't have to feel inadequate or apologize for their lack of progress, or label them as a "special needs" child.

All you have to do is love, train, and prepare them for *their* future. Oh, yeah, and one more thing . . .

Be real,

Biographical Information

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Dr. Ruth Beechick is a lifelong educator who now writes mostly for homeschoolers, whom she sees as bright lights in these days before Christ returns. Dr. Ruth Beechick has taught hundreds of people to read, Her own newest books are World History Made Simple: Matching History with the Bible (www.HomeschoolingBooks.com or 1-800-421-6645. and A Biblical Home Education.

Todd Wilson, “The Familyman,” author of Lies Homeschooling Moms Believe, Help! I’m Married to a Homeschooling Mom, and The Official Book of Homeschooling Cartoons, is a dad, writer, conference speaker, and former pastor. Todd’s humor and gut-honest realness have made him a favorite speaker at homeschool conventions across the country and a guest on Focus on the Family. Todd and his wife Debbie homeschool their eight children in northern Indiana when they’re not traveling around the country encouraging moms and dads. You can visit Familyman Ministries at www.familymanweb.com.

Deborah Wuehler is the senior editor for The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine. She resides in Roseville, California, with her husband Richard. They are the parents of eight children: three teenagers, three elementary, a preschooler, and a baby. They have been homeschooling since the birth of their firstborn who is now graduated from high school. Many of her articles can be found on www.Crosswalk.com, and many other homeschooling sites. She is a group leader in her local homeschooling support organization and she loves digging for buried treasure in the Word, reading, writing, homeschooling, and dark chocolate! Email her at senioreditor@TheHomeschoolMagazine.com.