

# Learning disability: a problem that can be helped

by Kerry Chalmers  
Are you worried about the progress of your child? Do other kids make fun of him and have you and his teacher begun to believe he really is stupid? If so, he may be one of the more than 100,000 children in Ontario with a learning disability, often referred to as a "perceptual handicap". He may have been mislabelled as a slow learner or even retarded and unfortunately by the time you decide to seek assistance things may be at a crisis level.

Dr. Griffith Morgan is the Director of the Centre for Education Disabilities at the University of Guelph. He is a teacher, a psychologist and a professor in family studies and has some serious concerns about our present system of education. The centre consists of offices, classrooms and assessment areas and is responsible for research and development work under the head of learning disabilities. Practical community work is constantly being done with children as well as research.

"We assess children that have been referred to us; advise their parents, plan programs with and for them," Dr. Morgan outlined, "and this can involve making liaisons with schools."

"This process is important because we find out what the difficulty is and then stand by the family and help them," he added.

**Understanding**  
The doctor stressed that early understanding of the problem is important and explained that usually by the time a child reaches the centre he is 10 or 11 years old and has had significant school failure. Sometimes a learning disability is misread by a teacher who sees it as a behavior problem.

The situation becomes worse as the year progresses and parents are shocked to find that Johnny may have to repeat a year because he can't keep up in reading or mathematics. He feels that it can become an "ego thing" with a teacher who will try to



**PROGRAM IDEAS** are shared by Dr. Griffith Morgan, Director of the Centre for Education Disabilities at the University of Guelph and mathematics tutor Marlene McKendry. Mrs. McKendry has been involved with centre for six years.

cope with the problem without proper guidance. They don't like the child but won't let go.

**Get help**  
Dr. Morgan feels the parents should give the professionals a chance if there are concerns. He suggests a family doctor could assist if the child is pre-school or the teacher, principal or school psychologist for the school age child, but says not to hesitate in getting another opinion if things still seem unsatisfactory.

McKendry has been with the centre for six years working with children.

She feels the staff are very fortunate to have Dr. Morgan to work with and seek out when they have concerns about their program.

**Workshops**  
Mrs. McKendry and Mrs. Pat Noakes set up workshops for teachers, sharing ideas that have been successful with children. They recently flew to the Lakehead where a workshop for district teachers was held. Mrs. McKendry feels these skills are useful for all teachers, not just special education staff. She also mentioned that often principals attend these workshops to update themselves and gather useful information. Mrs. Noakes works with language arts, Mrs. McKendry with mathematics.

**Used here**  
Rockwood Centennial Public School has used material from the Centre for Education Disabilities for their remedial program. Principal Grant McTae feels the ministry has made some steps in recent years in assisting special education but does see a need for continued change in this area. He feels it is most difficult for the student with average or above average intelligence who has a learning difficulty.

**Decision**  
After an assessment of the child is done, a decision is made. Many times tests do nothing more than reassure a parent who finds out the child is on the right track, but other times a tutor must be found and the school must be contacted to try and work out a program that will work for that particular student.

**Association**  
There is a group of parents in Ontario who have joined together to better the conditions for the learning disabled child; the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Parents share experiences and find strength knowing they are not alone and that there are thousands of children suffering from the same problem as their child. This group is attempting to ensure that "not only their child but all children have the opportunity to receive an education appropriate to their individual needs." The Wellington County Chapter have a community resource centre, sponsored by the A.C.T.D., Royal City and Guelph Kiwanis Clubs, that is available at Guelph C.V.I. every Tuesday evening from 7-9:30 p.m.

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**Outbacks**  
The centre staff is concerned with the recent cutbacks in some special education programs in Ontario. Dr. Morgan feels someone is not doing their job and is troubled that it took until a month ago for the government to admit

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## Free Press Rockwood and District Horticultural club has list of plantings

"We want to involve everyone in our immediate and long range plans to 'Make Rockwood More Beautiful'." That was the theme and the consensus of the meeting of the Rockwood Horticultural Club held on Wednesday evening, April 20 at the Town Hall. Because of the great natural beauty of its setting, the members of the year-old group, now about 50 persons from the village and the surrounding district, have set a three phase objective for making the most of the village's superb location for the delight and pleasure of residents and those passing through.

at latest next spring, after the surfacing of the roads, repairs to the boulevards and the widening of Highway 7 have been completed.

**Long range**  
As a long range objective, a major planting scheme for strategic places in the village was considered. One idea was to focus on the development of rock gardens which could be a unique and singularly appropriate way of creating some town beauty spots. There are some handsome outcroppings of rock which would lend themselves to this sort of gardening, and of course, this would imply an ongoing commitment by interested people.

Ways of involving residents, merchants, youth and school children were discussed, amongst them one that was put into operation at the meeting, namely dividing the membership into teams, each of whom would have a specific assignment. These duties were accepted by the members present, and approaches will be made to others in the community for their cooperation.

Through the courtesy of Yosef Drenters, a tour of the grounds at the Rockwood Academy has been arranged for Sunday, May 15 from 2 to 4 o'clock, when it is expected the spring gardens should be at their best. This is a repeat of a most successful first venture last year. The general public will be welcomed at a modest fee, but the event will be free of charge for members. New memberships will be available. Refreshments and a social time will add to the pleasure of the afternoon.

**Depend on teacher**  
Dr. Morgan feels schools should be made more efficient and that teachers need to know more about kids—how to group them and select them for programs. A successful classroom depends almost solely on the teacher and if children are selected and grouped properly they will know how to make use of resources and aids, according to the doctor.

The cedar rail planter boxes at each entrance to the village are showing the tulips which were planted last fall, and these will be followed by a gay medley of annual flowers, to be donated and cared for by the members. The flower beds at the cemetery and at the cenotaph will also be cared for by the club, by special arrangement with the village trustees and the township council. There are plans to install litter bins at strategic places in the village and to try actively to educate people to use these consistently. Approaches are planned to local merchants to enlist their cooperation by providing trash baskets where appropriate. Children and adults will be asked to share in a major clean up early in May.

A start will be made shortly with plans for tree and shrub planting perhaps this fall, or

Firefighters in Milton took delivery of a new \$21,623 mini-pumper last week. The truck will be used mainly to combat grass fires and calls in the rural area. The truck will be stationed at Campbellville.



**JOSEPH DRENTERS** spoke to students at Rockwood Centennial Public School last week as part of Education Week. He discussed the history of the academy and described his research. The students were fascinated by the talk and the many pieces of history he brought with him, including letters written home from former students, slates and alleys as well as many pictures.

### Rockwood Roundup

by Kerry Chalmers  
Communication is a concern for the Board of Trustees. They ask village residents to let them know of concerns so they can act on them. The next meeting is May 30 and all residents are welcome to join in.

Clean up day for Rockwood will take place May 14. All garbage too big for regular pick-up can be left out on Saturday with the regular garbage. Stoves, chestfreezers etc. will be removed.

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Pioneer Day is planned for July 2 and the trustees have extended a welcome to the scouts, cubs, guides and brownies to use the town hall for any event they would like to hold. The trustees will assist wherever possible. A coffee perk from the Scout and Cub Association was appreciated by the trustees for use at the fund raising dance.

The money is earmarked for changing road signs from the miles measurement to metric.

The metric system is being "shoved down our throats", Krantz told council.

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C. Thompson, Clerk.

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