

School Choices Discussion

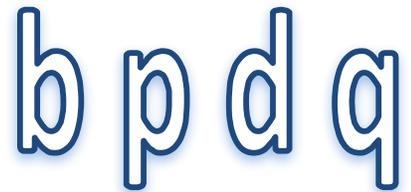
If you missed the October 12th **Staff / Parent Discussion on Making School Choices**, you can find the handouts on the Children's School web site in the "For Parents" section. Remember to **Focus on the MATCH** between your child, your family, and the school rather than seeking an absolute best choice (i.e., one school that's best for all children in all families). **Take a BROAD, LONG-TERM VIEW** including your priorities for future years' programs as well as other children in the family so that you can avoid multiple school changes and placements of siblings in too many different schools.

Perhaps you wondered ...

... whether all children write letters or read numbers backwards or whether it's a sign of dyslexia, etc.

The simple answer is that it's typical. Basically, until children encounter letters and numerals, the orientation of an object is not a factor in its name. A dog is a dog no matter which way it's facing or whether you view it from the right or left or above or below. So, children are not used to encoding the orientation and using that information to decide what to call something.

All of a sudden, with letters and numerals, orientation matters, sequence matters, and position on the page matters, etc. Partly, children have to be told that these things matter, and they have to have the short-term memory capacity to store all the information at one time. Usually, adults are good at telling them what matters, but we have to be patient until they mature enough to hold that much information in memory at once. With lower case letters, p, d, q, and b are the worst because they're all basically a circle and a line but in all the possible orientations relative to each other. Sigh.



It's not unusual for us to see some of these issues in kindergarten and 1st grade. By age 7, there should be enough memory capacity to handle them, which is why challenges such as dyslexia aren't typically diagnosed until that time. Because we know the errors are common and that maturity is the main factor in remedying them, we do not make a big deal about correcting them. Instead, we want to encourage the children to do as much beginning writing and reading as they can, and we don't want our corrections to discourage their efforts. That being said, there are a few strategies that adults can use to help children work from left to right, top to bottom. For example, you may see teachers use a green dot on the left and a red dot on the right, so they tell the children to start at the green dot. With reading, we'll often use a finger to cue where to start since we don't want to write in the book.

14 vs. 41

Number errors like saying fourteen when you see 41 are an artifact of English and rarely happen in languages that label their numbers in ways that make more sense (like ten one for 11 and ten two for 12).

Whoever invented the English number system did children a disservice by putting the four first in fourteen, just like forty-one, so the number names are actually backwards in the teens. For that reason, the research shows that essentially all English speaking children make teen errors into elementary school and few whose languages use a consistent numbering system ever make them.