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Book Review: Visual Secrets for School Success

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Book Review: Visual Secrets for School Success

Abstract

Book Review

Keywords

Learning Problems, Vision Therapy, Visual Processing, Guided Activities

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Montecalvo B, *Visual Secrets for School Success*. Author Academy Elite; 2020. \$29.99, 224 pages, ISBN: 978-1-64085-651-6, Kindle, \$9.99, e-book ISBN: 978-1-64085-652-3, Paperback, \$14.99, ISBN: 978-1-64085-650-9.

Parents of children who have learning problems, or those of children who are simply having difficulty keeping up with academic activities, are often looking for guidance or strategies that might improve the learning ability of their child. One key area which can be modified to improve learning is how the child processes information visually.

The author of this book found that out personally when her children entered a new school environment and faced some of these challenges. However, because of her specialization in vision therapy, she used her knowledge “to develop strategies for my kids so they would be more efficient at completing their assignments in school.” So, given the success with her own family, she decided to share that information with families who may not have access to a thorough optometric assessment to evaluate those skills necessary for academic success. That is the audience for whom this book is written. And, while the information is valuable for enhancing visual skills for improved visual processing, the reader should also seek out guidance of those professionals who will test for visually related learning challenges and subsequently give more specific strategies for achieving visual success, supplementing the information in this book.

The book is divided into three parts with six appendices. The first three chapters serve to give background information to help those who lack knowledge of visual functioning to understand how complex the visual processes for learning are, beyond 20/20 visual acuity and “normal” eye health. Dr. Montecalvo then explains how best to use the remainder of the book, including reminding the reader that they and their “student” might feel overwhelmed, but she suggests that they only do activities for approximately 30 minutes at a time. She also discusses setting up a good ergonomic workspace for maximum benefit when doing the activities she recommends.

Part two covers visually guided activities for handwriting, spelling, composition, math, and reading comprehension. Each of these chapters begins with a table which describes the visual skills necessary for the task being addressed, as well as definitions of those skills. Then Dr. Montecalvo gives activities to enhance those specific skills. Importantly, she stresses that helping a student to be successful while doing these tasks requires a coaching-type attitude and points out that coaches often ask players to modify a skill in order to improve some aspect of their performance. Typically, in response, players attempt to modify their behavior and, when successful, coaches then complement the player on that achievement. The same approach should be applied with these activities. An example might help to appreciate this process: take spelling. First the visual skills necessary for spelling are described which include visualization, imagery, visual memory, visual sequential memory, non-imagery spatial processing and visual discrimination of size, space, and shape. Then activities to enhance these skills are offered.

In the third section, topics reviewed include taking advantage of spare time in school, being organized, and working smarter not harder, again with visual skills being described for these areas. Finally, there are six appendices which include identifying optometrists who assess the visual skills identified in this book, some questions to ask to see if the eye doctor might test for

the skills deemed necessary to be successful, some components of a comprehensive eye examination, and an example of a 12-week visual program for skill enhancement.

This book is well-written and easy for a lay person to read and could be an important adjunct to a thorough functional visual assessment. I would encourage any optometrist managing children's vision to be familiar with this book as a potential resource.