

Fifteen-Ten Commandments of Learning Disabilities

Jeanne McRae McCarthy

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1. Thou art a member of the most honored profession charged with the responsibility of teaching all children. Thou shalt not put false gods before thee, whether they are neurology, psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology or electroencephalography, expecting them to assume your charge: to teach.
2. Thou shalt not take my name in vain. I am a child who does not learn. Thou shalt not label me with such epithets as brain damaged, dyslexic, hyperkinetic, or minimal brain dysfunction.
3. Remember thou that I need to be taught how to learn what you want me to learn.
4. Honor my abilities as well as my disabilities.
5. Remember that children who do not learn do so for an infinite variety of reasons. The least likely and most difficult to document at this stage of knowledge in the science of neuroanatomy is that which attempts to relate the non-learning to the condition of the brain itself.
6. Thou shalt not over-estimate nor under-estimate the severity of my problem. Thee does not yet know the prevalence of learning disabilities in the public school population.
7. Thou shalt not forget that severe learning disabilities is not a dichotomy. The child doesn't either have it or not have it like measles.
8. Thou shalt not get bogged down in the organic – not necessarily organic controversy (the purist-pragmatist controversy).
9. Thou shalt not engage in professional haggles over whether the child is emotionally disturbed or brain damaged.
10. Thou shalt never again list a set of characteristics of children with learning disabilities. These are now acutely aware of the fact that each child with a severe learning disability is idiosyncratic unto himself.
11. Thou shalt remember that the diagnosis of severe learning disabilities is by its very nature temporary and ephemeral.
12. Thou shalt not covet more research-base to your educational practice than exists in fact.
13. Thou shalt remember that it is very easy to tell parents what not to do, but very difficult to tell them what to do.
14. Thou shalt not indulge capriciously in the referral game, but shall judiciously check each agency before referring parents to yet another source of help.
15. Thou shalt remember that these children do belong in your classroom. They do belong in your school.