AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL ISSUES by Mary Cunningham

- FASD is the spectrum of physical, cognitive &/or behavioural characteristics educators and other professionals in the school system may see in students with FASD.
- FASD is caused only by maternal drinking in a pregnancy. Sometimes you will see the term PAE or Pre-natal Alcohol Exposure to refer to the cause or etiology of FASD.
- FASD is a brain-based set of disabilities. Nothing will work until this fact is understood and accepted. All people with FASD have brains that work – but differently from “normal.”
- The brain damage of FASD is permanent and cannot be fixed at the present time so educators should concentrate on the accommodations and program modifications that all of these children will need.
- There is a new realization that there are many other disorders similar to FASD which also feature brain damage. We call all of them Neurobehavioural Disorders and they appear to respond to the same accommodation and modification strategies needed for FASD. These include but are not limited to: ADD/ADHD, Asperger’s and Tourette’s Syndromes, Acquired Brain Injury, anoxia at birth, several learning disabilities and students affected by trauma.
- All students with FASD are not all the same and exhibit a wide range of disabilities.
- Fortunately all students with FASD have a wide range of aptitudes and abilities which must be developed if there is to be any hope of a functional adulthood.
- Focusing on their aptitudes and talents rather than disabilities is one of the bases of success with children with FASD.
- The strategies and thinking shifts in this resource will help ALL students with brain-based disabilities. It is important to understand that every school system has many, many students with FASD but most are misdiagnosed as having some other condition.
- FASD-tuned strategies will NOT hurt ANY pupil but will help almost all of them.
- Re-framing “dysfunctional” behaviour as a product of brain damage is a key to success.
- Learn to see these students as “hurt” rather than “bad” (IE. Badly behaved).
- It is not that students with FASD “won’t” behave properly, they “can’t” behave. (D.Malbin)
- More than anything else children with FASD just want to fit in and be accepted.
- The parents and caregivers of children diagnosed or suspected of having an FASD are, at present, the real experts on how to care for them and achieve success.
- Using the parents and caregivers as “experts” will make an educational professional’s job much easier.