

Foreword

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D.

When I started writing *Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*, my plan was to write a short book for parents with no references. It just didn't turn out that way. As a recovering academic, I found it impossible to write anything without citations! And since it was the first book I had written on a concept I had developed over a 20-year period, I felt compelled to include all the theoretical underpinnings; methods of clinical assessment; research on the *Visual-Spatial Identifier*; the introverted personality type often found in visual-spatial learners (VSLs); the interaction of VSLs with giftedness, learning disabilities and AD/HD; tons of teaching techniques; and, to my surprise, a chapter on VSL adults. The book clearly had its own agenda—I was just the scribe.

Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids is the book I wanted to write. But I'm glad that Allie Golon wrote it. She actually knows the visual-spatial construct better than I do! In addition to reading and re-reading copious drafts of *Upside-Down Brilliance*, Allie is an artist living with an entire family of VSLs. She has infused the book with marvelous stories about her sons, Sam and Matt, and her husband, Bill, as well as delicious anecdotes she has obtained from parents through the many listserves in which she participates. *Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids* is a joy to read.

We've used some of the same cartoons in *Upside-Down Brilliance* and *Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids* because Allie came up with most of the ideas for Buck Jones' illustrations. Despite the surface similarities, the books are really quite different from each other. Allie brings a fresh perspective and offers countless ideas to parents of VSLs. Every chapter is filled with suggestions that parents can implement immediately. The book is a treasure-trove!

Parents can discover if their child is visual-spatial very quickly by glancing at the quiz on page 17: "*Is Your Child a Visual-Spatial Learner?*" in Chapter 2. The rest of the chapter is devoted to further exploration of the checklist, complete with anecdotes and helpful parenting tips. Chapter 3 covers the most difficult aspects of dealing with visual-spatial children on the home front: chores, getting them off to school in the morning; bedtime; visual-spatials and auditory-sequentials in the same family. Chapters 5 and 6 concentrate on parent advocacy in the schools, including practical hints for helping them stay focused, reading methods, spelling secrets, writing clues, keyboarding, organizational skills, math facts without memorization, and the bane of their existence: homework

At this point in time, schools tend to be focused on the left-hemispheric skills of reading (phonetically), writing (by hand), and arithmetic (calculation and rote memorization). VSLs often are crushed in traditional classrooms, where they are evaluated on the basis of their left-hemispheric abilities, while their right-hemispheric brilliance is ignored. When parents find themselves against a brick wall, after they have tried valiantly to get school personnel to understand their child's learning style, it is time

to consider alternatives. Allie homeschooled her boys for five years, and she has a wealth of experience to share with readers on this subject. She addresses the pros and cons of homeschooling, unschooling, partial homeschooling and afterschooling. Homeschoolers will love her list of resources in Appendix B.

Allie and I are hopeful that in the near future schools will become more responsive to VSLs. Most educators that I have addressed in the last few years are familiar with the term, “visual-spatial learner.” Some are identifying these children on their own and trying to accommodate them with more visually presented information; encouragement to create visual images in their minds in response to instruction; fewer timed tests; reduced drill and repetition; less emphasis on making students show their work; grading ideas separately from the mechanics of spelling, grammar and punctuation; substitution of more creative work than a written paper to demonstrate mastery; and more reliance on the computer. Teachers want to reach these children; they just need more support. We encourage parents to share our books with educators and to acknowledge all the teachers who are accommodating to their children’s learning style.

I know you will enjoy *Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids*. Happy reading!

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D.

Author, *Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*