

## **BRIGHT KIDS, BAD GRADES**

*Topic: Learning Disabilities*

### **The Facts**

- Approximately 4 million school-age children have learning disabilities (*Pediatric Neurology*, 2003)
- The most common learning disabilities are noted in reading and language skills (Schwab Learning and National Institute of Mental Health, 2003)
- People with learning disabilities can and quite often do go on to lead successful and happy lives (Schwab Learning, 2003)

### **Start a Conversation**

- How do kids with learning disabilities differ from "normal" kids? What is a normal student? What is an LD student? Is either title fair? Why or why not?
- How do we treat students with learning differences in our schools? Do you think we treat people with learning differences fairly and appropriately in our community? In our family? What can we do to be more sensitive to people with learning disabilities?
- How can we as a family help each other develop an "I can do it" attitude? How can we help each other find success in school and in life?

### **Advice From the Experts**

According to experts at Schwab Learning and the National Institute for Mental Health, learning disabilities are disorders of the brain. They affect the way all kinds of people – adults as well as children – with average intelligence receive, process or express information. Learning disabilities affect the skills of reading, listening, speaking, writing and/or mathematics. People cannot be cured of learning disabilities, but they can learn ways of dealing with and compensating for them in school and in life. Experts offer the following advice for parents of a child who is struggling with a learning disability:

- **Talk and listen.** Encourage your child to talk about his/her learning challenges and accept them.
- **Foster Strengths.** Help your child develop strengths, talents and interests.
- **Set a good example.** Turn off the television and read or write letters or play games together.
- **Reinforce what is important.** Try to refer to your child's challenges as learning differences; he/she is smart, he/she just learns differently than other students.
- **Provide encouragement.** Give lots of praise and support your child's efforts.

