

Educational Implications

Some important beginning objectives for teachers with students having cerebral palsy are: (1) to modify the classroom environment to accommodate the student's movement, and (2) to become familiar with the student's primary and preferred methods of communication. The quadriplegic student in particular may use a combination of augmentative devices, including a communication board with symbols, words, and letters on it, a computerized communication device with a keyboard, digital display, and/or voice simulator, and a unicorn stick (strapped to the head) or other pointing device. Communication may be awkward at first, but given a supportive environment the teacher and other students will gradually learn the language of gesture, eye movements, and sound that many students with CP use to communicate.

Resources

United Cerebral Palsy Association

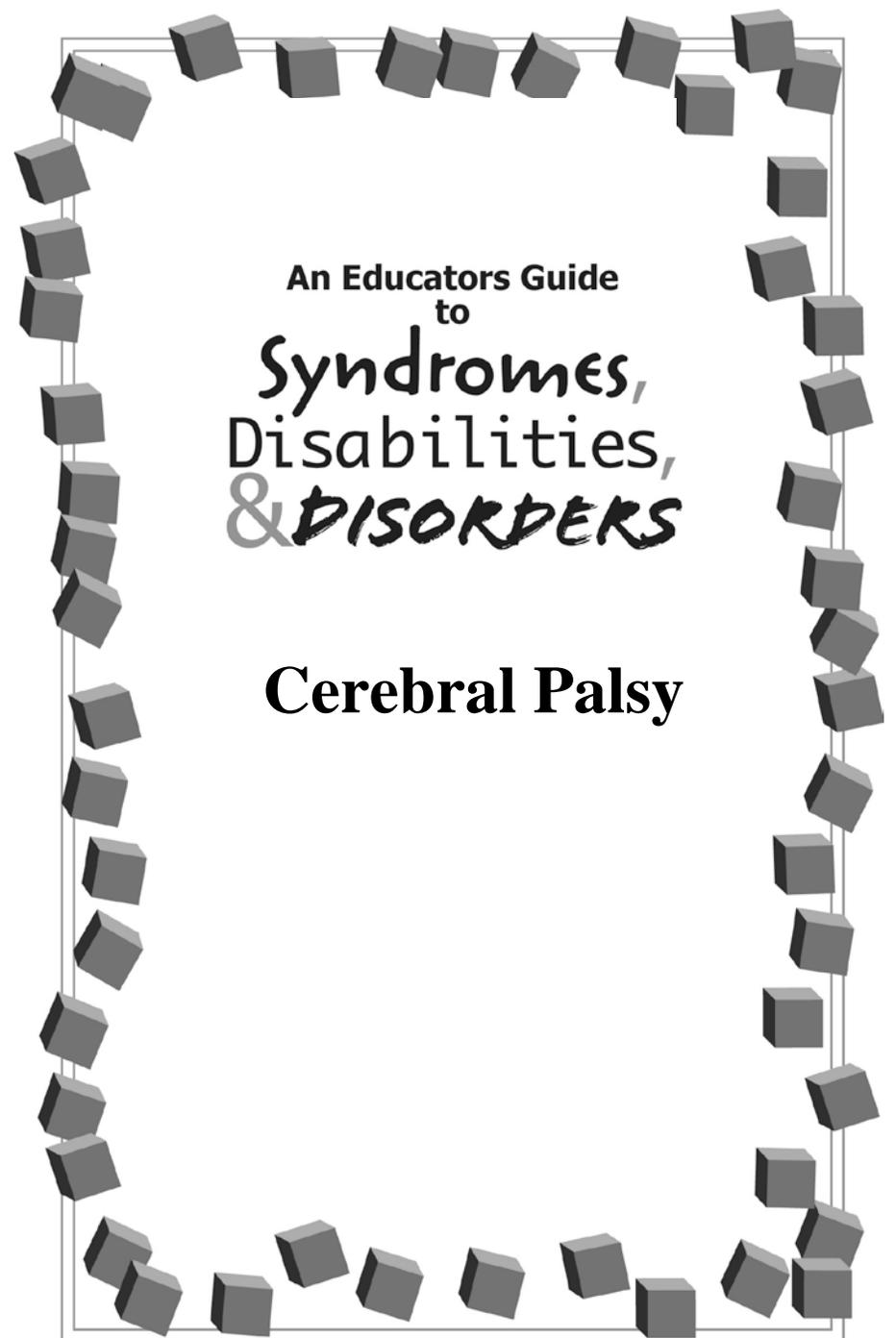
1660 L Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036-5602
(202) 776-0406; (202) 973-7197 (TT); (800) 872-5827 (Voice/TT)
e-mail: ucpanatl@ucpa.org
Web site: <http://www.ucpa.org>

National Easter Seal Society

230 West Monroe Street, Suite 1800
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 726-6200; (312) 726-4258 (TT); (800) 221-6827
e-mail: nessinfo@seals.com
Web site: <http://www.seals.com>

National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC)

8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319
(301) 588-9284 (Voice/TT); (800) 346-2742
Web site: <http://www.naric.com/naric>



Symptoms or Behaviors

There are three main types of cerebral palsy: **spastic-stiff** and difficult movement; athetoid-involuntary and uncontrolled movement; and ataxic-disturbed sense of balance and depth perception. Individuals may also have a combination of these three types. Cerebral palsy is characterized by an inability to fully control motor function. Depending on which part of the brain has been damaged and the degree of involvement of the central nervous system, one or more of the following may occur: spasms; involuntary movement; disturbance in gait and mobility; seizures; and abnormal sensation and perception.

The primary effects of cerebral palsy range from mild impairment of movement of one part of the body to severe impairment of most gross motor skills and fine motor skills functions.

CP can also cause sight and **hearing** impairments, problems with depth perception and balance, learning disabilities, and mental retardation.

Motor problems associated with CP often impair a person's ability to walk, talk, eat, breathe, speak, and control bladder functions, and he or she must receive significant support to perform the daily functions of living.

Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Meet with the parents and the child as early as possible in the school year to determine individual needs. Student records should reveal special programming in previous years/placements.
- Work with other professionals as a team to help the student lead a productive life. Include parents, health-care professionals, occupational and physical therapists, speech, sight and hearing specialists and para-professionals.
- Determine specific learning requirements on the basis of an up-to-date educational assessment.
- Develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) if necessary to meet the child's needs.
- Encourage the student to complete assignments, even if extra time is necessary. A feeling of accomplishment will do much to enhance self-esteem.
- Be familiar with specialized equipment, such as adapted typewriters, pencil holders, book holders, page turners, word boards or special desks.
- Remind the student to take any prescribed medication. Arrange for any required assistance.

- Talk to students about cerebral palsy, and if the child is comfortable with the situation, have the child or parent explain any adaptive needs. Encourage other students to find out how they can assist and when they should assist.
- Expect acceptable and appropriate behavior. Students with disabilities are accountable for their behaviors in the classroom.
- If necessary, schedule bathroom breaks for the child who needs assistance (from a para-professional) just before class breaks.
- For special activities scheduled outside the school, ensure that appropriate arrangements are made so the student can participate.
- Orient the child to the school, especially ramps, bathrooms with modifications and access to elevators.
- Assist the student to form and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships. A sense of acceptance is important to all students of all ages.
- Talk about and assist with the development of social skills.
- Encourage communication to prevent isolation. This may mean early recognition of alternative means of communication if the child has a speech or hearing loss. Patience and understanding in listening will help build communication skills.
- Encourage the student to participate in as many classroom activities as possible, depending on the extent of the cerebral palsy. Some students will need a modified form of the curriculum in some or all subject areas.