

Educational Implications

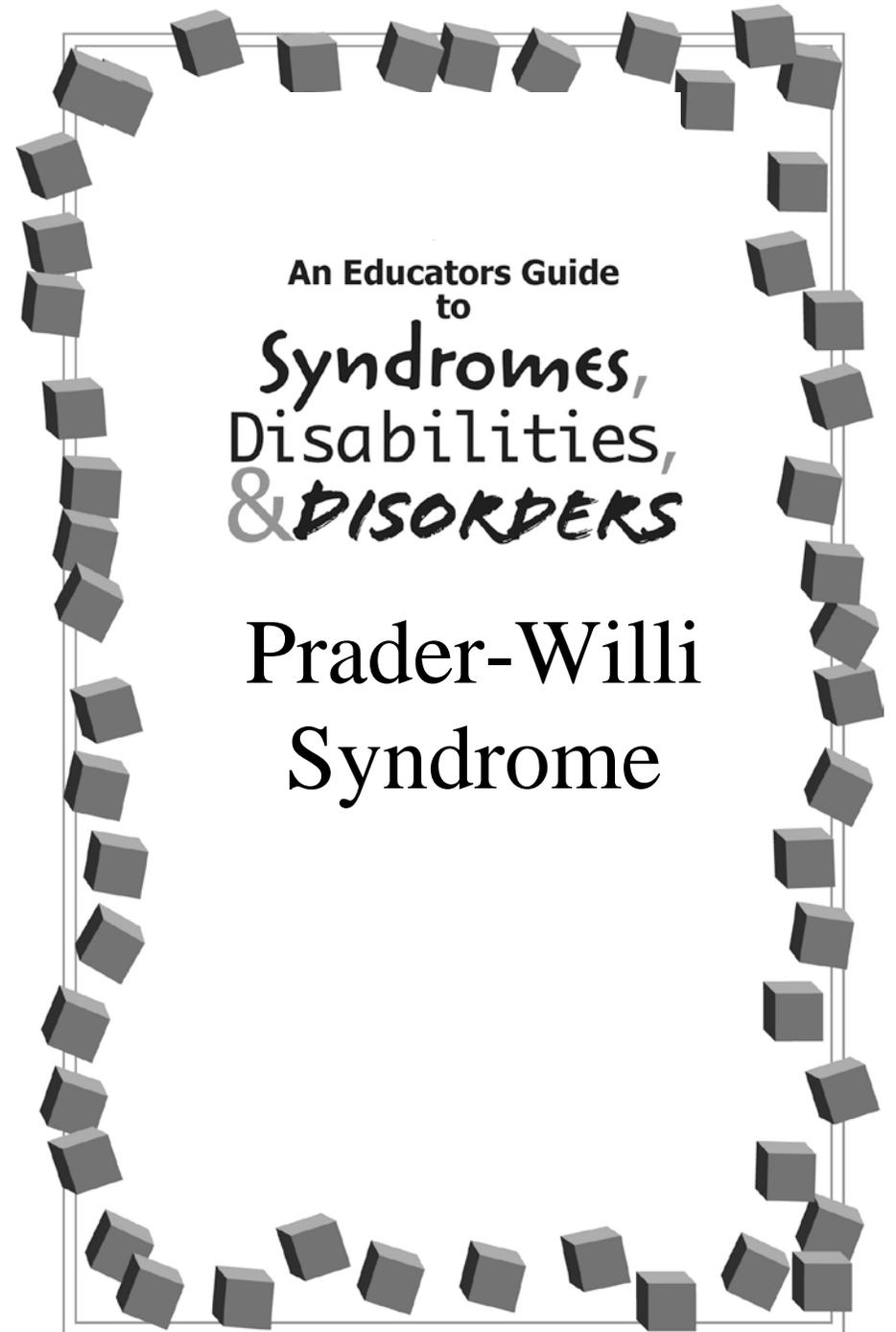
People with PWS have a range of learning disabilities regardless of their IQ, which is often in the mild to borderline range. However poor social and emotional skills inhibit the person performing up to that IQ. Rigid behavior and tantrums are part of the syndrome. All staff should agree to the same method of dealing with the child. Build supported change and choice into lessons and activities.

Specific weaknesses in math and writing are common, but reading and art skills are considered strengths. Short-term auditory memory is often weak, but long term memory is again a strength. Visual aids and cues to learning should therefore be used as much as possible. Make sure ALL school staff is aware of the need for dietary control. Like all children, those with PWS perform better if their efforts are praised and acknowledged, and they will persevere at tasks if they are well motivated.

Resources

The Prader-Willi Syndrome Association (USA)
1-900-926-4797
5700 Midnight Pass Rd.
Sarasota, Florida 34242
National@pwsausa.org
www.pwsausa.org

The Prader-Willi Connection
www.pwsauk.emon.co.uk/educatn.htm



Symptoms or Behaviors

A major concern of PWS is obesity. If not controlled, the obesity can become life threatening and may result in diabetes hypertension breathing difficulties, heart disease and skeletal problems.

School staff should watch for the following:

- Food intake
- Weight increase
- Skin picking
- Sleepiness
- Speech defects in articulation
- Scoliosis
- Injury due to high pain threshold
- Respiratory difficulty
- Bruising (tendency to bruise more easily)
- Behavioral problems
- Vomiting (rarely occurs with PWS; if vomiting occurs may indicate a life-threatening illness)

Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- There is a strong need for routine, sameness and consistency in the environment.
- Warning about changes in plans or routines and time countdowns before transitions may be necessary.
- When a student is stuck on an issue, reasoning with them is not successful.
- Try redirecting them to another topic or defer the discussion to some other time.
- Provide external motivation and rewards.
- Most students with PWS do better with concrete rather than abstract concepts.
- Strengths are often seen in areas such as jigsaw and word search type puzzles.
- Use of visual cues assists the student in carrying out instructions.
- If poor short term memory is present the child may appear to have learned a topic one day, only to have forgotten it the next.

- Repeated revision and consolidation is needed to ensure the topics are fully understood.
- Poor emotional control (tantrums, yelling, swearing, aggression and self-injury) can be brought on when the student is stressed.
- The student needs time to recover and often feels sadness, remorse and guilt. Reassurance is needed.
- Time out is often a successful strategy.
- Social skills often need to be taught to the student with PWS.
- The student with PWS has an insatiable appetite and will never have control of their craving for food.
- Students should never be left alone with food.
- Provide close supervision and make sure all staff is aware of dietary restrictions.
- Teachers should communicate with parents on alternatives to “school treats”.
- Encourage a daily exercise routine to help maintain weight and prevent fatigue.
- People with PWS tend to tire more easily and may fall asleep during the day. Morning is their best learning time and classes need to be scheduled to meet optimal learning times.