

Mr. GEER. There are a number of school systems over the country who are developing special classes which carry different types of titles.

For example, in this area I think the classes for the perceptually handicapped is one term that is used. Actually these children, many of them, do have problems of learning at the early age and these problems become compounded.

There is a national association that has formed around this particular area, an association for children with learning disabilities. That is a very rapidly growing group largely composed of parents and people concerned with this.

The Office of Education has one staff member now who is primarily concerned with alexia or other terms which may be used, learning disabilities, perceptually impaired. For a long time we have known that there were a number of children with brain injury to various degrees.

Sometimes this is manifested with muscular manifestations and more often referred to as cerebral palsy. There is still another group whose motor function is not visibly affected who are affected in vision, speech, hearing, and various other ways and actually ideation of the brain.

I think it is significant that we have programs starting in this field and in some instances fairly well developed. The recent legislation—the Elementary and Secondary Act Amendments of 1966—I am not sure which side the Congressman was on, but the report stated children with special learning problems were to be included in that. All I can say at the moment is that we are making some headway in trying to find out what this is all about and how far we can go with it.

It might be well to ask Dr. Willenberg to indicate what is being done in California because here is one State which is making a fairly good degree of progress.

Mr. QUIE. I would like to hear from Dr. Willenberg, if I may.

Mr. WILLENBERG. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the California State Legislature in 1963 enacted legislation that established a category of programs for so-called educationally handicapped children consisting of those youngsters who have significant emotional problems in combination with neurological impairments and in conjunction with retarded academic development.

Of course, included in this group would be these youngsters that you have referred to as children with alexia. Actually, alexia is a medical term that attributes a learning disorder which is particularly related to reading, to neurological involvement which may be a neurological insult or simply lack of neurological development.

Our concern in the development of the program for educationally handicapped youngsters originated from the recognition of the fact that it is too difficult to differentiate etiologically with the different youngsters as to their causes of difficulties that it would be better administratively to have some umbrella type of legislation in order to allow them, after we bring in the youngsters, to have the special needs to proceed with the organization of the instructional groups and to accomplish by trial and error in some instances and by known evidence in other instances as much as we possibly can with them academically as well as in the realm of emotional adjustment.