

Learning Disabilities: How the Arts Can Enhance Kids' Skills



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Dealing with Learning Disabilities in Children

It can be shocking -- even a bit dispiriting-- when your child is diagnosed with a learning disability (LD), but know that you are not alone. According to [research](#), approximately one in every three parents who have a child with learning disabilities do not feel prepared to take on the challenge. However, with the parents' support and a great deal of focus on education, most children with LD go on to live productive and happy lives. In fact, certain data shows that within eight years of leaving high school, more than half of young adults with LD don't consider themselves to have a disability.

There are many different learning disabilities, but the [five most common](#) include:

- **Dyslexia** - a disorder that impedes ability to read and comprehend a text

- **ADHD** - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder makes it challenging for students to pay attention and stay on task, particularly in a school or learning environment
- **Dyscalculia** - An inability to order numbers correctly that may also extend to limited strategies for problem-solving
- **Dysgraphia** - A disorder that causes issues with written expression, basic sentence structure and grammatical awareness
- **Processing Deficits** - These deficits cause problems when making sense of sensory data, therefore making it harder to perform in a traditional classroom without instructional supports

The Benefits of the Arts for Children with LD

When it comes to education, a lot of parents encourage their children to focus on [STEM fields](#); that is, science, technology, engineering and math. Studying these subjects improves a child's communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, and data analysis abilities. Plus, there are many [lucrative job opportunities](#) for those who choose to pursue the hard sciences. However, an education that only focuses on these subjects can be detrimental, especially for children with learning disabilities.

Adding arts to your child's education has many [benefits](#). It helps kids develop motor skills, vocabulary, decision-making skills, cultural awareness and creativity. Best of all, the arts can improve the overall [academic performance](#) of a child struggling with a learning disability.

Working within the arts helps children gain confidence that is key to the learning process. After a child is diagnosed with a learning disability, they may start to doubt their abilities. Studying and participating in the arts provides them with an opportunity to learn and practice in a less structured environment than a traditional classroom. Seeing that they can create and grow successfully in one area shows them that it is possible to succeed in subjects they may be struggling with otherwise. Furthermore, the arts teach kids to focus -- something most children can benefit from, but especially those dealing with ADHD.

Arts and Activities for Children with Learning Disabilities

- [Music lessons](#) teach about rhythm, sound and pitch and can be especially helpful for kids with Sensory Processing Deficits as well as dyscalculia. The younger your child is, the easier it will be for them to pick up a new instrument. When [choosing an instrument](#), consider your child's interests as well as affordability. Start with something simple and your child can work up to larger and more challenging instruments as their craft improves.
- [Children's theater](#) can be helpful for those with dyslexia. Going over scripts as a group and performing what is written on page can help with things such as reading

comprehension and memory. It also gives children practice when it comes to stepping out of their comfort zone learning lessons from mistakes in rehearsal.

- Working with the [visual arts](#) -- especially things like painting and drawing -- can help children with dysgraphia become comfortable with the motions involved with writing.

It's not easy learning that your child has a learning disorder, but most kids with LD grow up to lead happy and healthy lives. The key is a well-rounded education that provides opportunities and tactics for learning despite their LD challenges. Adding the arts to your child's curriculum helps those with LD gain confidence in the abilities. That confidence can spill over into their traditional classroom for a better overall performance.