

Armenta Learning Academy
Achieving Excellence Through Education

PROCESSING DISORDERS

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Parents often ask me for information about different learning disabilities and their traits. “What signs should I look for?” “What can I do about it?” At ALA, we work with mild to severely learning disabled students. Here is some information on the most common disabilities, what their implications are, and what can be done to help.

A child with a **visual processing disorder** has difficulty remembering and making sense out of what he/she sees. They don’t need glasses and they don’t benefit from “vision therapy”. In reading and spelling, letters are typically omitted or reversed. Phonics may come easily. Sight vocabulary will be limited. In math, numbers may be reversed or poorly aligned for computation. They may have good math reasoning ability and be able to do word problems. It may be difficult for them to fit things together into a whole, like puzzles. In writing, planning on paper is poor. Margins are usually ignored. Writing is usually off the line are either too close or too far apart. Rarely, mirror writing can occur. If the visual processing is severely disordered, we call it dyslexia. I highly recommend, when a child is reading, cover one line at a time so that the print doesn’t “jump-out” at them and the student gets overwhelmed. Also, try chunking the information visually into small parts for the reading material to make sense.



A child with an **auditory processing disorder** has trouble sorting, understanding and remembering what she/he hears. They don’t need a hearing aid. They try to listen when you talk, but they are hearing so many sounds at the same time they don’t know which ones are important. They may have trouble responding to simple questions. They may get confused trying to carry out a series of directions. They may mix up the sounds of words and the order of numbers. Phonics is very difficult. Bizarre misspellings are common. Extra letters may be inserted, or letters may be omitted in words. They may say “aminal” for “animal”. Remembering an address or a phone number can be a difficult task. Math word problems may be particularly difficult. They may do fine if given paper and pencil in math. If the auditory processing disorder is severe enough, we call it dyslexia. I recommend giving one command at a time to keep the child from getting over stimulated. Speak to your child at eye level to be sure that they process the information. Having the child repeat the command helps processing and creates understanding of what is being said.

The child has trouble in **both the visual and auditory channel**. This is a very serious problem. Reading, spelling and writing are dramatically affected. Many children write just a series of letters in random order. Some may get the beginning letter of a word, but the remainder is a jumble of letters. They can read only those words in their sight vocabulary – and sight vocabulary is very limited. Math is also affected. They find it difficult to remember math facts or correctly align numbers for computations. Word problems are very difficult. Trying to follow classroom directions is frustrating. If the combined disorders are severe enough, we call it dyslexia. Have the child sit in front of the classroom and let the classroom teacher be aware of how this can affect learning in several subjects.

A child with a **sensory motor skill disorder** lacks fine muscle control. They may be “all thumbs”, “up-down”, “under-over”. Labels like clumsy, awkward or uncoordinated are often used to describe them. Handwriting is messy, usually off the lines. Capitals and small letters may be used randomly. Letters may be malformed. Writing may be very slow and laborious. It may take “forever” to get things down on paper. Occasionally P.E. skills are so deficient that Adapted P.E. is needed. The child may have trouble catching/kicking/throwing a ball, balancing, hopping, running, skipping, jumping or playing games. If the sensory motor skills are severely disordered, we call it dysgraphia. I recommend to have children practice simple tasks to improve hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.

A child with an **attention disorder** has trouble paying attention in class. They often



miss out on important parts of learning in all subjects. They may have “gaps” in all academics. Often they have so much energy that they switch quickly from one thing to another, from one activity to another, without finishing anything. They may talk non-stop. They may have trouble sitting still and staying focused. Some children with attention disorders benefit from medication...but not all. I highly recommend The Nutrition Solution to ADD, some students can benefit from a change in diet.

A child with a **disorder in cognitive abilities** may be unable to see similarities and differences, draw conclusions, make interferences, classify, categorize, summarize, think critically and creatively. They may have trouble memorizing and learning information by rote. They may have trouble communicating ideas through language – writing, gesturing or speaking. They may have trouble understanding what words mean. Deficits in oral and written expressions, reading, math and/or listening comprehension are usually the result.



- Association: long term memory deficits; poor cause/effect sense; trouble with part/ whole relationships.
- Conceptualization: trouble using information in complex manner; transfer and generalization of learned materials is difficult; poor abstract thinking.
- Expression: poor organization and expression of thoughts orally, gesturally, or in writing; poor vocabulary; may be able to understand language at age level.

Processing disorder + academic discrepancy = learning disability

Mild processing disorders can be compensated for without special education. Several of us have mild disorders and function just fine. Some are genetic; some are the result of mild brain injury.

1. Disorders don't go away with age...and they aren't fixed; they are compensated for.
2. People don't develop a disorder if none existed by 3rd grade... unless there has been head trauma of some kind
3. Discrepancies can be caused by something other than a disorder; socio-cultural , language, economic, motivation/underachievement, emotional, visual, hearing acuity, health, lack of educational opportunity all can be factors in difficulties with learning.
4. These students can benefit from programs geared towards special learning needs, such as working with educational specialists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc. to meet the individual and educational needs of the student.

At Armenta Learning Academy we believe all students have different learning needs and styles; therefore, we work with each student to determine educational programs that will make a difference in their academic career. We see students benefiting from our small class sizes and personal attention, as reflected in our students achievements of advancing one to three levels in one school year. Grounded in the belief that children are a precious gift, Armenta Learning Academy individualizes programs of instruction to promote good grades, peer and instructor support, concept reinforcement, goal achievement, excellent academic values, and acceleration. By reviewing and checking homework, promoting good study skills, and combining independent and mutual work time, our goal is to prepare your children for their entire academic careers. Our academy can provide the assistance that dyslexic, attention deficit, asbergers, and other special learning needs students and their families need. With our student-centered programs, educational support and a developmental, hands-on approach, our students enjoy a variety of instructional styles for mild to severe learning disabilities. Armenta Learning Academy provides an integrated, simultaneous, multi-sensory, “across the curriculum” approach to instruction which is designed to assist students in acquiring the skills they need to cope with their language learning differences. This supportive, orderly, success-oriented program encourages the development of academic competence, effective work habits, self-discipline, and self-esteem. Armenta Learning Academy has a tradition of encouraging creative and independent thinking, teaching a strong self-concept, and encouraging personal motivation, while moving at the child's learning pace and achieving excellence through education.

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