



Learning Disabilities and the Arts

By NCLD Editorial Team

0 Comments



The arts are more than a fun, superficial way to keep kids occupied. Art activities can help children with learning disabilities begin to overcome the challenges they face in learning in many different ways. Of course, having a learning disability does not necessarily mean that a person has an exceptional artistic talent. However, music, art, crafts and dance can give students with learning disabilities a chance to express themselves through different media and gain confidence along the way.



Unlocking Confidence

A feeling of self-worth—the knowledge that you can do something—is a critical part of the learning process. Children with learning disabilities often come to think they are incapable of learning because of their ongoing difficulties in school. A paintbrush, a costume, a drum or paper, scissors and glue can be new tools for self-expression that boost confidence while providing opportunities for learning and practice.



Learning Through Art

The arts can open the world of learning to students who have trouble with traditional teaching methods. The arts are intellectual disciplines—requiring complex thinking and problem solving—that offer students the opportunity to construct their own understanding of the world.

Drawing and painting reinforce motor skills and can also be a way of learning shapes, contrasts, boundaries, spatial relationships, size and other math concepts.

Music teaches children about rhythm, sound and pitch. Beats can help children learn rhymes and other features of reading such as phonological awareness. Using repetitive songs to learn academic facts (like the alphabet song or multiplication tables) can make the learning experience easier and more fun.

Dance provides children with a social way to learn about sequencing, rhythm and following directions. While developing coordination and motor control, students can also learn counting and directionality, which can enhance reading and writing concepts—such as understanding the difference between similar looking letters (like p/b/d/q) and telling left from right.

Performing plays is an opportunity for children to immerse themselves in a theme and learn about it in a profound and personal way. Acting out historical or literary figures and events gives students a sense of ownership about what they've learned, allowing them to acquire a deeper appreciation of the subject matter.

Crafts offer children the opportunity to express themselves in two- and three-dimensional ways. Students can develop vital problem-solving skills without having to rely on areas of expression that may be more challenging.

Arts As a Means of Assessment

Timed tests and take-home reports are traditional means of academic assessment that can be especially difficult for individuals with learning disabilities. Creative projects offer these students the freedom to show what they know without the constraints of printed text. Offering students art projects or multi-media presentations as a way to demonstrate an understanding of material they've learned can be an excellent alternative.

Because a person has difficulty learning through hearing alone or seeing alone does not mean they cannot learn. The arts offer individuals with learning disabilities dynamic ways of learning, and just as importantly, a way to fully discover their own self-worth.

Tweet 61