

HOW THE ARROWSMITH PROGRAM IS IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THOSE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

By: Howard Eaton Ed.M. and Josh Poirier M.S. Ed.

The Arrowsmith Program is effective at improving the brain's capacity to organize, plan, process, memorize and reason through academic challenges and daily living activities. There are no strategies, compensations or assistive technology used to provide this neurological improvement in the Arrowsmith Program. Rather, the brain itself is transformed, and network connectivity is improved, resulting in a human that is able to organize, plan, process, memorize and reason through daily challenges on their own.

Research on the Arrowsmith Program from the University of British Columbia and Southern Illinois University has highlighted how the brain is changing in those engaged on the cognitive exercises. Over and over again, the research has noted the significant positive effect the program has on executive functioning.

Executive functioning weaknesses, as described above, are common in the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) population. In fact, research estimates that up to 8 out of 10 individuals with ASD struggle with executive functioning. Almost all school-based interventions are strategy, accommodation or assistive technology based. Unfortunately, this approach still puts a heavy burden on the teacher and parent to provide oversight on the student. In other words, this approach requires an executive functioning brain to oversee the use of strategies, accommodations or assistive technology of the individual with ASD. This becomes a frustration for everyone. Think about it. You need to have good executive functioning ability

in your own brain to know when, where and how to use any outside executive functioning strategies you were given. This leads back to parents, tutors and teachers always having to coach the child or adult with ASD.

There are many success stories of children, teenagers and adults with ASD at Eaton Arrowsmith Centre for Neuroeducation. Often, they have been previously diagnosed with ASD without Intellectual Impairment or High Functioning Autism. The Arrowsmith Program does require some level of self-motivation and sustained attention. Historically, more severe cases of ASD have found it difficult to engage in the program, however, overall engagement in the Arrowsmith Program since moving onto the online platform has shown increased engagement overall, as students who typically have a difficult time engaging in in-person are more comfortable in their own environments and setting themselves up for success on their own terms.



Over the twenty years since the founding of Eaton Arrowsmith we have worked with hundreds of students who display this profile to improve executive functioning. Our current online students with ASD are expressing improvements in their ability to focus, to complete tasks at a higher level, and to read and comprehend what they are reading. Their mood, optimism, and ability to read social situations have also improved.

Comments like the one below from Mrs. Sandra Weizman are remarkable to read considering the current standard of intervention in education for the ASD population: "This summer, he is like a completely different person taking the grade 9 equivalent course. He is paying attention in his classes 100% of the time. He is taking his own detailed notes and highlighting things appropriately in each new short story. He is fully participating in class discussion. Last year he would

sometimes know the correct answer to questions the instructor was posing, but by the time he would get the answer from his brain to his mouth to say it, the teacher would usually have already moved on to another topic. This year, he is answering immediately and answering correctly, for the most part. He is learning new vocabulary and remembering what the words mean even a few days later. (This was never the case before.)...The understanding of abstract ideas, synthesizing and analyzing, getting his thoughts down on paper and putting it all together, he is mostly doing independently. His attention span and energy level are working for much lengthier periods and he is not exhausted after a three-hour class followed by three hours of homework anymore. He still has energy to do other things after that."

What Mrs. Weizman is outlining are executive functioning abilities. To be clear, her son is still improving in this area and some support is required as neurological change continues. In addition, old habits of the past can be hard to change, and it takes time to remove the scaffolding that was built over months and months of struggles.

Here is some more feedback from a mother with a child with ASD. This is from Mrs. Billie Jo Bevan: "The Arrowsmith program has been a wonderful addition & natural fit for my homeschooled son's educational programming. Not only does it provide structure & community, it supports executive functioning skills, particularly with clocks. Several skills like deductive reasoning allow for relational math and generalization of other skills. I've noticed that he is able to understand higher level concepts with multiplication and division. The team at Arrowsmith is highly supportive and wants to see each student succeed. It's been the missing link to increase his cognitive capacities."

It is critical that individuals with ASD, who can engage in the Arrowsmith Program, be given the opportunity to improve their own brain function. We all want to show how we can be independent and not rely on others to get us through life. When a child or young adult is dependent on a guardian to manage academic and daily living tasks it can lower one's self-esteem and impact mental health. Research on the Arrowsmith Program is showing that students who are improving cognitive capacities are showing improved social-emotional health. We have seen this in all populations that engage in the program whether that be learning disabilities, ASD, ADHD and brain injury. We have a drive to be able to achieve goals without the help of others, and building executive functioning capacities within the brain provides that capability.

Connect with us to learn more.

Eaton Arrowsmith Center for Neuroeducation offers the Arrowsmith Program online with teacher-guided classes and in person in Vancouver BC, and Redmond WA.



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Center for Neuroeducation

www.eatonarrowsmith.com

(844) - 264 - 8327

