

**Arrowsmith Program
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Support Needed

Children with learning difficulties or ADHD may struggle with literacy, numeracy and maintaining attention.

Proposed Intervention?

The Arrowsmith program purports to strengthen weak cognitive processes in the brain that are claimed to underpin literacy, numeracy, memory, processing, emotional and other capacities.

Theoretical Rationale

It is claimed that the different activities in the program strengthen different parts of the brain and the cognitive processes associated with them. The result is claimed to be a stronger brain which will learn more easily, overcoming any difficulties experienced.

Research Evidence

Despite the program being in operation for more than 40 years and claims about research support, there appear to be only two peer reviewed publications on the program. Most evidence on the Arrowsmith website is in-house studies, conference posters, case-studies and testimonials (Bowen, 2021). Neither of the two peer-reviewed studies (Motamed Yeganeh et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2019;) was high quality research with small sample sizes, lack of evidence that participants had learning difficulties and neither reporting comparison with a control group.

Conclusion

There is little or no robust, independent evidence to support the use of the Arrowsmith program. The cost to families and the time required (two to three hours of the school day spent completing the required exercises) are also concerning.

Verdict

As for other programs claiming to train the brain or to remediate hypothesised underlying cognitive processes to improve a wide range of difficulties, the use of the Arrowsmith program cannot be recommended.

Relevant References

- Bowen, C. (2021). Independent research and the Arrowsmith Program. *Nomanis*, 11 Available at https://20821764.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/20821764/Nomanis_June2023/Pdf/NOMANIS11-JUN21_BOWEN.pdf
- Motamed Yeganeh, N., King, R., Boyd, L. A., Rose, G. M., & Weber, R. C. (2021). Symbol relations training improves cognitive functioning in students with neurodevelopmental disorders. *Applied Neuropsychology: Child*, 11(4), 789–796. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622965.2021.1967154>
- Weber, R. C., Denyer, R., Motamed Yeganeh, N., Maja, R., Murphy, M., Martin, S., Chiu, L., Nguy, V., White, K., & Boyd, L. (2019). Interpreting the preliminary outcomes of the Arrowsmith Programme: A neuroimaging and behavioural study. *Learning: Research and Practice*, 5(2), 126-148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23735082.2019.1674908>