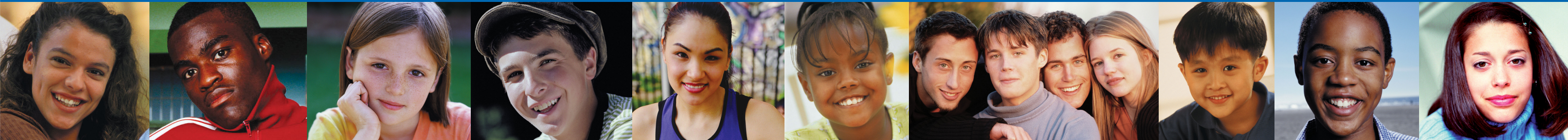


# learn·ing dis·a·bil·i·ty (lûrn'ing đis ə bĭl'ĩ tē)

Any of various cognitive, neurological or psychological disorders that impede the ability to learn, especially with the ability to learn mathematics or language skills.

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades



## Bright Kids, Bad Grades

Millions of children today have trouble learning reading, writing and math. In the past, and sometimes still today, these kids were thought to be slow or unmotivated. Now we know that many of these children have a learning disability. There are many disabilities and a variety of research about causes and treatments. Experts believe that some children may be able to overcome certain learning disabilities with specific teaching aids and methods, targeted therapies and patience. Learn more about the latest research and successes.

This special program was produced by the Emmy® award-winning television and education team at CWK Network, Inc.



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## RESOURCE GUIDE

- Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet
- Parent Tip Sheet
- Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan
- Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan
- Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan
- Discussion Questions

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Phone 1.888.598.KIDS  
[www.cwknetwork.com](http://www.cwknetwork.com)

# Character Traits

All *Connect with Kids* programs address these 26 character traits:

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Caring/Compassion | Citizenship     |
| Civility          | Conviction      |
| Cooperation       | Courage         |
| Courtesy          | Diligence       |
| Freedom           | Generosity      |
| Helpfulness       | Honesty         |
| Honor             | Integrity       |
| Justice/Fairness  | Kindness        |
| Loyalty           | Patience        |
| Peace             | Perseverance    |
| Respect           | Responsibility  |
| Self-Control      | Togetherness    |
| Tolerance         | Trustworthiness |



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# For more information



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on *Connect with Kids* or *Bright Kids, Bad Grades*, please call (888) 598-KIDS or email to [sales@cwknetwork.com](mailto:sales@cwknetwork.com)



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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

Millions of children today have trouble learning reading, writing and math. In the past, and sometimes still today, these kids were thought to be slow or unmotivated. Now we know that many of these children have a learning disability. There are many disabilities and a variety of research about causes and treatments. Experts believe that some children may be able to overcome certain learning disabilities with specific teaching aids and methods, targeted therapies and patience. Learn more about the latest research and successes.

**This resource guide is designed to accompany the video entitled *Bright Kids, Bad Grades*. This resource guide includes:**

- Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet
- Parent Tip Sheet
- Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan
- Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan
- Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan
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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Self-Reflection Questions

1. We all have some type of challenge in our lives, what is one area of your life where you have felt challenged? How have you worked to overcome this challenge? What did you do?
2. What are some things you can do to develop an “I can do it” attitude? How can you find and build success?
3. In the video, Matthew Levine’s new school helped him turn his life around. Are there some changes that you would like to make to your own life that will help you be more successful?



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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet

### WHAT ARE LEARNING DISABILITIES?

According to experts at Schwab Learning and the National Institute for Mental Health, learning disabilities are disorders of the brain. Learning disabilities are not about level of intelligence. They affect the way all kinds of people with varying level of intelligence – adults as well as children – receive, process or express information. Learning disabilities affect the skills of reading, listening, speaking, writing and/or mathematics. People cannot be cured of learning disabilities, but they can learn ways of dealing with and compensating for them in school and in life.

Learning disabilities are regularly divided into three categories:

- Developmental speech/language disorders – People with these disorders often cannot control their rate of speech or have trouble expressing themselves in speech. They often call things by the wrong name or cannot “retrieve” words from their mental word banks in regular conversations. Sometimes they have trouble “receiving” information; they struggle with directions and often cannot make sense of sounds, words or sentences they hear.
- Academic skills disorders – These learning disabilities affect the three “R’s” (Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic) and pose problems with the skills necessary to master any or all three of these areas.
- “Other” learning disorders – This list includes delays in acquiring language, motor skills, coordination disorders, and spelling and memory disorders.

### WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE LEARNING DISABILITIES?

Because learning disabilities show up in such a wide variety of forms, there is no definitive way to pinpoint the causes. Sometimes learning disabilities

are seemingly inherited, but many times they are unique to the person. The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities (CCLD) states that an LD is “a neurobiological disorder in which a person’s brain works or is structured differently.”

### WHO HAS LEARNING DISABILITIES?

All kinds of people have learning disabilities, including very successful adults and even famous people. Most people suspect Albert Einstein may have had learning disabilities, and Thomas Alva Edison felt sure he had learning disabilities, too. However, the diagnosing of learning disabilities is fairly recent and so experts often limit their statistics to school age students. (*Pediatric Neurology*)

Consider these facts:

- Approximately 4 million school-age children have learning disabilities.
- Ten to 20 percent of those learning disabilities are undiagnosed.
- The most common learning disabilities are noted in reading and language skills.
- Many children inherit their learning disabilities, but not all learning disabilities are inherited.
- The number of girls and boys with learning disabilities is equal.
- There is no cure for learning disabilities.
- ADD and ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) are not learning disabilities, but they often occur alongside them.
- People with learning disabilities can and quite often do go on to lead successful, happy lives.

### GETTING HELP

Parents who believe their child may have a learning disability should consult with the child’s teacher and other school staff to plan an assessment. This will

(continued on next page)



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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet (cont.)

determine if the child is eligible for special services from the school and/or other support programs. Private evaluators, such as psychologists, can also perform the assessments, but parents must check with the school to see if these will be utilized for creating an educational plan.

### RESOURCES

*LD Online*

*National Institute for Mental Health,  
Learning Disabilities*

*National Center for Learning Disabilities*

*National Dissemination Center for Children  
with Disabilities*

*Pediatric Neurology*

*Schwab Learning*



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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Discussion Questions

### OPENING

1. What does the narrator mean by the words, “They look like normal students?” What is a normal student?
2. What are some of the names people call kids with learning disabilities? Are any of these names fair? Why?
3. Why do you think a high percentage of kids with learning disabilities or learning differences “drop out ... turn to drugs ... or end up in trouble?”

### PART ONE

1. What is Anna Gaffney’s diagnosis? Describe its symptoms.
2. How do the experts explain the functions of a brain in a “normal” child? How are they different for a child with learning disabilities?
3. How does Dr. Paul Yellin explain his theory that learning disabilities have nothing to do with a person’s intelligence?
4. What are some of the strategies the Churchill School uses to teach its students? Do you think they are successful?

### PART TWO

1. Describe Matthew Levine’s learning disabilities. How did people react to him in school? How did he feel about himself?
2. How does Matthew’s story parallel the stories of many students with learning disabilities in public school systems?
3. What are Julian Smith’s challenges? How does his story differ from Matthew’s?
4. What is an IEP? What are “accommodations” and “modifications” and how do they help students with learning disabilities?

### PART THREE

1. Describe Jodie Finney’s learning challenges. How has she learned to help herself?
2. What does Dr. Paul Yellin mean by, “Success in school and success in life can be two very different things?”
3. How do both Dr. Yellin and Jodie Finney suggest people with learning disabilities find and build success?

### CLOSE

1. How did Matthew Levine’s new school help him turn his life around? Do you think this is a common story or unique? Why?
2. How can parents, teachers and the students themselves help overcome learning disabilities?
3. How can a person, with or without learning disabilities, develop an “I can do it” attitude?





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For the  
Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan

### There's No Substitute (cont.)

5. Give the class about five minutes to complete the first interview, then stop them and ask them to switch roles. This time, Person B interviews Person A. Person A must use the word circus in answering each of the questions. The word circus must make sense as part of Person A's response." Again, give them about five minutes to complete this interview.
6. At the end of the allotted interview time, ask the class to come back together and discuss the activity. Ask: *Was playing this game difficult for you? Why or why not? What did you need to do to have a successful interview? When you were being interviewed, what did you do to help yourself to work the word banana or circus into your answer? Did your partner help you or cue you? How did you feel when you were being interviewed? (Note to teacher: If you noticed a lot of people laughing ask them why it was funny? Would it be funny if you actually had this problem? Why or why not?)*
7. Say: *This activity illustrates what it is like to have a specific learning disability. Many people with learning disabilities have trouble completing a task because there is something else that distracts them from the main task (in this case, thinking about working the word into the discussion). They know what they want to say, but they must concentrate very hard to do two tasks – one to respond to a question and another to think of working a specific word into the conversation. Quite often, just like in the exercise, people laugh at themselves or at the person who cannot find the words, or they get anxious, frustrated or sometimes even angry. Why do you think people have these different kinds of reactions? Do you think this is okay? Explain your answer.*
8. It is important to emphasize that while a person with a learning disability may have difficulty in one kind of learning task, they may do well in others (learning to play a new game or doing a science project).
9. Then ask the students: *Knowing what you know about learning disabilities from experience or from the documentary, how did this activity parallel having a learning disability? How has this exercise and/or documentary helped you understand how people with learning disabilities feel about their challenges every day? How can you help someone with this specific learning disability?* Discuss first and then have the students write a personal response in their journals.

#### EVALUATION

- Did students participate in creating the list of activities?
- Did each student generate at least 10 long-answer interview questions?
- Did each student attempt the "stipulated" interview?
- Could students describe the comparison between the activity and actually having a learning disability?
- Did students participate in the discussion?
- Did each student complete the written response?



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# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Parent Tip Sheet

#### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Learning disabilities occur in approximately 4 million school-age children, but they are sometimes difficult to discern from learning problems (*Pediatric Neurology*). Just as in the children's book, *Leo The Late Bloomer* by Robert Kraus, some children develop a bit slower than others but eventually catch up. Telling the difference between a learning disability and a developmental delay can be quite challenging, but if your child has significant, ongoing problems in math, reading, writing or language, he/she might have a learning disability.

Experts at Schwab Learning offer the following list to think about in terms of your child's performance in school:

#### PRESCHOOL

- Speaks later than most kids
- Cannot find the words he/she needs in a conversation
- Is very challenged learning days of the week, shapes, colors, numbers and letters
- Cannot follow directions or routines

#### GRADES K-4

- Has trouble making the connections between letters and sounds
- Cannot blend sounds to create words
- Consistently makes errors in spelling/reading
- Cannot remember sequences
- Cannot tell time

#### GRADES 5-8

- Slow to learn reading strategies
- Math problems are challenging to the point of frustration
- Spells the same word differently in a single piece of writing
- Avoids reading and writing
- Has difficulty remembering or understanding what he or she just read
- Has difficulty understanding and/or generalizing concepts

- Misreads directions and information

#### HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

At home, you can help your child in many ways:

- Talk about your child's learning challenges and accept them.
- Try to refer to them as learning differences; your child is smart, he/she just learns differently from other students.
- Foster your child's strengths, talents and interests.
- Give your child lots of praise and support your child's efforts.
- Know what is going on in school and help with homework, projects, and other learning talks. Get the teachers to give you help with drills, exercises and other ways to assist your child with storing information.
- Set a good example and turn off the television and read or write letters or play games.
- Help your child to learn how he/she learns: What are the tools your child will need to succeed? How do you find them and use them?
- Stay optimistic! Hope springs eternal and tomorrow is another day, Scarlet!

Experts at LD OnLine suggest parents monitor their child's progress and organize information about their child's learning disability and offer the following strategies:

- Start a folder of all letters and materials related to your child's education.
- Keep school files up to date – names, dates of tests and results, medical exams, information from/about other professionals, etc.
- Keep samples of your child's schoolwork, both ones where his/her learning disability is evident

*(continued on next page)*



Connect with Kids

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Parent Tip Sheet (cont.)

and ones which show his/her strengths and successes.

- Keep a log of every contact with teachers, professionals, etc.
- Log your own observations of your child.

It is important for every parent to remember that children with learning disabilities can succeed in school and can become successful in their adult lives. Early intervention, correct support services, and love and understanding at home make the difference.

### RESOURCES

*LD OnLine*

*National Institute for Mental Health,  
Learning Disabilities*

*National Association of Learning Disabilities*

*National Center for Learning Disabilities*

*National Dissemination Center for Children  
with Disabilities*

*Pediatric Neurology*

*Schwab Learning*



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## For the Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 9-12 Lesson Plan

### There's No Substitute

#### PROJECT AND PURPOSE

Students will experience how it feels to have to concentrate on two cognitive tasks at the same time during an interview.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will ...

- Generate a list of questions to use in an interview.
- Conduct an interview with a fellow student.
- Be interviewed with the handicap of having to include a certain word in every response.
- Compare and contrast the experience to tasks experienced by people with learning differences.

#### MATERIALS

- Board
- Paper
- Pens/pencils

#### PROCEDURE

1. Make two columns on the board. Label one side, "Things we can do while doing other things" and the other column, "Things that take all of our concentration." Say to the students: *Sometimes we can do several things at once, but sometimes we have to put every ounce of concentration we have into ONE activity. Some examples of the first are having a conversation with a passenger while driving a car or watching television while folding laundry. Examples of the second include driving carefully in a bad rainstorm or completing a really challenging math problem. Let's come up with lists of both things.* Collect their lists on the board.
2. Have a brief discussion about the reasons they put the activities on the different lists, making sure to note that some activities need all of our attention in order for us to be safe or thorough. Tell the students: *Quite often, a person with a learning disability has a hard time doing two things at the same time. He or she needs to concentrate on one of the activities alone and then the other to feel successful. Today we are going to experience that feeling.*
3. Have the students develop 10 questions that they could use to interview a total stranger. These questions should solicit more than one word answers or two word factual responses. They need to encourage the interviewee to provide a story or several sentences in response. An example might be, "What electronic gadget do you depend on most in your life and why?" or "Tell me about the best birthday present you ever received." Give the class several minutes to compile a list of questions.
4. Break the class into pairs and have them select who will be Person A and who will be Person B. Person A will be the first interviewer and Person B will be interviewed; then they will swap roles. Before they begin, give them the following stipulation: Person B must use the word banana while being interviewed to complete the task. The word banana must make sense as part of their response. The word banana must be used in response to each question asked in the interview.





Connect with Kids

For the  
Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan

### What Are You Doing? (cont.)

5. Play the game for five to seven minutes, and then have all the As find a new B. They will play the game again, but this time Person B asks, “What are you doing?” first.
6. Gather them back together to discuss the activity. Ask: *Did you feel successful in the activity? What are your secrets of success? How did you help each other? Did you have to give your partner ideas for new activities? Did you find yourself thinking ahead to the next action? Did anyone stop doing the action before you were supposed to? Why? What made you stop? What was challenging or hard for you? How did that make you feel?*
7. Tell the class about how they were concentrating on two very different skills to do this activity. They had to use one part of their brain to develop and ask the questions, and they had to use another part of the brain to do the actions they were not talking about.
8. Explain that quite often students with learning disabilities are asked to complete two tasks at the same time and it is very challenging. Reinforce how challenging it can feel to have to really concentrate on a task to complete it. Ask: *How do you think this exercise is like having a learning disability?*
9. It is important to emphasize that while a person with a learning disability may have difficulty in one kind of learning task, they may do well in others (learning to play a new game or doing a science project).
10. Have the students write a response to the activity that answers the following questions: How did you feel when you were playing this game? How does this exercise help people understand what it is like to have a learning disability?

#### EVALUATION

- Did each student participate in the game?
- Did students persevere through the activity when it became challenging?
- Did students participate in the post-activity discussion?
- Did each student write a response to the activity?
- Could students make the comparison between the activity and having a learning disability?



Connect with Kids

For the  
Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan

### A-Z

#### PROJECT AND PURPOSE

Students will write an assignment in block letters and cursive with both hands. The purpose is to experience how it feels to complete a task naturally and to complete a relative task that requires extreme concentration.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will ...

- Write an assignment in both block letters and in cursive, once with their dominant hand and once with the other hand.
- Compare the experience to what it feels like to have a learning difference.
- Write about that experience and share through discussion.

#### MATERIALS

- Board
- Paper and writing implements

#### PROCEDURE

1. Write the alphabet in block letters and in cursive on the board and have students check you for accuracy. Then write on the board, “The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs,” and ask what is unusual about the sentence. (The answer: This sentence uses every letter of the alphabet.)
2. Have them take out a sheet of paper and a pencil and copy the unusual sentence in both block letters and in cursive. When they have finished, say: *Wonderful. Now turn your paper over and put your pencil in your other hand, the one you usually do not write with. This is called your “non-dominant hand.” Your job is to write the same sentence in both block letters and in cursive with your non-dominant hand.*
3. Encourage them to persevere, even when it gets messy or difficult. Give them an appropriate amount of time to complete both of the writing samples and then have them show their attempts to their classmates. Let them compare and contrast their attempts.
4. Ask: *How did you like this activity? Is your writing legible with your non-dominant hand? Describe it. What did you have to do to write the sentences out legibly? Was this easy or hard for you? Why do you think so? How did you feel while doing this activity?*
5. Explain to the class: *Writing with your non-dominant hand is a lot like having a learning disability. It takes enormous concentration to complete a very simple task, and often a person must figure out new ways to do it, just as you did.*
6. Have them discuss what it would be like to always have to figure out a way to do things other people seem to be able to do so easily. How would they feel?
7. After the discussion, have the students write a response to the activity. They can write about their own feelings and how this helped them understand how people with learning disabilities feel about their challenges every day. It is important to emphasize that while a person with a learning disability may



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For the  
Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan

### A-Z (cont.)

have difficulty in one kind of learning task, they may do well in others (learning to play a new game or doing a science project).

#### EVALUATION

- Did each student write the alphabet sentence in block and cursive with his/her dominant hand and then with his/her non-dominant hand?
- Did students persevere through the activity when it became challenging?
- Did students participate in the post-activity discussion?
- Did each student write a response to the activity?
- Could students make the comparison between their feelings after completing the activity and the feelings a person who has a learning disability goes through every day?



Connect with Kids

For the  
Classroom

# Bright Kids, Bad Grades

## Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan

### What Are You Doing?

#### PROJECT AND PURPOSE

Students will play the game “What Are You Doing?” to experience how it feels to concentrate on two cognitive tasks at the same time and compare this to how it might feel to struggle with a learning disability.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will ...

- Participate in a game to experience how it feels to concentrate on two cognitive tasks at the same time.
- Compare and contrast this experience to having a learning disability.

#### MATERIALS

- Open space for movement

#### PROCEDURE

1. Say: *Have you ever tried to rub your stomach and pat your head at the same time? For some people this is easy, but for most it is challenging. That’s because you are requiring your brain and your body to do two very different tasks together. It takes a lot of concentration, and even then, some people cannot do it. This is what it can feel like to have a learning disability.*  
  
*Sometimes doing what seems simple to some people can be very challenging. Things like listening to a teacher and taking notes or trying to write a story and thinking of the correct words to use can be very difficult for a person with learning disabilities.* Explain that today they are going to challenge themselves to do two different tasks at the same time by playing a game called “What Are You Doing?”
2. Have the students break into pairs and find an open space somewhere in the room. In each pair there must be a Person A and a Person B. Say: *Person A will give Person B an activity, but in a very original way. Then Person B will give person A a different activity in an original way. Let me teach you how to play by using two volunteers as demonstration models. I will direct my models’ speech and activities.* Have a pair come up to demonstrate the following steps while you narrate the activity:
  - Person A begins by asking Person B, “What are you doing?”
  - Person B responds by saying, “I’m flying a kite.”
  - Person A then begins doing that action – flying the kite.
  - Person B then asks Person A, “What are you doing?”
  - Person A answers by saying a new behavior, “I’m drinking hot tea.”
  - Person B then begins that action – drinking hot tea.
  - Person A asks, “What are you doing?” to begin the process again, but A must continue flying the kite until Person B gives a new action.
  - Then Person B asks, “What are you doing?” and A gives a new action. The process continues until the leader says, “Stop.”
3. Ask: *Are you ready? Now you’ll try it on your own.*
4. Now, let them try the game on their own. Remind them to keep the actions and activities school-appropriate. They may be outrageously silly, but not inappropriate.