

Processing Disorders and Their Impact on Learning

A processing disorder refers to an impaired ability to recognize and make sense of information. Below are examples of processing disorders that can influence a child's ability to learn and perform to their potential at school:

- ❖ **Language Processing**: a child with a weakness in language processing may have difficulties learning and understanding the meaning of language, have a limited spoken and/or written vocabulary, misinterpret common vocabulary, take longer to respond orally, have difficulty following multi-step directions, require frequent repetition, and have difficulty paying attention during instruction.
- ❖ **Visual Processing**: a child with weak visual-perceptual skills may have difficulty recognizing letters, words and numbers, skip letters, words or lines while reading, make letter and number reversals, have limited spelling memory, ignore operation signs, and overlook subtle visual details.
- ❖ **Visual-Motor Integration**: a child with weak visual-motor integration skills may experience difficulties taking notes, accurately copying information from text, and translating thoughts and ideas on paper. They may also transpose letters and numbers and take longer to complete written tasks.
- ❖ **Fine-Motor Functioning**: a child with poorly developed fine-motor functioning skills will likely experience weaknesses in handwriting, including difficulties forming letters, writing quickly and fluently, and writing legibly with appropriate spacing. Fine motor deficits can also impact a child's ability to perform daily living tasks, such as tying shoes, fastening buttons, and using utensils.
- ❖ **Memory**: a child with a weakness in memory may not remember what has been said or read; they may demonstrate gaps in background knowledge or inconsistencies in mastery of information; they may experience difficulty memorizing basic information and/or storing new information for future recall; and they may experience difficulty processing multi-step instructions and directions.
- ❖ **Processing Speed**: a child with a weakness in processing speed may have difficulty demonstrating automaticity with recalling letters, words and numbers; they may require more time to scan, understand and process visual stimuli; they may need additional time to process and make sense of auditory information; and they may require additional time to complete tasks.
- ❖ **Attention/Concentration**: a child with a deficit in attention/concentration typically has difficulty sustaining focus; they may be easily distracted by extraneous stimuli; they may have difficulty maintaining sequence and following multi-step directions; they may demonstrate poor organizational and planning skills; they may require frequent repetition and additional time to grasp concepts; they may make careless errors and overlook details; they may appear lost in thought or observed to day dream frequently; and they may have difficulty shifting or transitioning from one task to another.
- ❖ **Executive Functioning**: a weakness in executive functioning may impact a child's ability to follow multi-step directions, remember the sequence of activities, learn from mistakes, initiate and stay focused for the duration of a task, and organize time, space and materials. Children with executive functioning deficits may also have difficulty regulating their behavior, maintaining emotional control, stopping behaviors at appropriate times, and understanding the impact their behavior has on others.
- ❖ **Auditory Processing**: A child with an auditory processing disorder may have difficulty deciphering speech sounds and words, understanding speech in noisy environments, following and/or understanding directions, holding on to verbal information in immediate memory, and responding orally to verbal prompts or questions.