

The Jewish Press
April 25, 2007
The Arrowsmith Program
Give Your Child A Future
By Rivi Edelman

In every classroom there are those children who, despite the fact that they are of average intelligence, still don't "get it." Parents and teachers both agonize over the decision to modify the class work for these children. The dream of both educators and parents alike is an intensive program for these children's weak areas at the completion of which **they would no longer need modification or remedial support.** Because every child has different weaknesses, it would need to be a broad-based program that could strengthen many different cognitive areas.

The Arrowsmith Program, whose laboratory school is based in Toronto, has been addressing this need for close to thirty years. Many years ahead of its time, its premise is that weak areas of the brain can be strengthened through a series of cognitive exercises that graduate in intensity and speed, using cutting edge technology. The scientific community has dubbed it, "neuroplasticity". Recently, author Norman Doidge, M.D. wrote about his neuroplastic research in [The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science](#). He describes the Arrowsmith Program's success in chapter two of his book. As the exercises change the brain's abilities these children begin to learn at the natural rate of their peers; they no longer require remedial support, program modification or other forms of compensation. Nineteen different cognitive areas are addressed, including auditory and visual memory, conceptual comprehension, attention span, motor planning for writing and speech, reading visual cues for social skills, etc. Every child is assessed at the onset, brought up to average capacity, and graduated from the program as quickly as possible.

Recently, this program has been licensed to yeshivas in the United States including the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach in NY, and in September 2007, Maimonides Academy in Los Angeles. The children are mainstreamed for parts of the day, in the Arrowsmith classroom doing exercises for others, and gradually reintegrated into a full academic curriculum as their capacity to learn improves and the exercises are completed.

One mother remarks, "In the last four months, my son has become wittier; his baby sister who used to tease him no longer has the nerve because he is sharp enough to respond!"

A child in the program said, “I think I have really improved in reading and socializing because I used to be on grade four reading level and now I’m on grade seven reading level and that was only a year ago. Also, I used to just read books but I never understood what it said which is a very big improvement on my part. I used to be so shy, if you introduced me to someone I would either hide or turn red. Now I can meet every person in the school without turning red.”

An eighth grader says, “I have improved in my fluency with numbers in my head when I am trying to find the answers quickly. I am able to process the numbers and able to remember a lot more.”

A mother laughs, “Occasionally I wouldn’t take my 7 year old daughter to a birthday party if I was too pressured or busy because she wouldn’t remember. No longer. Just a few months into the program, her memory has improved so much, and she’s become so organized with time, that she reminds me days before of the coming party. The day of the party she waits at the front door in her party dress, present in hand. Her brain is becoming more efficient than mine! I would love these exercises for myself.”

One parent confides that she had given up hope that her son would ever read Hebrew efficiently. Labeled dyslexic, he practiced painstakingly for years with the best help his parents could find. Recently, his Rebbi reported to her that her son is at the same level and speed as the rest of the children—he had caught up three grade levels within **nine months** in the Arrowsmith program.

Another mother relates, “On Friday afternoons, when we were all rushed, I would ask my daughter to run up and put her shoes away, so I didn’t trip on them again, and of course she would forget half-way up the stairs. Now, five months later, I can tell her, “put your shoes away, take a shower for Shabbos, clean your room and remind your sister to hurry up” and she remembers all of it, without a single “what?”

One father says, “My biggest concern was life skills. I saw my son’s grades improving with Arrowsmith, but was surprised to find the program improving the whole family’s quality of life as well. His auditory processing problems had impacted on everything from basic conversations to enjoying videos with our family. He would continuously make us rewind so he could follow the video at a slower pace. Needless to say, everyone waited till he was asleep to watch. Within four months he was watching along with the family, and laughing at all the right

parts. His jokes became wittier, and he started to “get it” when people were sarcastic. When he graduates school, in addition to all the facts he has learned, he will have a better quality of life, better relationships, and more choices in life due to Arrowsmith. People will finally know him as the bright child he always was.

At HALB, where the program is in its second year, two children have been admitted to the enrichment program after years of struggling with low grades in the past. **Other results in *only ten months time* include reading comprehension scores increasing within a range of 1.5 years to 5.2 years of improvement, reading speed scores showing .9 years to 3.8 years of improvement, and wide range achievement math test scores improved anywhere from .8 years to 3.3 years of improvement.**

To learn more about implementing the Arrowsmith Program at your school visit www.arrowsmithschool.org.

To schedule an educational or professional development session on learning disabilities contact Annette Goodman, Chief Education Officer, Arrowsmith Program, 917-584-0137.

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