

# The Use of Color to Treat Learning Problems

By Lisa Harp

I am the queen of color. Or, so I tell my students as I work with them, invariably using color as a training tool. Some of these students question what I am doing, but the bottom line is this: I get results with color. A normal child spends most of his day in school, dealing with black and white. Most of this day is spent with a black lead pencil, books printed in black and white, and worksheets and workbooks also printed in black and white. It seems their world is black and white, perhaps with a few colored moments. For a left-brained child, this is not an issue at all. His brain does not require color to function well. However, a right-brained child, who sees the world in color and pictures, craves and needs color to succeed in an academic setting.

Without it, he loses interest in the topic at hand and slowly fades away. This student is often diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder or a learning disability. This may indeed be true. But, more often than not, this child is misdiagnosed and misunderstood. However, I have had excellent results with these right-brained kids simply with the use of color. Following are some color activities that have proven to be extremely helpful for students with learning problems.

- When they do their math, I have them use a colored pencil. I use blank paper and model the correct math steps using a colored marker. Each step gets a different color.
- Math facts are taught using color, a story, and a picture. The entire fact is included with the story and picture. The traditional black and white flash cards that don't have the answer available will not work with a student with learning problems. These kids need other clues to help them memorize. That is where the picture, story, and color come in.
- Spelling words are also practiced in color. I have them write all of the vowels in one color and all of the consonants in another. Or, I will have them write each syllable with a different color. Another color activity I have them do is to write the spelling word in color. Then, I have them cover up the word and try to write it from memory forward and backward.
- Writing assignments are performed with a colored pencil. However, editing is done with a different colored pen or pencil. After the student writes his assignment, I have him go back over the assignment and add capitals, periods, and commas with the other colored pen or pencil.
- If reading is a struggle, I place a colored transparent report cover over the reading material. If a student is having a difficult time learning sight words, I have him write them with a colored pen or pencil. Phonemic awareness is taught by highlighting the word segment being taught in color and having a colored picture to go with it. For instance, if I am

teaching the "et" phonemic segment, I have a picture of a jet and a list of words with the "et" portion in color. I have the words gradually get more difficult.

- If the student needs to memorize any information, such as states and capitals or biology terms, the student can make his own study aids. Have him draw a picture in color that will cue his memory for the term. Then come up with a story to go with it. Have the fact to be memorized written in color somewhere with the picture and story. The student will enjoy learning and memorizing in this fashion much more than the traditional method of "drill and kill". He will also retain the information, which is what is most important.

Color is a miracle worker for right-brained students. It holds their attention and helps them succeed. And that is why I am the queen of color.