



# JOURNAL

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## IS MY CHILD A STRUGGLING LEARNER?

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Joey, age 7, tries to read from the book his mom has chosen for him. It is from the series that she has successfully used to teach her other three children to read at this age.

"The f-a-t c-a-t s-a-t on the m-a-t," he reads, sounding out every word like it is brand new, even though he has read this story many times. There seems to be no retention of the words from day to day, or even from line to line.

Joey's lack of progress leaves Mom perplexed. She asks herself: Why isn't he learning as quickly as his brothers and sisters? He seems bright enough—but just doesn't get it. Am I teaching him too early, or does he have a learning disability? Can he be tested for one? And where would I take him to be tested?

This scene occurs in homeschool households across America, with children of all ages, in many learning areas other than reading. Children who have great difficulty spelling, writing, doing math and retaining information are often a puzzle to the competent, caring parents working with them. These parents don't necessarily see their children as having special needs, or learning disabilities, but they do see that they are working with struggling learners.

There are many levels of learning struggles. If a child has a learning glitch, he or she is working harder than he should have to, but is not behind. If the child is struggling more, and has a learning dysfunction, he has to work even harder to learn, and is about a year behind. If he has dyslexia, dysgraphia, or other learning disabilities, he has to work much harder, and is at least two years behind grade level in one or more areas. He may even be at a complete standstill academically. Many of these struggling learners are gifted.

These bright, hard-working children do very well in a homeschool setting where the parent can tailor teaching methods and curriculum to them, and spend more time working with them.

There are two things that are important to do for this struggling child:

- Identify where the learning block is, and how to remove that block, reducing the stress in a child's learning system.
- Find a curriculum, and more importantly, teaching strategies that help this child get in touch with the "smart part of himself."

Whether your child is experiencing a glitch, dysfunction, learning disability, or has special needs in other areas, check HSLDA's website for help.

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