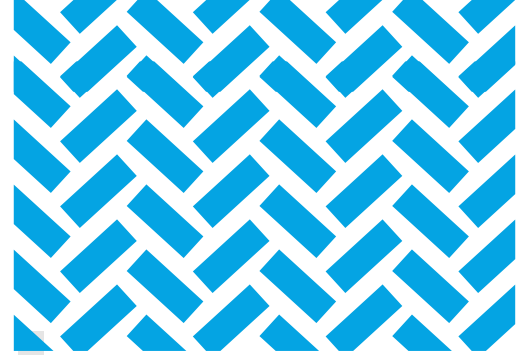


# Williams Syndrome Educational Profile 2024



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Students with Williams syndrome have a unique educational profile, with widely disparate strengths and weaknesses.

However, the effective utilization of their personal strengths and their ability to access technology can greatly improve success in more challenging areas and allow access to age-appropriate curricula with their same-age peers.



This profile was created to provide teachers and providers with a brief general overview of the relative strengths and weaknesses of students with Williams syndrome. Please recognize that individual children will present as individuals and may exhibit different strengths and weaknesses than those described here.

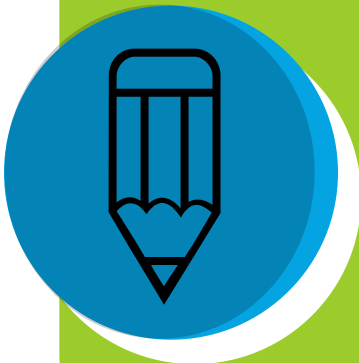


## Reading

- Can generally learn to read well with intensive systematic phonics instruction
- Phonemic awareness including phonemic manipulation is a crucial teaching strategy
- Struggle to create a “mental movie” when reading; this impacts comprehension
- Reading comprehension may be impacted by language deficits



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## Writing

- Learning to spell and writing out words is a critical component of literacy development.
- Composition skills frequently surpass mechanical ability
- Utilization of graphic organizers supports increased written output
- Handwriting skills may progress slowly even with intervention; intervention should be continued regardless.



- Need early access to assistive technology including both high and low tech supports.



## Speech & Language

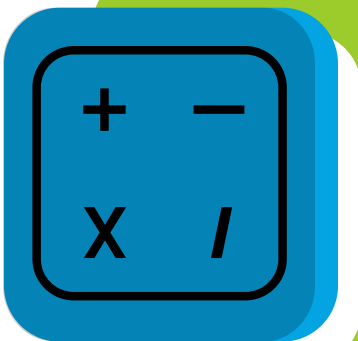
- Concrete vocabulary is often a relative strength
- Likely will need support with learning how to make inferences
- May have word-finding problems
- Provide wait time for the child to be able to formulate a response
- Speech Therapy is a necessity throughout their entire school career to support language and vocabulary development.

**Limited understanding of relational language and complex grammatical structures may impede both listening & reading comprehension**



## Fine Motor Skills

- Fine motor development is almost always delayed. However, instructional concepts should continue to be taught and an "alternate pencil" provided to the student so they can respond to the curriculum
- Students may benefit from a slant board to change the visual plane of the working surface.
- Allow student to copy from a paper on their desk rather than copying from the board
- Find alternate ways for the student to engage in art and other creative tasks, other than using a scribe or adult support.



## Math

- Kids with WS can learn math
- Direct instruction with simple methodologies and sequential delivery is most effective
- Number lines, manipulatives, and Touch Math are highly effective
- Provide worked examples with sequential instructions



**Working memory, nonverbal reasoning, and visuospatial skills likely will need to be accommodated to increase success in math.**



## Social Relationships

- Kids with WS deserve legitimate friendships with their peers but lack the skills to build them
- Kids with WS have difficulty understanding sarcasm, irony, metaphor etc. and with social pragmatic language skills
- Their desire to please may lead them to follow poor examples from other students
- Direct instruction in self-regulation and pro-social behaviors is crucial.
- Zones of Regulation & Social Thinking are often effective curricula.



## Executive Functioning

- Use task lists and visual schedules to support working memory
- Provide worked models or pictures of completed work as examples.
- Allow extra time to complete a task
- Break a larger task into manageable parts
- Ask child to repeat instructions to ensure thoroughness and comprehension
- Consider pairing the student with a capable peer



## Important Tips

- There is wide variability in the abilities of individuals with WS
- Expectations should be set high as the children are often able to meet these expectations with support.
- Liberally use the Pre-teach/Teach/Re-Teach cycle. This supports working memory.
- Music and rhythm may be an effective tool to aid in overall learning and may be helpful with pre-teaching and re-teaching.



## Science & Social Studies

- Emotional connection to materials helps with remembering facts & concepts
- Often very social; invested in the world they live in
- Kids care about people and the world. This is typically a high interest area.

## From a parent: A good teacher match for someone with WS will:

- **Set high expectations** and see each student as capable of learning great things with the right supports.
- **Recognize** that students with WS are ready to participate, ready to learn; they sometimes just don't know where to begin.
- **Understand** that the language a child with WS uses may not accurately represent all going on in their minds.
- **Be ready to shift**--shift in tools, resources, or supports. There is always a way to make the learning accessible.
- **Get ready for joy!** Students with Williams with the right supports will find immense joy in learning and in their peers and will contribute greatly to classroom culture.

FIRM...  
but kind

## It's worth it!

The unique profile of students with Williams syndrome may challenge your skills. The extraordinary gifts of students with Williams syndrome will brighten your day and reward your efforts!



**For more information, please visit**  
**[www.williams-syndrome.org](http://www.williams-syndrome.org)**

Compiled for WSA by Robin Pegg, MEd

Contributors:  
Robin Pegg, MEd  
Carolyn Mervis, PhD  
Bonnie Klein-Tasman, PhD  
Karen Levine, PhD  
Lindsay van Staden