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## HONORS PROJECTS

### The Effects of Drama Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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#### Abstract

In completion of my Honors Project, I created Brighter Connections Theatre (BCT). This program was designed for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) ages 8 to 14 years old. BCT ran for six weeks this past summer in Dayton, OH and had a total of seven participants. Four of these children and their parents agreed to be research participants. My team of volunteers and I documented the progress made by these research participants in certain social and behavioral areas through the process of drama therapy. This document consists of a literature review of drama therapy, a detailed overview of the program, the research results, and implications for future research needed in this field.

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art therapist at a school for children with all kinds of developmental disabilities. This article is just the thing to share with my colleagues who don't understand what I do. Drama therapy is not only helpful for neurotypical students, it's also applicable for those on the autism spectrum. The use of acting, role-playing, movement and body language, and focus on learning how to interact with and interpret the communications of others makes it a great fit for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A recent study in the *Dramatherapy* journal explored the effects of drama therapy sessions on children and young people with ASD, and found benefits that fit into five broader themes: Dramatherapy sessions gave participants a safe place to explore their feelings. Partic Children with ASD have altered gait patterns to healthy controls, widened base of support, and reduced range of motion. Several studies refer to cerebellar and basal ganglia involvement as the patterns described suggest alterations in those areas of the brain. Further research should compare children with ASD to other clinical groups to improve assessment and treatment planning. In recent years, it has become clear that children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) have difficulty with gross motor function and coordination, factors which influence gait. Knowledge of gait abnormalities may be useful for assessment and treatment planning. They also studied the effect of cueing and concurrent tasks on gait in children with ASD. Autism is also referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD. Autism decreases the individual's ability to communicate and relate emotionally to others. A balanced diet, along with some vitamin supplementation, is advised by clinicians for children with autism spectrum disorders. It is important to have a good diet as some patients show good improvement in symptoms when eating such a diet. Some patients with autism suffer from constipation and others may develop a habit of eating items like dirt or paper.