

Movement and Drawing Exercises to Help Development and Learning Difficulties

5 One-Day Workshops

A task belonging in the early years is to master the spatial world. To do this is to break the natural symmetry with which we have been born and to develop accurate, harmonious movement. If accomplished, a child is in this respect ready for school, ready for literacy and numeracy, ready to make bodily movement internal.

Often, however, when a child struggles at school, it is found that his or her development has not taken that course, or not entirely. Subsequent remedial work to complete the early years' tasks then proves to bear fruit, not only in coordination but also in writing, reading and the capacity to manage the school environment.

This work on the Development of the Senses has evolved out of the earlier educational work of Audrey McAllen whose book "The Extra Lesson" is subtitled: Movement, Drawing and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading and Arithmetic.

Suitable for Learning Support Teachers, Class Teachers, Classroom Assistants, Subject Teachers and Upper School Teachers, the workshops aim to equip teachers with insights and an effective group of exercises to carry into their day-to-day work.

The exercises are formed so as make-up-for and move-on the developmental struggles of individual children. They also improve the overall skill-level of a class and support concentration. Without any obligation, participants are invited to do the exercises and all will receive material on how to do them.

Stage 1 The Pattern of Dominance and Overcoming of Mirroring

Born without laterality, of ear, eye, hand or foot, the task to establish these belongs in the first seven years of life. For many school age children, however, part of the pattern proves to be as yet undecided. Specific exercises then establish the missing laterality and typically this in turn makes-for improvement in a child's writing and reading. The basis of the capacity to master the left-to-right stream of the western script - proves to lie in completion of the dominance pattern, in the crossing of the vertical midplane and in the overcoming of mirroring.

Stage 2 Overcoming the Three Midplanes

In addition to left and right, separated by the vertical midplane, there is above versus below and behind versus in-front. In this way, the human stance, upright and forward-facing, has three midplanes. Though invisible, these condition the very young child's movements, as borders not to be crossed. Later however, a skilled level of spatial orientation requires the child to habitually cross these midplanes. Through this, fluency in literacy and (in particular) numeracy have a sound basis.

Stage 3 Completion of an Assessment of Senses' Development

This workshop adds to the diagnostic and developmental exercises of workshop stages 1 and 2, to build a whole assessment. Amounting not only to a list of checks but also to an overall picture of a child's accomplishments amid the lower senses, this provides both direction and content, for future work to help a child's specific needs.

Stage 4 Releasing Stress

Partly as a need of the times and partly toward the aim of the next workshop, on focus and attention, this central theme in the lives of children, stress, has to be faced. Insights and practical methods drawn from the work of Rudolf Steiner, help to form a picture of what stress really is - as well as how to approach it. As in earlier workshops, the activities for children here include the primal early movements, essentially bringing rhythm.

Stage 5 Developing the Capacity for Attention

Through movement exercises designed to develop the inner dynamic of lift-carry-place, a range of activities is brought for the strengthening of attention. Out of the earliest actions of engagement in babyhood, develop the two polar opposite activities, of awareness and attention. The one works inward from the periphery while the other reaches out from the centre. Both are needed as a starting-point for learning in the school environment.

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