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NEWSLETTER - May 2012.

Welcome to the May edition of our Newsletter, keeping you up to date happenings at The Movement and Learning Centre.

Barcelona Conference 2012

Ian has recently attended the annual international conference of The Institute for Neuro Physiological Psychology (INPP) held in Barcelona. The conference theme each year is neuro-developmental delay in children with specific learning difficulties. Presenters at the conference came from a range of professional backgrounds and work in academic and clinical practices throughout Europe and North America.

Two presenters reported on their research in the implementation of the INPP School Programme of developmental exercises in schools in Germany and Hungary. Their findings provided further support for the efficacy of this programme in remediating developmental delay and enhancing literacy skills and behaviour in the classroom. This is of particular note because this is a programme that we provide training in for teachers here at The Movement and Learning Centre.

Arjan Kuipers, a chiropractor from the Netherlands, made a very interesting presentation on better understanding of the brain as a key to better treatment and training of children on the autistic spectrum.

Dr Kjeld Johansen, Director of the Baltic Dyslexia Research Lab reported on latest research using auditory stimulation in the treatment of a range of learning and behavioural difficulties. This is a treatment we use with our clients.

Quite apart from the formal presentations the conference brings together friends and colleagues from around the world who are all working in their own fields to improve the lives of children, adolescents and adults. It always amazes me how much interest there is from around the world in our work here in Bo'ness. In fact a colleague from Norway is attending our training course in Bilateral Integration in May!

Enhancing Learning and Releasing Potential

Our conference on the 8th September 2012 has already been attracting considerable interest with more than 20 people already signed up. As we had hoped those attending so far come from a range of professional backgrounds and also include parents.

Please note that an early bird conference fee is available up to 31st May 2012. Please check our website for more details and to book a place.

Research

A tide of change is taking place with regards to how we support our children in the early years before starting formal education. Recently in Scotland the national Early Years Taskforce published its vision for the future and local and national government are diverting money into early years provision. One significant priority is to highlight the role of physical play in children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.

It was noted in The Times Educational Supplement Scotland recently (TESS 27 April 2012, Henry Hepburn) 'that five year olds starting school with degree educated parents are about 18 months ahead (in terms of vocabulary) of classmates whose mums and dads have no qualifications'. Early pre-school experience

does impact on school readiness. But as some researchers in the field note ‘Although some teachers identify poor academic skills at school entry (knowing letters, numbers etc) as the primary source of children’s difficulties, most noted problems with self regulation, particularly problems with following instructions and controlling attention as the main cause of children’s lack of readiness for school’(Blair and Diamond, 2008).

Can the child sit still? Does the child have the physical competency to play? Can he hold a pencil to draw, write? Can the eyes track smoothly along a line of print in support of reading? Can the child plan, organise and execute controlled voluntary movement? These are examples of motor competence that are assumed to be in place by the time a child enters formal education. But what if they are not? A child who has not developed minimum levels of motor competence is likely to experience difficulty or failure when confronted with formal academic tasks.

Executive function is understood as an umbrella term encompassing a number of interrelated sub-skills necessary for purposeful goal directed activity. Blair and Diamond (2008) state that ‘Self regulation refers to the primarily volitional cognitive and behavioural processes through which an individual maintains levels of emotional, motivational, and cognitive arousal that are conducive to positive adjustment and adaptation, as reflected in positive social relationships, productivity, achievement , and a positive sense of self’. Research has highlighted the link between deficiencies in executive function and difficulties in aspects of social-emotional function such as distractability, impulsivity, delay of gratification, lack of concentration, action selection, understanding of mental states and recognition of the consequences of actions (Riggs et al, 2006). There is also evidence to support the view that difficulty with motor coordination is associated with deficits in executive functioning in particular attention problems (Piek et al, 2004).

Movement, balance and postural control are indeed the foundations of later learning and behaviour.

References

Blair, C and Diamond, A (2008) *Biological processes in prevention and intervention: The promotion of self regulation as a means of preventing school failure*. *Development and Psychopathology*, 20, 899-911.

Early Years Taskforce

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/earlyyearstaskforce>.

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Riggs, N.R., Jarhomi, L.B., Razza, R.P., Dillworth-Bart, J.E. and Mueller, U (2006) *Executive function and the promotion of social-emotional competence*. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 27, 300-309

Children say the funniest things!

We were dog sitting for a family member who was abroad on holiday. The small fluffy white poodle, Charlie, from a distance was the cutest little dog you could imagine. However, far from being a docile lap dog he was very, very snappy. We had him in the office one day tied up lest he attack one of our children. One wee boy of 7 years of age saw Charlie and commented on how cute he was. We told him that while he looks fluffy and cute he was a bit wild. The boy then said ‘That shows that you must never assume with your eyes!’. Age 7 but starting university this year I think!