

# Surrey Early Speech and Language Program Newsletter




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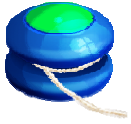
## The Sensory System .....Doorway to Learning

By: Amanda Goodison & Alex Lay

**A child's sensory system is like the doorway to their learning. It's important that we recognize individual sensory differences as well as a child's changing sensory needs across situations. Here are some things to know about sensory processing and things to do to help your child learn better.**

	<b>Things to Know:</b>	<b>Things to do:</b>
<b>Movement</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement is critical to the way kids learn about their world.</li> <li>• It helps information flow and enhances their learning ability.</li> <li>• The effects of movement can last for up to 2-4 hours.</li> <li>• Activating the parts of kids' brains that respond to movement leads to wider brain activation and increased alertness.</li> <li>• Adding movement to an activity can help keep a child's attention longer, and help them better remember what they have learned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate "heavy work" into your child's day, such as getting them to help you bring the groceries in, carry a weighted backpack, and help rearrange furniture.</li> <li>• "Heavy play" is also a great way to get kids moving. Some ideas include: "magic carpet" game where kids pull each other around on a piece of rug or a blanket, jumping on a trampoline, tug of war, and playing on the playground.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Differences</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement has an especially powerful effect on learning and attention in boys</li> <li>• Boys build trust, intimacy and bonding through physical and rough and tumble play.</li> <li>• Research shows us that boys who are moving vocalize more, and have an easier time accessing words and feelings than if they are still.</li> <li>• Boys tend to need more time and movement to shift attention and transition between tasks.</li> <li>• Girls tend to be better at multi-tasking and tend to have stronger language skills due to differing brain chemistry.</li> <li>• Girls attend better and become more interested in a task when stories and descriptions are added.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let all kids engage in some rough and tumble play, as it can be a learning tool.</li> <li>• Remember that kids can still be listening and learning even when they are not making eye contact or when they are moving around the room.</li> <li>• Schedule in "movement breaks" and incorporate movement games in homework or speech practice sessions or when transitioning from one activity to another.</li> <li>• Add stories and detailed descriptions to tasks and games to increase interest and attention for girls.</li> </ul>
<b>Levels of Alertness</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We make and retrieve memories and form new ideas and action plans according to the level of arousal of our body:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low level – mellow, lethargic</li> <li>- Medium level – calm and alert</li> <li>- High level – agitated, frazzled</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If we think of the body like a car engine, we can think of these levels as "low speed," "just right," and "high speed."</li> <li>• When your child's engine is in high speed, it can be difficult for them to pay attention, sit still, or complete tasks.</li> <li>• When your child's engine is in low speed, they may have trouble concentrating, "zone out," or feel and act lethargic.</li> <li>• When the body engine is running "just right," it's easiest to pay attention, get work done, and have fun. This zone is the best for learning and remembering.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify your child's "engine speed" or arousal level in a given situation.</li> <li>• If the child's alertness level is low, alerting activities will help the child focus longer and be alert. These can include bouncing, chewing something crunchy, or eating something cold or sour.</li> <li>• If the child's arousal level is too high and they are hyper-responsive to input, calming activities may be used to get them into the optimal zone of alertness. Calming activities include deep pressure to their head, trunk, shoulders, and/or hands, and heavy work</li> </ul>

## Self-Regulation



- “Self-regulation” refers to the strategies a child uses to increase their attention to a task, to self calm, and to control their impulses.
  - During infancy, parents and caregivers provide input such as touch, movement, sights and sounds, which help the child stay calm and attend to and organize relevant information.
  - Later in development, the child comes up with his or her own strategies for calming, and attending to and organizing sensory information.
  - A child who can self-regulate effectively uses these strategies and has the ability to monitor and change his or her state of arousal to match the demands of the environment.
  - Regulatory strategies can include fidgeting, staring out the window, jumping, bouncing, rocking, repeating directions, and smelling objects.
- Talk to your child about how they are feeling if you notice that their “engine” is running fast or slow. Help them figure out what could get their engine running “just right.”
  - Keep in mind that when your child is fidgeting, moving around, or staring off into space, they may actually be self-regulating the best way they know how.

Reference: Marc Landry, Occupational Therapist. November 2008 presentation to Fraser Valley Speech-Language Pathologists.

## Welcome to our New Executive Director!



The Board of Directors and Staff of the BC Family Hearing Resource Society are thrilled to announce the arrival of our new Executive Director, **Christine Mayworm.**

Christine is moving to Canada from Chicago. Having worked in Vancouver in the 1980s for Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services, Christine is familiar with B C. She is happy to be returning to “Beautiful British Columbia” after a long stay in the states.

Christine is a licensed clinical counsellor with immense experience in working with children and their families with communication needs. We look forward to her vision, leadership and direction and are very excited about the opportunities to come.

Families and community service providers wishing to connect with Chris can reach her at [cmayworm@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:cmayworm@bcfamilyhearing.com) or by calling our office.

***Welcome Christine!***

## Annual General Meeting 2008...

Each year we invite stakeholders to our annual meeting as a way of updating them on our work, to meet other families (free childcare provided) and to recognize our generous volunteers and donors. On November 26, 2008 the BC Family Hearing Resource Society hosted their annual general meeting. Over 50 people attended to hear of our agencies progress and to meet our new Executive Director. Thank you to those of you who attended. The annual report was approved and is available to anyone through our website or by contacting the centre. The financial audited statements are presented and reviewed by our auditors and are also available upon request.



The annual report highlights our confirmation of values, our mission and our achievements through services to families, training and research.

Our Board of Directors is elected each year at this meeting. We encourage people to become involved in the work of our centre through volunteering, membership and donations. Thank you for your generous support. If you are interested in learning more about our work or becoming involved, please do not hesitate to contact Ellen Peterson, Business & Resource Development Manager at the centre.

## Walking for bright futures...Save this date!

It's that time again! Lace up your walking/running shoes and join us!

**Elks and Royal Purple Annual Walk-a-thon.**

The site is the **Campbell Valley Regional Park**



**May 24, 2009**



Watch for more details coming soon to your mail box and on our web site.

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