MOVEMENT TO HELP WITH HANDWRITING

Movement helps lay the basic foundations for writing and other fine motor skills. Participating in movement activities provides additional messages to the brain on body position, direction of movement and distance to name a few. This awareness develops to a point where we can perform a movement without having to watch ourselves to see if we have done it properly. This allows us to move our attention from the skills of the task to the task itself. (Eg not just handwriting but creative expression)

When there are difficulties copying shapes, changing directions within a shape and combining directions when drawing (diagonals) then the child may be having difficulties working out how to move their pencil to form these shapes.

Therefore, practicing pencil and paper skills may not have as significant an impact as practicing movement skills that encourage an awareness of movement, direction and distance.

The following program was developed to address this skill and is designed to be run 1-2 times a week for 15-20 minutes. It can be run in a group or individually.

There is an evaluation sheet to be filled in when you have completed the program to let the therapist know if the program was useful and any helpful feedback you any have so that a practical program can be developed.
WEEK 1

STEPPING STONES

MATERIALS:

- Cards with shapes drawn on them
- Pieces of carpet or cardboard (about 6)

ACTIVITY:

- Show the child a card (shapes are numbered in sequence)
- Have them use the carpet/cardboard squares to make the shape on the ground
- If correct, have them jump with both feet together on the shapes (for most shapes start on the left hand side and jump across, and start from the top and move downwards)
- If incorrect, have the child talk about their shape and how they can make it look like the card. Get them to talk about it and encourage them to use a lot of directional words (eg “Does your shape look like the one on the card”, “How is it different”, “Yes you need to move that piece on top of the other one”, “Yes you need to move that piece to the left of that one” etc.)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- Have the child close their eyes. You place pieces in a particular shape. Have the child feel their way around the shape and try and pick which one it might be. If this is difficult to start, select 3 shapes from which they have to choose the one they think they have felt.
- Instead of carpet squares, use chalk on cement and have the child talk about the directions they are drawing (eg for a square – Start at the top, across, down, across, up)
WEEK 2

BEANBAG JUMP

MATERIALS:
- Beanbags or rolled up towel (about 6)
- Buckets (about 6)

ACTIVITY:
- Set up the buckets to represent a shape (refer to the developmental sequence of shapes and start at the beginning). Have them name the shape before they start.

- Have the child place a beanbag between their knees and jump with both feet together around the shape. Have them talk as they go (eg “jump, jump, jump, jump, stop, turn”)

- As they move from bucket to bucket, they have to drop the beanbag they are using in the bucket and select another to jump with to the next bucket.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:
- If you are on a carpeted surface, have the child crawl from bucket to bucket around the shape with the beanbag on their back.

- Have the child jump from bucket to bucket. When they reach the bucket throw them a beanbag which they then put in the bucket.
WEEK 3

SIMON SAYS

MATERIALS:

- Seat
- Chalk
- Chalkboard

ACTIVITY:

- Have the child sit on a chair
- Get them to close their eyes, or use a blindfold if this is difficult. Some children may be fearful of a blindfold and it may not be an appropriate alternative for these children.
- Tell them you are about to hold the hand and move it to make a shape.
- Move the arm slowly (encourage them to straighten the arm but keep it flexible) in given shape. Talk about the directions of the movement.
- When finished have the child repeat the movement. Encourage them to talk about the shape’s direction.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- Draw shapes with feet
- Draw with chalk on the chalkboard. To have visual feedback of movement when completed.
WEEK 4

OBSTACLE COURSE

MATERIALS:

• Tables
• Chairs
• Sheet
• Hoop
• Balance beam

ACTIVITY:

• Set up the obstacles – using 3 different obstacles at a time (eg table, sheet, hoop)
• Have the child negotiate the obstacles (eg walk around the table, crawl under the sheet and trace around hoop on the ground with a piece of chalk)
• Have the child talk through the activities as they go. (“I go around, under then draw the circle”)
• Once this obstacle course is mastered, change to another one.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

• You can include crawling, walking (heel-toe, backwards), jumping, sliding, rolling.
• To make the activity more interesting time how long it takes to negotiate properly, or have a goal at the end (throwing ball into a bucket)
WEEK 5

SHAPE TARGET

MATERIALS:

- Large shapes cut out of cardboard
- Blu-tac
- Beanbags

ACTIVITY:

- Stick shapes on a nearby wall
- Stand or seat child 2 metres from wall. Mark ground with a line if need be.
- Have a pile of beanbags close by. The child picks up a beanbag and throws it at the shape that you designate.
- Give 2 points for correct throws that hit the shape, 1 point for the beanbags that are aimed in the right direction and 0 points for beanbags that are thrown in the wrong direction.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- Use different shapes
- Use letters or numbers
- Increase distance as skill improves
- Keep a tally of scores
WEEK 6

SHAPE 0’s AND X’s

MATERIALS:

- Chalk
- Cement

ACTIVITY:

- Have the child draw a 0’s and X’s grid on the ground.
- Instead of using 0’s and X’s use varying shapes (e.g., triangles and squares)
- Take in turns to fill in boxes. Try and explain the rules of the game to the child. If, however, it is too difficult just have the child take turns with you to fill in the grid until it is complete.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- Use butchers paper instead of cement
- Stick a large sheet of paper to a wall to encourage shoulder stability
- Vary the shapes as others are mastered.
WEEK 7

MARBLE ROLL

MATERIALS:

- Large container lids (eg icecream) of various shapes
- Marble or ping pong ball

ACTIVITY:

- Have the child sitting in a chair
- Have them pick up and place marble onto the bottom of the lid (the side with the lip that helps seal the lid onto the container)
- They then need to manoeuvre the marble around the lid (eg tip it from side to side and forward and backwards) so that it travels around the edge of the container.
- Have them talk about the direction in which they are moving the marble.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- You may like to cut out other shapes from plastic lids and attach a cardboard lip to the edge, to make the marbles uncommon shapes.
- You can sometimes buy cheap mazes from bargain stores that will also encourage this skill.
WEEK 8

GUESS THE SHAPE

MATERIALS:

- Sheets of paper
- Markers

ACTIVITY:

- With the child’s eyes closed draw a shape on the palm of their hand.
- Have them move through an obstacle course and draw the shape on a piece of paper at the end.
- Help the child by telling them the directions of the shape you are drawing.
- Have them repeat it on your hand to see if you can identify a shape they have drawn (However you don’t have to do the obstacle course!!!!!!)
- If this appears difficult, have your shape cards handy, so that you can select 3 and the child points to the one you have drawn on their palm. Then they can go and draw it.
EVALUATION OF MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

CHILD’S NAME: ________________________________________________

1. SKILLS

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COMMENTS:
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COMMENTS:
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SIGNED: _________________________________________  DATE: __________________