

Readiness for Learning: Getting the 'brain ready' and 'body ready' for classroom participation in young school children.

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Introduction

Many young school children find it hard to participate in the everyday activities of the classroom due to behaviour or sensory processing difficulties. Teachers often ask occupational therapists what they can do to assist children in 'getting ready to learn' and enhance participation within the classroom. Move to Learn (MTL) is one option that occupational therapists can recommend. The MTL program is a set of motor sequences based on perceptual motor and sensory integration theory and how this might impact on readiness for learning. Many teachers are already using MTL in their classrooms and are attributing improvements to the program. Currently there is limited empirical evidence to support these anecdotal reports.

Objectives

This study aims to investigate change in classroom participation in young primary school children as result of implementing the MTL program.

Methods

Participants included 100 young primary school children attending typical primary schools in Australia. A randomised controlled trial was implemented whereby children were randomly allocated by class to an experimental group (daily use of MTL) and a control group (no MTL). 'Readiness for learning' was measured at the beginning and the end of the program (one school term) based on data collected regarding sensory processing, social development and classroom behaviour. Independent raters scored and interpreted the data.

Results

Between group comparisons indicated significant differences for some elements of children's ability to get ready for learning. Children participating in the MTL program demonstrated significant improvement in the areas of organisational or planning behaviours.

Conclusion

The MTL program appears to have some impact on children's ability to get ready for learning and their participation in the everyday activities of the classroom. In particular the program appears to benefit children who have specific difficulties with planning and organisation.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

As a result of this study occupational therapists can feel more confident and better informed when recommending the MTL program to teachers.