



Services for Young Children

Blog article



Pre-writing skills – How do you support young children to develop?

Writing outcomes across Hampshire and nationally remain an area of relative weakness when compared to outcomes across other areas of learning. The following article has been written to support child development knowledge and to remind practitioners about the importance of providing the appropriate resources, teaching strategies and environments for young children for developing their fine and gross motor skills which are a critical part of supporting pre-writing development.

Writing requires a significant amount of physical control and is a skill for life that must be refined and used time and time again. To support the early development of pre-writing skills we need to consider some essential elements that children need to have to enable them to be successful mark makers from the outset.

The process of becoming a writer is complex. It requires hand/eye co-ordination and involves the development of balance and proprioception (The ability to manage the space that you are in). Without a well developed muscle structure, knowledge and experience of using both gross and fine motor movements a child can not be expected to begin to make specific controlled and meaningful marks.

It is fundamental that children have gained gross motor skills before moving on to more complex fine motor tasks. When planning learning experiences for children from birth to five you need to think carefully about planned next steps and ensure that children have appropriate opportunities for developing both gross and fine motor skills.

Fun physical experiences which develop shoulders and upper arm muscles such as; crawling, running, climbing, rolling, tummy time, manipulating materials, sensory experiences and playing with a wide variety of toys and equipment are simple ways that you can provide the necessary, yet vital foundations to develop muscle structure and good core stability from an early age. Muscle control generally develops from the top of the body downwards and from the centre outwards, which means that the muscles in the hand that support the tendons and ligaments in the fingers are one of the last muscles a child will have good control over. It is therefore imperative that children develop gross motor control alongside fine motor control.

Providing a well resourced, stimulating learning environment inside and outside which enables children to have time and space to wallow in purposeful physical experiences is the key to capable and confident writers. As teachers in early years, it is your role to provide appropriate and timely teaching strategies that motivate and engage the children and provide inspiration for learning and growing. Below are some examples and ideas to support

reflection of your current practice and help you think about priorities for planned improvements for deeper impact:

Essential experiences for developing gross motor skills	Essential experiences for developing fine motor skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for rolling, stretching, crawling indoors and outdoors • Walls, floor spaces, objects of different textures to encourage reaching and moving • Mirrors so children can see themselves moving • Push along equipment to encourage upper arm strength • Balls, beanbags, scarves, rhythm sticks for throwing, waving, catching, pushing or kicking • Collection of interesting objects to be handled, squeezed, pulled, rolled • Parachute games • Digging opportunities • Cushions, tunnels , boxes for climbing over, under or through • Painting or using big chinks on walls, fences or long rolls of paper • Dough gym • Climbing opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making marks on different surfaces with a variety of materials e.g. flour, cornflour, sand, mud, snow, paint, water, rice etc. • Manipulating dough or clay • Explore holes, posting boxes, threading, jigsaws, simple construction toys • Posting objects such as coins, keys, parcels or letters into slots or holes • Playing with keys and locks • Using tools such as hammers, screwdrivers and tweezers/tongs • Threading buttons, beads and dry pasta • Gardening using small sized tools • Fastenings on clothing and shoes (buttons, zips, laces, Velcro, hooks etc.) • Using pegs and other joining materials such as tape, cable ties, clips to fix clothing and role play fabrics or to make dens and shelters