

Dyspraxia in the Early Years: Identifying and Supporting Children with Movement Difficulties (Second Edition)

By Christine Macintyre

Reviewed by PATRICIA CONNELL, resource teacher at St. Colmcille's Junior National School, Knocklyon, Dublin 16.

This book was written for those closely involved with the development and education of young children, with three aims in mind: firstly, to identify movement difficulties, secondly, to understand these difficulties and the wider implications for home and school, and thirdly, to know how to help children with motor difficulties. The author, Dr. Christine Macintyre, is a well-known expert in the field of dyspraxia and begins her book with two pieces of advice which I would wholeheartedly endorse; these children need appropriate support and the earlier the intervention, the easier it is for the children to cope. The book is intended for those working with children up to the age of five or six but in actual fact would be informative to those dealing with children of any age.

The first chapter highlights the importance of movement and the benefits of early intervention for those children with movement difficulties. There are examples of the interdependence of all aspects of the young child's development and how movement difficulties may impact on other areas of the child's learning. The second chapter focuses on the children with difficulties. It briefly discusses possible causes of dyspraxia, explains the different terms used and lists the symptoms of motor difficulties. Chapter 3, on planning observations, has an observational checklist which could be used by teachers as a basis for differentiation of movement tasks. In addition, this chapter has some useful tips for dealing with verbal dyspraxia. The three areas involved in moving well: perceptual/sensory input, planning and organisation, and execution, are dealt with in Chapter 4 while Chapter 5 focuses on the abilities that contribute to skill acquisition. I would highly recommend this middle section of the book particularly as it contains a wealth of information and suggestions that would be of benefit to both parents and teachers. Chapter 6 discusses the formation of self-concept and the impact of motor difficulties on social and psychological development. The penultimate chapter focuses on development

of motor skills and the factors that influence progression in motor competence. It contains helpful tables detailing the sequence of skill acquisition for the main motor skills. Finally the last chapter focuses on activities to improve motor skills. There are a number of activities with suggested progressions which may be used to draw up an intervention programme for a child or children with movement difficulties. The book also contains three useful appendices with Appendix 1, in particular, having a very useful movement observation record in the form of a checklist of competences.

Much of this excellent book is based on observing, recording and analysing of the movement difficulties of individual children and how to use this information to help the child. Unfortunately, I believe that for many Irish teachers this is unrealistic. Most teachers simply wouldn't have the time or opportunity to do this. However, this fact in no way detracts from the value of this book. The reports from parents, teachers, and indeed children, in the book provide important insights into how dyspraxia can impact on all aspects of a child's life. It contains an abundance of valuable information and a wealth of practical suggestions that could be used by teachers, SNAs and parents to support the child experiencing difficulties. The book comprehensively achieves its stated aims and I feel it would be a valuable resource for anyone dealing with young children experiencing movement difficulties as well as those interested in children's acquisition and development of motor skills.

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