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Dear Parents

Why are our children's fine motor skills declining? What can we do to help?

Over the past 20 years there has been a steady global decline in our children's fine motor skills. This has been especially noticeable in the last 5 years.

It's very clear to teachers that the standard of fine motor skills in pre-school children is not where it should be. Disturbing trends are that teachers are criticised by parents for referring too many children for Occupational Therapy, and Occupational Therapists are criticised for prolonging intervention for fine motor skills. Parents are criticised too, for allowing excessive screen time where children are just sitting and not playing games which help to develop fine motor and gross motor skills.

It is time to stop the finger pointing and to collaborate to implement innovative ways to address the issue of weakening fine motor skills. This is particularly important for preschoolers.

What are fine motor skills?

Fine motor skills involve the use of the smaller muscles of the hands, such as when doing up buttons, tying shoe laces, opening lunch boxes or using pencils or scissors.

Why are fine motor skills important?

Fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday skills like self care tasks (e.g. clothing fastenings, opening and closing items, cleaning teeth, using cutlery) and academic skills (e.g. pencil skills for drawing, writing and colouring, cutting and pasting). Without the ability to complete these everyday tasks, a child's self esteem can suffer and their academic performance is compromised.

What are the building blocks necessary to develop fine motor skills?

- Bilateral Integration: Using two hands together with one hand leading (e.g. opening a jar lid with one hand while the other hand helps by stabilising the jar).

Dates To Diarise

Term 4

24, 25 & 27 November
Nativity Concert

6 December
Swop over day

7 December
Break up day
(school closes at 11h00)

15 December
Aftercare closes



Term 4
Recycling and Lunch Pals Duty

21 November
Otters

28 November
Badgers

5 December
Giraffes

- Crossing the mid-line: The ability to cross the imaginary line running from a child's nose to pelvis that divides the body into left and right sides.
- Hand and finger strength: An ability to exert force against resistance using the hands and fingers which requires the necessary muscle power for controlled movement e.g opening a clothes peg.
- Hand eye coordination: The ability to process information received from the eyes to control, guide and direct the hands in the performance of a task such as handwriting and drawing.
- Hand dominance: The consistent use of one (usually the same) hand for task performance which allows refined skills to develop.
- Hand division: Using just the thumb, index and middle finger for manipulation, leaving the fourth and little finger tucked into the palm not participating but providing stability for the other 3 fingers.
- Object manipulation: The ability to skilfully manipulate and control tools such as pencils and scissors and the controlled use of everyday tools such as a toothbrush, hairbrush, and cutlery.
- Body awareness (Proprioception): Information that the brain receives from our muscles and joints to make us aware of our body position and body movement, so we can accurately control our movements.

If a child has poor fine motor skills they might:

- Have an awkward or immature pencil grasp for their age.
- Have untidy, slow or laborious drawing, colouring or writing skills.
- Fatigue quickly when typing or using a mouse on a computer.
- Have difficulty (or achieves a messy/choppy outcome) when using scissors.
- Have difficulty performing precise manipulation tasks (i.e. doing up buttons, threading, or tying shoelaces).
- Dislike precise hand and eye coordination tasks (e.g. construction).
- Have difficulty performing age appropriate self-care tasks independently.
- Tire easily when engaged in fine motor tasks.
- Get frustration when required to do something that is difficult
- Display avoidance behaviours, not wanting to participate in fine motor activities.

They might also have difficulties with:

- Meeting academic criteria due to poor handwriting skills and/or rapid physical fatigue.
- Mastering letter formation, which slows writing and reinforces dislike of the task.
- Excessive pressure and anxiety in a school-aged child due to difficulties 'keeping up' in class.
- Completing exams due to difficulty answering all written questions within the allocated time.
- Poor self esteem when the child compares their abilities with their peers.
- Developing efficient typing skills.
- Manipulating items for construction (puzzles, lego).
- Completing self-care tasks (e.g. doing up shoelaces, buttons, zips, using cutlery.)

Some of the possible reasons for the decline in fine motor skills could be:

- Babies and infants are spending less time on their tummies. In recent years, parents were advised to let infants sleep on their sides or backs and not on their tummies due to the link with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. This limits a babies' opportunity to push up on their arms.
- 'Snug and Safe' seats keep children safely strapped in however, they also limit rolling around and playing on the floor.



- Walking rings allow for mobility but can also lessen the weight bearing on the upper limbs and small muscles in the hands.
- Technology, specifically television and screens, means less time for active movement. We have seen fine motor skills plummeting as children swipe and point in place of active manipulative play that develops and strengthens fingers and hands.
- Less outside play, like climbing, swinging and rocking.

What activities can help improve fine motor skills?

- Threading and lacing: with a variety of sized laces and beads.
- Tying knots: in string and laces
- Zips: Gripping the lever and sliding the zip up and down
- Tongs or teabag squeezers: to pick up objects (e.g. put marbles down a marble maze).
- Manipulation games: such as 'Pick up Sticks' or deposit coins into a money box.
- Play-dough: Using the fingers, working with the Play-dough up in the air, not flat on the table.
- Baking: Beating, whisking, sprinkling and rolling.
- Construction: that requires pushing and pulling with fingers (e.g. 'Lego').
- Storing construction materials in jars with screw lids that need to be opened and closed as the materials are needed and when packed away.
- Craft: Colouring, cutting, pushing and pulling, make things using old boxes, egg cartons, wool, paper and sticky or masking tape.

If you have concerns about your child's Fine Motor Skills, speak to your child's teacher or an Occupational Therapist.

Wendy McKinnon

Learner support teacher - Blouberg campus

Excerpts taken from "Why are our Children's Fine Motor Skills declining?" by Bunty McDougall Kids Sense Child Development – Fine Motor Skills.



Health Tip of the Week

Take time eating and chew properly. The benefits of slow eating include better digestion, better hydration, easier weight loss or maintenance, and greater satisfaction with our meals. Meanwhile, eating quickly leads to poor digestion, increased weight gain, and lower satisfaction. ... When you eat slowly, you digest better.

Ticket sales Heaven and Nature Sing

We have released more tickets for Heaven and Nature sing. The limit of five tickets per family no longer stands. Please feel free to book more tickets.

Uniform Shop - socks (Grade R)

Please note: the Uniform shop is having a problem with supply of stone colour school socks at the moment. The socks were ordered in July and as yet, they have not arrived. According to the rep, they will arrive before January. The uniform shop have tried to source another sock supplier in the meantime but have had no success thus far. School socks are an item that may be purchased elsewhere such as Woolworths, Cape Union Mart and Edgars.

Pre-loved stationery collection

As you clear out your child's stationery in preparation for the new year, please consider donating your used stationery to the nursery schools and children of Home of Hope and Little Lambs. Thank you so much in anticipation for your support.

<http://littlelambsnpo.co.za/>
<http://www.homeofhope.co.za/>

The stationery can be placed in the box with hand prints on it in the foyer.

Support Staff Contributions

We are approaching that time of the year to show our appreciation and thanks to our support staff workers.

This year we are trying something different and are collecting small cash donations from our families to put towards buying our support staff gift vouchers from Pick n Pay. If you would like to contribute towards this, please send your donation to school in a sealed envelope with your child's name on it.

We thank you for your support and know that our support staff will be very appreciative of this kind gesture!

Please place your contribution in the wooden box in the foyer or send the contribution to your child's class teacher.



Pre-primary Sports Day

Heaven & Nature Sing

Friday 24th & Monday 27th

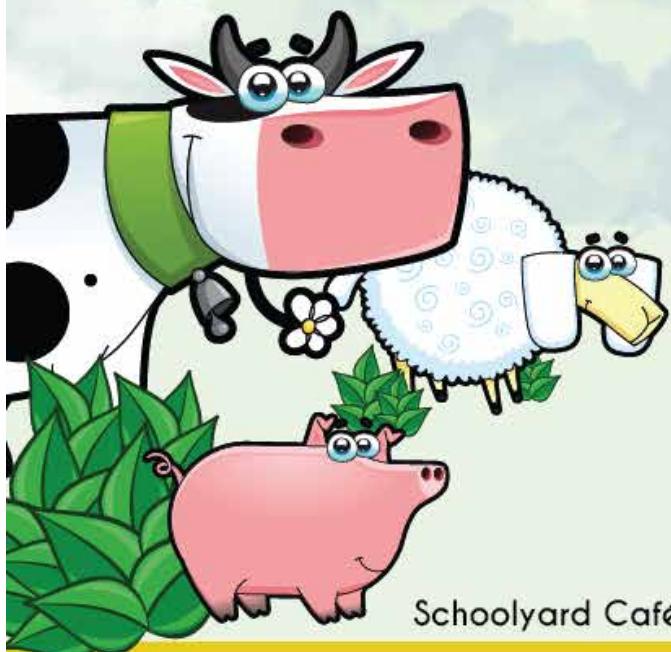
19h00 | theatre@elkanah

Saturday 25th

10h00 & 18:30 | theatre@elkanah

Adults R50 | Kids R35 | Tickets avail. on Quicket

(Children under 3 watch for free, but will sit on your lap)



Schoolyard Café will be open

