

SureReading

The Optimum Reading, Writing and Spelling Method



Information Booklet

The Optimum Learning & Health Centre
12 Bayview Crescent
Beaumont, South Australia 5066.
Tel. 61- 8 - 8379 4755, Fax. 61- 8 - 8379 0824
Email. akoelman@ozemail.com.au
Web: www.optimumlearningandhealth.com

The OPTIMUM READING, WRITING & SPELLING method

The **objective** of the **OPTIMUM READING, WRITING & SPELLING** method is to provide a systematic approach to reading, writing and spelling, based upon the structure of the word.

The method will develop skills for:

- * building a word from the sounds of the letters within the word (encoding)
- * analysing the sequence of the sounds within a word (decoding)
- * rules for decoding a multi-syllabic word, based upon the rules used in most non-english speaking countries, so that the word looks as it sounds when broken into syllables.

These skills will be developed in a multi-sensory way (**Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic**), so that each child's individual learning style will be included.

WHY A PHONOLOGICAL AND KINESTHETIC DISCRIMINATION PROGRAMME?

For the last 10 years many schools have moved away from **Phonics**, which is the process of sounding out all letters in sequence to form the whole word. **Instead** children have been given reading tuition using **Sight Reading**, the process of recognising the picture of the whole word at once, rather than breaking the word down into its parts, the letters and syllables. The approach of Sight Reading **works well with children who process information Visually**, however it **does not provide them with any word attack skills**, in case they have never seen the word before. Therefore the child can manage quite well in the early stages of reading, when the letters are in big print and mono or 2 syllabic words are used repeatedly, so that it is easy to recognise them as a picture. As the size of the letters decreases and the length of the words increases, the process of recognition becomes more and more difficult. If the child always automatically sounds out the words, while looking at the picture of the word, he/she may eventually end up knowing the relationship between the picture of a word and the sound of a word, without ever having been taught. These children usually have no problems with reading, writing and spelling, as their brain has managed to put structure to what they have experienced. This is a subconscious learning process, which may or may not lead to the child's ability to express this relationship consciously.

There is however a large group of children (mainly boys), where this process doesn't take place automatically. When they read, there is total silence in their head. They look (often stare) at the words in the hope that they recognise them and if they don't, they have no way of making sense out of the word. They particularly seem to find it difficult to put sounds in a sequence: "waps" versus "wasp", or recognise the sequence of sounds within a word: string = s-t-r-i-n-g, even though they have successfully pronounced these words many times.



This group of children tends to perceive the world from a right brain perspective and are often left eye and/or left ear dominant, activating the right brain in preference to the left brain, when they are looking or hearing (**R-brain learners**). The right hemisphere processes the world as a whole, hence the total picture approach works well for them. When they hear a word, they process it as one sound and find it difficult to analyse the whole into its parts, which is a left brain task (decoding). In spelling this becomes obvious in words like "strip". The letters may, or may not all be there when it is spelled and often they are in the wrong order. It therefore doesn't look like phonetic spelling (write the word as it sounds). This group of children seems to learn with the right brain at the exclusion of the left brain.

Language is processed predominantly in the left brain and analysing is a left brain task as

well. The left brain likes structure and a step-by-step approach and will therefore always attempt to put structure to an experience. The left brain focusses on detail (parts) and sequence. Therefore it is more inclined to notice the individual sounds (**Auditory or Phonological discrimination**), movements of the mouth, tongue, throat and lips (**Kinesthetic discrimination**), and the sequence of the letters within the word (**Visual discrimination**), than the right brain, that tends to process the whole.



Children who predominantly use the left brain only (**L-brain learners**) usually know how to sound the word out, but they have to do this every time they see this word, as they don't seem to take a picture of the word, or they can't access the picture of the word and therefore they don't recognise that they have seen the word before. L-brain learners also often have problems with reading comprehension, as this has to do with developing a total picture of the story, which is a right brain activity. However in the classroom, this is not as common as the right brain learner being stuck for left brain decoding skills.

WHY DO WE NEED SENSORY INTEGRATION FOR READING, WRITING AND SPELLING?

The **OPTIMUM READING, WRITING & SPELLING** method is designed to give both hemispheres the opportunity to learn to the best of their ability, making sure at all times that the picture of a word is combined with the sound and the feeling of the word. Recent research has shown, that people who move their lips as they are writing, spell much more accurately, than people who don't move their lips. In other words, people who use the sound, the feeling and the picture of a word together, spell better than people who don't. **Spelling** therefore needs to be a **sensory integrated activity**.

HOW CAN YOU LEARN TO USE THE WHOLE BRAIN FOR READING, WRITING AND SPELLING?

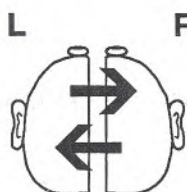


Dr. Paul Dennison, Creator of **Educational Kinesiology (Edu-K)**, or **Edu-Kinesthetics** as it is called in the USA, has designed an **Integration Process** to **improve communication between both hemispheres of the brain**. He has also designed a set of **Brain Gym®** activities to bring the brain in a "**switched-on state**" for learning. These **Brain Gym®** activities can be done for 5 minutes with the entire class before starting a reading, writing, spelling (or maths) lesson.

In order to *learn* with both sides of the brain simultaneously, children need to be able to *access* both sides simultaneously.



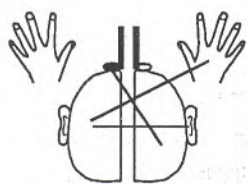
In my opinion, this is the reason for most learning problems. If part of the Brain is **not accessible**, then it is not involved in the learning process. Therefore the child needs to resort to **survival strategies** to make do, the best way possible. Often they are told off for not trying hard enough, but this is usually not the case. The child tries, but it is like a car with a gearbox that will only allow first or second gear. The slow work can be done, but when the speed increases, so does the struggle, the noise level and the sense of discomfort. The only and best way to fix all this, is to fix the gearbox, so that the third and fourth gear and with very high speeds even fifth gear can be accessed. Putting ear plugs in, so you can't hear the sound, or making short trips only, so it is bearable, doesn't change or solve anything. If you don't look



**Whole brain
access:
integrated
state**

for and treat the cause, nothing will change. This explains why tutoring has never really solved a problem like Dyslexia. If a child cannot process words as they are offered in normal reading books, then reading more books is not going to change this. Once the child can **access both sides of the brain** simultaneously, he/she can then **learn new, more efficient strategies** for any activity. Therefore some Brain Gym® activities are included in this method. Anyone who has done a course in Edu-K, can vary the Brain Gym® activities according to what is most suitable to prepare for the upcoming lesson or activity.

Most people have a distinct dominant side of the brain, which means that one side is slightly bigger than the other side of the brain, in other words they are asymmetrical. However Dr. Galaburda has discovered that Dyslexic children often have two symmetrical sides of the brain, without an obvious dominant side. It is as if a table tennis game is going on between the two sides of the brain. Every time a message comes in, it is not clear which side is going to do the job, or is capable thereof. This confusion also reflects in the way they use their body, as these children often have trouble knowing left from right.

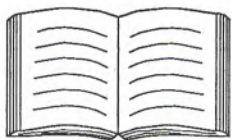


**Cross
dominant or
X-Dominant
pattern in an
unintegrated
state**

For many children with learning problems, their dominant hand is on the opposite side of the body's dominant eye, ear, or foot, a pattern that is often referred to as **cross dominant or X-Dominant**. Knowing about the Dominance Profile can provide valuable information about someone's strengths and weaknesses in terms of his/her learning styles and strategies.

If two dominant parts of the body are on opposite sides of the body, it becomes crucial for the two sides of the brain to communicate with each other, or for the person to be in an **integrated state**. If the person is in an **unintegrated state**, the two sides of the brain cannot communicate and that means that a person may not be able to write down information with the right hand that he/she has just perceived with the left eye.

The **key to whole brain learning** therefore is an **integrated brain**. When we are born, we are not integrated yet. It takes 5-6 years for girls' brains to integrate completely and 7-8 years for boys' brains. At birth boys have a hormone, Testosterone that actually prohibits them from integrating till 2 years after the girls are integrated. Boys tend to develop the right brain more (gross motor development), whereas girls tend to develop the left brain more (language and fine motor development). This explains why girls are much earlier competent at tasks like colouring in and cutting things out along the lines. Girls are also quite happy to sit down and talk to their friends, whereas boys would prefer to run around and hang upside down from trees. In The Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, this doesn't matter, as formal learning is not started till 6, 7 and 8 years of age respectively, but in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, children are expected to learn whole brain tasks like reading and writing when they are 4 1/2 - 5 years of age. As the integration is not yet complete at that age, especially boys find these activities very difficult. Consequently they will try to do these activities with one side of the brain only. Which side, usually depends on their Dominance Profile and more often than not, they choose the side that corresponds to their dominant eye and/or ear.



In the Economist of November 1988 an article was published of a research study to investigate the reading ability of children in Germany and Sweden on the one hand and UK on the other hand. In the UK children start reading and writing at the age of 4 1/2, which is similar to Australia where they start as soon as they are 5 years old. The reading age was determined at the age of 10.

The results showed, that even though the children in the UK had practised for 5 1/2 years and the children in Germany and Sweden had only practised for 2 - 3 1/2 years, the children from Germany and Sweden outperformed the children of the UK! When the amount of children who dropped out of secondary school and tertiary education was compared, a higher number of drop-outs in the UK was found. It was also interesting, that in Germany and Sweden people were continuously involved in further learning on a voluntary basis. In Sweden 65 year old people were enrolling in Courses to study Shakespeare, Japanese etc., because they enjoyed learning. In the UK this was not as common. Apparently learning was considered an enjoyable activity in Germany and Sweden, but in the UK, the struggle of the early learning experiences had created such bad memories, that the sooner they could quit formal learning, the better.

From the above results it follows that **practise doesn't necessarily make perfect** as the children in the UK had a lot more practise. They were practising reading with one side of the brain only and that will never lead to perfect whole brain reading. **Only perfect practise makes perfect!** In other words if the brain is fully integrated when reading is introduced and if all prerequisite sensory skills have been learned, then learning to read is an easy task and this is the case in Germany and Sweden. If however all kinds of survival strategies have to be adopted, in order to cope with the demands of school, reading will be a struggle and as the brain has a preference for repetition, these poor survival strategies will be rarely changed. This is illustrated by the fact, that many people who experienced reading difficulties as a child, still hate reading as adults and are still poor readers.

Children who start writing with an immature pen grip, still use this pen grip in adulthood! In Germany and Sweden, children who are developmentally delayed, suffer a lot more than they would in the UK, or Australia, as the majority of the children in Germany and Sweden has no learning problems, whereas it is quite common to have reading problems in the earlier years in the UK, Australia, or New Zealand. Many remedial programmes therefore originate from these countries.

How can this situation change, or better still: can it be prevented? The situation can change when the person has the opportunity to change their survival strategies to more efficient strategies. The situation can also be prevented by only offering the child a new task, when their brain is totally ready to deal with this task in a whole brain and multi-sensory way.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE OPTIMUM READING, WRITING & SPELLING METHOD?

This method focuses on all aspects of the learning process:

1. **Accessing.** Whole brain accessing, including the involvement of all senses.
2. **Strategies.** Efficient strategies for all subjects that can be learned once whole brain accessing is achieved.
3. **Content.** All content can be learned easily, once whole brain accessing is achieved and efficient strategies for all subjects have been learned.

This method can be used in Preschools and Kindergartens to develop the necessary prerequisite skills, as well as in Primary and High Schools to develop and further the skills. It is suitable to be used both in the classroom and as a remedial method.

When children enter school, they are at many different stages of development. Yet they are all offered the same curriculum, regardless of their ability to deal with this.

This method looks at the individual child and starts at a level that matches the child's developmental readiness, so optimum results are guaranteed!