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## LEARNING TO MOVE, MOVING TO LEARN!



By  
Samantha Anderson

Principal  
La Gratitude  
Pre-primary School

How many parents of preschool going children have heard the phrase: "Your child needs to move their bodies to help with future learning." Hopefully all of you! But why is this? How does your child moving their body help with later learning? Are movement programs not a little outdated? Well the short answer is NO! Besides the obvious health benefits, there are numerous studies that are still confirming that movement is essential to your child's learning. It has been proven to help increase memory, perception, language, attention, emotion and decision making. A simple activity, like a well thought out obstacle course, will improve your child's spatial awareness (the ability to know where their body is, in relation to objects around them). This in turn, should help them to better learn the letters of the alphabet, as they figure out the position of the circle on the "b" and "d", and in which direction it goes. Through climbing and outdoor play, children learn essential problem solving skills in order to figure out how to move their bodies, to achieve what they want to. Activities such as riding a bicycle, marching, crossing one arm over to the opposite leg, all work on bilateral integration and crossing the midline; essential automatic skills needed for later reading and writing. And the list goes on... These movement activities, repeated on a regular basis, help to forge and strengthen the neural pathways between the brain and the body. Research shows that our brains cannot adequately focus on two tasks at the same time. As much as we like to say

we are multi-taskers (present company included), that is an impossible statement. We are either flitting between tasks, or not giving a task adequate attention and brain power. So, consider your child in the Primary School environment, where the activities slowly become more task-oriented as they move through the grades. If your child's brain is trying to concentrate on how to move their bodies, or hold them up at a table, instead of it being autonomous, critical brain space and functioning is being used. However, if your child is fully capable of, for example, moving freely and easily between and across the two halves of their body, they can concentrate more fully on the structure of that sentence they are trying to write across the page. So what do you do if you're worried that your child may not be able to perform certain movements adequately? Or how do you know that what they are currently able to do is age appropriate? Well, the first step would be to chat to your child's preschool teacher. We are trained to look out for certain physical milestones in your child's development, and we are also able to spot possible 'red flags' that might alert us that your child needs some additional support. Often we are able to work on these at school, through various movement activities. There are however, times that we may need to refer to a specialist, such as a Physiotherapist. Your child's brain is at a critical development stage up to the age of 7 years old, and we want to take advantage of this period in your child's learning. In the meantime, let your creative juices flow! Create your own movement games and activities at home, both inside and outside. You will get those endorphins flowing and have wonderful family time too; and we all know that quality time spent with your children is rewarded down the line. So keep moving, keep learning, and most importantly, keep having fun! You won't regret it. Happy Moving!

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