



# Skills & Relationship to School Performance

Toni M. Schulken, MS, OTR/L  
www.pathwaysforlearning.com

## Sensory Processing

- Filtering out background visual and auditory information
- Regulation of arousal and attention level
- Seeking out excessive movement
- Avoiding tactile activities
- Over reaction to incoming sensory input in areas of visual, auditory, touch, movement, smell, taste
- Fine motor coordination
- Gross motor coordination (clumsiness)
- Motor planning
- Poor body awareness in space
- Overall academic performance
- Overall work habits

**Constructional Praxis** (visual space management of objects; the ability to use an organized and problem-solving approach to build a model when given the pieces needed to achieve the end product such as a model in the absence of step-by-step directions)

- Learning the proper motor patterns to write letters
- Copying block designs
- Building with construction toys
- Writing an organized paragraph or essay
- Social problem solving
- Segmented letter formation

**Praxis on Verbal Command** (translation of verbal directions into actions):

- Language processing
- Following verbal directions

**Postural Praxis:** (planning and executing bodily movements after viewing a visual demonstration)

- Following directions by visual demonstration only (many sports)
- Gross motor coordination and fine motor coordination
- Learning and remembering the motor patterns for letter formation

**Sequencing Praxis** (sequencing movements, bilateral coordination)

- Follow classroom routines
- Multi-step direction following
- Organizational skills
- Written expression (writing in a sequential, organized manner)
- Learning and remembering the motor patterns for letter formation
- Spelling

**Fluency** (working with speed and accuracy, maintaining a consistent rhythm of movement)

- Task initiation and completion
- Level of anxiety
- Social skills
- Reading fluency, writing fluency, math fluency
- Processing Speed
- Success with timed tasks
- Perform movements in a slow and plodding fashion
- Takes a long time to do most motor tasks
- Slow in dressing and eating

# Skills and Relationship to School Performance Continued

**Muscle Tone** (continuous and partial contraction of the muscles):

- Maintaining an upright posture while sitting or standing
- Fidgeting and shifting
- Integrity of joints during fine motor skills
- Maintaining palmar arches
- Leaning on people and furniture
- Moves in and out of chair while eating or doing work

**Upper Body Strength** (strength at the shoulder girdle and arms):

- Gross and fine motor endurance
- Posture
- Writing endurance

**Trunk Stability and Rotation:**

- Gross motor coordination
- Bilateral coordination (stabilizing paper when writing)
- Oculomotor skills (writing fluidly across the page)
- Midline crossing (development of hand dominance)
- Working posture

**Pinch strength:**

- Pencil grasp
- Manipulation of small objects
- Pencil pressure
- Writing endurance

**In-hand manipulation:**

- Pencil grasp
- Manipulation of small objects
- Manipulation of dressing fasteners
- Writing endurance

**Wrist strength and stability:**

- Isolated finger movements
- Pencil pressure
- Fine motor skills

**Upper Limb speed and Dexterity** (completing simple fine motor tasks within a time constraint):

- Successful participation in timed tasks
- Task initiation and completion
- Fluency

**Body Perception with draw a person:**

- Overall body awareness in space
- Spatial awareness
- Praxis

**Visual Discrimination:** The ability to recognize differences and similarities between shapes, objects and patterns.

- Letter alignment on lines
- Proofreading skills
- Distinguishing between similar letters r, n, h, b, d
- Distinguishing between math symbols and angles

**Visual Closure:** The ability to identify a picture or shape from a partially completed or disorganized presentation (including the ability to complete an incomplete drawing/letter/shape).

- Spacing between letters and words
- Letter formation
- Breaking words into syllables
- Accurate copying from near and far without omitting information
- Fractions
- Reading fluency
- Completing a drawing or letter if given part of it
- Reading full test questions and stories for reading comprehension
- Visualizing end product when completing a construction activity

# Skills and Relationship to School Performance Continued

**Visual Figure Ground:** The ability to visually locate a picture, shape, letter or number among a busy, competing background.

- Finding items in a desk or bookbag
- Keeping one's place when copying from the board or a textbook
- Looking up words in a dictionary or on a map

**Visual Spatial Relationships:** The ability to recognize if a shape is facing a different direction from other shapes.

- The ability to recognize letter and number reversals when reading and writing
- Graphing skills
- Lining up numbers in math
- Following a map or diagram
- Planning and organizing use of space on paper
- Right/left discrimination

**Visual Form Constancy:** The ability to recognize two shapes to be the same regardless of differences in size, shading, texture and/or position (orientation).

- Distinguishing between similar forms such as an oval and circle or a square and rectangle
- Recognizing letters in various writing styles
- Projecting the idea of a shape onto something familiar (i.e., a snow cone is a triangle, a door is a rectangle)

**Visual Memory:** The ability to remember visual information. To recall or reproduce what is seen after viewing it for a short period of time.

- Letter and number recognition
- Learning sight words
- Reproducing numbers, letters and shapes without looking at a model

**Visual Sequential Memory:** The ability to remember a sequence of pictures, shapes, letters, numbers. To recall or reproduce a sequence of visual information that is only seen for a short period of time.

- Following multi-step directions
- Remembering the motor patterns for letter formation
- Spelling
- Copying from the board or a textbook
- Following classroom routines
- Remembering sequences (days of week, months, alphabet, phone numbers)

**Visual Motor Integration:** The coordination of visual

perceptual skills and hand/finger dexterity for writing and drawing. Muscle movements guided by the eyes.

- Letter formation
- Drawing (pictures and shapes for geometry)
- Writing fluency (speed and accuracy)
- Reproducing drawings, letters, etc. from the board or a book

**Visual Motor Control:** The ability to guide the hands with the eyes for skilled tool use.

- Coloring within boundaries
- Writing on lined paper
- Cutting along lines
- Ball skills
- Writing fluency (speed and accuracy)

**Bilateral coordination:** The ability to coordinate the two sides of the body to successfully and efficiently complete fine and gross motor tasks.

- Stabilizing the paper while writing
- Stabilizing and adjusting materials while cutting, stenciling, and/or using a ruler
- Manipulating dressing fasteners (including tying shoes)

**Oculomotor Skills:** The ability to quickly and accurately use the eyes together as a team.

- Attention
- Reading and Writing (including losing place)
- Copying accuracy
- Visual endurance
- Perceptual motor skills
- Task accuracy and completion
- Headaches