

READING, WRITING AND WRIGGLING

REPORT SUMMARY

1 The Project in General

The overwhelming feeling of the staff at Old Bank School is that the project has been very beneficial, for the school as a whole, for the staff team, and for individual children.

*'Exciting and different from anything we've done before'.
'This project gave us permission to let children be children ...'*
(Teachers and Learning Support Staff)

*'Developmental Movement Play has worked in our setting largely due to the excellent organisation and enthusiasm of the staff from JABADAO. It has also been successful because of the hard work of our own staff who care about the children and who want to give them every opportunity to succeed in the future'.
(Head Teacher)*

Over the course of the first year of the movement specialists and staff observed changes in the early movement patterns the children were engaged in through the Developmental Movement Play activities, and, over the same period, school staff also noticed considerable changes in the children's functioning – emotional, social, physical and academic.

The data collected supports these observations and since no other major changes were made to the children's curriculum, the school believe that it is the DMP work that supported the changes.

In addition to the perceived benefits in these areas, both staff and children have enjoyed the project, and the approach has spread throughout the school as staff in other classes (the project focused on Reception / Year 1) wanted to use it to support older children as well.

2 For children: evidence from staff

Staff feel that children made progress, that they can attribute to the introduction of Development Movement Play, in a range of skills. They note general improvement in: *'...memory, confidence, concentration, social and academic skills...'*

'Our particular setting takes the majority of its pupils from an area of deprivation. The children arrive here with low aspirations, poor social skills and low levels of communication. The value of Developmental Movement Play to our setting has been marked, even after only one year'. (Head Teacher)

'We have noticed that generally our children appear more co-operative and are better at waiting for turns. They are more willing to follow instructions. They are more able to make choices and to follow their choices through for a sustained

period of time. Previously, they were more likely to flit between activities.'

They have noted these specific developments amongst the group of children involved in the project, when comparing them with other recent cohorts of children in the same class. The measurements are subjective, based on observations made in class and achievements made in standard tasks, and come from the class teacher (who has been in the same class for the last fourteen years), backed up by the Learning Support Assistant and the Nursery teacher who has been involved in the project throughout.

Social development:	<i>'more interaction between children. Better manners. More able to take turns.'</i>
Emotional development:	<i>'Better able to express themselves.'</i> <i>'The self-esteem of some children has gone up. Previously they often said, 'I can't do that' – a phrase we haven't heard for some time!'</i>
Physical development:	<i>'Especially fine motor skills (pencil and scissors)</i>
Academic development:	<i>'Confidence to have a go at independent writing. Improved number skills. Improved phonic awareness.'</i> <i>Majority of Yr 1 children are now working at the upper end of Level 1 for maths and literacy.</i> <i>'Two statemented children are showing small improvements also.'</i>
Creative development:	<i>'More ideas. More able to use their imagination'</i>

3 Evidence from data: three case study children

Data collected on three specific case studies provides a detailed picture of sensory and perceptual development parallel with specific 'developmental movement' activities and shows a congruence between:

- changes in behaviour
- changes in perception
- specific functioning
- development of early movement patterns

The data and detailed analysis suggest progression in early movement patterns and parallel progression in functioning and behaviour. Evidence gathered in this way centred on three children from the class of 21 (a further 70 children are being tracked using these tools in the wider research project). The following are examples of analysis from this data.

SUMMARY CASE STUDY ONE

Girl, aged 5 years and 10 months, began the research period as a very shy unconfident child who hardly spoke, reluctant to join in with physical activities and very cautious about physical risk. All her early movement patterns were unfinished,

the shoulders and hips are not rotating fully, there was a balance issue and her upright posture was stiff.

Over the year her confidence has grown markedly to the point where she is expressing her desires and asserting herself in the group. In movement play activities she is less compelled to seek reassurance and is excited to show others what she can like to do. Although she still has limited speech she now verbalises her experience.

Specific data on behavioural development:

- **Empathy:** She becomes more aware of other people's feelings (which we would expect from an increasing awareness of her own body and feelings). (Alert 3 to 1 and up to 2 again)
- **Listening and acting:** Increased ability to take in instructions (Alert decreases from 2-1)
- **Focus and concentration:** Her attention span does not improve (Alert 1 -3).
- **Speech:** She has less difficulty articulating words. ((Alert drops from 4-3) With a greater willingness / pleasure in sounding and making noises as she plays (2-3). And a consistent desire to talk to herself as she plays (4-3-4)

Specific data on development of movement patterns

Her gross motor activities of skipping and hopping develop rapidly over this year, albeit with some way to go before they are finished. In the earliest patterns, which were very unfinished at the start, the movement at the centre of her body develops slowly. Her belly crawl makes significant progress with the legs becoming involved (instead of dragged) and her tummy making more contact with the floor. In developmental movement work this change is often observed to be connected to a developing sense of self, and confidence in self.

SUMMARY CASE STUDY TWO

Girl, aged 5 years and 4 months. Over the year she has made significant social and academic developments despite a very troubled time in term three.

Specific data:

- **Emotional stability:** The picture is coloured by things going on in Child 2's life that make her much more anxious in term 3 than in previous terms. However, the staff saw 'huge improvement' in her temper tantrums and ability to join in group activities in term 2. This might be attributable, in part, to an increasing comfort in her body and less anxiety about being close to other children.
- **Attention:** Her attention span is short throughout.
- **Listening and acting:** Her ability to respond to instructions appears to improve somewhat.
- **Social skill:** She appears less able to judge social distances – which may be muddled with her increasing ability to tolerate touch and closeness? Or may be linked to her troubled emotional state.

SUMMARY CASE STUDY THREE

Boy, aged 5 years and 10 months, began the year with little awareness of his body, and little awareness of the needs of others.

Specific data:

- **Focus and attention:** This child shows less distractibility and an increased attention span over the period.
- **Social skill – empathy:** He shows marked improvement in awareness of other people's feelings.
- **Memory:** Remembering instructions is still hard, but there is some improvement.
- **Social skill:** There is evidence of increased mis-judging of social distances.
- **Speech:** There is some improvement in articulation

Parallel development of movement patterns

The earliest patterns were very unfinished at the start and show some progress, but there is still a long way to go. At the start his shoulders are held up to his ears and rounded – they do not rotate in the early patterns. There is some movement in this through the year. There is a marked development of his belly crawl with leg involvement and more movement in all limbs as well as the centre. There is a continuing theme of closed hands and rounded body shape – both indicate that this child has not completed the progression from the C curve of the small baby, to the S curve of the upright child, but over the year there has been considerable progress towards this uncurling.

4 For teaching and support staff

The project began with just the Reception / Year One teacher and support staff being involved, but their growing enthusiasm, and the curiosity of other staff, led to a whole school training day. All staff now use elements of a Developmental Movement Play approach.

'Increased knowledge of how movement play can affect a child's neurological organisation'. (Teachers and Learning Support Staff)

'It has made us look at the needs of individual children and made us more accepting of certain behaviours eg spinning, rolling, playing dogs etc...' (Teachers and Learning Support Staff)

'We were keen to 'spread the word' about Developmental Movement Play after our initial training. We were excited about it, we all wanted to do it, as it helped us to see why children were behaving as they were'. (Teachers and Learning Support Staff)

5 For lunchtime time supervisors

Lunchtime supervisors noticed that the younger children in the hall appear better at using knives and forks. Also, that they are better at playing and amusing themselves in the playground.

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*'Comments and observations from lunchtime staff and admin workers have confirmed opinions formed by staff with greater involvement'.
(Head Teacher)*

6 For the school

It is important to note that the project, although initially based in just Reception and Year One, has made an impact on the whole school. By the third term, everyone was buzzing with it. This has probably influenced the way everyone feels about the work, and the achievements that have gained through it. This level of enthusiasm and involvement is almost bound to affect the results they get, or at the very least, the things they notice and attribute to the work.

*'As a school we felt ignored by the LEA and by various other initiatives as we have not qualified for so many things due to our postcode. Our self esteem and school profile has been raised through the JABADAO project. We feel at last that we have something different to offer and we are proud of this!'
(Teachers and Learning Support Staff)*

7 Lasting impact

The staff are committed to continuing with Developmental Movement Play as part of their curriculum. They will continue to offer aspects of the work undertaken in Year One.

*'We have already noticed progress among our children so we are determined to continue to offer Developmental Movement Play as a regular part of our curriculum. Children who have been part of the 'Reading, Writing and Wriggling' project are moving on to the next class. '
(Teachers and Learning Support Staff).*

'We will continue with DMP as it is something we value and enjoy. We are looking forward to working with the JABADO team next year. We are all looking forward to learning more and taking part in further training'.

8 Future support

Staff are eager to continue with the work, and although they can continue some aspects without support from JABADAO, clearly continued input is desirable.

9 Longitudinal study

Clearly, one year of activity is only the beginning of a useful evidence gathering process. At the end of year one the teachers feel that the DMP approach is having a significant effect on learning. If we follow these children through to Year 6 (and the new year groups that come up behind them) we can start to draw firmer conclusions about the value of DMP within the curriculum.

JABADAO is eager to develop a longitudinal study that follows the current children through to Year 6, tracing the benefit for these children through social, emotional, physical and academic indicators.

This will enable us to build a body of evidence in a school supporting some of the most challenged children, comparing exclusion rates, behaviour incidents, staff reports and academic results with several years of previous results.

It will give the education authority the evidence on which to base a rolling out of the work, should it prove to be effective in reducing barriers to learning and improving children's functioning and emotional and social skills.

10 A Word of Caution

Enthusiasm as an additional factor in success

Despite the fact that we have collected careful data throughout the year, there are many pitfalls connected with trying to pin down the exact value of an approach such as this.

Undoubtedly, the project as a whole has had a very positive effect and has been wholly worthwhile. The overwhelming feeling of the staff at Old Bank is that the project has been very beneficial, for the entire school and for individual children. The feedback has been exceedingly positive.

The enthusiasm for the project may have influenced its success! This is not to take away from the effect it has had, or the convincing nature of the quantitative evidence – only to notice the power of involvement and enthusiasm as an additional factor that arts organisations can generate.

Changing ability to gather evidence

In addition, the project process represents a learning curve for the staff as well as the children. At the start the material was new, and the observations are influenced by this. It would be safe to assume that, as the project progressed, the observers saw more and recorded more of relevance.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Setting up the project

'Reading, Writing and Wriggling' was initiated by the integrated team which supports the children in Old Bank School – the Head Teacher, the Speech and Language Therapist, the School Nurse, two Social workers and, taking the lead, the Health Visitor. The Education Psychologist also became involved later - in a whole-staff training day. The Health Visitor was the centre of the planning team. Having worked alongside the school for many years, and moving towards retirement, she wanted to do 'something that made a difference'. Her previous experience had led her to believe that, although these children need a great deal of support in many ways, little she had done had made the impact that she was desperate to make.

Having formulated a plan, she contacted JABADAO to help with devising the project and the application to Kirklees Children's Fund.

The project was allied to the wider Action Research project that JABADAO had set up to investigate a new approach to movement in early years settings.

Old Bank School

Old Bank is a primary school established in 1976. It currently has 80 pupils from Reception to Year 6. The school also has a 24-place nursery with purpose-built facilities added on to the school building.

The majority of the pupils come from the London Park Estate, in Mirfield, an estate with challenges related to poor housing, crime, drugs, high unemployment and health issues. The school prides itself on the provision it makes for children with special education needs.

National Centre for Movement, Learning and Health - JABADAO

The Centre is a national agency which creates new opportunities for people of all ages to participate in movement activities that promote learning and wellbeing. Through involvement in research, practical work and training Centre practitioners aim to contribute to a developing understanding of the ways in which human beings learn and stay healthy in four programmes: Children's programme, Older People's programme, Body and Movement programme and Health programme.

This project falls within the Children's Programme. Developmental Movement Play (DMP), is a new framework for Early Years settings. It combines young children's natural desire for spontaneous movement with the provision of opportunities in which the biologically driven movement patterns that help to develop the brain and nervous system can flourish. The approach is being tested in an Action Research project – an extended piece of research run in partnership with fourteen early years centres across the country. Old Bank School is one of these partner projects.

Project Staff

Director - Penny Greenland is Director of the National Centre for Movement, Learning and Health and acted as Project Director and Trainer on Reading, Writing and Wriggling. She has a background in dance, movement therapy, movement

observation and analysis and trained in developmental movement with the Centre's partner organisation in Seattle, USA. Penny is also a freelance consultant undertaking evaluation projects on movement work in special educational Needs settings, and teaching Safeguarding and Duty of Care courses. She is author of *Hopping Home Backwards - body intelligence and movement play*, a book about movement in Early Years and primary settings.

Practitioner- Heather Main is the project practitioner, visiting the school weekly to run DMP sessions for Reception and Year 1. She worked on a wide variety of community projects with the Centre during 2002 and 2003, especially in early years settings and primary schools.

Coordinator - Linda Neary supported the project throughout, working with the initial team who set it up, the Head Teacher, the Staff, the funders and, when appropriate, parents. She also filmed sessions and edited a video that parents and other children in the school could see. She has a background in Community Work and spent many years working in television and in film-making.

AIMS AND CONTENT

Aims

First and foremost:

'In a school that has been identified as having a very high level of temporary exclusions, to improve particular children's ability to cope with and enjoy school, and build the best possible foundations for their future health.'

To do this by:

'Offering Developmental Movement Play to the staff and support team at Old Bank School - as a potential way of helping children to build the emotional, social, physical and intellectual foundations that children need in order to access the school curriculum appropriately.'

'Providing simple, practical information for parents, carers, health workers and teachers supporting these children.'

'Enabling the staff team to continue the work after the project is over'.

And when a top-up grant became available part-way through the project, to:

'Celebrate the achievements of the children by making an exhibition of their work together.'

'Share information about the project with others in the area working in education, health and community settings with young children'.

Breakdown of Activity

Activity Sessions for children

- Weekly activities in school, over three terms, led by the Project Practitioner, Heather Main. Approximately 40 mins per week for each child
- Further activities led by staff as they got to know the approach and the activities
- PE sessions incorporating developmental movement activities
- Setting up a Movement Corner at the side of the classroom where child led play takes place
- Small group work led by the LSA

Training for Staff

- Introductory training day for Reception teacher, Nursery Teacher, Learning Support Assistants, plus members of the integrated team of Health Visitors, School Nurse, Speech and Language Therapist and Social workers (who, at the last minute, were unable to attend)
- A further training day for the Head Teacher and the whole staff team

Activities for parents

- 2 videos, information and support sessions for Parents
- 1 video made for this project, but useful for other parents in the area to introduce the approach
- Exhibition afternoon

Assessment and Evaluation

- Term One: Meeting at the end of term one to track progress. Project Director, teachers and LSAs
- Term Two: Two days of individual assessments to include all the children in Reception and Year 1. Director with the teacher present throughout.
- Term Three: Discussion between teachers and Director regarding value of the approach
- Data gathering throughout with detailed reports on three randomly chosen children, two girls and one boy