

## Ideas for Visual Motor Success

"**Visual motor**" is the complex coordination of what the child sees and a motor response to it. Be it copying a shape, coloring within a space, stringing beads, etc, eyes and hands need to be coordinated.

### **A good stable "core" leads to the student's best chance to produce neat work.**

- encourage through active play – (see *Heavy Jobs for at Home* for ideas)
- use proper fitting desk and chair with ankle, knee and hip at 90 degree angles, the trunk slightly forward forearms resting on the desktop. The desktop should be 1-2 inches above the elbows when the arms are at the student's side. Feet should be resting on the floor. (Hips can also be slightly higher than knees, if this is more comfortable and feet are still fully supported on the floor).

Realistic expectations to do "seat work" for a 3-4 year old is 8-10 minutes and 10-15 minutes for a 5 year old. Give movement breaks after 10 or 15 minutes.

Some children just do better in standing. There is no magical learning position. An alternate learning position may be standing beside a book shelf with the paper on top of shelf.

**A slanted surface is beneficial** because encourages good neck, eye and wrist position for writing. A slant board can be made out of a 3" three ring binder turned side ways provides the slant needed.

**Drawing at Chalkboard** is another highly effective means of helping children learn to hold writing utensils correctly. When a child stands at the chalk board, the wrist automatically goes into a slightly extended position which enhances grasp. The chalk gives more feedback to tendons and muscles as it is dragged along the chalk board surface. Visually the child can look ahead rather than shifting the gaze downward as when drawing on a paper placed on a table top.

**Shorten writing utensils** 1" - 2" in length (crayons, chalk, pencils) facilitate proper grasp. Place utensils directly in front of child at midline to observe which hand they prefer.

**Prior to introducing letters** begin with these important strokes and stroke combinations (in developmental order): I, \_, O, +, X, square, triangle.

Make sure the lines are from top down, left to right, and when working on O start in a 2 o'clock position and drawing counter clockwise – like making a c (this allows for motor memory to begin for printing c,o,a,g,q without need to lift and relocate pencil).

**Forearm position:** Children need to use good arm and hand position, including keeping forearm down on the paper when writing or coloring. Note: The slant board encourages resting forearm on table/slantboard surface.

**Cutting:** Use 3x5 note cards and student scissors. Start first with snipping, then cutting across card and then cutting along a ¼" wide 3" line: straight then curved. Roll play dough into a "rope" of ½" width and use play dough scissors to cut into pieces. Note: scissors positioned in hand so that the thumb is on top.

**Bead stringing** or string cherrios on shoe lace (lengthen stiff end of shoe lace using scotch tape for greater success: bilateral sequence of hold and release

Add some fun by hiding beads in playdough or other molding compound, then have child dig them out (great input to finger muscles) before stringing them on shoe lace.

