

ilíocht

Celebrating Diversity in Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín



What's On

**NPC Special Education
Conference 2016 -
'Getting it Right for Children'**

Saturday, 12 November 2016

The Ashling Hotel, Parkgate Street,
Dublin 8 (near Heuston Station)

Time: 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A conference for Parents who want
to know more about supporting
their child in special education.

ADMISSION FREE

GUEST SPEAKERS:

DR. NIALL MULDOON -

Ombudsman for Children

BILL AHESSY - Senior Music

Therapist, NMT, MMT, PGD MT, BMus

CONSULTATION SESSION:

The National Council for Special
Education (NCSE) will consult with
parents present on the Special Needs
Assistants (SNA) scheme.

This consultation will inform the
NCSE's Review of the SNA scheme.
Information from the following will be
available on the day:

NPC * Junior Cycle for Teachers
Support Service * National Council for
Special Education (NCSE) * Special
Needs Parents' Association * Irish
Epilepsy * Dyspraxia Association of
Ireland * Irish Autism Action *
DeafHear.ie * Dyslexia Association of
Ireland * Sharing the Journey -
Supporting parents & families of d/Deaf
and hard of hearing children

ALL PARENTS WELCOME!



A Winter's Tale

Welcome to the new school year
and the 7th edition of ilíocht.

We're a few months in now so hopefully everyone is settling in well and mornings are going smoothly. For anyone who finds them a nightmare however, the article on **"Surviving Mornings"** gives some advice and tips on how to get our little ones out the door with the minimum of meltdowns (from adults as well as children!)

We all know that too much time on iPads/Tablets can have a detrimental effect on our children, but this term's issue looks at how **technology can help children with additional needs** in all sorts of areas from completing homework to learning new social skills.

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) can go hand in hand with lots of other conditions and is something we have covered in past issues. In **"Sensory Diets"** we look at how a "diet" of activities specific to your child's needs, can help alleviate some of the symptoms of SPD and allow a child to regulate and focus on the task at hand.

We would like to thank everyone who submitted an article last year.

The **"Parent Piece"** in particular tend to be very personal accounts by nature and we are especially grateful to the parents who have let us into their private lives to raise awareness of the challenges their children face. This year we would like to expand on the topics covered to include ADHD, ADD and Dysgraphia, among others, and would love to hear from anyone who has experience in these areas. If there is any other topic you would like us to cover please do let us know.

If you would like to submit a parent piece, an article of interest or get involved in ilíocht in any way please email,

celinecronan@gmail.com

Surviving Mornings

By Celine Ronan, *ilíocht* Editor

I sometimes think that trying to get three children ready for school, along with myself, is something akin to trying to herd jellyfish. I think it's doubly true of children with extra needs, especially those with issues around impulsivity or sensory issues. Below are a few of the tips I've picked up over the years which have worked (somewhat!) for us.

BE PATIENT

I realise (better than most!) how stressful mornings can be and how maddening it is to send someone upstairs to get dressed only to find that person fifteen minutes later still in their pjs playing with their favourite toy. At times like these I try to remember that no child wants to be in trouble and they do well if they can. They would much rather play along and stay in your good books. However for some of our children, the skills needed to stay on task are just not there yet so without some tools to help them they are doomed to fail. Whether they've become distracted by their own thoughts (very common in children with ADHD), the scratchiness of the seam in their sock or the noises of the house that no one else even registers – whatever they reason they've gone "off task" it's not that they are "being bold" or are out to ruin your day. They just don't have that skill yet.

PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!!

This is one of those cases where failure to prepare means prepare to fail! Have as much as possible done the night before – make the lón (involve the kids as much as possible in this), have each uniform laid out, shoes etc. and bags packed and ready to go. I can't tell you the amount of times we've been ready with time to spare except for one missing shoe which is found under the trampoline after 30 minutes of muttering "I just don't understand how one shoe can be in a bedroom and the other nowhere to be found!"

SET YOUR CLOCK THAT FEW MINUTES EARLIER

If it takes an hour to get ready, give yourself an hour and a quarter. I know it's hard getting up but those few extra minutes really make a difference to how the morning, and ultimately the day, goes for your child. Imagine if you were hurriedly woken every morning and ushered through the next hour without a minute to take a breath? It would set the tone

for the rest of the day. For little ones with sensory difficulties it can really set them off on the wrong foot. I know some people who swear by getting up a half hour before their kids to shower and enjoy a coffee in peace – for me, that's 30 precious minutes in bed wasted. I'd much rather shout instructions from the shower and hope someone is listening. That said, I do think it's important to leave enough time for them to get ready without being rushed out the door.



"...those few extra minutes really make a difference

to how the morning, and ultimately the day, goes for your child".

USE VISUAL OR AUDIO SCHEDULES

For older children a simple checklist will suffice, for younger ones there will need to be clear pictures of what needs to be done. Keep it simple. Some children, especially those with impulsivity issues prefer audio schedules, for e.g. they know when you play a certain song that they need to brush their teeth and be finished by the time the song finishes. Whatever type of schedule you use, encourage the child to do it for himself if possible – it's all about supporting independence.

QUICK AND HEALTHY BREAKFAST OPTIONS

When some days are just not going to plan, have quick breakfast options that can be eaten in the car.

PLAY

I know time is precious but try incorporate a few minutes of exercise into the morning routine. For us, if everyone is ready on time they can go play on the trampoline for 10 minutes. It plays a big part in regulating their sensory system and gives them the best possible start to the school day. It's not always possible but it does make a difference. Avoid TV at all costs – it makes them lethargic and more difficult to shift out the door when it's time to go.

HAVE A FINAL CHECKLIST IN THE CAR

A quick "Does everyone have their lón? Does everyone have a mála? Does everyone have a cóta?" can avoid trips back to the school after you've dropped them off.

Fun Apps That Aid Learning

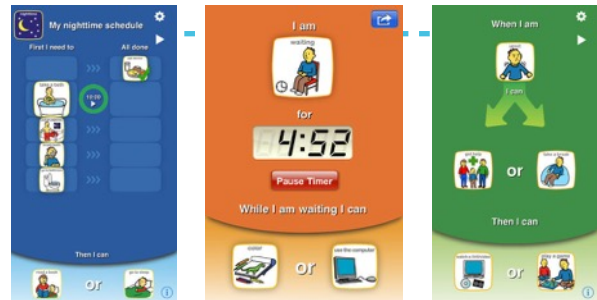
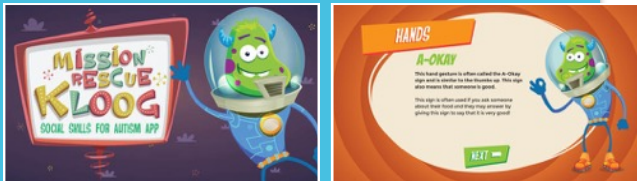
By Celine Ronan, *ilíocht* Editor

Technology can play an important role in the education of children with extra educational needs. The visual nature of these apps appeal to children, especially visual learners, and for children with fine motor problems the method of input is much easier than handwriting. They can help with many different areas of development, from behavioural management to maths skills and cater for almost all ages. The following apps are just a small selection from what's available.

KLOOG – SOCIAL SKILLS

(iPad and Android)

This is a really fun app which teaches social skills to children. Kloog is an alien who has crash landed on earth. The child has to help the Alien learn some of our social rules in order to get parts and fuel for his spaceship to allow him to return home. It covers the topics of *Non Verbal Communication*, examining topics such as personal space, eye contact and decoding body language, *Communication Skills* such as conversation starters, interrupting, and staying on topic, and finally *Thinking Before You Talk* which examines areas such as honesty and the “rules police”. This app requires the help of an adult for children who haven't learned to read yet.



CHOICEWORKS (iPad)

This is an excellent app as it combines three different areas – visual schedules, tools for waiting, and tools for dealing with feelings. The visual schedule screen allows you to make your own schedules. The timer part of the app allows the user to see a countdown of the time they have to wait in addition to what the user can do while waiting. The third section deals with feelings and gives some tools to deal with common feelings.

Dexteria.net

Dexteria has a number of different apps which target fine motor skills in addition to number formation and maths concepts. Recent research has demonstrated a clear connection between the development of fine motor skills in early life and later success in math, science, and reading. The various apps are designed for all ages, from pre-schooler up to adults.



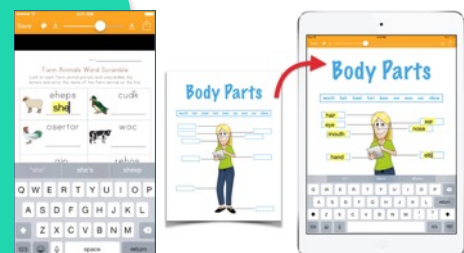
ZONES OF REGULATION – EXPLORING EMOTIONS

(iPad and Android)

This is an excellent app for teaching children about emotions with a view to helping them self-regulate. It separates emotions into four different zones – red, yellow, blue, and green. Children navigate their way through the app picking up tools they can use for the different zones, for example taking ten deep breaths when in the red (Anger) zone. The idea is they will learn to recognise and name the different emotions they have and that they will have a “toolbox” full of useful tools they can use themselves when they recognise they've entered one of the zones.

SNAP TYPE (iPad: Free)

This is an app which allows the user to take a picture of a school worksheet/homework sheet and complete the sheet by typing the words needed instead of writing by hand. It's of great benefit to any child who finds handwriting very difficult. It's easy to use and available free on iTunes.



The Sensory Diet

By Celine Ronan, *ilíocht* Editor

In the same way that our bodies need food, a sensory child will need specific types of sensory input throughout the day to keep him focussed and regulated. Our Sensory System consists of input from:

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
- Proprioceptive (input from our joints and muscles)
- Vestibular (input from our inner ear concerning balance and movement).

Each child has his own very unique set of sensory needs. Some children are over responsive to certain stimuli and some are under responsive. Lots have a combination of the two. This means that some children will “crave” certain inputs like movement or textures while some will be absolutely terrified of them. For this reason it’s very important to work with an Occupational Therapist when putting together your own child’s unique “sensory diet”. In particular, never use items such as weighted vests/bear hug vests without the supervision of an OT. During the times when I don’t have access to an OT I am guided by my child – if he is constantly sucking on his sleeve or putting things in his mouth then I will give him something more appropriate to chew on like a chewy-tube or a drink with crushed ice. If he’s jumping around crashing into furniture then I’ll direct him to the trampoline or play games where he tries to push me across the room using his outstretched hands.

SIGHT

This sense involves much more than merely “seeing”. It enables us to judge what is “coming at us” and the correct response needed. Children with sensory problems with the visual sense may have trouble judging the speed a ball is coming at and may kick too early or late for example. Others may have great difficulty transcribing something from the white board in the classroom because they need to shift their vision back and forward from the board to their copy. The following exercises can give visual input:

Citrus Balls – identifying then throwing different fruit into a bucket

Hosing – using a garden hose to aim and knock down items such as tin cans

Flashlight Tag – while your child is lying in bed get him to track the light from a flashlight on the ceiling without moving her head. Give him his own flashlight to copy your movements. Alternate between smooth movements and jumpy ones.

SOUND (AUDITORY SYSTEM)

This system deals with taking in information through our ears, and processing it in order to give an appropriate response. For some children with auditory input problems, they are not merely playing “the deaf ear” – they actually haven’t processed the fact that you’ve called their name yet. The auditory sensitive child may react violently to certain noises while other children seem to lack a “volume control” and may speak too loudly or crave loud noises. Earphones can be helpful at times to block out unwanted noise. Music therapy using specialised CDs and earphones can also be effective at regulating this system to allow the child to tolerate noises he would normally avoid.

The Sensory Diet, continued from page 4

SMELL (OLFACTORY SENSE) AND TASTE (ORAL)

These two senses are closely linked and give an immediate response to stimulation, both pleasant and unpleasant. Some children are over responsive to certain smells that other children wouldn't even notice. I remember once on an all-inclusive holiday not being able to go into the restaurant at all because the smell of the food cooking made our son nauseous before he even got to the table. On the opposite end of the scale some children don't notice smells which others find offensive. Some children crave oral input and chew on anything they can get their hands on. Some are oral sensitive and are extremely selective about tastes and textures of food for example. Oral input is incredible organising and an excellent way to help your child regulate themselves. We can get oral input from:

- Using a straw to suck thick yogurt/shakes/crushed ice out of a cup
- Blowing up balloons
- Chewing gum
- Electric toothbrushes
- Chewy-tubes and other specific sensory toys.

TOUCH (TACTILE)

Our skin is the largest organ in our body and provides us with information regarding temperature, pressure, vibration and pain. The ability to process these sensations correctly is absolutely vital to so many areas including motor planning, body awareness, social skills, and emotional security. A child who is over responsive to touch may flinch at the lightest touch or exhibit a flight or fight response. At the other end of the spectrum some children seek out touch by crashing into people or objects. The following can give tactile input:

- Theraputty or playdough
- Playing with shaving cream or finger painting
- Playing with sand
- Fidget toys.

PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT


The Proprioceptive sense receives messages about what our joints and muscles are doing and contributes to motor control and planning. We receive this input through our joints and muscles so any activities that involve pushing the joints together or pulling them apart can give excellent input. These include but are not limited to:

- Wheelbarrow races
- Carrying "heavy" items such as books
- Hanging from monkey bars
- Trampoline
- Hoovering the carpet
- Cycling
- Bouncing on a therapy ball
- Crashing on to gym mats and cushions.

VESTIBULAR INPUT

The vestibular system gives us input regarding our balance, movement and our body position in relation to the ground. It tells us if we are upright, upside down, whether we are moving or standing still. I always know if my son's vestibular system is off kilter when he spins around but doesn't get dizzy (but again it's different for every child). Anything which provides movement can give a child vestibular input - it's a matter of working out whether he needs calming rhythmic input or rousing vigorous input. The following can give vestibular input:

- Swings, (slow swinging is calming, fast is energising)
- Roundabouts
- Playing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" with feet against feet and holding hands
- Airplane – Lying on your back and lifting the child into the air with your feet on the child's lower abdomen and his hands in yours
- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Piggyback rides
- Wheelbarrow walks (great for proprioceptive input too).

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