

**The Feldenkrais Method® in Teaching Children How to Learn
and Improving School Performance.
An Overview
By
Joyce Ann OTR/L, GCFP**

Are you concerned about your child's school performance? Have you been told that there is nothing wrong with him or that he's just not trying hard enough? Have you been told you should medicate your child, but you don't want to? Schoolwork involves many different skill, which must occur at the same time, called multi-tasking. For example, the child must be able to watch and listen to a teacher (visual and auditory), hold a pencil, take notes or copy from a blackboard (visual and motor), and pay attention to all of these things at the same time, for extended periods of time. If the child has difficulty with this multi-tasking, then schoolwork will suffer. This can often be detected and corrected, without medication. The Feldenkrais Method® and vestibular integration programs can help improve your child's ability to learn, increase attention span, reading and comprehension, improve coordination and organizational skills.

Many children may not be comfortable in their body for a variety of reasons. These might be the children who just cannot sit still, squirm in their seats, fidget with their hands and flop down on on the floor or at their desk, seeming to be unable to hold up their torso without some type of support. They may be uncomfortable with tags in their clothing or being touched at times. They may frustrate easily and give up on more difficult tasks, not taking the time to solve a problem which requires more investigation. Many of these children seldom sit and play, unsupported, with both hands together because they are constantly leaning on one hand or the other, therefore potentially making writing and stabilizing the paper with the other hand difficult.

Parents often tell their children to "sit nice" and have been told that some positions are wrong, such as the "w" position. It is not a problem if a child sits in this position as long as he/she also equally sits in other positions, such as ring sitting (soles of the feet together), side sitting (one leg forward and one leg back), cross legged sitting, or kneeling. When a child has only one choice, such as sitting in only the "w" position, then he/she is not free to fully explore his/her environment and movement remains limited. Learning to weight shift and transition in and out of all sitting positions, as well as balance and weight shift in standing, and walking, requires freedom to move in the torso, including the ribs, sternum, clavicles, and spine.

The Functional Integration® (FI) lessons involve hands on interventions to teach individuals to improve movements habits by learning to differentiate and redistribute movements throughout their body, looking at and exploring the relationships between one area of the body and another. When effecting change in one area of the body, other areas are effected and therefore movement habits change. This allows individuals to normalize their muscle tone and utilize appropriate muscle groups in the appropriate situations.

Differentiation requires learning to move areas of his skeleton independently of other areas. Undifferentiated movements involve moving large areas as a unit using more primitive or simple movement patterns. Both are necessary so that in the appropriate circumstance, the individual can access the pattern necessary for the most efficient movement. When an individual is able to move physically with less effort, this allows for more efficiency in thought processes as well, since the individual is able to pay more attention to cognitive challenges without the distraction of the movement pattern (multi-tasking). For example a child may be better able to sit in a classroom and listen to a teacher if he is more comfortable and organized in his body.