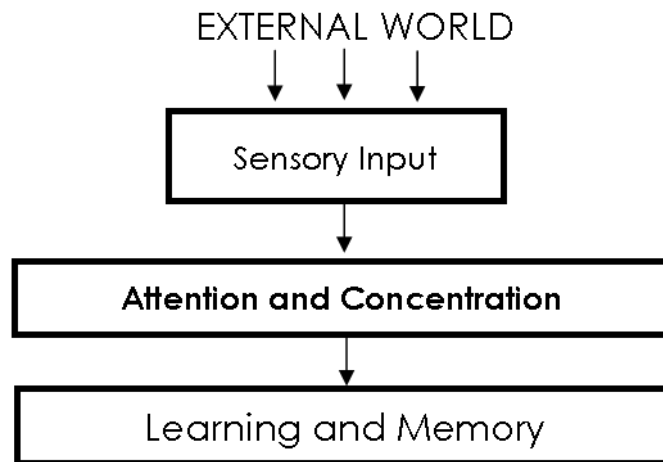


LSS Working Memory Toolkit



Appendix 1

Attention and Concentration



Adapted from TOMAL 2

Attention and Concentration are vital pre-cursors to learning and memory.

Some students will need to be **specifically taught techniques to aid their concentration**. These should be in addition to the environmental and teaching strategies outlined in the Memory Toolkit (page 4) as part of Quality First Teaching. There are a number of simple exercises that can be tried to support the development of concentration skills. If taught as part of a learning intervention, they can then be transferred to, and used, in the classroom.

Preparing the Brain

Draw a large figure 8 on its side ∞. This can be on a white board, large sheet of paper or just in the air. Draw over it repeatedly with the right hand, the left hand, and then with both hands.

If you lose concentration during a task refocus using this activity. Close your eyes and mentally retrace the figure.

Concentration Score Sheet

Every time you find your mind wandering during a task put a tick on your concentration score sheet. Do this consistently and you will find that you end up having fewer ticks and greater concentration time.

5 More Rule

It is common for children with poor concentration to give up when their minds wander off. Developing the self-discipline to work through the frustration level by working for five more minutes or to complete five more items (eg sums in a maths activity, questions in a comprehension exercise or sentences in a writing task) can help to support this. Often once the frustration level has been broken through then they are able to complete the whole task.

Mind-Body Integration

(This is one to try at home) Sit in a chair in a comfortable position. Turn off all distractions such as the television and the radio. Try to keep as still as you can for five minutes. Notice if your limbs move or start to twitch. Practice this each day. As you get better at it extend the time up to 15 minutes. If five minutes is too long initially then you can time how long your child is able to stay still and then record improvement as it is practised over several weeks.

Relaxation and Positive Imagery

(This is one to try at home) Combining a relaxation technique like deep breathing with positive visual imagery helps the brain to improve or learn new skills. Research shows that if a person mentally practises their golf swing, the brain actually records the imaginary trials in the same way as if they were real trials which leads to improvement on the golf course. Children with poor concentration skills can use this method by “imagining” that they are paying attention in class or focusing on their work, and this can in turn change their behaviour at school. Encourage the child to push all other thoughts out of their head as they crop up.