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without walls

ATTENTION

Naomi A. Weiss, M.S. Ed.
December 16, 2008



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helping children reach their potential™

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Our Guest: Naomi A. Weiss

Naomi A. Weiss, M.S. is a member of the graduate faculty of Bank Street College of Education. She is also a facilitator for the *Schools Attuned Program* of the *All Kinds of Minds Institute*. Ms. Weiss also serves as a Hidden Sparks coach in two Jewish Day Schools.

Prior to her work for Hidden Sparks, Ms. Weiss, a learning specialist, worked at *All Kinds of Minds Institute* conducting neurodevelopmental assessments with teams of pediatricians and psychologists to develop learning profiles and management plans for students in kindergarten through high school.

Ms. Weiss also worked as a Special Educator for children in Early Intervention (0-5) programs and as a classroom special education teacher of children with learning disorders and behavioral/emotional challenges in elementary, junior high, and high school.

Ms. Weiss will share her diverse experience with you this evening in this interactive seminar on "Attention."



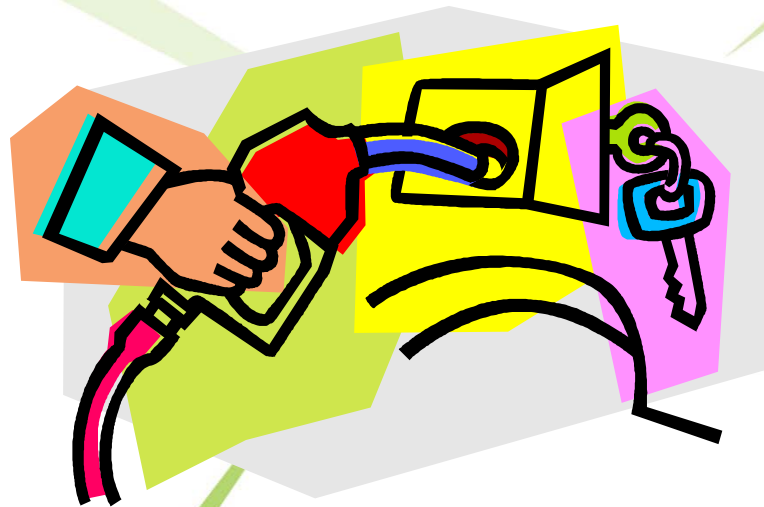
Agenda

- ❖ Describe specific behaviors of children with weak Processing and Production Controls.
- ❖ Discuss strategies to help students with challenges in the Processing and Production Control systems.
- ❖ Reflect upon how we can raise the metacognitive awareness of our students.

Attention: 3 Control Systems

- 1. Mental Energy*
- 2. Processing*
- 3. Production*

❖ Mental Energy: the energy or “fuel” needed for thinking & controlling behavior



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❖ Processing intake of information



If you....

- ☐ have difficulty determining what's important when listening or when reading
- ☐ become easily distracted by irrelevant stimuli (which others might ignore)
- ☐ have difficulty with fine details
- ☐ have an easier time with the "big picture"
- ☐ require repetition of instructions
- ☐ daydream/free associate too easily

Saliency determination

Processing depth/detail

Cognitive Activation



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Which strategies help you process incoming information?

(what you see, hear, read, or experience?)



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Now...

Think about your students.

When you hear the following descriptions of the Processing Controls, which students come to mind?



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WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH WEAK *SALIENCY DETERMINATION*?

- ✓ They have difficulty finding the main idea in reading or word problems.
- ✓ They have difficulty highlighting main points.
- ✓ They are more vulnerable than other students are to distractions.

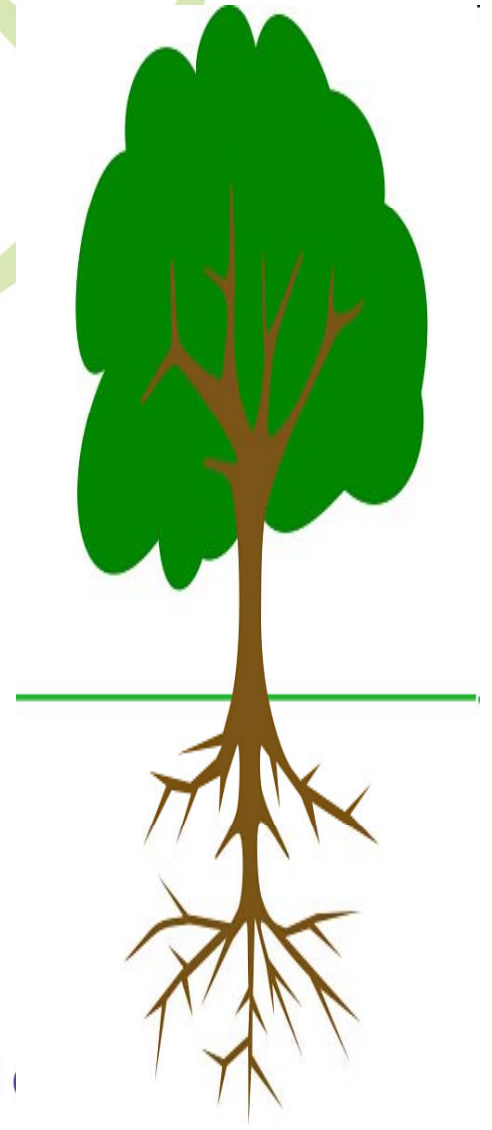


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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH WEAK *DEPTH/DETAIL PROCESSING?*

- often fail to register information deeply enough
("in one ear and out the other")
OR
- overly focused on the details/ have difficulty
seeing the "big picture"

Note: As children advance to higher grades, there is an increase in detail, and the detail becomes more decontextualized. *Some students who progressed in earlier grades may not be as successful in later grades if they cannot focus strongly enough when more details are involved.*



WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE *OVERACTIVATION* or *UNDERACTIVATION*?

- Overactive cognition:



- They "free associate" -often losing track of the ideas being discussed in class.

- Underactive cognition:

- Bells don't "ring" for them.
 - They often feel "bored."



PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING ABOUT CHILDREN WITH WEAK PROCESSING CONTROLS:

- They are often very creative and notice what others miss!
- They need their teachers to help them focus during class.
- They should not be called upon when it's obvious that they haven't been listening. (Avoid humiliation!)



So What Can We Do?

STRATEGIES

IN TERMS OF SALIENCY DETERMINATION....

1. Encourage metacognitive awareness.
2. Provide experiences which help develop the ability to select what's really important.

*Model this skill during reading and listening exercises
by verbalizing your thinking.

(Circle/underline/highlight/color-code/use post-its/ paraphrase/summarize
cross out superfluous information/etc.)



- 3 Analyze your classroom for potential distractions.



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STRATEGIES

5. Incorporate “distraction breaks” (i.e., give the child the chance to look out the window)

6. Self- rate distractibility.

7. When giving directions...

- establish good eye contact
- deliver short & direct instructions
- give advance warning!
- combine verbal *and* visual explanations



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STRATEGIES

IN TERMS OF PROCESSING DEPTH/DETAIL...

8. SUPERFICIAL PROCESSING:

- Encourage subvocalization/formation of mental pictures/
notetaking

9. EXCESSIVE DEEP PROCESSING:

- Encourage metacognition
- Impose time limits

STRATEGIES

IN TERMS OF **COGNITIVE ACTIVATION**...

10. Practice interrelating ideas...compare and contrast...connect ideas in webs & diagrams.

11. Ask student to keep track of "mind trips."

12. Provide brainstorming opportunities and creative outlets.





REMINDER:

Children who struggle with attention have weaknesses in *some* or *all* of their control systems.

Variability exists in terms of *which controls* are weak and the *degree* to which the weak controls interfere with students' learning, behavior, and ability to relate to others.

❖ Production: regulation of “output”



ASSESS YOUR OWN PRODUCTION CONTROLS

Do you...

- ☐ have difficulty planning ahead?
considering possible consequences before doing/saying something?
- ☐ have difficulty foreseeing solutions?
- ☐ have difficulty allocating time?
- ☐ say/do inappropriate things without realizing it?
- ☐ make frequent careless errors without noticing?
- ☐ have difficulty realizing when you've said or done something inappropriate?



If you...

- ☐ have difficulty planning ahead...
- ☐ foreseeing solutions...

- ☐ have difficulty allocating, time...

- ☐ say/do inappropriate things without realizing it...
- ☐ make frequent careless errors without noticing...
- ☐ have difficulty realizing when you've said or done something inappropriate...


- **Previewing**

- **Pacing**

- **Inhibition/Self-monitoring**



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Which strategies have helped you to
produce quality work?

Now...

Think about your own students.



Who comes to mind when you hear the following descriptions of the Production Controls?

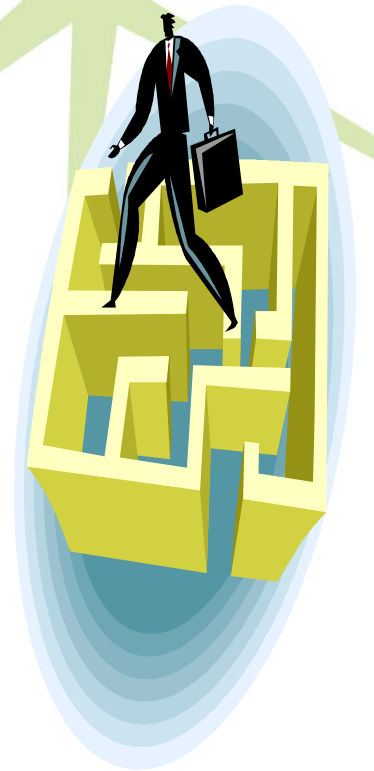


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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH WEAK *PREVIEWING* ?

They...

- don't ask, "What if....?" ("If I pick this topic, will I be able to write a good report?" "If I say this, what will happen?")
- have difficulty planning a project because they don't know what the end result will look like.
- are unprepared for transitions.
- get on bus without homework because they didn't plan ahead.
- struggle with organization.

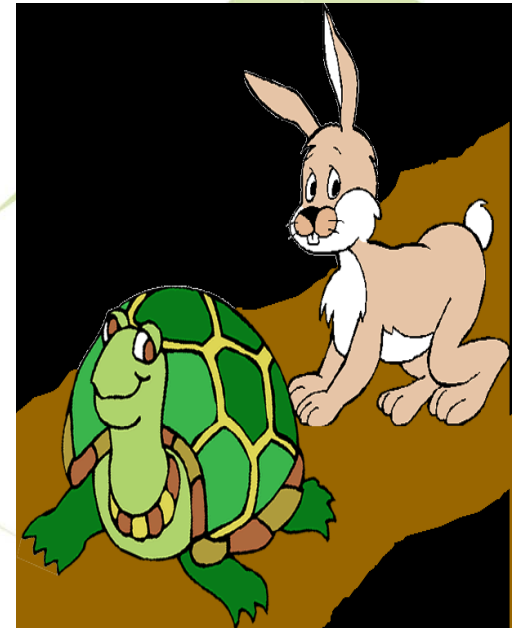


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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH WEAK *PACING*?

They..

- complete work too fast/too slowly.
- have difficulty allocating time.
- have difficulty understanding "stepwisdom."

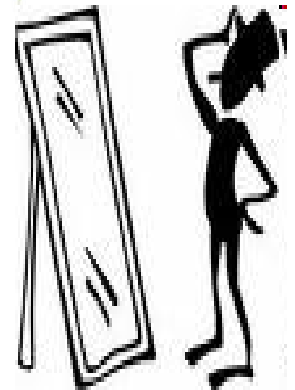


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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH WEAK *INHIBITION/SELF-MONITORING?*

They...

- have difficulty suspending their initial response long enough to consider options.
- have difficulty "slowing down" & thinking through a problem.
- have difficulty pausing to ask, "What's the best way to do this?"
- show reluctance to proofread.
- have difficulty detecting mistakes.



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What can we do?

Strategies

Previewing

1. Practice "What if...?" in academic, behavioral, and social areas.
2. Ask students to submit a work plan.
3. Art project = opportunity for previewing--picture in your mind the end result

Pacing

4. Teach and model time management strategies.
5. Estimate time length and document accuracy.

Self monitoring

6. Reward for finding errors.
7. Encourage asking self, "How am I doing?" & self-grading.

Facilitation/Inhibition

8. Time delay—require a student to pause for a set period of time before responding to oral and written questions.
9. Plan implementation—Require student to verbalize or draw a plan to be implemented.

What are other possible sources of weak attention?

- weak language
- weak active working memory—while rushing to “hold onto” information, child may appear frenetic and impulsive
- anxiety about family problems
- depression
- undiagnosed learning disability
- seizure disorder—tunes in/out

How can we talk to students about their attention strengths and struggles?

- Children are confused by their own daily performance, so be **specific** when you point out the areas they need to work on.
- Be sure to identify their solid/strong areas of **attention**.
- Notice/inquire about their affinities outside of school and creatively incorporate them into the classroom.

Involve students in this endeavor!



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Thank you for your attention!



Contacting Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks' programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.

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