



Body to Brain Learning
Professional Learning Series

Body to Brain Learning Educator's Checklist:

Use this checklist to identify the cues that may indicate neuro-motor and sensory immaturity in a student who has learning challenges or isn't reaching their learning potential.

READING

- Difficulty reading
- Below the age-appropriate reading level
- Difficulty recognizing the same word on a different page.
- Loses place easily.
- Skips words.
- Re-reads or skips lines.
- Confuses similar sounding letters or combinations of letters.
- Comprehension difficulties: e.g. doesn't read/attend to meaning, but focuses on articulating/decoding/sounding out words
- Dislikes reading and avoids it when possible
- Fluency and consistency issues when reading aloud or quietly (Arduous)
- Difficulty reading certain fonts
- Difficulty manipulating sounds in words
- Difficulty matching sounds to letters or letter combinations
- Uses finger to keep place
- Whispers to self when reading quietly

WRITING

- Writing difficulties
- Difficulties copying accurately from the board
- Problems copying from a book
- Letter reversals
- Word reversals
- Skips words
- Writing skills don't match speaking ability
- Limited written vocabulary
- Messy writing
- Pencil grip difficulties
- Reverses letter combinations
- Poor and inconsistent spelling
- Sloping handwriting: uphill or downhill
- Misaligns digits in number work
- Difficulty with fine-motor activities
- Poor placement of words or drawings on a page
- Inconsistency in letter and/or work spacing
- Inconsistency in letter formation
- Poor spelling

POSTURE & MOVEMENT

- Difficulties sitting still at a desk (constant squirming or fidgeting)
- Has trouble sitting still on the floor in a cross-legged position for group work/storytelling
- Frequently looks around
- Sits in “W” position on the floor
- Appears clumsy or bumps into objects
- Difficulty catching balls
- Awkward in Phys Ed or movement activities
- Sits on a foot when on a chair
- Props head up with hands/arms at a desk
- Pencil grip is poor
- Sits sideways at a desk
- Standing still is challenging
- Low muscle tone – in activities and when seated (slouching, floppy & all over the place).
- Very fatigued at the end of the day.

ATTENTION

- Difficulties concentrating on tasks
- Easily distracted by others, noise, visual stimulus
- Needs to continually check his/her environment
- Difficulty remembering and following sequences of instructions
- Short attention span
- Misinterprets instructions or questions
- Confusion of similar-sounding words/sounds

LISTENING

- Oversensitive to sounds
- Excessively loud in interactions with others or when doing own work
- Poor sentence structure
- Poor comprehension of spoken word
- Difficulty remembering simple sequences of instruction
- Misinterpretation of questions/instructions
- Confusion of similar-sounding words/letters
- Frequent need for repetition
- Short attention span
- A flat and monotonous tone
- Inability to sing in tune

VISION & SPATIAL AWARENESS

- Frequent eye rubbing
- Eyes tear often
- An eye turns in or out
- Complaints of discomfort or fatigue /headaches
- Covers one eye (with hair or hand)
- Tilts head to one side
- Squinting
- Avoids reading or other close activities
- Holds reading materials close to the face
- Burning or itchy eyes
- Print blurs/ seeing double/ letters move on the page
- Difficulty mentally manipulating and identifying objects, e.g. with jigsaw puzzles
- Difficulties telling the time
- Poor sense of direction
- Trouble visualizing (words, letters, numbers, sequences etc.)
- Confusion of left and right

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Immature behaviour for age
- Difficulty relating to people, objects & events
- Difficulty making friends

DEMEANOUR AND ATTITUDE

- Tends to over-react with loud noises or sudden sounds
- Covers ears with hands during class or group-based activities
- Easily frustrated by class activities
- Overwhelmed easily
- Displays energy extremes: very active to very tired.
- Poor self-image, possibly associated with learning difficulties
- Low motivation/ interest in learning activities

SPEECH AND VOCABULARY

- Poor vocabulary for age
- Speech difficulties
- Difficulty with fluent speech
- Poor sentence structure
- Constant chattering while working.

WHAT NOW AND, WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

Here are some pointers:

First, please note, this checklist is not exhaustive nor intended as a diagnostic tool.

This checklist is a guide to help you start to look at and interpret your student's "body language" differently. It enables you to begin to know what body behaviours to look for and what aspects of student behaviour to pay attention to because these are often present in children who experience neuro-motor and sensory maturity issues and, these can directly impact on their learning performance. The body speaks about the learning experience, and this is the language it can use.

This checklist is an observational and reflective tool that helps us to look more closely at a child's/student's body language. The results you see once you've completed this checklist with a particular student in mind can indicate possible underlying neuro-motor and sensory immaturity issues that may be impacting that child's/student's learning potential in a classroom setting.

Be aware: when I say "these body behaviours" I don't mean you need to have checked **all of them** for you to consider possible neuro-motor and sensory maturity issues impacting on that student's learning. You might find a child/student has checkmarks in some, all or only one or two of the descriptive categories in the checklist. One or two checkmarks across the whole list of behaviours, responses and presentations are possibly unlikely to indicate issues related to body-based learning challenges, but that isn't always the case. It is also important to remember that some of these cues/ indicators can be expressed subtly and silently; by mischievous children and compliant children. If you see these characteristics in your students' body language and classroom/learning behaviours, it is probably worth knowing a bit more about these characteristics and how they can impact learning success

We don't often ask students how their body feels when they are in class. We tend to assume students have conscious and cognitive control over their body and that "challenging" behaviour is consciously or cognitively driven.

Our work suggests that the cues listed in this checklist are often behaviours and characteristics of children who experience neuro-motor and sensory immaturity difficulties that can impact on learning success, function and performance. And, importantly, those actions/behaviours/indicators are **not** likely to be controlled consciously or deliberately.

If we know a child is experiencing learning challenges, and, that child displays some of these behaviours and/or body presentations, then, underlying neuro-motor and sensory issues could be contributing to those learning challenges. Being aware of these cues may help you, as their teacher, start to identify the tell-tale signs that suggest there may be developmental immaturity issues contributing to their learning challenges. We can then identify them more accurately, address them, help the body support the learning process and help that student learn more effectively.

The purpose of this checklist is to help you as a teacher start to pay attention to these cues and begin to view them from a neuro-developmental perspective that recognizes the role of the body in successful learning. It helps provide a different lens with which to view learning. You will begin to be aware of these indicators and understand that they may be contributing to the learning blocks/challenges some students are having.

We know that if the body isn't supporting learning, it can interfere with learning. This checklist helps us start to identify where things may be going awry. You can begin to interpret your student's body language and see how it impacts their academic learning. You can learn more about how to identify and address these issues in your classroom by signing up for one of our **Body to Brain Learning** Professional Learning Series.

MORE INFORMATION:

This **Body to Brain Learning Educator's Checklist** is one of many resources and tools available to help educators identify and address physical indicators of neuro-motor and sensory immaturity shown to contribute to student learning challenges.

This checklist is part of the “**Body to Brain Learning**” **Professional Learning Series** developed by Dr Christine Payard (PhD) of *Integrating Thinking* and is free for those who are interested in more of our Professional Learning opportunities.

Our aim is to provide professional learning for teachers and professionals working with children who have learning difficulties, so that they can understand more about how to help the body support their student's learning in the classroom.

We use face-to-face and online methods to help participants access this information in convenient and meaningful professional learning ways.

The **Body to Brain Learning Professional Development Series** draws together information from neurobiology and developmental theory, education, neuro-cognitive science, professional learning and the Australian Learning context, including implementing the Australian Curriculum.

The **Body to Brain Learning Professional Development Series** is professional learning that helps teachers apply theory in practice. It helps them contextualize the information and use it in their work, in their schools. It is theory based, but practically driven. It is action-based and designed to meet AITSL and CPD requirements within Australia.

To learn more about the **Body to Brain Learning Professional Development Series**, including online and face-to-face professional learning opportunities, visit: www.integratingthinking.com.au/training
Or sign up for more information and email updates: www.integratingthinking.com.au/learn-more

Upcoming events include the online Professional Learning Series:

How the body tells a learning story...

More information will be emailed to you about this learning opportunity when you sign up for more details: www.integratingthinking.com.au/training or www.integratingthinking.com.au/learn-more

**Help your students address their learning challenges
by keeping the role of the body in mind.**

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Chris Payard on Linked in, or join our email community to be updated regularly on events, training opportunities and information about our work.



