



With every passing year, it becomes more evident that our little ones are growing up in a changing world. It is not just COVID-19 that has brought about this change, but the introduction of technology from a young age, our change in lifestyles, the lack of opportunity to play outside or the freedom to spend hours at the park, to name a few. Simply, our children are not benefiting from the exposure to activities that promote the positive development of perceptual skills as they once were. So what, you may ask? Studies have shown that, *“Perceptual skills are the highest predictor to literacy success and provide children with the ‘data’ they need in order to discriminate, recall, blend and segment syllables and words. These form the cornerstones to developing sound literacy skills and productive readers and writers down the line”* (Kieran Gray nee: Mardghum - Ba(STA) Honors (Wits).

PERCEPTUAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD:

WHAT ARE PERCEPTUAL SKILLS AND HOW DO THEY PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT?

Perceptual skills can be broken down into two main groups: auditory and visual perception. The development of these skills require the brain to break down information it receives from the ear or eye. It is not the physical ability to hear or see, but rather how what is heard or seen is interpreted by the brain. The ability of the brain to correctly interpret this information is crucial for learning to take place. *“Children learn and develop by what they hear and what they see. Enhancing the development of these skills at an early stage can only set them up to succeed later in learning skills like maths and reading, where these developmental skills are essential”*, writes Mrs Raeesa Bulbulia - BscOT (Wits).

WE’VE IDENTIFIED THE PROBLEM:

At **Kyalami Preparatory Nursery School (KPNS)** we have noted the global trend toward more children requiring additional support from an occupational or speech therapist. This is due to gaps in their perceptual skills development. A speech and occupational therapist can assist a child to develop neurological pathways in their brain in order for it to correctly interpret messages sent from the ears and eyes. While these therapists have an important place in our Schools, we have taken a proactive and innovative approach in the classroom to support and bridge the gaps in developing our children’s perceptual skills.

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION:

At KPNS, we have created a Perceptual Programme (called, **Look, Listen, Learn**) to develop our children’s perceptual skills from the ground up. This programme has been specifically designed by experts in the field, an occupational therapist (Mrs Raeesa Bulbulia) and speech therapist (Kieran Gray nee: Mardghum), to take our children right back to the basics of perceptual skills development and build their knowledge, understanding and skills, layer by layer. Each age group has a graded programme designed to ensure that every pre-skill required for reading, writing and numeracy is taught and practiced with the intensity of a therapy session, by our trained teachers. The two components, auditory and visual, work hand-in-hand when learning takes place and are integrated into classroom activities based on physical activities and a hands-on approach to learning. It is important that our children do not use these skills in isolation, but incorporate and practice their skills throughout the day, doing what children do best - play!

OUR PLAN OF ACTION:

Weekly lessons to combine elements of both visual and auditory

skills are intentionally prepared and taught during class. These skills and extensions are then practiced throughout the week to reinforce the concepts our children have learnt. Our therapists have created a COVID-19 friendly programme so that our children do not miss these crucial skills during these unpredictable times.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL IN IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAMME?

Our goal in implementing this programme is to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to develop, implement and practise these vitally important perceptual skills before beginning to read and write, reducing the need for therapy in years to come.

WE’D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We would love to tell you more about our Perceptual Programme and introduce you to our wonderful teachers implementing **‘Look, Listen, Learn’**. If you would like further information, please contact me, Tammy Odendaal, or the therapists involved in developing this programme by using the details below:



Tammy Odendaal
KPNS Headmistress
 todendaal@kyalamiprep.co.za



Kieran Gray nee: Mardghum
 kieren.mardghum@live.co.za



Raeesa Bulbulia
 ot@raeesa.co.za

