



Research Newsletter

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Issue 8

Compiled By Jenny Davis

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Finding out about Autism from the perspective of those with Autism

<https://www.robysteward.com/1800secondsautism>

1800 Seconds on Autism on BBC Sounds



1800 Seconds on Autism is a podcast produced by the BBC (British Broadcasting Cooperation). It is hosted by two Autistic Adults; Robyn Steward and Jamie Knight, with help from Support bat Henry and 4ft Plushy 'Lion'.

Research News from PLASN-R

University College London, PhD students have been embedded in schools as a part of class teams have been researching the links between movement differences and learning. Spencer Hayes (Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology at UCL) reported back at the PLASN – R meeting this term, that the research has highlighted the following findings:

- 87% of children with ASDs have movement differences from their neurotypical peers.
- Movement impacts learning and cognition.
- Movement difference is likely to become one of the diagnostic criteria for ASCs– allowing for earlier diagnosis, possibly 18 months rather than 4 years.
- Masking is facilitated through motor skills.
- Containment of movement creates anxiety and interferes with students' capacity to learn.
- Perfectionism can cause dysregulation.
- Needs scaffolding to be successful – clear instructions – what does success look like.

Ruby Wheeler (UCL Researcher and Pediatric Clinical Psychologist), reported back to PLASN-R on her research into how students own perceptions of their motor skills and movement affect their abilities in movement tasks from sports to handwriting. Movement skills impact everything from daily living to academic learning.

How do children's own perceptions impact success in learning motor skills?

- Non autistic children were not as aware of their actual abilities.
- ASC kids were more thoughtful and reflective about abilities.

- ASC kids consistently scored lower than non-autistic children on motor tasks but were more aware of how they were doing.
- Higher motor skills scores correlated with higher scores on word reading ability.
- Perception of motor skills impacts engagement with activities. The less confidence the child had of their success – the less they wanted to engage with the task.

Action Points:

Look for activities that increase engagement and perception of competence.

Consider ways to teach motor skills using tasks that are intrinsically motivating.

UCL Research Project at Springhallow:

This year we will continue our collaboration with Researchers from UCL into **Movement and its impact on communication and learning**. This project will now be part of a longitudinal study into how movement impacts learning.

A longitudinal study is one where the same data about students, is collected more than once, **at different points in time**. The purpose of a longitudinal study is to assess not just **what** the data reveals at a fixed point in time, but to understand **how (and why) things change** over time.

Last term, Cedar class welcomed Eli (a PhD student from UCL), who worked alongside the class team and carried out investigations into how students' motor skills impacted their learning. This year the same students' progress and development of motor skills will be tracked by another PhD student, Dan.

Dan is also the Assistant Head at Eagle House School, which offers us opportunities to share expertise, in addition to adding to the understanding of how motor skills develop in young people with ASCs

Researchers will be embedded in class, to build trust with students and to understand how our students communicate. Students will feel more comfortable engaging with our researchers if they have built a relationship with them. Many research tasks can be carried out as part of the school day.

Parents and carers, are always given information about the project and can choose for their child to participate or not. Students can also choose to participate or not.

Springhallow Appreciative Enquiries

Every year our teachers research how teaching can be improved for our students – they collaborate and share their findings.

This year the teachers will be undertaking enquiries into the topic of:

Scaffolding to support learning for pupils with ASCs

You can find information about this topic here:

[What is Scaffolding? \(youtube.com\)](#)

For those who would like to investigate the topic further, here are some links to research and information that may develop your understanding and knowledge.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkhS69W_kg8

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/five-evidence-based-strategies-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-send>

Research Board

The role of our Research Board is to decide what the key issues are for Springhallow School.

Our Research Board welcomes participation from Senior Leadership, Teaching and Therapy Staff, Parents, Governors and very importantly, Pupils.

The next meeting of the Springhallow Research Board will be in the Spring Term.

If you are interested in contributing to the work of the Research Board please /contact Jenny Davis (Research Co-Ordinator)