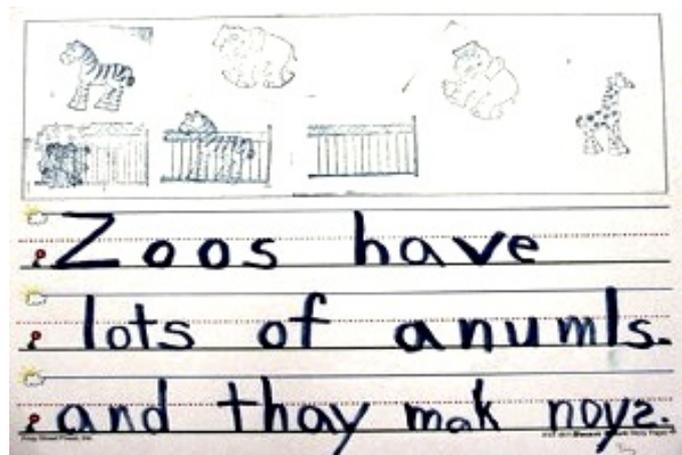


Why do they do that? - Phonetic Spelling

*Phonetic spelling means that words are spelt how they sound,
not how they look.*



Phonetic spelling is a common issue amongst children who struggle, and it is always an indicator of a deeper issue in how they process and integrate sensory information.

Phonetic spelling is also something children are trained into doing, as a means of learning how to spell difficult words; however, it is not something a functional child will pick up on, or do as a matter of course. Ultimately, it is a dysfunctional way of learning to spell, just as sounding out words letter by letter is a dysfunctional way of learning to read.

Reading and spelling, reciprocal aspects of literacy

Pretty much everything we do in this world ie: every action we perform, is generated on the basis of what we have perceived. At the core of our ability to do the things we do, is the dynamic of

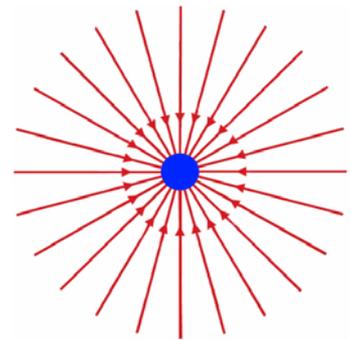


perception and performance, which both utilise the exact same skills, abilities and processes, just reciprocally. If those skills, abilities and processes are not fully functional we will struggle to perform everyday tasks.

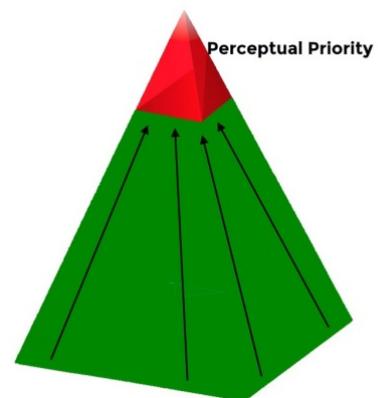
Interestingly, reading is a reciprocation of spelling and vice versa, where reading requires us to know what spoken words look like and spelling requiring us to know what written words sound like. There is also a progression which occurs, from hearing a word, to be shown pictures of it, seeing it in real life and then being able to represent what we know symbolically, via letters and words. This progression runs in conjunction with other developing aspects of performance, within the developmental sequence. One such aspect of development is the progression through different priorities in perceptual performance.

Priorities in Perceptual Performance

Our perceptual performance is all about being able to receive vast amounts of sensory information, connect the dots and create (perceive) a worldview that is meaningful. Our life experience is multidimensional and made up of various felt experiences, constructed in such a way that any object or situation experienced is experienced as dynamic and alive. In order for this to happen, we need to be able to receive sensory information via any sensory modality, and relate it to any and all other information received through all other sensory modalities, and do so in a consolidated way. This is where priorities come in.



At different stages of development, different areas of perceptual performance hold the position of priority over all others. This means that information is received via all sensory modalities, but is perceived relative to the area that has the priority in the moment. This allows us to receive the sensory information any object is comprised of, relate it to all other information ever integrated, and discern what that object is relative to all other objects in our worldview. For example, we hear someone bite into an apple, and that familiar crunching sound is immediately experienced relative to everything else we have ever integrated. Integration is basically a process whereby objects and situations become known experientially; so that sound of biting into an apple is already known, relative to the pattern of 'apple,' and everything else we have ever experienced. Such is the proficiency of integrated performance that the sound is instantaneously and spontaneously recognised; and, if it is not, the dots will continue to be connected¹ until we get our answer; or it will cease, if we lose interest. The naming of 'apple' will arise after the fact.



The child continues to develop in all areas of perceptual performance but this is occurring relative to the priority in place at that point in time.

¹ Technically, inter-relationships will continue to be formed

The First Priority – auditory perceptual performance

For the first 3-3½ months of life, a child's priority in perceptual performance is in auditory perception. Any of us can look at a new born baby and see that they are primarily responsive to sound. They readily turn their head toward sound or even lie there listening to the world go by. Very quickly they begin reaching toward sound, and even repeating certain actions in order to generate a sound. Everything the child is experiencing is being related to what they perceive auditorily.

The Second Priority – physiological perceptual performance

At around 3-3½ months of age, the child begins to move into physiologically based perceptual performance. This is a rather vast and substantial area of performance, in which motor performance and control are developing, as well as all aspects of tactile performance, strength, rhythm and co-ordination, proprioception, etc. All other sensory information received through other sensory modalities is experienced relative to this priority.

The Third Priority – visual perceptual performance

At around 3-3½ years of age, a child needs to step into the priority of visual perceptual performance in order to be fully functional. It is this priority that will drive the ongoing refinement of performance, which is required in order to perform the highly sophisticated and complex tasks human beings are capable of. Ultimately it is probably this need to refine performance, which pushes a child into this priority, as their desire to explore the world unfolds.



We can also refine of visual perceptual performance, and doing so allows us to process and integrate increasing amounts of sensory information. This, in turn, allows us to refine other areas of performance – motor function, co-ordination, speed, verbal acuity, artistic talent, musical ability, writing, etc.

Children who struggle consistently demonstrate that they have a visual perceptual deficit ie: they have not stepped fully into the priority of visual perceptual performance. They are unable to process the vast amounts of sensory information our world is comprised of, and information is consequently left out or is missing from what they are perceiving. This shows up when they attempt to perform a task, because the same deficits a child has in visual perceptual performance are also present within their task performance. They will demonstrate a wide range of issues, including, not understanding the task, not knowing where to begin a task, how to proceed, how things relate to each other within the task or to the wider environment. The list of things that can go wrong is substantial, and the child's performance, behaviour and demeanour is constantly conveying to us, information about what has gone wrong within each child's performance; we just need to understand these deeper levels of performance in order to understand what they are telling us.

Phonetic Spelling

The reason why children spell phonetically is because they have not stepped into the priority of visual perceptual performance. They are unable to relate what they hear to what they see, because there is a breakdown within their core skills, abilities and processes. This leaves them operating from a less efficient and effective perceptual priority. Phonetic spelling is a functional indicator² of a visual perceptual deficit and, because we know how some of these core issues express themselves within task performance, we are able to understand something of what has gone wrong for a child by simply observing their performance.

If you would like to know more about the Visual Perceptual Therapy, and how childhood struggles can be corrected, you can visit the website www.visualperceptual.com or contact me via info@visualperceptual.com

The Visual Perceptual Therapy is available all around the world, via Skype.

Natoya Rose
Occupational Therapist

*With that, I would like to welcome you to my world,
the world of visual perceptual performance*



² Functional indicators are pointers found within a person's performance, which point back to the issues we will find when we evaluate them. They are clinical markers of the breakdowns, which occur in core of performance.

