



Spring/Summer 2008

Family Achievement Focus



Summer Therapy Options Help Enhance, Improve Children's Skills

Many parents find that summer offers a great opportunity to explore therapy options that help prepare their children for the next school year. Without the demand of extra homework, or school-related activities, children have additional time to concentrate on activities that may enhance and strengthen their skills prior to the start of the next school year.

This summer, FAC is offering the following programs that may be helpful to many children and adolescents. While FAC offers these programs throughout the year, a number of families have found it beneficial to begin these programs during the summer:

Life/ Social Skills and Play Groups

Life/Social Skills (ages 9 to teens)

Life/Social Skills (ages 6 to 8 years)

Special Play Skills Programs

FAC offers a series of groups designed for children and teens who demonstrate social, communication or interaction difficulties. Groups will meet once a week for 8 weeks to address topics that may include: conversational skills, self regulation, conflict/friendship management and other topics appropriate for that age group.

These have been very popular groups for children of all ages and families have reported successful results in seeing positive social changes for those children who have participated.

Please contact Veronica Arens at FAC if you are interested in registering for one of FAC's Summer Life Skills Programs scheduled to begin in July.



FAC offers Life/Social and Special Play Groups for children of all ages.



(continued on page 2)

Berard Auditory Integration Training

(continued from front page)

FAC's Berard Auditory Integration Training (AIT) is designed to normalize hearing and the ways the brain processes auditory information. Years of research have shown that distortion in hearing and auditory processing contributes to behavioral or learning disorders. AIT has been proven to reduce many of these deficits associated with a range of disorders including: autism spectrum disorders, central auditory processing disorders, speech and language disorders, sensory issues, ADHD, anxiety and depression.

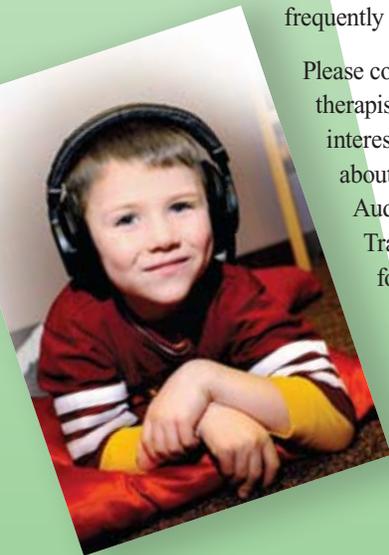
How it Works

AIT involves clients using headphones to listen to specific types of music. The music and sound is specifically regulated based on the client's individual needs. Each listening session lasts 30 minutes and is facilitated by a Berard AIT-trained therapist twice a day for 10 days.

Positive Results

Many clients who have completed FAC's AIT sessions report favorable results: Parents often report a reduction in tantrums, sound sensitivity, echolalia, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Parents also observe increased ability in following directions, attention, auditory processing, short-term memory, and speech/language skills. Increased socialization, cooperation, self-confidence and independence are also frequently observed.

Please contact your therapist if you are interested in learning about FAC's 10-day Auditory Integration Training Program for your child.



(continued next column)

Interactive Metronome (IM)

Interactive Metronome is another tool used by FAC therapists to help children with attention, sequencing, coordination, motor planning and timing issues. These basic skills also affect a child's higher level skills in the areas of math, reading, self care and other academics.

Interactive Metronome uses headphones and hand/foot sensors which are connected to a computer. The computer directs and guides the user through a series of sounds and repetitive limb exercises to improve motor planning and sequencing.

A typical Interactive Metronome treatment may include 15 sessions broken down over a three week period where a client may be seen three to five times per week for one hour.

Improvement areas include greater attention/focus, language processing, improved concentration, reading comprehension and ability to regulate aggression.

Vision Screening

FAC has recently introduced vision screening as an additional resource for clients who may be experiencing vision-related challenges. FAC's occupational therapists can screen for a variety of visual impairments that affect an individual's ability to complete activities of daily living, school or work related tasks, mobility, and community activities.

Children or adults who have or have had brain injuries, strokes, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy, pervasive developmental disabilities, and learning disabilities have a high prevalence of vision disorders.

If your child exhibits several of the symptoms listed below, please contact your therapist or call our front desk and ask to speak with one of FAC's therapists trained in vision screening.

- Covers or closes one eye when reading
- Complains of eyestrain
- Complains of headaches
- Rubs eyes
- Complains of double vision
- Complains of words moving on the page
- Loses place while reading
- Complains of blurred vision
- Hold things very close
- Uses a finger to keep place when reading
- Skips lines and words often
- Trouble learning right from left
- Reverses letters and numbers
- Mistakes words with similar beginnings
- Poor recall of visually presented material
- Sloppy writing
- Trouble copying from the board

These therapists can assess the need for a vision therapy evaluation and/or further occupational therapy services to improve visual skills.

See the following websites for more information on vision therapy and success stories: <http://www.visiontherapy-online.com/>

Home Programming Tip of the Month:

Baby & Bear Touch

Does your child, sometimes, step on top of you, bowl his brother or sister over, but then can't grip his socks

tight enough to put them on? If you are puzzled by this, you are not alone; many children experience sensory processing issues related to touch and using the proper pressure or force modulation needed to accomplish tasks.

Fortunately, there is something parents and caregivers can do to help with this type of sensory issue. "BABY & BEAR TOUCH" is a technique used to help a child understand how hard or light to touch something. You can teach this method by showing the child a picture of a baby and a bear. Then, take the child's hand and gently stroke it like a "baby" while showing them the picture. Next, show the bear picture and squeeze the child's hand "hard, like a bear." Now, ask your child to touch you "gently, like a baby" and "hard, like a bear". Expand the exercise by using additional items from around your home. Use a nerf ball or other soft object and touch it "gently, like a baby" showing your child that the ball doesn't change. Now squeeze it hard like a bear, showing your child that the shape changes. Now it is your child's turn to touch the objects. Make sure to use the same words and pictures as your child tries this exercise.

Continue to practice touching objects, people, and animals using a "gentle baby touch" and "hard bear touch". Use the baby (gentle/soft) and bear (hard)

touch visuals along with the words when you notice that he/she is not using the right force or strength on an object. Example: "use a bear touch to put on your shoes." "You need to use a gentle baby touch on the puppy." Eventually, you won't have to show the picture or use the words anymore.

If your child continues to have sensory processing issues regarding touch and pressure, our therapy staff may be able to help. Please call us and ask to speak with an occupational therapist—651-738-9888.



Picky Eaters Finding Success with FAC's SOS Feeding Program

There's hope for those parents tempted to throw in the towel when it comes to their very picky eaters! Sequential Oral Sensory (SOS) Approach to Feeding Program is up and running at FAC!

The SOS Feeding Program is a developmental approach to feeding, designed to assess and address all the factors involved in feeding difficulties. It focuses on teaching a child the basic rules of eating through exploring different properties of foods, including texture, smell, taste and consistency.

Shannon Erickson OTR/L, one of the FAC therapists trained in SOS, reports that the group has had success with a number of clients who are picky eaters and problem feeders. Examples of such successes include: decreased anxiety during feeding, learning to accept new textures in their diet (including wet/messy textures), improved eye contact during feeding, and reintroducing and maintaining new foods in their diet.

Shannon reports that some of FAC's older clients have even become involved in preparing the foods they are going to eat to increase interaction with food in a non-threatening way. With all clients, foods are presented in a fun positive atmosphere in which all gains, no matter how small, are celebrated. At times, even tolerating the presence of a new food is a great accomplishment.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact FAC and ask to speak with one of our SOS Feeding Program specialists.

FAC's SOS Feeding Programs use a non-stressful, positive approach in helping children with feeding difficulties.



Wanted: Golfers who want to improve their accuracy!



Yes, you heard right! FAC is excited to extend its Interactive Metronome® (IM) program to golfers who want to improve their accuracy. While IM has shown proven therapeutic results in children and adults who struggle with such issues as sequencing, coordination, and timing (see article page 2), the Interactive Metronome Company has shown how some of these same outcomes can be applied by athletes, namely golfers. In a number of controlled studies conducted by Interactive Metronome, golfers who completed the Interactive Metronome training improved their accuracy in comparison to a control group of golfers who did not participate in IM.

The application in golf may work because training involved in IM (repetitive movements and exercises) fine tunes one's timing properties, which can then positively affect the timing involved in a golf swing. Another reason why the training may work especially well with golfers is because the exercises involved in IM make the coordination between one's intention and one's voluntary movement more precise.

Please visit www.interactivemetronome.com to learn more about how this program is being successfully used by golfers throughout the county.

FAC will be offering IM training, on a private pay basis, to any individual who is interested. For more information, please contact our front desk and ask to speak with one of our therapists trained in Interactive Metronome—651-738-9888.

Friendly Reminders and Recognition

- **FAC will be closed Monday, May 26 for Memorial Day, Friday, July 4 and Saturday, July 5 in observance of Independence Day.** Please remember, with advance notice, your child's therapy can be rescheduled to accommodate holidays, vacations and illness. Our scheduler would be happy to assist you in rescheduling options – 651-738-9888.
- **Henry, FAC's therapy dog, is available to assist your child in his/her therapy session.** If you would like to have Henry available for your child, please ask your therapist to reserve him during your child's therapy time.
- **Above and Beyond Program Reminder:** If you would like to recognize your therapist or business office staff person for something special they did to assist you or your child, please complete an Above and Beyond program slip and submit it to the box located on the front desk. Special thanks to clients, parents and families who have already recognized staff members – your recognition and kind words mean a lot to the FAC team.
- **As the FAC lobby continues to get busier, we are asking for help from parents and caregivers to be please be attentive to noise levels in the waiting area.** Since many of the children we serve are very sensitive to noise and commotion, we are asking that parents please help keep children under control as much as possible to make waiting room time calm and enjoyable for all of our families. In addition, please limit cell phone calls, as much as possible, to private areas outside of our waiting room. Voices often carry and private conversations become more public than we realize. Thank you for your ongoing cooperation!
- **Special thanks to all families who participated in Client Appreciation Week.** All FAC Staff want to extend their continued thanks and appreciation to parents, caregivers and clients for their dedication to their child's therapy. Also thanks to all who filled out a survey – results will be reviewed and shared at a later date.

Mark the Date:

Sensory Processing Workshop: June 26!

Another Interactive Sensory Processing Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, June 26 from 6 to 9 pm at Family Achievement Center. FAC's Veronica Arens, OTR/L, Clinical Operations Manager, will be repeating her popular "Introduction to Sensory Processing," for parents and caregivers who have children who are struggling with sensorimotor challenges. Cost for the workshop is \$20 per individual or \$35 per couple. Workshop space is limited so please call early to reserve your spot—651-738-9888.

Recipe for Summer Therapy Fun: Dirt Cake

Here is an easy idea to create a delicious, fun treat while working on some sensorimotor skills.

Ingredients:

1 box instant vanilla pudding (prepared)

1 bag of Oreos

1 bag of Gummy Worms

Directions:

Use a rolling pin to crush Oreos (good for strength and bilateral coordination).

Use fingers to put worms in pudding (messy/tactile).

Use hands to sprinkle Oreos on top (tactile and eye hand coordination).

To add an extra summer touch, parents can purchase a new sand bucket and shovel so the children can actually make the cake in the sand bucket. They can then use the shovel to scoop the goodies onto their plates (eye hand coordination and fine motor).



Henry, FAC's therapy dog, has started some additional training and conditioning with Lauren Clark, canine trainer/interpreter. Lauren, who is also an occupational therapy student, is working on developing programs for using dogs in rehabilitation settings to enhance therapy sessions, making the dogs more involved and beneficial to the clients who use them. Lauren will be working with Henry and the FAC staff throughout the spring and summer. Please let your therapist know if you would Henry to be involved in your child's therapy session.



If you are interested in learning more about Lauren's dog training, please contact the front desk.

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