**FACT SHEET: Visual Perception (Visual discrimination and Visual figure ground)**

### What is visual perception?

The process that enables the brain to interpret visual information. It is different to visual acuity which merely measures sharpness of sight.

### Visual Discrimination:

Ability to identify and discriminate between letters, numbers, shapes or objects.

### Why is it important?

Students need to understand and differentiate what they see as they have different meanings.

### Signs of poor visual discrimination:

- Difficulty learning the alphabet and recognizing words/letters.
- Confusion of similar shapes, letters and numbers (e.g. regular reversal past mid-Year 1).
- Mistaking words with similar beginnings or endings.
- Trouble writing and remembering letters.
- Tending to use other senses to make what should be visual discrimination (tactile and verbal).

Poor visual perception can cause confusion leading to self-doubt, reluctance and hesitation in classroom participation.
Classroom suggestions:

- Sorting detailed pictures from magazines with different characteristics (such as certain shapes or colours).
- Bingo games using different colours, shapes or letters.
- Use iPad and Smartboard Apps such as *Match it up, Jigsaw Zoo Animal Puzzle* and *Pattern recognition for first grade*.
- Make simple puzzles by cutting out segments of an image on a cardboard of paper.
- Spot the difference. Try [http://www.visuallearningforlife.com/visual-perception-worksheets.php](http://www.visuallearningforlife.com/visual-perception-worksheets.php), which includes worksheets in all 7 areas of visual perception.

Visual Figure Ground

Ability to visually locate and identify shapes, objects embedded in a busy visual background. The ability to attend/tune in visually to detail without being distracted by competing visual information.

Why is it important? Children with poor visual figure ground perception may:

- Be unable to block out distractions such as conflicting words or images around the classroom.
- Need increased time to do all classroom tasks, from copying from boards to finding a certain coloured pencil.
- Experience visual fatigue which can contribute to lack of attention and disruptive behaviour.
Students with signs of poor visual figure ground

- Have difficulty knowing what is important or unimportant on a page.
- Work slowly compared to peers.
- Experience difficulty completing work such as near-far copying tasks.
- Experience difficulty finding items in their bags or pencil case.

Classroom strategies

- Remove glare by sitting away from direct sunlight and take regular breaks to decrease visual stress.
- Play hidden picture games such as ‘I Spy’ and ‘Where’s Wally’.
- Eliminate visually stimulating table as much as possible.
- Complete simple crosswords.
- Change positioning of student’s seating to minimize distraction from other students.
- Use red marker to outline boundaries of the specific area to cut or colour.
- Play Scavenger Hunt.
- Limit competing information from the visual field.
- Use iPad Apps (Little Things and Doodle find).

Circle all 6’s and cross all 9’s

Colour all X’s in red

Note: Some students may need to visit a behavioural optometrist or optometrist for a visual assessment.

References