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What can teachers do about cognitive development of their students?

What can parents do about cognitive development of their children?

12 criteria of mediated learning experience

By mediated learning experience we understand any interaction between an adult and child with clear intention, meaning and transcendence. The purpose of such an interaction is to help children expand their cognitive capacity. In such an interaction an adult intends to communicate a particular meaning or skill and helps the child to relate (transcend, bridge) the meaning to some other experience or thought.

The role of a mediator is to adapt stimuli by selecting, filtering, magnifying, or reducing, naming, repeating, relating them to other stimuli, etc. in order to make the stimulus more accessible, more understood, more digestible, incorporated and elaborated. Stimuli are the normal stimuli of a person's world: objects, events, actions, smiles, anything.

Mediated learning experience is the main environmental influence leading to higher order cognitive skills, including executive functioning, such as: regulating attention, systematic exploration, precise perception, the acquisition of a vocabulary to precisely label objects, their position and characteristics, the integration of information, the definition of a problem, spontaneous comparison, making hypothesis and making plans, checking whether it is right or wrong, etc.

Context for optimal mediation:

- Language rich environment
- Experience rich environment
- Opportunities for one to one interaction
- Low stress time on task
- Available repertory of mediators



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Feuerstein distinguished 12 criteria of mediated interaction:

1. Mediation of intentionality and reciprocity:

Intentionality refers to the mediator's attitude and communication to arrest and maintain the child's attention, to engage the child into the activity. The implied message to child is: This is what I want you to do; let me help you pay attention so you can do this.

Reciprocity means that the interaction is mutual: We are having a learning experience together.

Both participants of mediated learning experience show mutual understanding and interest towards the other one. The mediator makes statements that show he understands how children are feeling and what they are thinking.

2. Mediation of transcendence:

This means going beyond (transcend) the here-and-now. What we are doing now is connected to the past, to other things and could serve in the future. Thinking has to do with creating relationships, generalization, abstraction, insight, rules, etc. All this is the result of mediation of transcendence: widen a person's perspective, tell stories, point at relevance, compare, conclude, etc.

Children connect what they are doing now to something they recall or something they imagine, so the event is not isolated.



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3. Mediation of meaning:

Meaning refers to what a mediator wants children to attend to deal with and understand. Mediation of meaning starts with preparing the child to become open. “Why is it important for you to know?” mediation of meaning means adding an extra affective, social, cultural meaning to a stimulus. A bunch of flower has no meaning in itself; its meaning is mediated by cultural transmission.

The mediator helps the children notice and learn what is important and valuable to know about what they are doing together. Let your children know what is important to notice by your tone of voice and what you say. Give your children some elaborated information about what to notice concerning the materials and activities you are doing together.



4. Mediation of feeling of competence:

To gain a positive self-image a person must receive subjective comments of appreciation as well as objective positive feedback as to how and why results have been obtained or how to improve. The feedback should involve clear information what was good or what needs more work and what kind.

Even a wrong answer is partly right. Celebrate mistakes as opportunities for learning, in this way avoiding frustration.

5. Mediation of regulation and control of behavior:

People with executive dysfunction often react impulsively and without planning. This “mediation of regulation” mediates us to wait, look and think before acting. Mediation can be verbal, by physical touch, by stopping the person, using symbols, songs, and signs, whatever. It is the role of mediator to find a way how to help the child to learn from the stimuli - giving clear and simple directions or making adjustment to the materials, showing some general problem-solving principles, helping to plan and work according this plan, applying a strategy, etc.



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6. Mediation of sharing:

This means to assist verbal expression by giving the model when a person has word-finding difficulties; not by testing a person continuously, which induces guessing; but by sharing one's thoughts, experiences, feelings, insights.



7. Mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation:

This means to give the message that it is O.K. to be different, to have different speeds of learning, different styles, preferences, abilities, different goals and ways to achieve these goals; not everyone needs to know the same things at the same time. It is crucial that the mediator avoids intrusions on learning and keeps himself in the role of helper. It is the child who needs to experience successful learning.

8. Mediation of goal seeking:

Encourage dreams, create needs, achievements, but mediate how to get there, i.e., how define goals and to plan the steps to achieve them.

9. Mediation of challenge:

Create openness towards the new and unexpected, make learning fascinating, point at advantages of learning something difficult, but reassure.

Keep the task within your children's "challenge zone" – not too easy, not too hard, but enough to stretch, enough to reach beyond what the child already knows or can do.



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10. Mediation of optimistic alternative:

Even in the worst outlook, when you do not know what is going to come next, point at a possible positive outcome. Mediating optimism creates inquisitiveness for relevant cues. Pessimists stop looking or investing effort.

11. Mediation of awareness of change:

You have to tell a person frequently that he is able to change his present way of functioning, and afterwards tell him how much he has changed. Give the same message through stories. People, who perceive themselves as modifiable, will continue investing.

The message to the child is: You can learn. Here is evidence of your ability to learn.

Provide concrete evidence of changes your children have made as a result of your work together. Help your children notice what has changed.

12. Mediation of belonging:

To mediate that people belong to different groups (family, friends, culture, etc.); each having their rules and belonging entails rights as well as responsibilities. Therefore, everyone must have a positive contribution to society, by doing some kind of work, however little it may seem, and how different this may be from pre-injury activities. It is the mediation of belonging that creates in the person a feeling of identity and self-confidence in relation to the others.



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Child's response to mediation may be:

- Self-regulation of attention
- Self-regulation of movement
- Self-regulation of emotions
- Self-talk (related to task) with challenging tasks
- Interactions with mediator are appropriate, enthusiastic, and expansive
- Initiates interactions and activity involvement
- Energized by challenge
- Uses adults as resource
- Maintains involvement in activities and completes tasks



References:

- 1) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304399369> Significance of the Feuerstein approach in neurocognitive rehabilitation
- 2) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281634792> Parents Teachers As Mediators