



# The Pyramid of Learning

Williams & Shellenberger (1996)

## A Foundation For Development

At the Centre for Developing Children (CFDC), we use the Pyramid of Learning to guide our assessment and intervention approach. This model helps us understand how a child's sensory and motor foundations support their ability to learn, play, and participate in daily life.

## What is the Pyramid of Learning?

The Pyramid of Learning is a framework that shows how foundational sensory and motor skills support the development of higher-level cognitive, academic, and social abilities.

At the base of the pyramid are the sensory systems, including proprioception (body awareness), vestibular processing (balance and movement), and tactile input (touch). These systems help children feel secure in their bodies and environment.

As children develop these foundational skills, they build postural control, motor coordination, and planning, which are essential for movement, fine motor tasks, and overall body control.

These skills then support attention, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and social engagement - all necessary for successful participation in learning and daily life.

At the top of the pyramid are academic learning and independence - skills that rely on a strong foundation of sensory and motor development.

## How We Use This at CFDC

When we assess a child, we don't just look at surface-level challenges; we take a bottom-up approach to understand what might be impacting their ability to engage and succeed. If a child is struggling with attention, emotional regulation, or fine motor skills, we first examine whether sensory or motor foundations need support. By strengthening these core developmental areas, we create lasting improvements that help children thrive in all aspects of life. Our goal is to ensure that each child builds a strong foundation for learning, confidence, and independence.

