



September 15, 2010



New at Sherbrooke Elementary School!

“How Does Your Engine Run”- The Alert Program teaches children that their bodies are like engines. Their engines can run on **“high”**, on **“just right”**, or on **“low”**. A high engine can look like someone who is very excited, active, or moves around a lot. You can have a high engine at recess, at a party, or playing sports. A just right engine can look like someone learning, paying attention, and working in a concentrated fashion. A just right engine is needed in class for learning. A low engine can look like someone who is tired, not motivated, or relaxed. You need a low engine to relax and fall asleep.

Some children have a difficult time getting into the “just right engine” mode for learning. The Alert Program teaches ways to help high and low engines get a just right engine. It helps staff and teachers understand self-regulation of “engines” and it suggests ways to regulate a child’s engine level.

A few teachers at Sherbrooke Elementary School have commenced training with *The Alert Program* and have already begun to use strategies in their classroom. As well, an “Engine Room” has been set up at school. This “Engine Room” is a safe environment filled with equipment to help children with regulating their engines. It is also a place where movement can be used to enhance learning. Sensory motor equipment such as large mats, swings, and therapy balls are a few items you may find in this “Engine Room.” An example of getting a high engine to just right may be to use heavy work such as doing chin-ups, pushing and pulling tasks, or jumping and crashing in large mats. Respiration and breath games can also help children get into the “just right” level for attention and focusing.

The Alert Program was designed by two Occupational Therapists in New Mexico in 1987 and it is implemented in many schools throughout the United States. This approach using sensory motor strategies has helped many children improve their attention, learning, self-confidence, and self-regulation. Sherbrooke Elementary School will be the second school in the Eastern Townships School Board to be providing an “Engine Room” for its students. We will be working closely with the teachers involved in Knowlton Academy’s Engine Room as we continue to develop our expertise and program.

Caroline Hui, Occupational Therapist, who helped to implement The Alert Program at Knowlton Academy has been involved in our preliminary training and we hope to further collaborate with her as we move forward. Several staff members are already familiar with this program and will be directly involved with the Engine Room and helping teachers to use sensory motor strategies in the classroom.

While we have been fortunate to set up most of the bigger equipment, additional materials would certainly be appreciated in further building and maintaining the program. If you are interested and find yourself in a position to donate to the program, the following materials could be of use:

- Water Bed Mattress(es)
- Scraps of foam
- Mini trampoline
- Plastic storage bins of all sizes
- Therapy Balls (Yoga Balls)
- New “fidget” toys

If you would like to learn more about the *Alert Program* or the *Engine Room*, we will be making a presentation at our Open House/Meet the Teacher evening on September 18, 2010. Please do not hesitate to contact the school should you have any questions about “How Does Your Engine Run?” and the Engine Room or if you would like to help out.

Peggy McCourt
Principal



• Shellenberger S. & Williams M. (1998) *How does your engine run? The alert program for self regulation*. Albuquerque, Therapy Works, Inc.