



{inclusion outreach}

1031 Lucas Avenue
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POWER MOBILITY

The impact that independence with mobility can have on cognitive and social development is profound. Children who are unable to move independently need to be assisted to explore their environment at the same age as their peers. It used to be assumed that children had to have a baseline of cognitive and visual skills in place before they would be considered for power mobility.

We now understand that a student will not be able to use a power wheelchair safely and independently when first starting out. There are no pre-requisite skills required because they learn these skills best by actually doing them in the context of real-life routines. Some children progress through the levels very quickly, while for others power mobility remains at the earlier stages for much longer or remain at that level ongoing. Some children may become full time power chair users, while others may use a combination of power and manual wheelchair options depending on the activity. There is still learning when students simply having the exploratory experience.



Respect

Competence

Inclusion

Presence

Choice



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Levels of Power Mobility Learning:

Exploratory –basic exploring the cause and effect of using the joystick to initiate movement in a large open area. Supervision is very close. Often there is an attendant switch to override the controls for safety.

Early Driver –learning stop/ start, turning, backing up, etc. in an open area with close supervision. Speed controls are set to low on the wheelchair.

Developing driver –becoming more refined with basic functions, now moving into navigating hallways and outdoor paths with distant supervision.

Skilled Driver –Navigating tricky tight areas and a multitude of surfaces indoors and outdoors. Selects the appropriate speed setting for the environment and manages without direct adult supervision.

To make learning most meaningful, think of destinations to go to with the power chair. If using the gym at school, you could set up a suspended rope with some paper streamers to make a “carwash” or a small obstacle course to navigate. Older students might enjoy a trip to pick up supplies or to the office to pick up the photocopying for the class.

References:

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Sunny Hill Health Centre’s website: www.seatingandmobility.ca