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Why Move Beyond Hands-On Instruction?

uring the past decade, most successful educational theories and practices have centered around a "hands-on" approach to learning. Whether the curriculum dealt with science, mathematics or language, the focus moved to "handson," a belief that children of all ages learn best when they are actively involved in learning. The use of manipulatives in mathematics instruction, experiments and samples in science instruction and journal writing in language instruction offer good examples of a hands-on approach to teaching and learning.



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Research on Left Brain/Right Brain Learning



wever in the late 1990s, research in cognitive theory, learning theory and even medicine, suggests a move beyond hands-on to what we might call *minds-on* instruction. How does a primary school teacher move *beyond* hands-on instruction? This book shares specific, easily implemented techniques for the preK to third grade classroom. Yet, to get the full impact of this movement, it helps to look at the curriculum changes which led to this new way of teaching. Research on "left brain/right brain" learning styles influences our teaching today.



Research on Left Brain/Right Brain Learning

A lthough most people use both sides of their brains routinely, we often see children who appear to favor one particular hemisphere. Hands-on techniques, though important, should also be geared to a child's "brain style." In addition to the research on left/right brain learning, other branches of cognitive science suggests "gender differences" related to instruction.

Girls may use both sides of the brain to sound out words.

 Girls may draw on emotions more readily and use this to solve problems.

 Girls prefer a verbal approach to solving math and science tasks. Boys may be more subject to dyslexia, because they use only one side of the brain to process language.

Boys may draw on physical activity more readily than emotions. This may often translate into a shorter attention span in the classroom.

Boys may display a literal approach to math and science tasks; doing rather than talking about the process.