
Sensory and Sensibility

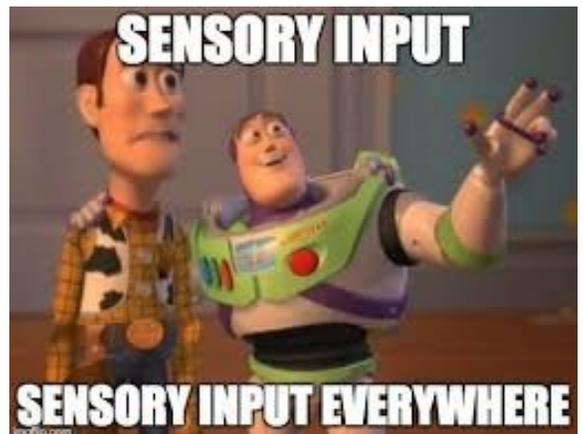


Issue #1

Creating a Sensory Friendly Classroom

Sensory Integration in the Classroom Impacts...

- Self Regulation
- Motor Planning, sequencing
- Motor skills development.
- Attention, impulse control.
- Readiness to learn.
- Application of learned material



Successful Classrooms for Autistic Students

Teaching autistic students can be challenging. Students on The Autism spectrum often have difficulty transitioning to new activities due to their lack of understanding and anxiety surrounding new situations.

They may also have attention and sensory needs that make it difficult for them to focus. Setting up a classroom with visual cues and schedules can decrease anxiety, increase independence, smooth out transitions and minimize challenging behaviors.

Minimize Distractions

As you set up your classroom pay attention to where your autistic students will be seated. Windows, the hallway or free time areas can cause lots of distractions. Try to set your student in an area that gives them an unobstructed view of your teaching. Look at your classroom walls. As much as possible **limit the amount of extraneous visual material** you have hanging from the ceiling and on the walls. Limit decorations on or near the chalkboard/smartboard to increase focus. **If anything on your wall does not support your teaching take it down!**

Minimize Clutter

Clutter is distracting. Set up your classroom area and furniture based on your students' needs. If you don't need something let it go.

- Clutter control - Store games, puzzles, manipulatives...inside plastic containers or cubbies (bonus points for labels!). Don't put everything out at once!
- Limit activity options to keeps kids from becoming overwhelmed by their choices.
- Clearly designated Play / Work area. Use furniture, cubbies, shelf units, etc. to designate areas. All materials should have an organized and labeled place where they belong.

Have a Calming Space

Stress, anxiety, and misunderstandings happen in the best classroom situations - so be prepared have a calming area for your autistic student. This doesn't have to be large, it can be as simple as a small corner behind a desk with a chair or beanbag, **a weighted vest** or **lap pad**, some **noise cancelling headphones**, and a few fidgets. These items can be stored in a basket under or next to the chair. Practice visiting the calm area before a meltdown happens, so when it hits your student knows where to go to refocus.

Use Visual Supports

Simple visual cues and using furniture as boundaries can lessen an autistic student's anxiety and help them to focus.

- Visual cues can include: **classroom schedule, visual timer, picture labels** for classroom supplies.
- Use blue painters tape on the floors of your classroom to **create line up areas, or boundaries between centers.**
- Study carrels for children who may need to decrease the amount of stimuli in their visual field.
- Use visuals to **mark areas that are off limits.** Simple stop signs can label cabinets and areas that are for teacher use only.

Seating

- For the child who needs to move a bit, you might try an inflated seated cushion or a pillow from home so he can both squirm and stay in his seat.
- Some kids are better off if they sit close to the teacher. However, if your child is easily distracted by noise, he may end up turning around often to where the noise is coming from.
- Tape on the floor around their desk area to designate boundaries.
- Carpet squares to sit on at circle time

Accommodate Sensory Needs

- **Weighted vests** to help students focus and pay attention.
- **Weighted lap pads** also work for students who require more proprioceptive input
- **Sitting discs or wedges** also provide students with movement which can help them focus.
- **Theraband** tied under a desk for a child to push his/her feet against for proprioceptive input.
- **Sensory bins** for tactile input - incorporate fine motor activities
- Pay attention to fluorescent **lighting.** Some students are very sensitive to this form of unnatural lighting. If this is the case try to sit your student near a window with lots of natural light or use classroom **light filters.**



- Decreased amount of visual stimuli on the walls
- Color coded folders for finished work
- Clearly defined play and work areas
- Limited decorations
- Natural light/adjustable light



Calm Down Area



Clearly labeled storage bins to decrease visual stimuli and increase organization



- Move N Sit Cushion
- Theraband



Diffuser for fluorescent Lights

*Plastic table cloth also works well!



Huggy Chair



Weighted Lap Pad



Mini Trampoline



Therapy Swing

Visual Schedule

