Sensory Strategies for Focus & Alertness

IDEAS Conference: Summer 2014
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What is Sensory Processing?

- Neurological process of organizing sensations for our use in everyday life
- Our brain receives sensory information from our bodies and surroundings, interprets these messages, and organizes them to perform a response
- Senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, vestibular movement), Proprioception (joint sensation)
Sensory Integration Dysfunction

- The brain inefficiently processes sensory messages coming from a person’s own body and his or her environment.
Do You Know Me?

I hate having my hair washed, brushed or cut
I cry and shield my eyes from the sun and other bright lights
I have “selective hearing” or difficulty listening
I am a picky eater; I resist new foods and textures
I complain about tags in my clothing
I seem to be unaware of normal touch or pain; I often touch others too soft or too hard
I hate being tickled or cuddled
I have poor gross motor skills, such as running and riding a bike
I always walk on my tiptoes.

I have trouble focusing and/or concentrating
I am overly sensitive to loud sounds such as vacuums and blenders
I am always smelling people, food and objects
I chew on everything
I have poor fine motor skills, such as handwriting and cutting
I have difficulty dressing myself
I sit with my legs in a “W” position
I put my socks on “just so” or maybe I never go barefoot
Common Sensory Based Classroom Behaviors

- Difficulty staying seated
- Difficulty focusing on schoolwork tasks and instruction
- Too much touching
- Resists touching
- Mouths things
- Aversive reactions to sounds
Meeting Sensory Needs

• Individualized and based on child’s sensory preferences
• A part of a child’s day at home and at school
• Can occur before, or during learning activities
Principles for Using Sensory Strategies

- Do not use to reinforce negative behaviors. **Use to prevent not react.**
- Provide a sensory diet.
- Teach self-regulation by using strategies to control arousal levels.
- Teach the student a way to communicate needs.
- Address underlying sensory needs.
Sensory Diet OR Sensory Plan

- Patricia and Julia Wilbarger in 1991
- Specific plan developed to help a student meet his/her sensory needs.
- “Just right” mix of sensory input to reach and maintain optimal level of arousal of the CNS.
- Combines alertness, organization, and calming activities.
- Dynamic- adapts with student’s sensory changes
- Everybody has one!
Asking for a Sensory Break

- Bounce ball
- Jump rope
- Trampoline
Understand Space

Public Space

Social Space

Intimate Space

Personal Space

5 to 6 ft.

1 to 3 ft.

less than 1 ft.
Alert Program

- Our Bodies are like car engines
- Sometimes they run “high”
- Sometimes they run “low”
- While learning we need it to run “just right”
- We use sensory input to help our engines run “just right”

*Taken from How Does Your Engine Run? A Leader’s Guide to the Alert Program for Self-Regulation (Williams and Shellenberger, 1996).*
Movement Activities

- Difficulty Staying Seated
- Difficulty Focusing on Schoolwork Tasks
Movement Breaks

- Vestibular Input (head movement) is most effective
- Proprioception - Heavy Work, Joint compression is calming
- Movement activities are most effective when you utilize both
Movement Strategies

- Get the head moving!
- Exercises
- Spinning
- Jumping
- Rocking
- Swinging
- Playground equipment
Novelty is Important!

Use Smart Board Spinner
Shakes and Wiggles
Movement Ideas

- Exercises (push ups, sit ups, toe touches, jumping jacks, hop on one foot)
- Songs with movement (i.e. Hokey Pokey, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes, Macarena)
- Stretches (tree pose, butterfly pose, lunge, pretzel)
Smart Board Resources

1. www.exercisetv.tv - Free video clips. Click on yoga or stretches and there are video clips ranging from 30 seconds up to several minutes. Good for K-5.

2. http://www.tvokids.com/games - Free movement games that last about 60 seconds to a couple of minutes. Click on "Health and Sports". There are many to choose from.

Joint Compressions
Deep Pressure Input
Heavy Work

- Difficulty Staying Seated
- Difficulty Focusing on Schoolwork Tasks
- Tactile Activities (especially when child is overly rough-hits others/objects, breaks items to get input)
Heavy Work Strategies

- Calming effect
- Carrying, pushing, pulling heavy loads
Deep Pressure

- Applied through shoulders, head
- Roll ball on student giving firm pressure
- Get under mats, bean bag chairs, and pillows
Joint Compression

- Push ups (wall or chair)
- Jumping Jacks
- Push hands together
- Body Sock
- Stretchy Band on chair legs
Weighted Products

weighted vests, lap pads, blankets (OT)
Special Seating

- Difficulty Staying Seated
- Difficulty Focusing on Schoolwork Tasks
Cube Chair
Social Story

I need to use my wiggle seat when I want to move around. My chair will turn over and fall if I don't.

I might get hurt. I will wiggle in my seat when I need to quietly, so that I do not bother other students.
Standing Stations
Oral Input

- Difficulty Focusing on Schoolwork Tasks
- Mouths things
Oral Strategies

- Water bottle
- High sensory input: Chewy, Sour, Spicy
- Oral fidgets
- Student Specific Preferences: Let them pick
Smell

- Notices smells others do not notice
- Picky eater because of the way foods smell
- Smells everything

- Alerting - strong smells - citrus, peppermint

- Calming - lavender, vanilla
Tactile Input

- Difficulty staying seated
- Difficulty focusing
- Too much or too little touching
Hand fidgets
Students have individual tactile preferences so for this to be effective they need to pick the fidget
Sensory Box
Tactile Bins

- Bins filled with dried rice, beans, popcorn, sand, pasta
Wilbarger Brushing Protocol
Visual Strategies
Decrease Visual Distractions

Study Carrell

Slant board
• Full spectrum (natural light)
• Filters over fluorescent lights
Visual Strategies

- Use color.
- RED is alerting.
- GREEN and BLUE are calming.
- This is very child specific.
- Colored paper, highlighted text, reading windows, and highlighter strips.
Low Tech Color
Modify Worksheets using Color

Practice
Find the perimeter of each figure.

1. Triangle
   - 7 m
   - 13 m
   - 24 cm
   - 12 m
   - 11 cm

2. Square
   - 56 cm

3. Pentagon
   - 50 cm
   - 15 m
   - 40 m
   - 24 m
   - 65 m

4. Trapezoid
   - 24 cm
   - 34 cm

5. Hexagon
   - 48 cm
   - 40 cm

Apply

Put 'sl' in the spaces.
- ide
- am
- ip
- ow
- ed
- eeve
- ippers
- eep
- ice

Put in the correct words.
1. We went down the ____________
2. I ____________ in a bed.
3. Mother has some new ____________
4. Do not ____________ on the wet floor.

Yes/No
1. Would you like a slice of bread?
2. Have you been on a sled?
3. Did you slam the door?
4. Can you slice a cake?
WAYCROSS MIDDLE

Color coded map for Autism student at new school.
Color for visual support

Highlighter Tape

I handed that back to her too. The world got around. By nighttime I had a whole crowd of customers around my table. I was kept busy writing letters, addressing envelopes, filling out forms, and explaining official-looking letters that scared people half to death.

I didn’t blame them. The language in some of those letters—Establish whether your disability is one-fourth, one-third, one-half, or total, and substantiate in paragraph 3(b) below—would upset anybody. I meant, why can’t the government write English like everybody else?

Most of my customers were old, but there were a few young ones too. Like the girl who had gotten a letter about her baby from the Health Service and didn’t know what it meant.

By nighttime one old lady brought me some iced tea and a peach, and another gave me some fried chicken wings. I was really having a good time when the shade of all the people standing around me suddenly vanished. The sun hit me like a ton of hot bricks.

Only one long shadow fell across my table. The shadow of a tall, heavy, blue-eyed cop. In our neighborhood, when they see a cop, people scatter. That was why the back of my neck was burning.

“What are you trying to do here, sorry?” the cop asks.

“Help people out,” I tell him calmly, though my knees are knocking together under the table.

“Well, you know,” he says. Mr. Silver and Mr. Dollar have been in business a long time on this corner. They are very respected men in this neighborhood. Are you trying to run them out of business?”

“I’m not charging anybody,” I pointed out.

“That,” the cop says, “is exactly what they don’t like. Mr. Silver says he’s glad to have some help with the letter writing. Mr. Dollar says it’s only a nuisance to them anyway and takes up too much time. But if you don’t charge for your services, it’s unfair competition.”

Well, why not? I thought. After all, I could use a little profit.

“All right,” I tell him. “I’ll charge a quarter.”

“Then it is in my duty to warn you,” the cop says, “that it’s against the law to conduct a business without a license. The first time you accept a fee, I’ll close you up and run you off this corner.”

He really had me there. What did I know about licenses? I’m only thirteen, after all. Suddenly I didn’t feel like the big black businessman anymore. I felt like a little kid who wanted to bother for his mother. But she was at work, and so was Dad.

“I’ll leave,” I said, and did, with all the cool I could muster. But inside I was burning up, and not from the sun.

One little old lady hollered “You big bully!” and shook her umbrella at the cop. But the rest of those people were so beaten down they didn’t say anything. Just
Color Overlays
Without Overlay: The dog saw cute.

With Overlay: The dog was cute.
Who likes this color combination?

Students with a Learning Disability.

Who likes this color combination?

Students with ADHD.
Who likes this color combination?

Students with a Visual Impairment

Who likes this color combination?

Students with Down Syndrome
Who likes this color combination?

Students with Asperger's

Who likes this color combination?

Students with Depression
I went with my mom to the store. She had to buy some milk.
Q. What do goblins and ghosts drink when they’re hot and thirsty on Halloween? A. Ghoul-aid!!!

Q. What is a Mummie’s favorite type of music? A. Wrap!!!!

Q. Why do demons and ghouls hang out together? A. Because demons are a ghouls best friend!

Q. What’s a monster’s favorite bean? A. A human bean.

Q. Why can’t the boy ghost have babies? A. Because he has a Hallo-weenie.

Q. What do you call a witch who lives at the beach? A. A sand-witch.

Therefore, the focus of this study was to determine how commonly available technology can be used in a differentiated instruction setting to support research based strategies. The long term goal includes matching students with appropriate technology to support research based strategies. Some ways in which technology can support a number of research-based strategies for particular students is reported in Babbitt (2004). Through
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I can SAY at SCHOOL</th>
<th>Things I can NOT say at School</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>![Emoji]</td>
<td>![Emoji with Cross]</td>
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Five Point Scale

- **5**: Yelling
- **4**: Loud
- **3**: Inside voice
- **2**: Whisper
- **1**: Quiet

- **Anger Thermometer**
  - **5**: Hitting, screaming, throwing, pushing, crying
  - **4**: Yelling, screaming
  - **3**: Loud voice, angry face
  - **2**: Uh-oh! Something is wrong.
  - **1**: I feel good.
How I Feel

Where is my body?

5 I can't stand this and ready to explode. I want to hit someone, something, or throw something. I need an adult to help me go to a safe place so I can calm down.

4 I am getting too angry. My brain isn't working clearly. I might say or do something I will be sorry for later. I need to go to my safe place to calm down.

3 I am getting really irritated. I need to walk away from a bad situation. I will tell my teacher that I need a break.

2 I am doing OK. I'm not pleased but I'm not upset. I can stay where I am and keep working. I can control my anger by myself.

1 I am doing great. I feel good about myself and about what is going on around me.
Stickers for Keyboard
Sensory Rooms at School
Kid Power
Sensory Spaces
Womb Spaces
Calming Room
Ideas for Keeping Your Body Calm

- Try organized relaxation classes at least two times a week. (*YMCA, Yoga, Martial Arts*)
- Learn about breathing. (*Slow your breathing when upset*)
- Put a small photo album together of pictures of things that make you feel good and calm.
- Try a calming sequence. (*Short series of relaxing actions you practice several times a day*)
- Listen to calming music.

Kari Dunn Buron
Sensory Rooms
GNETS
Resources

Thanks for Coming!

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