

Sensory Environment

Top Tips

Minimize visual distractions in the classroom

Consider noise in the classroom

Provide defined boundaries

Use alternative seating equipment

Provide regulation tools during circle time or seat work

Thrive area for sensory breaks



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Sensory regulation in schools

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What you need to know

The 8 senses

Activity ideas

What is sensory processing?

Sensory Processing refers to the way we process the world around us and how we feel internally. It allows us to successfully interact with our environment, the people in our lives and feelings we have. Messages in our brain are sent throughout our body to help us recognize how things look, feel, taste, smell, etc.

Sensory processing difficulty is a condition by which the brain has difficulty receiving, processing and responding to sensory stimuli (input). This typically results in an altered output (behaviour) in response to sensory stimuli.

What is the sensory threshold?

The point at which an individual will respond to sensory information.

Some people react when just a little stimulus is given and some people need a lot of stimuli to react.

Children with a HIGH threshold tend to be underresponsive - they likely need MORE input.

Children with a LOW threshold tend to be overresponsive - they likely need LESS input and will become easily overstimulated.

What are the 8 senses?

- **Tactile**-Sense of touch
- **Auditory**- Sense of hearing
- **Vision** - sense of sight
- **Gustatory**—sense of taste
- **Olfactory**—sense of smell
- **Vestibular**- sense of balance and movement
- **Proprioception**- an awareness of the position and movement of your body
- **Interoception**- a sense of what's going on inside your body, e.g. hunger, thirst, cold/hot, digestion, heart-rate, toileting need

Two types of sensory regulation breaks

Alerting activity ideas

Alerting— increasing arousal levels; vibrating cushions, music, lights, strong flavored food, movement activities on trampoline.

Calming— decreasing arousal levels; give space, reduce noise, tent, be mindful of smells in room, deep pressure massage.

Pupils may seek out movement after a long day of sitting. Give them the movement that they seek!

- Jump on trampoline/bounce on therapy ball
- Movement that includes changing head position
- Complete a structured sensory, movement-based obstacle course. Jump, crash, crawl. Push, pull, dance.

Calming activity ideas

Pupils may be overwhelmed with the sensory input, give them quite time to decompress.

- Relax in a quiet, dimly-lit space, such as a pop up tent or sensory room. Deep pressure massage.
environment is noisy.

- Heavy work activities.
- Fidgets such as fidget cubes or stress balls can be helpful as well.
- Headphones can be beneficial if the