

Classroom Strategies to Address Children's Sensory Processing Differences

Low registration	Sensory sensitivity	Sensation seeking	Sensation avoiding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Keep children alert by letting them know that adults are nearby. ■ Make eye contact when talking to children, and wait for their responses after asking questions. ■ Vary your voice level and facial expressions to help these children stay alert. ■ Encourage children to work in groups. They may need extra encouragement to socialize. ■ Use a variety of activities to keep children active in the classroom. ■ Have these children sit in the middle of the classroom, which offers more stimulation to help them focus. ■ Provide many activities and experiences that require movement. For example, have children leapfrog to the door and skip to the bathroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor your volume and speed of talking and your activity level. ■ Avoid strong scents, such as perfumes, lotions, and room sprays. ■ Maintain predictable routines. ■ Provide short breaks, such as using the bathroom, stretching, or going to the library, to help prevent sensory overload. ■ Provide a quiet area for children to go to when they start to feel overwhelmed. Make sure an adult can supervise this area. ■ Place these children at the beginning or end of the line to maintain a predictable routine. ■ Discuss ways for children to communicate their needs and distress. ■ Avoid touching these children. For example, use verbal reinforcement for positive behavior rather than a pat on the back. ■ Help prepare children for transitions, such as cleanup time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give children active jobs, such as taking notes to the office, erasing the board, and helping arrange the desks. ■ Encourage friendships with peers who are physically active and can help direct these children's energy into purposeful activities. ■ Let children stand, move, and pace around in the classroom. Have them sit on an exercise ball while doing work at their desks. ■ Let children use a fiddle toy during activities that do not provide a lot of sensory input. ■ Use lots of kinesthetic and hands-on activities. ■ Have children sit in the back of the classroom to provide them with lots of visual stimulation and decrease the likelihood that they will distract their peers. ■ Use positive behavioral interventions. For example, redirect children by having them go around the room and help organize materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor your voice and your activity level to avoid overwhelming them. ■ Maintain predictable routines. ■ Post an overview of the day's schedule to let children know what to expect. ■ Give children time and space to recover when they feel overwhelmed. ■ If children work in groups, place these children with a small number of peers. ■ When moving toward these children, approach them from the front instead of from behind to avoid startling them. ■ Keep the classroom as calm and organized as possible. Bright colors or lots of objects on the walls are distracting to these children. ■ Provide many opportunities for children to make simple choices. This helps them feel in control.

Each child is an individual with unique needs. Whether applying Bodrova and Leong's concepts or Dunn's strategies to the classroom, keep in mind that the ideas presented here are not exhaustive. Having an understanding of sensory integration, being knowledgeable of the four patterns of

sensory processing, and encouraging self-regulation, allows adults to better meet children's individual needs as well as maintain a classroom that accommodates the sensory needs of all children.