

Module #3: Classroom Sensory Strategies

All of us have sensory needs, things that we seek out to help us regulate or things we avoid, because they make it harder for us to tolerate stress. This tool is designed to help teachers examine their classrooms using a sensory lens by prompting two questions:

1. What sensory behaviors am I seeing in my classroom?
2. What sensory options can I have available in my classroom to help my students be more available to learn?

Note: Students who do not respond to a variety of sensory options in the classroom may benefit from a student-specific sensory profile completed by a qualified occupational therapist to determine student-specific needs and strategies.

Sensory Area	General Observations	Specific Observed Behaviors	Sensory Strategies
Movement	Students need gross motor movement to maintain regulation or become dysregulated when they do not have gross motor movement.	___ Rocking/swaying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocking chair/seat • Wiggle seats
		___ Jumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up/sit down desk • Pedal desk, ball chairs • Hokki Stools
	Students become dysregulated by too much movement or activity.	___ Running/walking around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement breaks • Stand up/sit down desk • Pedal desk, ball chairs
		___ Chaotic or frenetic movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga, stretching • Mindfulness, deep breathing
	Students need fine motor movement to maintain regulation or become dysregulated when they do not have fine motor movement.	___ Doodling, scribbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coloring book, free drawing, • Journaling
Temperature	Students report being too hot or too cold.	___ Too hot ___ Too cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal fans • Blankets
Auditory/ Listening	Students become dysregulated when the room is loud; students seek quiet.	___ Too loud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise cancelling headphones • Quiet corner • White noise machine, headphones to listen to music • Radio to play different kinds of music
	Students become dysregulated when room is quiet; students create noise when it is quiet.	___ Too quiet	

Sensory Area	General Observations	Specific Observed Behaviors	Sensory Strategies
Vision	Students seek space that is visually stimulating (a lot of color or activity). Students seek space that has little visual input.	___ Too little visual input ___ Too much visual input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorful murals, interesting patterns • Filters for florescent lights • Fish tank, ocean scene, pictures
Olfactory/Smelling	Students are sensitive to smells. Students seek smells (sniff clothes, classroom items).	___ Sensitive/averse to smells ___ Seeking olfactory input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choices of essential oils on cotton balls; students can pick one that is pleasing to them (smelling them can block out other smells they may be sensitive to) • Plug in air fresheners and sprays
Taste/Chewing	Students chew pencils or erasers, suck thumbs, or put other items in their mouths.	___ Seeking oral input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chew sticks to chew or suck on, bowls of fruit openly available, gum, hard candy
Touch	Students fidget with items or become dysregulated when asked to keep their hands or bodies still.	___ Squeezing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress balls, clay • Racquet balls, bean bags
		___ Petting/stroking, tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft or furry figits • Perler Beads, flat marbles, dry rice
		___ Pressure, push against things or request hugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therabands, pedal desk, Underarmor, body socks, bean bags
		___ Lifting heavy objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper/books, Lap pads, weighted vest
	Students become dysregulated when asked to sit close to other students or adults.	___ Aversive to touch or being close to others – needs more personal space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hula hoop – personal bubble, small tent