

# PLAY FROM AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PERSPECTIVE

FINE MOTOR AND SENSORY PROCESSING THROUGH  
PLAY

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# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Fine Motor

Visual Perceptual Motor

Sensory Processing/Sensory Modulation

Sensory Motor

Self Regulation/Organization of Behavior

Bilateral Motor Coordination

Self Help Skills

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# FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES

## Vertical Surface

- Floor or table top easels
- Butcher paper on walls inside/outside of the classroom
- Felt/flannel boards on an easel or vertical stand
- White boards/dry erase boards (or old chalk boards) placed on a wall or vertical stand

# FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES

## Activities that incorporate Vertical Surfaces

- Making pictures with sticker on windows or walls
- Stories that children with characters that children can place on the felt/flannel board
- If you have chalk board small broken sidewalk chalk pieces (1 ½” to 2 “ pieces) that the children may draw and then erase the drawing with a paintbrush.
- Find small dry erase markers instead of the large markers
- Use magnetic shapes, characters or forms for children to stick onto the white boards.
- Geo boards (rubberband designs on pegboard) placed against wall
- Puzzles with thick pieces on the wall
- Stamping or painting on the butcher paper taped on the wall
- Find an old Lite Brite (they are selling them again)

# MANIPULATIVES

- Young children should spend more time with fine motor manipulatives than writing utensils. With manipulatives the child gets a variety of sensory experiences to prepare them for the more refined skill of handwriting.

# PLAY DOUGH

- Rolling dough into a snake
- Pinching and rolling it into little balls Cookie cutters
- Using toothpicks to make designs
- Cutting with a plastic knife, pizza wheel or scissors
- Hide small items in the play dough for the child to find

# JUNK MAIL, SCRAP PAPER, PAPER

- Tear the paper into strips (3 skilled finger task)
- Crumble and stuff the paper into art creations (snow man, a scarecrow)

# MORE HAND FUN

Squirt bottles

Tweezers/Tongs

Dice games

Stringing beads

Lacing

Eye Droppers

Coins/buttons

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# MORE SENSORY HAND FUN

Shaving Cream

Finger Paint

Lotion

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# EVEN MORE SENSORY HAND FUN

## **Sandpaper**

- Color/draw with chalk, crayons, markers

## **Change the temperature of materials**

- Put markers in fridge, warm play dough

## **Make feely shapes (yarn, wikki stix, popsicle sticks on cardboard)**

- Trace the shape and then use finger paint or crayons to repeat the shape

# SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory Integration is the organization of sensations for use (Ayres, 1979)

Occupational Therapists have advanced clinical education in sensory integration theory and practice

Bring skilled intervention to the classroom to provide sensory tools that may work with a child to allow the child to adapt and access the educational curriculum

# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Vestibular

- Sense that detects movement and change in directions
- Coordinates eye/head movement, balance, muscle tone, and bilateral coordination

# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Vestibular

- Swinging
- Sliding
- Spinning
- Jumping rope
- “bilateral” activities (using both sides of the body)

# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Proprioceptive

- Proprioception is the awareness of our body in space
- Helps us stay upright in a chair
- How much pressure to use during activities
- Judge how to move through space

# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Proprioceptive Activities

- Climbing
- Carrying heavy objects
- Push/pull activities
- Crawling
- Jumping

# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Tactile

- Our sense of touch for hands, mouth, body
- Primary system for making contact with our environment
- IMPORTANT
  - alerting to hot, cold, or sharp
  - Learning size, shape, or texture



# SENSORY PROCESSING

## Tactile

- Finger painting,
- Finding objects in sensory tables,
- Manipulating a variety of tactile materials
- Oral motor also a tactile experience
  - Variety of food tastes, textures and temperatures

# SENSORY IDEAS IN THE CLASSROOM

## Be aware

- Note changes in the children's behaviors
  - More or less alert
  - More or less active
  - More or less aversive behavior (withdraw, cover ears, eyes, run away)

\*\*\*YOU may need to ask an OT if you see the above in a student and behavior does not change after several exposures

# SENSORY STRATEGIES IN CLASSROOM

## Tactile

- Use carpet squares for circle time
- Quiet pillow corner
- Avoid touching children lightly, use a more firm touch
- Offer the children the opportunity to stand in the front or the back of the line

# SENSORY STRATEGIES IN CLASSROOM

## Listen (Auditory)

- Use slow or fast rhythm to change the alertness state (calm or arouse)
- Turn down the volume of music
- Use a quiet voice to calm children

# SENSORY STRATEGIES IN CLASSROOM

## Look (Visual)

- Keep the wall decorations to a minimum
- Keeps visual distractions to a minimum
- Turn off the lights to help “quiet” down
- Turn on the lights to “wake” up

# SENSORY PROCESSING IN CLASSROOM

## Muscle (Proprioception)

- Use weighted blocks to push, pull, carry
- Put a few books in a child's backpack to help them "feel" their body
- Roll up and unroll in a heavy blanket
- Animal walks (bear walk, crab walk, etc)
- Yoga poses

# SENSORY PROCESSING IN CLASSROOM

## Move (Vestibular)

- Movement breaks
- Between centers “MOVE” to next center
- RECESS/PLAYGROUND (swing, spin)
  - Before wanting the children to be quiet

# DEVELOPMENTAL REMINDERS

Hand preference is 3 ½ years old

Hand dominance is not established until 6 ½ years old

Dynamic tripod grasp 5 years old, fisted grasp at 3 is ok

A 5 year old copies diagonal lines, an x and a square, and imitates a triangle

A 4 year old tries to cut a line

A 6 year old can write the alphabet (neat with effort)