Creating a Sensory Responsive Classroom

Rachel Hildreth, MS
Dr. Arndt
St John Fisher College
Sensory Processing refers to How the Brain Interprets Information through Sensory Input:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision (Sight)</th>
<th>Audition (Hearing)</th>
<th>Gustation (Taste)</th>
<th>Proprioception</th>
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<td>Olfaction (Smell)</td>
<td>Vestibular (Balance and Sense of Movement)</td>
<td>Tactile Stimulation</td>
<td>(The sense of Knowing one’s position in space.)</td>
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How does the **Sensory System** Gather Information?

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<tr>
<th>Sensory System</th>
<th>What It Tells Us</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Visual and Auditory Systems</strong></td>
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Dunn, Saiter & Rinner, 2002
# How the Sensory System Gathers Information

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<th>Sensory System</th>
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<tr>
<td>Touch and Movement Systems</td>
<td>The Touch System provides information about Self.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tactile Stimulation (Touch)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Proprioception (Sense of Body in Space)</td>
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<td>Vestibular Movement (Balance)</td>
<td>The Movement System provides information about Interaction with our World.</td>
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Dunn, Saiter & Rinner, 2002
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<td>Taste and Smell Systems</td>
<td>The Taste and Smell Systems provides information about obtaining Food and Protection.</td>
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Dunn, Saiter & Rinner, 2002
The Sensory Continuum

Sensory Processing is described through a neurological threshold (person’s experiences) continuum and behavioral response (person’s behavior) continuum.

**Person’s Experiences:**

- **Low:** Requires a *Very Little* Input to Generate a Response.
- **High:** Requires a *Lot* of Input to Generate a Response.

**Person’s Behavior**

- **Passive Self-Regulation:** *Lasseiz Faire* Attitude
- **Active Registration:** *Uses Strategies to Control the Environment*

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
Sensory Praxis

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
Sensory: Why Does it Matter?

1. **Intelligence** is defined as the ability to learn and adapt behaviorally.

2. In order to **support all learners**, the general education classroom focuses on the multi-intelligences of the learner through the facilitation of **differentiated instruction**.

3. **Differentiated Instruction** requires that educators review **Content, Process, Product, and Learning Environment from the perspective of each student** for effective and inclusive teaching.

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
The Sensory Child

Many students have difficulty registering, regulating and adapting behavior based on sensory sensitivities and sensation seeking experiences within their environment. (Carbone, 2001, Dunn, Saiter & Rinner, 2002).
The Sensory Child

Parents and teachers have difficulty supporting the child through daily routines and reaching learning standards which leads to a sense of lack of success on the part of the parent, teacher, and the child (Cohn, May-Benson, Teasdale, 2010).
# What Classroom Participation Means for a Child with Sensory Needs

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<th>Regulation of Sensory Information</th>
<th>Promote Social Participation</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
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<td>Difficulty participating in classroom activities due to the level of social participation required.</td>
<td>As children develop, the expectation and value of exchanges with caregivers, adults, and peers grows. These exchange become meaningful opportunities that require children to practice coping, flexibility, and turn taking.</td>
<td>For a child with sensory needs, the classroom environment must be examined through the perspective of the child using social participation and sensory guidelines.</td>
</tr>
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(Cosbey, Johnston & Dunn, 2010).
Environmental Assessment

With this Information the Classroom Environment can be Designed using Strategies to support the child’s regulation of Sensory Information, Promote Social Participation, and Learning Environment.

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
Environmental Assessment

Identify or Rule Out the Sensory Basis of Social Behavior... Identify specific Contextual Components Facilitating or Inhibiting Functional Performance”

Classroom: Physical Arrangement

- The child’s desk placement should be positioned in the front row,

- Surrounded by peer role models that would encourage positive peer interactions,

- Close proximity for positive feedback from the instructor

- With Reduction of potential external distractions (hairstyle, perfume) areas (pencil sharpeners, windows).

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
Classroom: Physical Arrangement

-A Closed ‘Safe Area’
(Usually in a square shape using bookcases) so that children that are over stimulated can be free from distractions and under stimulated child can jump and move about as needed.

-Small Group Work Areas
An instructor can closely monitor and provide exit/entrance for the child with sensory needs from the activity.

-Mobility
Furniture should be designed to move for a variety of instructional approaches.

Inattention and distractibility are often caused by external stimuli. For children with sensory needs, silence or high noise can serve as distracters.

Listening Centers to provide homework instructions and literacy materials

Background Music during Transition

White Noise to filter classroom buzz of voices can increase attention to task.

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
The use of **Color**, **fonts**, and other visual **qualities** can serve to increase **aROUSAL**, **draw** attention to **key areas**, & scaffold **complex processes**.

Dunn & Bennett, 2002
Token System


(Carbone, 2001)
Organizational Systems

Structural organization promotes predictability and control for children with sensory needs while supporting needs of spatial organization and retrieval.

Labeled slots or individual storage bins located in the classroom space or desk area can assist with organization of classroom/home work, supplies, and texts. (Carbone, 2001, Dunn, Saier & Rinner, 2002).
Questions?

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