



Tip Sheet



Adapting Settings to Support Sensory Experiences

Sensory processing is the process of organising a sensation coming into our bodies via our senses. Sensory processing is different for everyone, in different settings, at different times.

This resource will explore ways to consider and modify the sensory experience within an early childhood setting.

Sensory and regulation tools (such as fidget tools and noise cancelling headphones) can be fantastic, but there may be some other meaningful modifications to support participation.

For example:

A child may be sensitive to noise during group time, but not during outside play. The same child may enjoy messy play one day, but not the next.

Children may seek or avoid sensory activities, or you may notice other sensory differences (e.g. reduced ability to concentrate when it is noisy).

The sensory experience will be different for all children, in different settings, and at different times.

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When looking to modify the sensory experience to support participation, there are some different variables to consider:

Environment considerations:

- How does the physical environment reduce or enhance sensory information to support participation?
- What can be changed?

Planning considerations:

- What changes will support the sensory and regulation needs of the whole class?
- When are the trickiest times in the day for most children?
- What is the purpose of the activity, and how could it be modified to suit a variety of sensory preferences?

Predictability considerations:

- What are the unchangeable sensory elements? (e.g. toilet location, fire alarms.)
- What might help create some predictability around these elements?of sensory preferences?

Individualising considerations:

- What is a reasonable goal or expectation for the child within the activity?
- After adjusting the other variables, does the child still need additional individualised supports?

Environmental: Modifying spaces

Examples:

- Turn the sound or lights down.
- Noise dampening furniture or fixtures.
- Move “noisy” play areas away from “quiet” play areas.
- Minimise visual clutter.

Planning: Routines & activities

Examples:

- Reduce periods of waiting/lining up.
- Access to inside/outside activities.
- Include whole group movement breaks within or prior to group time.
- Have a variety of materials & options to access different activities such as paint brushes or finger painting.

Remember!

Participation may look different for everyone...

Predictability: Reducing anxiety

Examples:

- Use visual schedules.
- Use countdown or warnings.
- Use a story or script to talk about what to expect.

Individualising: Child-specific

Examples:

- Child is tasked with job of making the noise (e.g. ringing the bell).
- Child accesses a quiet corner during noisy routines or mat time.
- Child wears glasses or noise reducing headphones during group time or during loud activities.



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