Back to School

Being Proactive: Get Moving

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This week's sensory strategy is Get Moving!
Vestibular and Proprioceptive Sensory Processing

We often underestimate the importance of movement in the process of learning, but research has proven that the two are linked. In the world of sensory integration, the sensations of movement (vestibular) and muscle and joint pressure (proprioception) allow an individual to process information about their bodies and space and allow them to function within a given environment.

For some students, their brain does not seem to get enough information and they seek out extra movement opportunities. They may perform repetitive movements with their bodies or seem to be “on-the-go” almost all of the time, impacting their ability to attend to a given task. Other students avoid movement and this impacts their ability to process information, to develop strong motor skills, and to learn.

Providing movement opportunities for students and individuals can meet the needs of both groups and can also provide much needed proprioceptive input. PE and recess are natural opportunities within the school day to provide movement, but may need to be structured visually for an individual to participate in the activities that they need. For more on PE and learning, check out Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain by John J. Ratey. We have other resources available on sensory integration in the CEDIR Library.

There are an endless amount of strategies that can be helpful in the classroom. Keep in mind that the goal is optimal arousal, so consider whether the individual and/or the group needs alerting or calming activities (under the advisement of your occupational therapist) and provide opportunities for movement and sensory input before seated work, between subjects, and throughout the day. Here are a few example activities:
Alerting Activities

- Standing during some work activities, such as writing on the board
  - Consider alternative seating
- Indoor Lycra swings (can provide both alerting and organizing/calming)
  - Therapy band pulls
  - Short breaks on a small trampoline in corner
  - Some oral motor, tactile, auditory input
- Moving to “spots” to indicate knowledge or answer, such as “yes” or “no” or “true” or “false”
  - Ball toss for quizzes (teacher passes to students)

Organizing Activities & Calming Activities

- Transition walks (animal, robot, etc.) for younger students
- Carry heavy objects for the teacher from one end of class to other.
  - Make “deliveries” to the office
  - Erasing the board
  - Wiping tables
- Some oral motor, tactile, auditory input
  - Linear Rocking/Rocking chair
- Heavy Work and Weighted/Squeeze vests