

# Sensory Suggestions for the Classroom

## Journal and Handwriting

Typical Activities:

- Draw a picture in a journal/notebook and write about what you drew.
- Handwriting or tracing pages

Alternatives:

1. Add some vestibular input: Break into small groups or partners, act out a story or idea and then write about it in a journal.
2. Add some vestibular input: Allow children to complete their writing in different positions around the room-sitting or lying on the floor or sitting in a beanbag chair with a clipboard, standing with their work taped to the wall, or lying under a table with their work taped to the underside of the table.
3. Add some auditory input: Listen to a story on headphones and draw a picture while listening.
4. Add some tactile input. Practice letter formation in a sand or salt tray with colored paper at the bottom or try tracing/writing using a squiggle writer.
5. Add some visual input: All students to use different pens, markers, and colored pencils for writing and drawing.
6. Add some olfactory (smell) input by using smelly markers.

## Flashcards

Typical Activities:

- One on one drills for sight words, math facts, or other concepts-showing one flashcard at a time and having the student answer.

Alternatives:

1. Add some vestibular input: Place flashcards out on the floor and let students ride a scooter to grab a card and give the answer as they ride the scooter back to you to deliver the card. Or try running to retrieve each card or do an animal walk.
2. Add some proprioceptive input: Place flash cards out on the floor and have the students stomp or jump on each one as they give you the answer. Place them out on the table and have students slap or pound them with a fist as they give you an answer.
3. Add some tactile input: Hide flashcards in a tactile bin and have the students dig for each one and give an answer.

## Quiet Reading

Typical Activity:

- Reading quietly at a desk

Alternatives:

1. Add some vestibular input: Turn off the lights and give each student a mini flashlight to use as they read.
2. Add some auditory input: Try playing quiet music or white noise either on a speaker for the entire class or on headphones for individual students who prefer that.

3. Add some tactile input: Provide fidget toys for students who need to do something with their hands while they read.
4. Add some vestibular input: Allow students to read in various positions around the room. For instance while lying or sitting on the floor, on pillows or a beanbag chair.
5. Add some oral sensory input: Allow students to chew gum or have an alerting or calming snack as they read.

### **Lecture Instruction**

#### Typical Activity:

- Teacher speaks to the class in front of the room using a smart board, marker board, etc.
- Teacher leads circle time with students on the carpet.

#### Alternatives:

1. Add some vestibular input: Embed whole body movements as you move through circle time. For instance: stomp out the days of the week with your feet, jump to the months of the year, use different movements to accompany letter sounds.
2. Add some auditory input: Introduce concepts using music, rhymes, and rhythms.
3. Add visual input: Use videos and other multimedia platforms to introduce materials.
4. Add some tactile input: Introduce manipulatives and/or materials or objects related to the lesson that can be passed around.

### **Worksheets**

#### Typical Activity:

- Paper and pencil worksheets completed at the students desk.

#### Alternatives:

1. Add some vestibular input: Allow students to work in various positions (noted above).
2. Add some tactile input: Adapt worksheets to make them more hands on. For example incorporate manipulatives or create laminated worksheets with Velcro pieces to target the concepts that you're teaching.
3. Add some visual input: Laminate worksheets and allow students to work with brightly colored dry erase markers.

### **Utilize Movement Breaks**

1. Have students stand up and stretch periodically.
2. Take a walk to the drinking fountain (vestibular and oral sensory input)
3. Bounce or roll on an exercise ball.
4. Kid Yoga
5. Write questions related to the lesson on index cards and hide them under the students' chairs ahead of time (or around the room) so they have to get up and find them throughout the lesson.
6. Call out "Stand for five", letting the students know they must work standing for five minutes.
7. Provide a lot of opportunities for students to work in alternative positions such as lying on the floor, bean bag chair, leaning against the wall, etc.
8. Take an extra recess break.
9. Pass a ball up and down the rows of desk like a hot potato.
10. Take "shake" breaks.