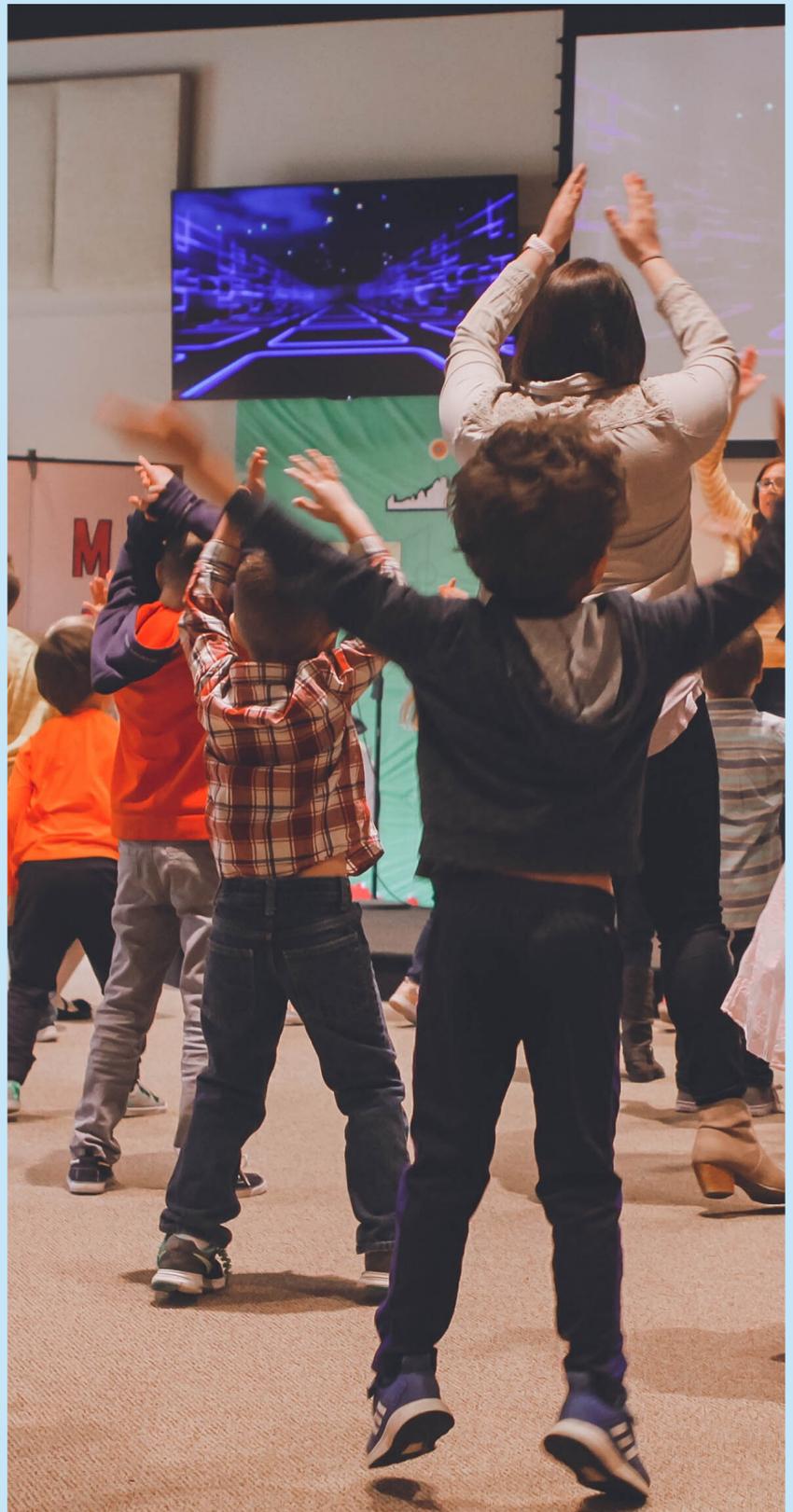


ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SENSORY NEEDS



IEP AND 504

Visual:

- Decrease visual clutter in the classroom
- Provide a screen to block child's field of view (can be a manila folder)
- Sit child in the front of the classroom, so less of the classroom is easily visible
- Provide materials (worksheets, etc) with less text on them
- Provide a cover for the child to cover part of the page, so that only part of the text is visible at a time
- Keep child's workspace organized with no extraneous materials
- Provide books, notebooks and worksheets with large print

Auditory:

- Use a rug or a carpet to decrease extraneous noises in classroom
- Always approach the child from the front before speaking to the child
- Gain child's attention before speaking to him/her
- Noise-canceling earphones or ear plugs
- Allow child to listen to music while working, especially for older children
- Develop alternative strategies around sounds that the child finds aversive.
 - For example, if the child cannot stand the rustling of paper, use as much digital materials as possible
 - Do not use words that the child finds aversive
- Keep the classroom noise to a minimum as possible
 - Be mindful of any loud noises in the classroom, such as morning greetings or music lessons/singing
 - Be aware of fire alarm drills and have a plan for the child on those days
- Allow child to take breaks in a quiet environment (a quiet space, a walk in the hallways, going to have a drink of water).
 - Prompt for breaks as needed.
- Allow child to have lunch in a space other than cafeteria
- For intolerance to noises such as toilet flushing or electric hand dryer, find a bathroom that the child can use where those are not present (i.e. toilet does not flush automatically) and make a clear plan on how the child can use it
- Give advance warnings of any upcoming potentially aversive sounds

- For unusual events, such as birthdays, preview with the child and make a plan that accommodates child's comfort level and contains an "escape plan." For example, some children cannot tolerate being among a group of children who loudly sings "Happy Birthday" song. This situation requires accommodations.
- For large school events, such as school assemblies, allow the child an option
 - Not to attend
 - Attend but be seated as far away from the crowd as possible
 - Attend but have an "escape plan"

Olfactory:

- Allow the child to avoid situations and spaces where aversive smells are present

Gustatory/oral:

- Allow child to bring snacks and preferred foods from home
- Pre-view with a child any unusual food events (i.e. birthdays) and find solutions for non-preferred foods
- If child chews on clothes or objects, provide chewing gum, chewy toys, or special chewy jewelry.
- Use sour candy, spicy or crunchy foods to increase energy levels

Tactile:

- Avoid unexpected touch
- Avoid any touch that the child finds uncomfortable
- Provide hand fidget toys as needed
- When the child has to stand or walk in line, have the child walk first or last
- Use Wilbarger protocol (structured brushing with a special brush)
- If child has aversions to textures, avoid use of those textures. For example, if the child cannot stand the feel of paper, use audio books, digital books, digital worksheets, and "speech to text" software
- Offer pencil grips, slant boards, and bold or raised-line paper for writing
- Provide pencil grippers and spring-loaded or looped scissors
- Allow verbal rather than written answers

- Reduce the need to copy, provide notes, use fill-in-the-blanks format instead
- A scribe

Proprioceptive:

- Ability to jump on and crash into pillows or mats
- Jumping on mini-trampoline or bouncing on therapy ball
- Climbing
- Wall pushups
- Carrying heavy objects for teachers
- Erasing a board
- Holding the door for everyone in the class on the way in or out
- Walking with a weighted backpack and playing with weighted toys
- Take child out to the playground before school starts and during school hours of quick breaks
- Weighted vests or lap pads
- Seating in bean bag or on wiggly cushion to provide extra input
- Supportive seating that provides extra opportunities for support, so that the child does not have to support as much of his or her body weight
- Using foot stools or elastic bands on chairs or desks for extra input
- Allow child to work standing up or walk around the classroom
- Allow child to work in alternative position (sitting on bean bag, lying on the floor)

Vestibular:

- Opportunities to use swings, tire swings, merry-go-rounds throughout the day
- Spinning on a chair, standing on a head on a couch or hanging off a beam upside down
 - many kids love doing that and will do it spontaneously

Interoception:

- Reminders for snacks/meals, seasonal dress, bathroom use, etc.
- Point out physical changes related to emotional experiences
- Respect what the child reports about their body because bodily sensations can be processed differently by children on the spectrum.

differently from their peers. You cannot use your judgement to evaluate the subjective experience of a child on the spectrum. You have to trust their communication, in whatever form it comes.

Postural Control:

- Supportive seating (cube chair, chairs with backs and armrests, etc.)
- Reducing demands for supporting own body

Praxis:

- Provide choices of ideas
- Break up multi-step tasks into clear steps
- Provide visual supports to illustrate steps to a task
- Provide feedback and re-direction to tasks
- Preview and practice all novel motor patterns, i.e. sequences of steps necessary to complete unfamiliar activities

Sensory Diet

A general accommodation for children with sensory differences is called a “sensory diet.” This is a set of individualized activities that provide inputs that will help your child stay organized and focused, i.e. to regulate arousal and attention.

All of us use these strategies throughout the day. We might munch on crunchy foods, twirl our hair, or bounce our leg. We use these strategies to regulate our level of arousal, or alertness. Children with autism, who have sensory differences, have a difficult time managing that regulation and often need additional sensory inputs. They can be given proactively to manage arousal level and provide regulation before a demanding activity. They can also be provided after a demanding activity, or simply periodically from time to time to avoid fatigue or prevent overstimulation.

What these inputs are and their timing have to be individualized to each child and developed based on data that shows when the child needs accommodations, and what inputs are helpful. An occupational therapist should collect data and develop the sensory diet. It is entered into an IEP as accommodation and needs to be spelled out in detail in a separate document, or in a child’s Behavioral Support Plan (BSP),

also referred to as Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). A sensory diet needs to be specific on timing, frequency, intensity, and duration of sensory input.

Your child will need accommodations in the home as well. Your school occupational therapist can provide consultations around modifying your home space to meet your child's sensory needs. Your school OT can also recommend activities and inputs for your child that would help him or her maintain an optimal level of arousal. If you are not sure how to arrange this, see my post on Service Delivery Grids, the part about Grid A.