

Postural Control and Motor Performance:

Postural stability, or the ability to maintain a stable trunk position, provides background support necessary to develop fine motor skills.

Give frequent breaks from table top work, since this student has a difficult time maintaining sitting positions and fatigues more quickly than other students due to weakness in postural muscle control.

To decrease fidgeting at the desk and to promote improved postural adjustments, allow the student to stand at the desk or to work on the floor in a prone on elbows position (on stomach). Bungee cord or Theraband wrapped around chair legs provide sensory input to assist student in remaining seated longer, The Therapist can provide this.

Using a partially inflated air pillow (stadium seat) may help increase postural control by increasing sensory feedback in sitting.

Allow the student to become a teacher's assistant and pass out papers so he/she is able to walk around the room appropriately with a goal directed task.

To increase postural muscle strength and endurance: swinging, jungle, gyms, rope climbing, pushing. Pulling heavy objects, carrying weighted objects, scooter boards and wheelbarrow walking are fine! (Be careful of Health and Safety Regulations).

Adjust the chair and table to a height suitable for the student to best perform table top work. (Feet touching the floor and the table height so the student's elbows can rest comfortably on top without hunched shoulders).

Students with low oral and postural tone often gain more control for fine motor tasks when given a sweet to chew or suck during writing activities, You can also try sucking activities using a straw. Use as permitted in the school setting. Ask you therapist for more information.

For students with oral motor control difficulties modifications to the snack menu may need to be made to accommodate to the student's needs. Also the student's sitting posture needs to be evaluated to determine if it has a direct effect on the student's difficulties with oral motor control. Please ask the occupational therapist for assistance in assessing these areas.

For the student with oral motor difficulties have him/her play with whistles, blowing bubbles, or making pictures by blowing paint through straws.

continued ... (Fine Motor / Visual Motor Skills)

Use of a moulded pencil grip will provide a larger surface for grasp to improve written refinement.

Larger marker pens - primary pencil - DLM grip - Stetro grip - bulb grip/"the pencil grip".

Use activities that involve tactile/kinesthetic awareness to reinforce writing skills such as drawing large letters in the air or on a chalk board or in sand, writing in Playdoh or shaving cream, or practise writing with eyes closed. Teach or review letter formation beginning large and gradually reducing size.

Use Rol 'n' Write Letters.

Provide primary lined paper or draw dotted guidelines on lined paper to help with spacing. Older students can be reminded to draw in their own guideline with a ruler.

Remind student to use non-preferred hand or provide clipboard or Bluetak to stabilise paper.

Practice visual motor skills by drawing with shapes and letters. Make sample drawings larger if necessary and provide step by step instruction.

Allow extra time for written work until the student's writing skills improve and/or decrease the amount of written work in the classroom and at home as needed.

Explore alternatives to the laborious effort of handwriting, use oral reporting or dictating tape recorders, and multiple choice responses, pre-prepared work sheets.

Supplement handwriting with other methods of written expression, i.e. - typing or - keyboarding on a computer. Computer games or drawing programmes are a good way to begin teaching computer keyboard skills.

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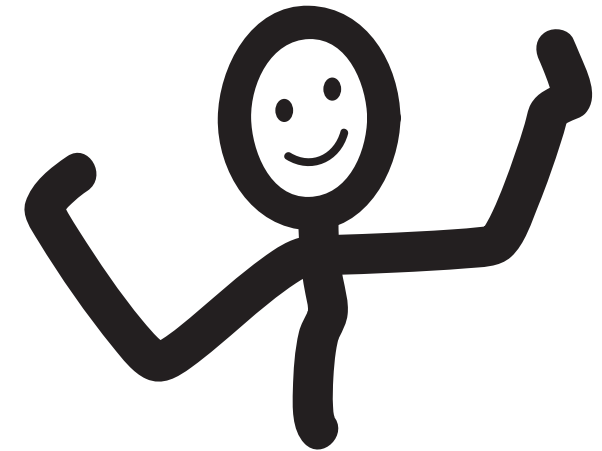
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Fizzy's Ideas: Coping Strategies

Classroom Coping Strategies



A programme compiled by
Occupational and Physiotherapists.

Advice for
parents, carers and education staff.

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Date of Review: May 2009

Date of Publication: May 2008

Leaflet code: 0101

Sensory Processing:

At each moment a person takes in information from the environment and his or her body must screen what is important to organise him or herself to act on the environment.

For the student who becomes over stimulated by the environment provide quiet, "time out" spaces to help the student to recoupe and become organised (i.e. a reading corner behind a bookshelf or under a table with pillows or a bean bag chair in a quiet corner).

For the student who experiences sensitivity to touch (tactile defensiveness), allow the student to stand at the end of the line and arrange the classroom seating to minimise the risk of being jostled or bumped by classmates (i.e. have the student's desk either near the teacher or at the back of the room).

When planning an art activity, modifications to the activity may need to be made to accommodate the student who is sensitive to touch (i.e. be aware that materials such as glue, finger, paints, clay, paper mache, etc. may cause the student to have an aversive response). Using tools (i.e. hammer, paint brush, etc.) may help student participate more fully.

Forewarn the student of any loud noises before they occur (i.e. bells/fire alarms).

To minimise auditory distractions, a classroom with a rug or carpet would help decrease extraneous noises.

Keep visual (i.e. art projects on the wall, bulletin boards, hanging projects) and auditory distractions to a minimum to help facilitate the student's attention to classroom instructions. Have the student sit near the classroom teacher to facilitate the student's ability to attend to directions and tasks.

To provide "heavy work" input, have the student push the chairs under the table or carry heavy objects when it is clearing up time. This kind of input will help the student maintain a better state of organisation.

Have the student become a teacher's assistant and bring back books to library for increased heavy work input, or be office messenger to allow more movement opportunities.

Providing opportunities for the student to jump on a mini-trampoline or bounce on a therapy ball throughout the day may help increase organisation and postural control.

Providing an object to manipulate/"fiddle with" or something to chew on can be very helpful to maintaining attention and organisation.

For student with poor body awareness include rolling, swinging or twirling in physical education activities. (Ropes, tyre wings, merry-go-rounds).

For the student who is over sensitive to movement or fearful of leaving the ground (gravitational insecurity), provide alternative playground activities. For example, the student may be able to

walk across a line on the floor but not able to walk on a balance beam. Limit the amount of rolling or twirling - let the student's response be your guide or check with the occupational health or physiotherapist.

Motor planning and Organisational Strategies:

Motor planning is the ability to organise and sequence new activities and affects the student's independence in self-help skills and motor development.

For the student with difficulty in motor planning, give simple step by step directions. Help the student identify the steps needed to accomplish the task. Demonstrate or ask another student to model the motor activity and then ask the student to try.

Keep tasks short.

Use a consistent approach to teaching the student a new skill. Allow time for practice. It may take a student with motor planning delays much more time to perfect a new skill.

Break down task into small steps.

Present directions for new activities in student's best modality, - visual, - auditory, - multi-sensory to facilitate learning. Use demonstration and information is understood and the task initiated.

Help the student plan out a task by asking questions such as "What materials do you need?" "What do you do first, etc.?"

For the student who has difficulties formulating ideas for projects or assignments, provide several suggestions or create a brainstorming session among a peer group.

Set up any variety of activities in an obstacle course. Begin simply and increase the complexity as the student is able to handle the tasks. Also, "Simon Says" or sequencing games are great for motor planning.

A student with motor planning difficulties may need assistance to recognise, and improve on performance/work that is not accurate.

Give markers for time e.g. egg timer; buzz alarm. To prepare the student for transitions use a time or warn them ahead of time to identify when it is time to change activities.

Using pictures or a list written on the blackboard to order the day's activities will help the student with sequencing difficulties organise the day.

Write classroom routines in a diary or picture code a diary. Help the student develop organisational skills by having a consistent place to store materials once he/she has completed a task.

Have a checklist or picture list of items needed e.g. pencil, ruler, rubber, textbook.

To help the student stay organised and focused on challenging academic work you can:

- Have the student use a finger or file card under a line to keep place in reading or maths.
- Use graph paper for maths work.
- Keep the amount of visual information presented on a page to a minimum.
- Cover an area of the page to expose 1 or 2 problems at a time.

To provide additional structure give the student letter and number guides to copy from. Tape to student's desk if needed.

To help use of blackboard materials, student should face blackboard. Keep amounts concise. Use different colour chalk to define different sections. If necessary have blackboard text on separate sheet for the student to copy or give a pre-prepared work sheet.

Fine Motor / Visual Motor Skills:

Development of fine and visual motor skills facilitates skills such as writing, keyboarding, and throwing.

Working on a vertical surface helps the student to develop strength in their shoulder and wrist muscles which are needed for writing. This can be done by writing on a blackboard, easel, desk easel or paper taped on the wall; also use of Right Angle desk raise.

To facilitate the development of the skill fingers (thumb, index, and middle fingers) that are necessary for the refinement of handwriting and scissor skills the following activities are suggested: using a spray bottle to squirt water onto a picture, using tweezers to pick up cotton balls or other collage materials to make a picture, using small manipulative items such as buttons, beads, unifix cubes and pegs.

For the development of the student's web space (the "circle" that forms with the index finger and thumb) that is needed to hold a pencil correctly the following activities are suggested: popping the plastic "bubbles" on packing sheets, opening/closing zip lock bags, snapping snaps, winding up wind-up toys that have a knob, using an eye dropper to make pictures by mixing food colouring with water and dripping it onto paper towels.

To increase finger strength/control: use a hole punch, push pegs into clay, cut card-board, pick up small objects with tweezers.

Provide activities to develop fine motor control and planning. Use games that involve spatial construction such as Lego or Origami.

Use Loop scissors, small size scissors or spring loaded scissors as a precursor to regular scissor use.

To practice scissor skills try cutting strips of paper, straws, and/or rolls of Playdoh. Check the student's scissor grasp (thumb and middle finger through the holes, the index finger stabilises under the middle finger side for increased control) and remind the student to "steer" the paper with the non-preferred hand.