

Heavy Work Activities for Small Places

Compiled by Aurora Hoobler, MS, OTR/L

This information is compiled from occupational therapists on the AOTA school and sensory integration list serve

A couple of thoughts:

- always keep safety in mind when performing activities
- remember every child is unique - some children will calm to certain activities while others get more excited
- vestibular input is more unpredictable as to how a child will react (may overly excite them)
- keep the child's age in mind and adapt the activity as needed
- it may be helpful to be highly structured. You can try social stories and visual schedules so the child knows what to expect during that time, in addition to the use of visual timers or regular timers so the kids know when their time is up. Any visual supports you can offer, such as picture symbols so they can choose which activity they want (if that is an option)

HEAVY WORK

- push/pull a weighted bucket from point A to Point B to complete a puzzle, or other activity.
- Carry heavier objects (i.e. have them help carry some of the toys)
- Use large movements (i.e.. lift objects off the table to drop into a bucket)
- Use heavier objects to lift
- Drag bean bag chair to corner of room (then you can perform "peanut butter and jelly" - sign the song while sandwiching arms and legs - don't go above elbow or above knee)
- Push against the wall to "try to hold it up"
- Do chair push-ups

ORAL MOTOR

- Whistles, pinwheels, bubbles etc. - things that requires blowing
- Chew toys
- blowing bubbles into a container filled with water
- color bubble 'juice' and blow onto paper
- blowing cotton balls off the table
- offer a chewy snack, crunchy snack, sucking juice through coffee straws or very long straws)
- chew gum
- suck sour candy or very chewy candy (i.e. war heads, taffy, etc.)
- drink apple sauce or slushy/frozen drinks with a straw

DESK TOP ACTIVITIES

- Fine motor activities that require squeezing - i.e. squeeze glue (be aware of defensiveness to wet glue), squeeze toys
- Fidgets -- koosh balls, bumpy balls, squishy toys, theraband, tops, water snakes
- Box with small objects buried in rice/beans/sand/pasta.
- Resistive Exercises, such as jumping jacks, toe touches, sit ups, push ups, etc

VESTIBULAR/PROPRIOCEPTIVE

- gentle rolling with therapy ball for deep pressure
- side to side swinging of student in sheet (like hammock) (fast or slow depending on student's arousal need)
- sitting on therapy ball and bouncing
- move n' sit disk or other seat cushions
- bear hug/weighted vest
- placed weight object in lap while sitting
- give move/stretch breaks
- allow them to participate in activities while standing or laying on the belly (if this works with your goals)
- rocking chair
- ball chair
- jump into bean bag chairs
- jump on mini trampoline

ENVIRONMENT

- play soft music in background (Enya, classical)
- dim lights, use 'natural' lighting or lamps (florescent lighting hums and flickers)
- use a soft voice
- use calming smells such as vanilla or lavender (if not hypersensitive to smells)
- have a small enclosed "calming" place the child can go to (i.e. tent, bean bag chair that is in the corner of a room and if possible place a book case on one side and the wall on the other to provide boundaries)

HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOL



- ❑ Place chairs on desks at the end of the day or take down at the beginning of the day.
 - ❑ Erase or wash the chalkboard.
 - ❑ Help rearrange desks in the classroom.
 - ❑ Help out the janitor with emptying wastebaskets, mop the floor etc.
 - ❑ Help the gym teacher set-up or take down equipment.
 - ❑ Chewy candy breaks, such as licorice, fruit roll-ups, Starburst or Tootsie Rolls or crunchy foods such as dry cereal, vegetables, pretzels or popcorn.
 - ❑ Sharpen pencil with a manual sharpener.
 - ❑ Cutting tasks with thick paper.
 - ❑ Have students carry heavy notebooks to the office or from class to class.
 - ❑ Wear a weighted backpack when walking from class to class. Parents can put a notebook, book, or books (depending on the size of the child) into their backpack each day for the ride or walk to school. Just be cautious about how much weight so that it does not result in lower back pain.
 - ❑ Carry books with both hands hugging the book to yourself.
 - ❑ Have child pass out papers/objects to class members.
 - ❑ Wash desks or dry erase boards.
 - ❑ Push the lunch cart or carry lunch bin to the cafeteria.
 - ❑ Staple paper onto bulletin boards.
 - ❑ Run around the track at school.
 - ❑ Using a beanbag chair in the classroom during silent reading or independent work tasks.
 - ❑ Prior to seatwork, have child pinch, roll, pull theraputty or squeeze balloons filled with flour.
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- ❑ Give child firm pressure on shoulders.
 - ❑ Have student move several packs at a time of Xerox paper from the storage area to the school copy center.
 - ❑ Climbing activities (on playground).
 - ❑ Push against a wall.
 - ❑ Sports activities involving running and jumping.
 - ❑ Have the child color a "rainbow" with large paper on the floor on hands and knees.
 - ❑ Open doors for people.
 - ❑ Quiet squeeze toys.