

Pediatric Development Center



~ Newsletter ~
October
2011

We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness. Contact us for further information:
125 Presumpscot St. Portland, ME.
(207) 699-5531

Good Resources:

The Organized Student by
Donna Goldberg and Jennifer
Zweibel

Learning Disabilities Handbook
by Joan Harwell

*Take Five, Staying Alert at
Home and School* by Mary Sue
Williams and Sherry
Shellenberger

Strategies for Middle and/or High School

By: Kimberlee Wing, OTR/L

Some students have significant difficulty with sensory regulation and internal organization, impacting their ability to adequately manage themselves in time and space. They are likely to become easily overwhelmed by touch, movement, visual and auditory input, reducing their ability to adequately adapt to changing demands of their environment.

Transitions and the Classroom

- 1) When transitioning to the middle school it will be helpful for the student to have a tour of the building and become familiar with where their locker will be, where the various classrooms are and to meet the teachers. Having knowledge of their schedule and what their day will be like will assist them with confidence and reduce their anxiety regarding the transition to a new school.
- 2) Transitions from class: the student would benefit from traveling between classes several minutes before the other students to decrease feeling overwhelmed by the number of children in the hallways and the visual and auditory overload caused by all the confusion. Having a watch with an alarm which alerts 3-5 minutes before the end of class would allow them to pass through before the other students. Being at the next class early would

allow them to be at a more optimal level for learning rather than being overwhelmed due to the transition.

- 3) Classrooms should be organized and free of visual or auditory distractions. Have a space available for students to go, such as a cubicle, which provides a visual and auditory free environment.

Homework and Testing

- 4) An assignment notebook is a helpful tool to write all assignments and to plan out long term projects. When leaving class early it will be important to have a specific place on the board or in the room where the student can look in order to write down their assignments. It may be important to connect with their teacher to make sure they have gotten the assignment correct.
- 5) Homework assignments should be posted in the same location in each classroom. Classroom rules and expectations should be gone over and provided in writing. Different teachers often have different rules and expectations and these need to be consolidated as much as possible, making sure that they are understood.
- 6) It may be helpful to meet regularly with the guidance counselor, social worker or

classroom aide to go over their assignments and for assistance with organization of their work.

- 7) Assigning a specific student for them to check in with may be appropriate.
- 8) Develop a strategy to insure the homework assignment has been adequately interpreted and followed up with. Teach the student to underline or circle the work that tells what to do, ie. write, look, learn, etc.
- 9) Develop a specific sequence to follow when writing down assignments and following them through to completion. Control confusion over directions: provide simple, clear and concise directions whenever possible. Break down complex directions involving sequential planning into step-by-step directions. Present directions both verbally and in writing.
- 10) Develop a "checkout" system to make sure the student has gotten all assignments and materials necessary to take home. After each assignment make a list of materials to take home and encourage following this list rather than attempting to interpret directions at the last minute.
- 11) Once home, develop a routine of immediately organizing their backpack to take out all important

papers from the day, including notes to parents and assignment book. Also organizing materials and the time needed to do homework.

- 12) Use specific organizational strategies for homework, such as using a calendar and breaking down assignments into manageable parts. Also, use of color coding such as specific colored notebooks for each subject, with matching colors for folders/poly sleeves/dividers and highlighters.
- 13) Highlight important information using different colors to indicate the type of information read or the level of importance, etc. For example: yellow for facts/data, blue for examples, green for history, orange for characters, pink for what is not understood, etc. Put highlighted information into an outline.
- 14) The student may require more time to understand and organize what they are doing. Therefore they will not respond well to timed assignments and tests, resulting in poor processing speed compared to their peers, and displays of anxiety.
- 15) Provide encouragement and be observant of signs of anxiety or confusion, asking the student if they need assistance by providing a quieter

environment, simplified directions, a reduction in information on the page, more time, help with organization, etc.

- 16) Present information meaningfully, adjusting for deficits in language and memory, and modify assignments and testing to address the student's need for freedom from distraction and additional time.
- 17) Determine the student's most successful method of indicating what they know and provide alternatives or choices for them to demonstrate their knowledge. Assessments and tests need to be based on the student's ability to indicate what they know, ie. verbal, fill in the blanks, true or false, short answer, etc.
- 18) Teach mnemonic devices or association to help with memory. Assist with visualization techniques to remember information. Sing spelling words, develop acronyms for sequences of facts, picture things to remember as ornaments on a Christmas tree, etc.

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