




Supporting Students with Social/Emotional/Sensory Needs

- What is Behavior?
 - All behavior is communication
 - Are basic needs met? Food, Thirst, Sleep, Shelter
 - Medical, Physical, Sensory Needs
- Sensory Needs and Examples in the Lunchroom (See backside chart)
 - Hear, Taste, Smell, Body Awareness, Touch, Movement, Sight
- Strategies to Support Sensory Needs (See backside chart)
 - Why students may display behaviors in the lunch line/room and positive behavior supports
- Lagging Skills
 - “Kids do well if they can”
 - E.g. wait time, voice volume, making choices, following multi-step directions, etc.
 - Some skills need to be taught directly
- Preventative Strategies and Supports
 - Offer Choices; Extended lunch; Alternative lunch options; Alternative time to eat lunch; Fidgets; Sensory Toolbox; Allow student to get lunch first to minimize wait time; Option to leave when finished; Encourage students to advocate; Provide specific praise (e.g. I love how you waited in line quietly!).
- Escalated Situations
 - Less is more
 - Limit verbal interactions
 - Try gestures/visual cues
 - Collaborate with staff to problem solve
- Programs schools are implementing to foster effective learning environments
 - Lunchroom: Comfortable Cafeteria, CONE System
 - Ukeru, Second Step, PBIS, Trauma Informed, Catalyst, Restorative Practices, Community Building, Equity

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SENSORY NEED	RED FLAGS	STRATEGIES
Hearing 	Startling easily; becoming agitated; being distracted by all sounds, difficulty responding to and following directions presented verbally; not responding when name is called	Ear plugs to block out noise; headphones to listen to white noise, alternate location for lunch outside of lunchroom; early release from lunchroom
Taste & Texture 	Not using utensils; choking or gagging during eating; constant biting, chewing on, or mouthing hands, clothing, fingers, and/or other objects; constantly making mouth noises, (clicking, buzzing, and/or humming); difficulty chewing or drinking from a cup or straw	Allow student to explore their food with their hands; gradual introduction of new foods; offer crunchy foods
Smell 	Reluctant to try new foods; being known as an extremely picky eater; having strong aversions to certain smells (food or non-food); seeking out specific smells regardless of safety (food or non-food)	Assign a seat as far away from the lunch line as possible, position student near an open window, allow student to use favorite lip balm or lotion to give them a familiar scent to help calm
Body Awareness 	Pushing others or playing aggressively; doing everything with 100 percent force; crashing or falling on the floor constantly; running into objects or others' appearing tired or sluggish, such as slumping and/or leaning on table	Weighted stuffed animal/lap pad; Option to stand/move; Wearing a backpack; Defining visual space to sit and/or place items
Touch 	Avoiding getting hands or face messy; Avoiding activities like finger painting, playing with playdough, and eating messy foods; Having difficulty tolerating certain clothing or textures on skin; Needing to touch everything and everyone, such as craving hugs and closeness with others, fidgeting with objects, and/or seeking out textures and touch experiences	Provide high-fives and side hugs as appropriate; option to use fidget toy; option to use tactile bin
Movement 	Constantly moving, fidgeting, and/or spinning around; Being fearful of movement, such as stairs, playground equipment, or swings; Acting uncoordinated or clumsy; Sleeping, slouching, leaning on desk/walls; Having difficulty with maintaining balance; Having difficulty with visual activities	Allow student to leave when finished instead of waiting for classmates to finish; Option to move (rocking, swaying, swinging of legs, bouncing of legs); Wiggle seat; Flexible seating; Option to stand
Sight 	Being easily distracted by surrounding visual stimuli; Having difficulty visually focusing on a task; Not noticing surroundings; Staring intently at objects or becoming fixated on visual stimuli; Arranging objects in a specific way repeatedly	Turn off or dim the lights; Create a distraction-free environment; Position student so that he/she is facing away from the entire room; Screen off a quieter area of the cafeteria with reduced stimulation where a small group of students can eat; Option of wearing sunglasses