

Introduction

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often experience challenges with sensory processing, regulation, and participation in school routines. When sensory needs are not supported, students may struggle with attention, emotional regulation, and engagement in learning activities. Research shows that structured sensory supports such as movement breaks, deep pressure tools, and access to sensory environment can improve self-regulation, increase on-task behavior, and enhance overall participation in the classroom (Laurie, C 2022).

This project was created in collaboration with TIP, a school-based site committed to supporting the sensory, emotional, and academic needs of all students. Staff expressed a need for clearer guidance on ways to use the sensory room, as well as education on the eight sensory systems and tools available at the site. By developing educational materials, including a professional development PowerPoint and a sensory activity binder, this project aims to support staff confidence, consistency, and student success.

Project Description

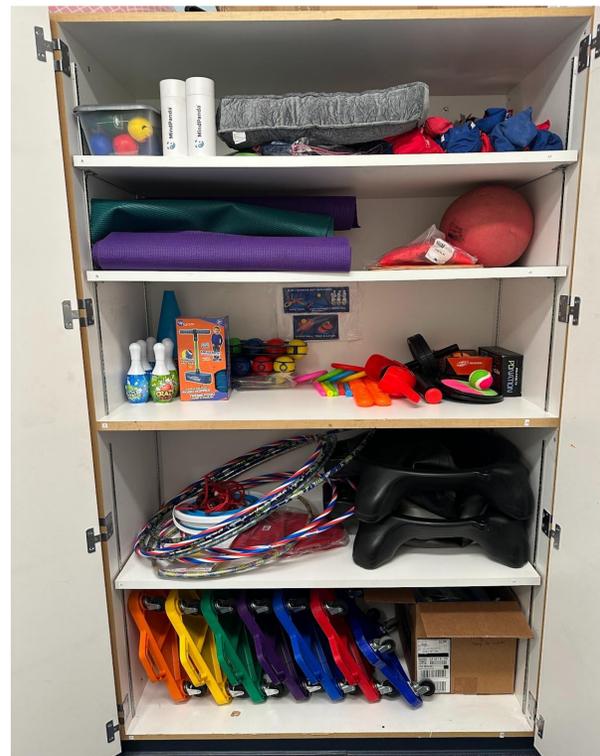
This capstone project focuses on developing educational materials to support staff in effectively using the sensory room and tools available at TIP. The project includes two deliverables including a PowerPoint that teaches the purpose of the sensory room and the use of sensory tools and techniques, and a sensory activity binder that provides easy-to-use visual supports and activity options for students. The goal of these resources is to increase staff knowledge and consistency when addressing students' sensory needs.

The project is grounded in the HPU core values including Aloha, Kuleana, Pono, Kokua, and Laulima. Aloha is reflected by creating supportive tools for the students' unique sensory needs, Kuleana is demonstrated through educating staff and promoting best practices to help students' well-being, Pono is shown by use of evidence that is ethical and thoughtful to guide the project design, Kokua is shown through helping the staff feel prepared and confident in using the tools and strategies, and Laulima is shown through collaboration with the site supervisors, teachers, and instructional aides to create resources that benefit the site.

Purpose/Aims

The purpose of this project is to support students and staff by providing clear and easy-to-use sensory resources to promote sensory regulation, engagement, and participation in a school-based setting. This project aims to increase sensory awareness and to give teachers and other staff practical tools that they can use in the classroom.

Additionally, the project aimed to educate staff on the role of OT and common techniques used in occupational therapy, such as deep pressure, proprioceptive, and vestibular input (Practice Promotions, 2023). In this way, the teachers and support staff can effectively apply these strategies for sensory regulation and integration for their students.



Methods

A systematic multi-step approach was used to develop this project. The process included a needs assessment, evidence review, collaborative planning, development of deliverables, and evaluation of the ease of use of materials that align with the site's goals.

A needs assessment was conducted through conversations with the staff and pre-surveys. Literature research was done to identify current evidence on sensory processing and regulation strategies. Next, collaborative planning was completed with site supervisor to ensure the project aligned with the staff and site goals.

Results/Outcomes

The results of my project show meaningful progress towards the primary aims. Teachers and staff reported the educational binder helped them better understand sensory needs and how to support students. The sensory activity binder, with its Velcro icons and organized categories, made it easy for students to independently choose activities. Overall, the project increased awareness of sensory regulation across the site, provided accessible tools, and supported students in improving self-regulation and increased participation.

Discussion

Post-surveys were administered to the staff. The results demonstrate the significance of the project by increasing sensory awareness across campus and creating sustainable tools that can continue to be used after completion of the capstone project.

Limitations

This project supports a proactive approach to meeting students' sensory needs while the project was successful in increasing sensory awareness and providing practical tools, there were limitations including the limited amount of time available to gather more data, follow-up training sessions, and integrating teacher feedback in order to improve and revise strategies.

References

