**Sensory classroom**

**Lesson 1: Exploring learning environments**

**Introduction**

In this lesson students consider the effects a standard classroom environment can have on learners who are sensitive to sensory stimuli. They will learn about how sensory rooms are used to offer such learners a calm environment in which they can explore their senses and evaluate the aids that are used to achieve this.

**Time:** @60 minutes

**Materials needed:** Lesson plan, lesson guide, selection of images of sensory aids (an image search for ‘sensory room aids’ will provide ample images from which to select), A3 paper and glue, sticky notes.

**Learning objectives**

* To understand that some learners are sensitive to sensory stimulus
* To know some benefits of sensory environments
* To evaluate sensory aids

**Lesson summary**

1. Introductory activity: describing classrooms (5 minutes)
2. Sensory learning environments (20 minutes)
3. Evaluating sensory aids (15 minutes)
4. Sharing evaluations (10 minutes)
5. Review & wrap up (10 minutes)

**Introduction: Describing classrooms (5 minutes)**

* Use **slide 3** to invite students to suggest ideas on what learning looks like in their classrooms. What do their classrooms sound/look like? What type of activities do they regularly do? (e.g. whole class discussions, group work, talking partners, watching videos, using digital learning resources etc).
* Give out sticky notes and ask students to write words to describe their classrooms (one word per post-it note). If needed, remind students that their comments should related to their learning and their learning environment, rather than personal opinions!
* Invite students to place their notes on a working wall and discuss them as a class, inviting students to group words of the same and similar meanings together and discussing what the words suggest about what classroom learning looks like (e.g. busy, full of sound, movement, energy).

**Sensory learning environments (20 minutes)**

* Use **slide 4** to explain that busy, active classroom environments are not always suitable for all learners.
* Discuss the problems for those students who struggle in environments where there are too many sensory stimuli, being sensitive to the students in your class.
* Ask students to think/pair/share the senses that would be most stimulated by modern learning environments and what stimulates those senses in their classrooms (**slide 5** - see notes for ideas).
* Use **slide 6** to introduce the term ‘Sensory Classroom’ and ask students to think/pair/share their ideas or experience of what a sensory room is.
* Use **slide 7** to explain why a sensory room may be beneficial to learning who is sensitive to sensory stimulus
* Watch an online clip showing a sensory room (example given on **slide 8**, or find your own), or visit the school’s sensory room if you have one.
* Ask students to make notes on the items that they see in the room, how they are being used and what sense they are designed to simulate.

**Evaluating sensory aids (15 minutes)**

* After a short feedback session around the sensory aids observed, give students with a range of images representing aids from a sensory room selected from an image search for ‘sensory room aids.’
* Allocate pairs of students an image of a sensory aid and give them a digital or paper copy of the **evaluation****sheet** and a sheet of A3 paper on which to stick their image and make evaluatory comments about the aid (**slide 9**).

**Sharing evaluations (10 minutes)**

* After a suitable length of time, give pairs the opportunity to share their evaluation of the sensory aid and invite questions from other students, if appropriate (**slide 10**).

**Recap (10 minutes)**

* Use slide 11 to review students’ learning in the lesson and recap the lesson objectives on slide 12 if you wish.

**Extension ideas:**

* Students could be given a budget (£2000) and asked to decide with sensory aids should be purchased for a sensory room, prepare a spreadsheet to submit their budget and justify why they selected certain items.

**Differentiation**

**Support:**

* Give students images of a sensory aid that is more transparent in terms of what it does
* Provide students with direct questions relating to their sensory aid by using the **support statements sheet.**

**Stretch & challenge:**

* Students could record their evaluation in the form of a product review for a consumers’ advice website.
* They can be encouraged to make more complex evaluative statements and could go on to complete the extension activity.

**Opportunities for assessment:**

* Informal observation of students’ during activities and discussion and students’ annotations of sensory aid image.
* More formal evaluation if wished of evaluations.