

# Sensory Lab

## WCBF 4-5

<p><b>Objective:</b> Students will gain an understanding of &amp; develop empathy for their peers living with ASD by engaging in simulated sensory challenge tasks.</p>	<p><b>IRP PLO(s) addressed:</b> Grade 4, English Language Arts A1: <i>use speaking and listening to interact with others</i> Grade 4, English Language Arts A9: <i>use speaking and listening to improve and extend thinking</i></p>
<p><b>Materials needed:</b> ▪ Sensory Lab bags (zippered cases)</p>	<p>Grade 5, English Language Arts A1: <i>use speaking and listening to interact with others</i> Grade 5, English Language Arts A9: <i>use speaking and listening to improve and extend thinking</i></p>

	<b>Teacher guide</b>	<b>Student guide</b>
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<b>Opening</b>	<b>Time</b> 5 min	<p>Discuss how the brains of people with autism’s work differently and they may experience the world differently. For example, they may hear sounds you don’t hear or see things you don’t pay attention to. They may like different foods. For example, if you don’t like onions someone with autism may love them or maybe they don’t like onions either. Each person with autism is different just like how each of you are different. And it’s okay to be different. We need to try and be a Friendship Superhero with everyone even if we think they are different or the same as us.</p> <p>Discuss how everyone has things they are good at and things they are not so good at and that can be frustrating. In front of class, have a volunteer do the All Thumbs sensory lab bag task. The volunteer will attempt to string beads on a shoelace while wearing gloves.</p> <p>Ask the volunteer, is it hard? How do you feel? How might it feel for someone who finds this hard? It’s frustrating when you try to do something and it’s difficult for you to do it. Imagine if the gloves were on you all the time. A person with autism might feel like that and it may be really frustrating when they try to put on their shoes, or their hat, or zip their jacket. Or they might find it easy to do these things. Everyone with autism is different.”</p>	Students listen.
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<b>Pre-Activity</b>	5 min	<p>We all have things we are good at and things we find difficult. For example, some people find it difficult to hear quiet noises, some people find it hard to look at the teacher when lots of things are happening around them, some people find it hard to talk so they use an iPad or pictures to talk, some people find catching a ball really hard and some people find it easy. We all find some things hard and some things easy to do.</p> <p>Explain to students that today we are going to do six activities. We'll set up each activity up at your table and divide you into groups and everyone will get a chance to try each activity. But first I want to explain each activity. Let's go through the activities and I'll explain them first and then you can try them.</p> <p>Refer to Sensory Lab Instructions sheet to explain each activity.</p>	Students listen.
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<b>Activity</b>	45 min	Students do the sensory lab activities. Circulate and engage students as they attempt the tasks.	In groups, each student completes the sensory activity.
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<b>Closure</b>	5 min	<p>After everyone has completed the Sensory Lab activities, ask students how was that? Discuss how some things were hard and some were easy. We all have strengths and we all have things to work on. But that's okay.</p> <p>Have students consider what they can do to help others who may find something challenging as you go through the activities. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could we do if we someone struggling to write their name? Hold the paper down, have them copy you, etc.</li> <li>• Listening - use less words, repeat what you say, ask if they heard you</li> <li>• Stinks - move away from smells, share something that smells nice like a flower</li> <li>• Feel - they might not like to be touched or they may like it and want to give high fives</li> <li>• Optical - they may not notice something new on the playground or a new book/game in the classroom and you can show them</li> </ul> <p>Remind students that everyone experiences the world differently. To be a Friendship Superhero you can help others when they are struggling or frustrated or something is bugging them. It's okay to not be good at everything because everyone can help each other out.</p>	<p>Students share how they felt about the activities.</p> <p>Students consider what they can do to help others who find something challenging.</p>
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<b>Adaptations:</b>			
⇒ Pair students up to help each other attempt the sensory lab tasks. Have a student or teacher demonstrate the lab first and then have the student try.			

**Reflection:** What went well? What needs to be changed for next time? What did I observe about my students? What would better facilitate my teaching of this topic? What needs to be considered for subsequent lessons on this topic?

## Sensory Lab Instructions

### *Refine your Writing*

Write on the tissue paper without holding the paper down with your hands.

Positioning our body can be hard for some people and some people are still learning how to print letters. Everyone learns at different speeds. A person with autism may have difficulties with their proprioceptive system (a sense of the body's position in relation to its external environment) and motor skills. This challenge promotes an understanding of how much pressure is needed to exert in a task in fine motor skill coordination.

### *Listen Up*

Sit back-to-back with a partner. One person picks a card and describes what they see and the other person draws what they hear.

You need to listen to your partner but it can be hard because you're in a busy and sometimes loud classroom. Some people find it easier to focus on the person talking while other people get distracted when the environment is busy. A person with autism may have difficulties with auditory processing while trying to filter out sounds other than the verbal instructions they need to be focusing on. The drawing challenge promotes an understanding of the difficulties faced while listening to instructions and completing a task simultaneously.

### *All Thumbs*

Put the gloves on and try to put the beads onto the string.

A person with autism may have difficulty with his or her motor coordination. The beads and shoelaces challenge promotes an understanding of the difficulties faced daily with what we consider simple tasks such as buttoning clothes or tying shoelaces.

### *What Stinks?!?*

Order the cards starting with your least favourite smell to your favourite smell.

Everyone has smells they like or don't like. Sometimes smells can be really powerful and noticeable. Have you ever walked into a restaurant that smelled like food? Some people get annoyed when they smell things they don't like. When people smell things they do like they may want to keep smelling it and get upset when the smell goes away. A person with autism may have hyper-sensitive senses—like the sense of smell. These individuals can be so sensitive to smell that fragrances can be overpowering and they may try to avoid them.

### *Feel the Difference*

Feel the different frames and put them in order from your least favourite to your favourite.

Some of these feel really nice to you but may feel icky to someone else. Could you imagine if your clothes felt like this? That could be really uncomfortable. A person with autism may have hyper-sensitive senses—like the sense of touch. These individuals can be so sensitive to touch that clothing can be uncomfortable or they may not like to be touched.

### *Optical Illusions*

Look closely at the pictures. What do you see?

Everyone sees the world differently. Some people may see the same things as you; other people may see different things. And that's okay because we can help each other by pointing out what we do see to someone else so they can see it too. A person with autism may have the ability to pick out the finest of details in a crowded and busy situation before anyone else sees them.

### *Yo-Yo Twist*

Try to yo-yo and say a tongue twister at the same time.

Just like how we can find it difficult to multi-task, a person with autism may have trouble focusing on multiple tasks. This may cause them to feel overwhelmed by all the sensory information happening at the same time. The yo-yo challenge promotes an understanding of how it feels to be overwhelmed with lots of information.

### *Mirror, Mirror*

Look only in the mirror and try to write your name so it looks correct (reads left to right) in the mirror.

A person with autism may have trouble doing actions that might seem automatic to you (like writing one's name). The *Mirror, Mirror* task challenges you to focus on writing your name as well as to think about using different motor skills to complete this task.