Sensory Circuits

What are sensory circuits?

A sensory motor skills programme for children comprised of 10-15 minutes of activities at the beginning of the day to help with sensory regulation. The Sensory Motor Circuits are based on the theories of sensory processing and sensory integration and aim to focus concentration in readiness for the day's learning. The circuit is broken into three parts which also encourages the development of the child's sensory processing skills – making sense of how their senses perceive the world. Working on physical, sensory and/or behaviour skills it should be active, physical and fun!

Is it different to BEAM?

BEAM is a six-week balance, education and movement programme is split into three blocks of graded activities, where the emphasis is on achievement and fun. It is an early screening programme to ensure prompt identification of children with balance and movement difficulties. Similarly to Sensory Circuits, BEAM looks at co-ordination and balance which are necessary for children to develop classroom skills, such as the ability to sit still, to concentrate and listen, eye contact and tracking, as well as hand-to-eye co-ordination.

Who will benefit from sensory circuits? Children who:

- Constantly fidget in class – *seeking sensory feedback*
- Are slow to start work and constantly missing cues – *low levels of alertness*
- Have difficulty organising self – *poor executive function*
- Are lethargic and dreamy – *low levels of alertness*
- Have poor coordination and balance – *poor motor organisation*
- Have known sensory processing difficulties
- Are constantly rocking – *seeking sensory feedback and self-calming*
- Have difficulty paying attention – *poor concentration*
- Lacking confidence to join in – *poor self-esteem*

What are the objectives of sensory circuits?

- Helps to focus children in readiness for classroom activities
- Fun for both children and staff
- Helps to calm some children and alert others
- Increases attention in the classroom
- Supports confidence to move
- Increases self-worth and esteem
- Reduces negative behaviour

What does a session look like?

The session is designed to take ideas from a menu of ideas lasting between 45 seconds to 2 minutes each divided into the three areas.

Alerting section – the aim of this section is to provide vestibular and proprioceptive stimulation within a controlled setting. This prepares the brain for learning. Activities can include such activities as:

- bouncing 10 times on a mini trampoline or space hopper
- spinning a hoop
- bunny hops / crab walks / frog
- Jumps

Sensory Circuits

Organising section – These are skills that may increase a child's focus, attention span and performance within the classroom through working on activities that require motor sensory processing, balance and timing. The child needs to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a sequential order. Activities includes tasks such as:

- balancing on a beam
- climbing wall bars
- throwing bean bags into a target
- wobble boards for balance work
- Skipping and jumping a moving rope

Calming section – the calming activities are very important as they provide input to ensure that children leaves the circuit and return to their classrooms calm, centred and ready for the day ahead. Activities include proprioceptive or deep pressure activities such as:

- placing feet or hands in weighted bean bags
- lying under weighted blankets
- having balls rolled over their backs
- hot-dogs (rolling child up tightly in a blanket)

Links for more information on Sensory Circuits
Book: Sensory Circuits: A Sensory Motor Skills Programme for Children – Jane Horwood (2009) published by LDA
Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EpBSD3dJnM
Diagrams/photos: Information for Teachers – Cambridge OT Service

Along side this think about sensory processing – children who struggle more with interpreting sensory information
Sensory processing is the way that our brain sorts out sensory information so we understand the world and can manage our everyday life. For most children the development of their sensory processing (sometimes called integration) occurs as part of our normal development and they learn to respond appropriately to sounds, smells, movement etc.

For some children their sensory development is delayed or disordered, and they struggle to take part in everyday childhood occupations. For example, they are so distressed by noise they can't go to a friend's party or they hit out when someone brushes up against them as they experience it as painful.

https://360.articulate.com/review/content/676fc2ac-b928-4e5e-a08a-ccd356991f39/review
e-learning from Kent Children's Therapy Services