

S IS FOR SENSORY

*Created by Children's Services
Division, Early Learning Training
Specialist Team*

Implementing sensory in your
program during COVID-19

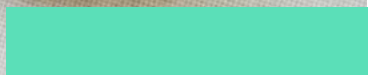
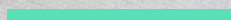




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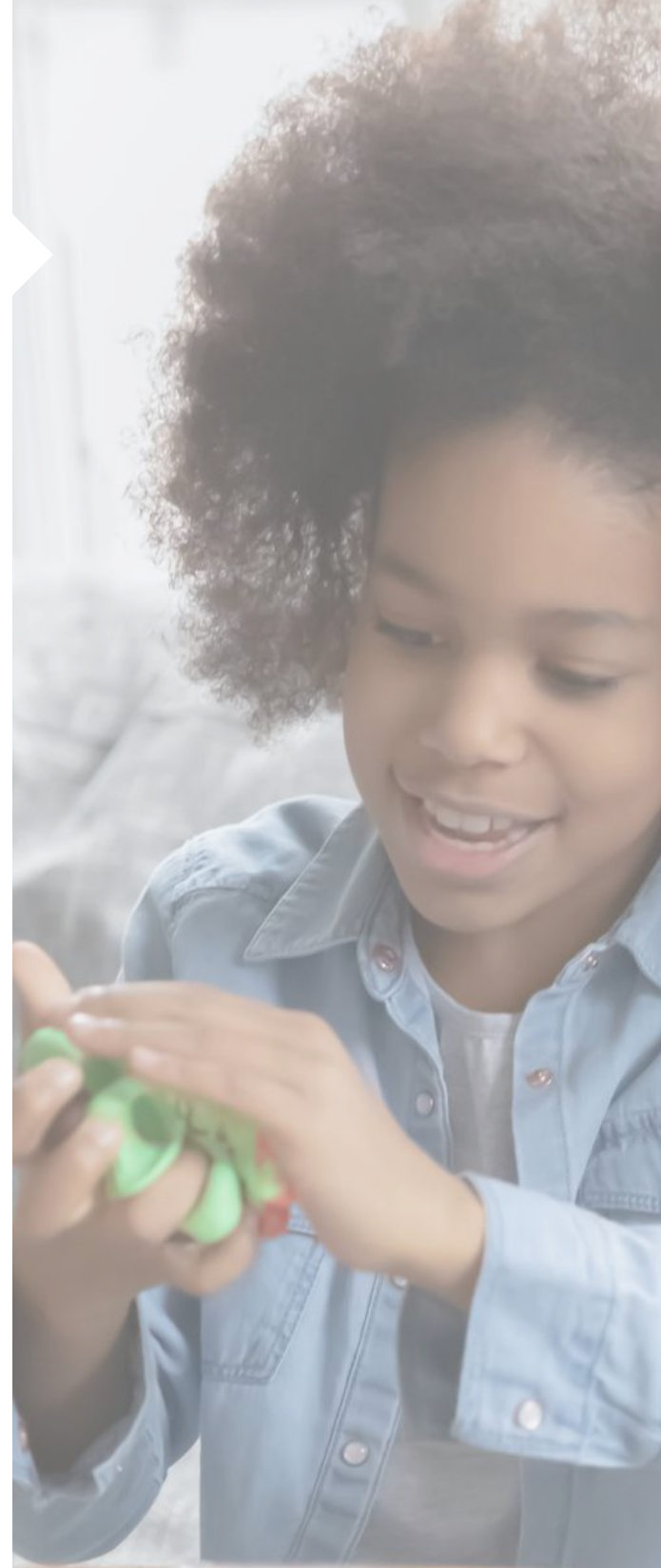
References

» Introduction

"While there are general principles and knowledge we can refer to, we must always think, feel, and act in ways that reflect the environment, the circumstances, and most importantly the children, families, and colleagues we have before us in every unique situation. As we question, research, reflect, respond, and co-construct our understanding of the world around us with children and families, we gain new perspectives and new and more complex questions arise." (How Does Learning Happen?, 2014, page 5.)

How Does Learning Happen? provides pedagogical direction for educators as they:

- cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of **belonging** amongst children, adults, and the world around them.
 - nurture children's **healthy development** and support their growing sense of self.
 - provide environments and experiences to **engage** children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry.
 - foster communication and **expression** in all forms.
- (How Does Learning Happen?, 2014, page 13.)



» **"Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a young child's senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as anything which engages movement and balance."**

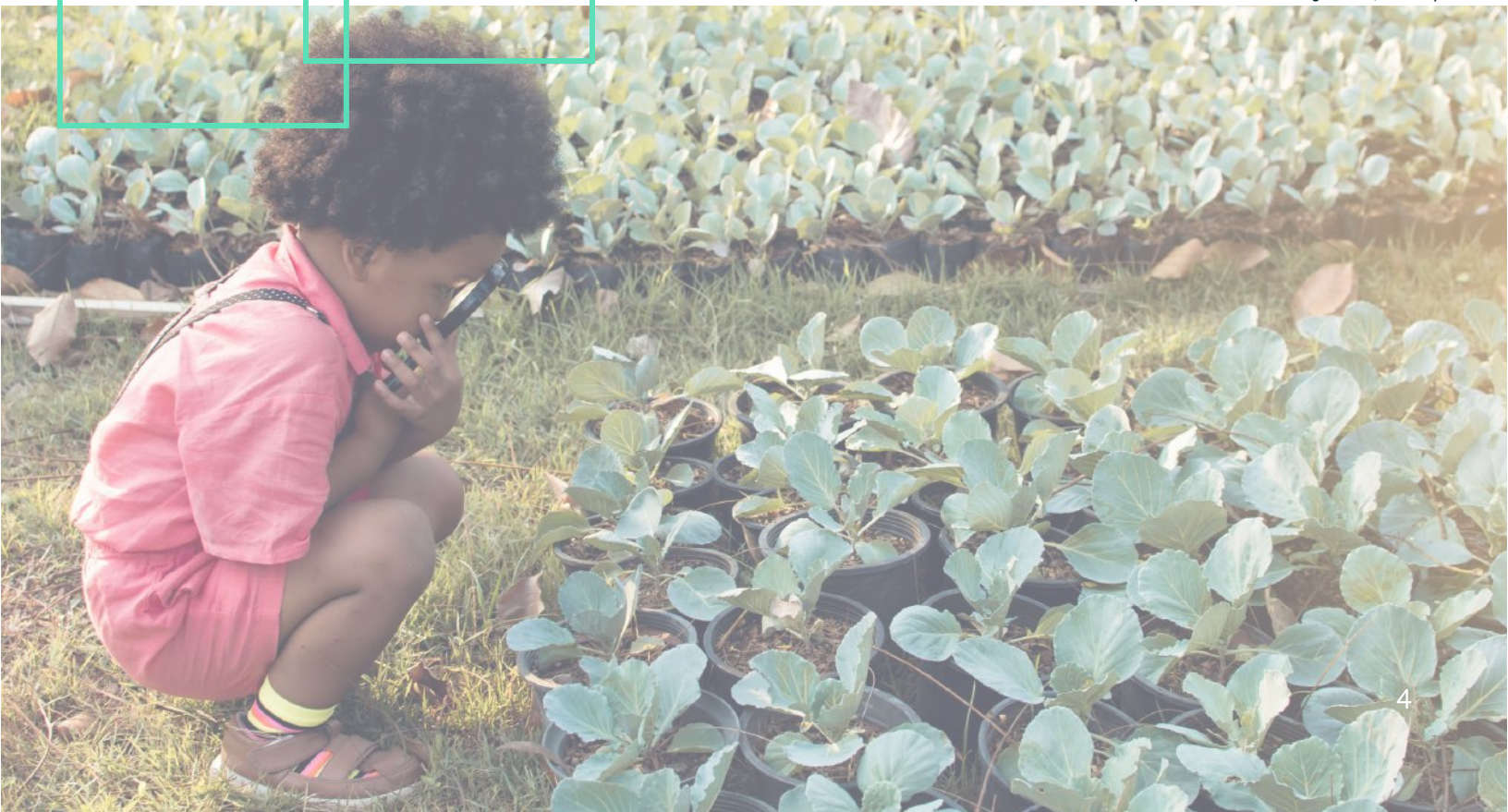
(Goodstart Early Learning, 2018)

Providing opportunities for children to actively use their senses as they explore their world through sensory play is crucial to brain development because it helps build nerve connections in the brain's pathways.

Five reasons why sensory play is beneficial:

1. Research shows that sensory play builds nerve connections in the brain's pathways, which leads to the child's ability to complete more complex learning tasks.
2. Sensory play supports language development, cognitive growth, fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving skills, and social interaction.
3. This type of play helps develop and enhance memory.
4. Sensory play is great for calming an anxious or frustrated child.
5. This helps children learn sensory attributes (hot, cold, sticky, dry).

(Educational Playcare, 2016)



When using art materials:

With the new COVID-19 guidelines, materials are not encouraged to be shared. In addition to not being shared, sensory items like rice, pasta, and playdough must also be single-use (discarded after each use). It would be beneficial (if your program allows) to have separate art bins with each child's photograph and/or name.



Each bin should contain a variety of art supplies (markers, glue stick, paintbrush, scissors, and individual sensory items, such as rice, playdough, etc.). This way, children are not sharing art supplies and are still able to initiate their art experiences and show off their creativity and self-expression.

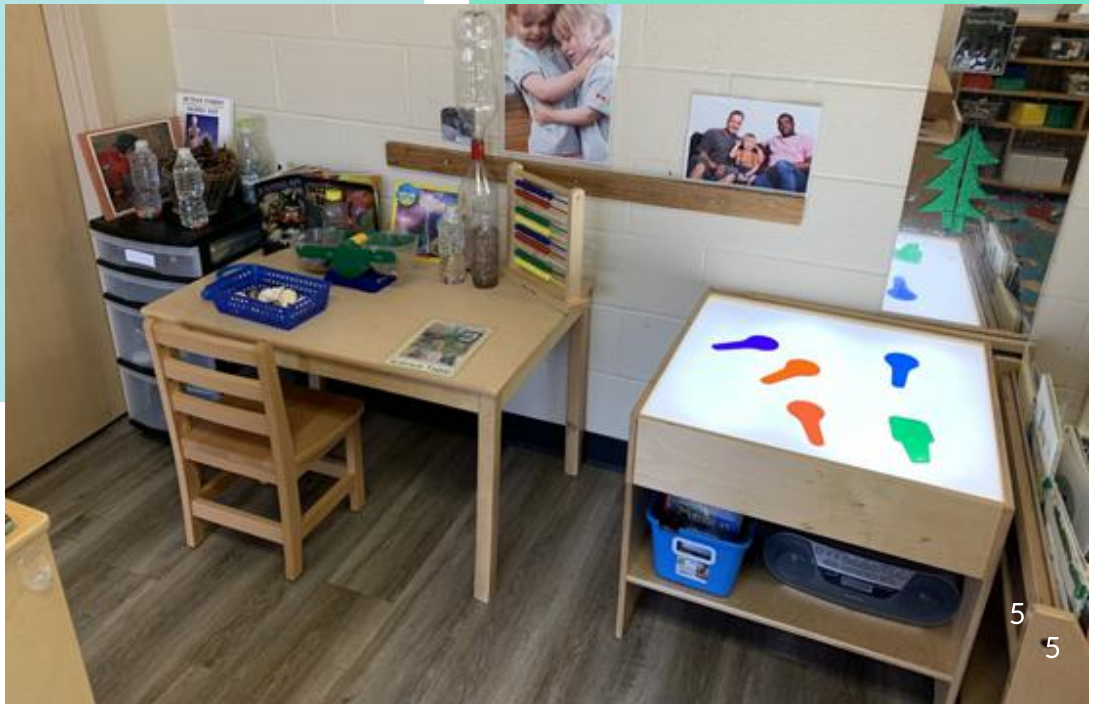
Chair placement



Set up your activities in an inviting way that promotes physical distancing. Providing adequate space between the chairs is a great way to make sure children distance themselves without even realizing!

HAVE AREAS SPACED OUT

The science table to the right invites children to engage in play by offering a variety of materials for open-ended experiences. To support physical distancing, space the science table and the nearby light table apart, yet close enough where the children can make connections and communicate their findings.





Dry materials to use for sensory

Dry materials are for individual use during COVID 19 safety regulations.

Please follow your centre's policies and procedures regarding the use of dry food as sensory, such as rice, pasta, beans, cereal, etc. Also be mindful of developmental appropriateness.

1



Bird Seed

2



Pebbles

3



Beads

These materials are great for fine motor development (e.g., scooping, picking up, sorting, etc.). They also come in a variety of shapes , sizes, and colours!

Still want to incorporate music and movement? You can!



In an effort to protect our children and educators against COVID-19, we are not currently singing. CD players, iPads/tablets, and musical instruments are great substitutes for children to play, listen, and follow along with. Music and dancing supports the development of rhythm awareness.

Educators can also pre-record themselves singing the children's favourite songs! Then the children can listen to them during play and/or transitions.

Music and dancing promotes self-expression and physical activity. Encourage the children to space themselves out to fully support their ability to move freely within their space and strengthen their self-identity. If the classroom seems too compact, don't forget you can take the dancing outdoors!

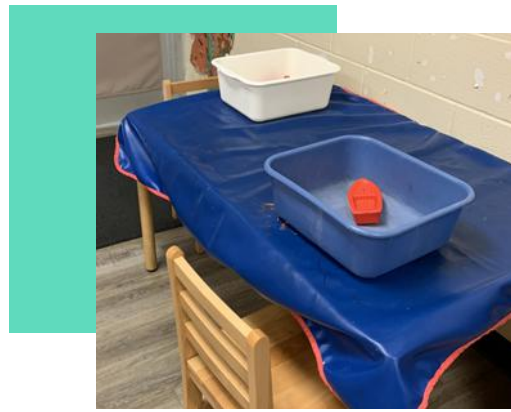
Even with these changes in place, music and movement will continue to ignite all areas of the children's development as it makes children happy, allows them to develop gross motor skills and gives them that sense of belonging in their program!



Sensory should now be done individually. Using individual sensory bins is a great way to engage children in single-use sensory experiences that are available to children throughout the day.

Water play can still be done (individually), however, the water must be dumped out when the child is done using it. The bins and items that the children engage with must also be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use.

Helpful tip: Label all sensory items with the children's names while in use. This is an effective strategy that will allow you to track the sensory being used by the children.



Individual sensory bin suggestions:

- Use rocks, water, and add ocean-themed creatures.
- Use kernels and/or beans and add farm animals.
- Use soap, water, and a toothbrush and add toy cars.
- Use magnets to uncover hidden metal objects in uncooked rice.
- Use ice cubes and add arctic animals.
- Use sand and add bulldozers, trucks, and cars.
- Use bird seed with scoops, spoons, and cups/empty containers.
- Sort different types of dry pasta into cupcake tins.
- Build your own sensory bags and/or bottles by adding beads, water, glitter, letters, etc.
- Use salt and let children use their fingers to draw images, letters, etc.
- Use tweezers to pick up different objects (rocks, beads, penne, gems, etc.).



» **"Opportunities to experience nature enhance children's sense of wonder and joy in the world around them, whether programs are located in large urban centres with small patches of green space, gardens, and trees or in vast fields and forests. A growing body of research suggests that connecting to the natural world contributes to children's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being"**

(How Does Learning Happen?, 2014, page 21.)

Sensory activities to implement outdoors:

Sensory activities may change depending on the weather/season.

- Use nature materials as loose parts (leaves, rocks, sticks, grass, flowers, etc.).
- Bring individual sensory bins outside and fill them with a variety of materials, such as water (add food colouring for some extra fun!), sand, and bird seed.
- Enjoy an outdoor scavenger hunt.
- Bug hunting.
- Bring out some paint to paint rocks, leaves, sticks, etc. (you can even use cedar branches as paint brushes!).
- Plant a garden.
- Climb, jump over things, walk across different platforms, or balance.
- Create a pinwheel or a wind chime to measure out different wind speeds.
- Look and listen for birds.
- Use water and brushes to paint a fence and tree trunks.



Other sensory activity suggestions:

While participating in tasting and smelling sensory activities, be mindful of allergies and restrictions.

- Identify different noises that you hear.
- Discuss what different foods taste like while trying them during snack and meal times (sweet, sour, etc.).
- Look through telescopes, binoculars, kaleidoscopes, and coloured lenses.
- Walk across different surfaces and objects at different heights to test out children's balance.
- Use a light table with loose parts and other manipulative materials.
- Identify different smells (put vanilla, cinnamon, vinegar, etc. in different bottles and have the children smell and guess what they are).



Check out these amazing resources to enhance your program!

If you are viewing this in PDF format, you can also access these documents by clicking on the title of the document.



[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)



[Building on How Does Learning Happen? Pedagogical approaches to re-opening early years and child care](#)



[Operational Guidance for Child Care During COVID-19 Version 7 - August 2021](#)

(This document is subject to change. Check to see if a Version 6 has been released before viewing this document)

How to use a QR code:

To use the QR codes above, open your camera on your phone and hold it up to the QR image you wish to view. The QR code will then generate a link for you to click on.



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