Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery Program
SEED

A Structured Sensory Enrichment Program
Where Students Move to Grow!

Administrator Version
August 2021

OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
Division of Specialized Instruction & Student Support
COVID-19 and Implications for Special Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the education system across the nation. As students return to school this fall, educators will again need to respond to a unique set of circumstances.

Educators must be aware that all students have experienced some degree of learning loss or missed learning, decreased progress or regression. Students with disabilities and students with sensory challenges were (and are) largely affected.

Covid-19 Compensatory Services are specialized instruction and related services in addition to a student’s IEP recommendation, made available to students with IEPs to help close gaps brought on by the pandemic disruption to learning.
SEED Initiative

• The SEED Initiative is a part of the COVID-19 Compensatory Service Implementation plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

• In support of students returning to school in September 2021, the NYC DoE will be providing students with disabilities with an opportunity to participate in an enrichment-based sensory movement program.

• Using specialized sensory equipment and a curriculum designed by Occupational Therapist experts, in sensory-based interventions, this program will support students who display intensive sensory needs that impact academics, social-emotional learning, and behavior.
SEED Initiative (Cont.)

• Children learn best and retain the most information when they engage their senses. Providing opportunities for children to actively use their senses as they explore their world through "sensory play" helps **build nerve connections in the brain’s pathways**, a crucial component to brain development.

• The **Sensory Education, Exploration and Discovery (SEED)** program will be offered after school hours Monday-Thursday and Saturdays, in 10-week cycles over the course of the school year at **ten** designated public-school locations.

• SEED will be led by Occupational Therapists and supported by a Special Education Teacher.

• Therapeutic activities will be implemented in an intentionally designed therapeutic space, incorporating the use of accessible sensory equipment.
SEED Benefits to Host Site School Community:

• The host site will be outfitted with a sensory space that can be used during the school day, beyond the SEED program in collaboration with the site's assigned occupational therapist and/or occupational therapy supervisor.
  • School-based occupational and physical therapists may utilize the SEED space when providing IEP recommended services to host site students and may also use the space to implement whole class activities as their workloads allow.
  • Host sites will keep this therapeutic space, benefitting students long term.

• The SEED program will provide opportunities to support students with intensive sensory needs across areas of academic, social-emotional and behavioral functions. For additional information on student criteria click here:

• Allows increased opportunity for specialized family engagement

• SEED program will be funded by Central in its entirety, to include equipment, materials and staff per-session/over time.
The goal of the SEED Program:

• To help the student become aware of his/her sensory profile;
• Teach the student and family sensory strategies that support both academic and social participation;
• Share successful sensory integration strategies with the student's school for integration into the student's natural learning environment.
What are **Structured Sensory Supports**?

**Structured Sensory Supports begin with sensory integration:**

- Sensory integration involves perceiving, modulating, organizing, and interpreting these sensations to optimize occupational performance and participation.

- Well-regulated and appropriately functioning sensory systems contribute to important outcomes in social-emotional, physical and motor, communication, self-care, cognitive, and adaptive skills development and maintenance.

- Deficits in sensory integration can pose challenges in performing activities of daily living (ADLs), in addition to development, learning, playing, working, socializing, and exhibiting appropriate behavior.

- Without intervention, issues in sensory integration continue into adulthood and have been reported to impact work performance, relationships, and general functional abilities.
How Do Structured Sensory Supports Enhance Student Learning?

- Provide structured movement activities to help improve overall school function and participation.
- Utilize specialized equipment such as designed to elicit sensory responses and enhance sensory integration.
- Provide students with self-regulation strategies so that they engage in meaningful social interactions and sustain attention.
- Provide students with necessary steps to plan and organize (executive functioning skills) tasks for them to acquire and retain new skills.
- Create an environment where students are given the opportunity (e.g., break area) for students to self-regulate and self-monitor when they are overwhelmed.
- Facilitate group dynamic activities that will encourage students to develop friendships and work cooperatively with their peers.
Host Site Administration Commitments

- Host after-school and Saturday SEED Program for the 2021-2022 SY beginning November 2021
- Host Saturday Related Service (OT/PT/SP) Program November through June 2022
- Designate a large/full-size classroom in a fully accessible location
- Support Installation and maintenance of sensory equipment by vendor/DSF
  - Daily cleaning by custodial staff
  - Timely repair of any broken/damaged equipment
- Identify and hire SEED designated Special Education teacher. (Centrally funded)
- Support Identification and hiring of Occupational Therapist(s) by SEO (Centrally funded)
  - If school-based OT(s) not available, SEO will support in posting/hiring OTs
- Payroll management of all participating staff (including RS providers)
- Manage any/all COVID-19 test/trace, situation room communications
**Student Criteria: NYC DoE SEED**

- SEED eligible students must be enrolled in a NYC DoE public school/preschool program (prek-8) and have a current IEP recommending occupational therapy.
- As the school community collaborates to identify students who would most benefit from SEED participation, the following factors should be considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student demonstrates difficulty with sensory regulation (ability to manage emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation).</th>
<th>Student has difficulty planning and organizing their movements (dyspraxia) to the point where it impacts school function and participation</th>
<th>Student withdraws when there are changes in the environment or routine and displays significant difficulty reengaging back into classroom activities/socialization.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student is sensitive to sensory information (over-responding) to the point where student’s ability to complete academic tasks and/or demonstrate appropriate social-emotional learning is impacted.</td>
<td>Student has difficulty tolerating transitions or changes in routines, plans, and expectations to the point where it impacts school function and participation</td>
<td>Student handles frustration with outbursts or challenging behavior and displays significant difficulty reengaging back into classroom activities/socialization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is slow to notice sensory information (under-responding) to the point where student’s ability to complete academic tasks and/or demonstrate appropriate social-emotional learning is impacted.</td>
<td>Student perseverates to the point that they cannot move on (i.e., can’t shift gears), and therefore ‘gets stuck’ on one task/activity.</td>
<td>Student has difficulty participating in group settings; turn taking, cooperating, supporting peers, making/maintaining friendships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEED Initiative:

THERAPEUTIC APPROACH
Evidence-Based Research and Practices

Research shows that Social Emotional Learning (SEL)* makes a difference in a student's success in school, work, and life.

Children who have strong SEL competence are 50% more likely to graduate from high school and have a full-time job by the age of 25.

Research also suggests that children with strong SEL skills have more friends, feel connected to school, and want to do well.

*Social emotional learning (SEL) is a methodology that helps students of all ages to better comprehend their emotions, to feel those emotions fully, and demonstrate empathy for others.

Source: https://www.nu.edu/resources/social-emotional-learning-sel-why-it-matters-for-educators/
The SEED program provides a unique opportunity for family participation and carry-over of learned skills at home and within the school community.
All SEED OTs will be Trained on Trauma Informed Care

- Childhood trauma can negatively impact learning and behavior.
- Following exposure to trauma, children may become ‘stuck’ in a heightened state of alertness and/or state of fear.

**Trauma Informed Care (TIC) includes:**

- Fostering and building **resilience**
- Focusing on student’s **strengths**
- Considering the student through a **trauma informed lens**
- Cultivating **adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities**
SEED Curriculum will include Social Emotional Learning Activities

Self Awareness & Self-Management/Regulation
• Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand and manage emotion

Social Awareness
• Feeling and showing empathy for others

Relationship Skills
• Establishing and maintaining positive relationships

Responsible Decision Making
• The ability to make appropriate choices about personal behavior and social interactions considering the well-being of self and others*


https://casel.org/sel-framework, CASEL 2020
Sample SEED Space
SEED Sensory Equipment

Every SEED Space will be equipped with:

- Community Station
- Regulation Station
- Creation Station
- Movement Station
The SEED Curriculum: 10 Week Cycle

- **Unit 1** – Introduction & Self Awareness
  - SEED Sessions 1-2

- **Unit 2** – Self Management
  - SEED Sessions 3-6

- **Unit 3** – Social Awareness
  - SEED Session 7

- **Unit 4** – Relationship Skills
  - SEED Session 8

- **Unit 5** – Responsible Decision Making & Wrap Up
  - SEED Sessions 9-10
## Sample Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SESSION STRUCTURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION/ACTIVITIES/TOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Health Check-in</td>
<td>Temp, sanitizer, wash hands, mask check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Opening Activity &amp; SEL Check-in</td>
<td>Mindfulness Yoga Activity and SEL Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory Enrichment Stations</td>
<td>Obstacle course, swing, sensory pathway, exploration stations, creation stations, etc.</td>
<td>Sensory-motor Activities, Sensory Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Closing Activity &amp; SEL Check-out</td>
<td>Song w/motions, etc. And SEL Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>Family Engagement &amp; Health Check-out</td>
<td>Session Review for carry-over, Wash hands, sanitize</td>
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High School Internship Program

• Beginning January 2022, utilize Saturday RS Program to host internship for high school students

• The Office of Related Service (ORS) has identified increasing diversity of providers as one goal towards addressing overall disproportionality of service provision

• This is an opportunity to reach out to male and female high school students of color, to introduce them to these valued professions, and provide a supervised hands-on internship at Saturday sites

• Sample intern responsibilities may include:
  > Learning about varied types of disabilities
  > Supporting students in participation through the various sensory stations
  > Assisting session staff in preparing materials and work-space before and after each session
  > Participating in sessions with staff (no handling of students)
Questions and Supports

• For additional information or clinical questions regarding student selection, please contact the Occupational Therapy Supervisor assigned to your school and/or Monica George, MGeorge@schools.nyc.gov or Suzanne Sanchez, SSanchez8@schools.nyc.gov.

• Helpful Links
  • SEED Program Description & Timelines SEED Description
  • SEED Administrator Guide (this PPT). SEED Administrator Guide
  • SEED Student Selection/Criteria Guide. SEED Student Selection Criteria School Guide
  • 'What is Sensory Processing Disorder' video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1G5ssZlVUw
  • American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) 'Sensory Integration and Sensory Processing Disorders.'
    • https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/Professionals/WhatIsOT/CY/Fact-Sheets/FactSheet_SensoryIntegration.ashx
thank you