



Occupational Therapy Students and HIPsters Working Together Promoting Community Participation with Autistic Learners

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Why This Matters

Supporting autistic learners on a meaningful path toward self-awareness, self-care, and self-advocacy in community environments is important to increase their quality of life.⁽¹⁾

Continuing support and education for autistic learners through transition periods is critical to promote community involvement.⁽²⁾

Who We Are

Two doctoral occupational therapy students partnered with eight neurodiverse HIPsters from My Possibilities (MP), as part of an ongoing team to help test and create a community participation curriculum for autistic learners.

HIPsters (Hugely Important People) is a term MP uses to refer to their students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Curriculum Access

Scan the QR code or open link for further insight about the curriculum.



[PlanningforAutism.com](https://planningforautism.com)

About the Curriculum

Promoting Community Participation for Autistic Learners is a curriculum that can be implemented by many disciplines, such as special education teachers, general education teachers, social workers, and other professionals.

48 lessons lasting 20-35 minutes each can be done in groups or individually.

Lessons target increasing self-awareness of individual's sensory needs, possible self-care strategies, and strategies to advocate for oneself.

Aligned with TEKS and CCSS standards for public schools.

Useful after high school graduation.

Lessons include:

- Hands on learning
- Practical and experiential lessons
- Engaging material

Curriculum Use

- By autistic learners to learn about and advocate for for sensory, communication, and social needs.
- By professionals and teachers who work with autistic learners.

Sample Lesson

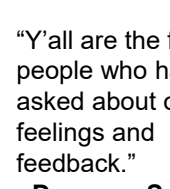
Unit 1: Self-Awareness—Understanding Sensory Types
Learning Objective: The learner reviews the four possible Sensory Types on the Sensory Observation Tool.

Name of Lesson #13:	Sensory Types—What are they?
Materials Needed:	Handouts and visuals Scissors and glue, if desired
Preparation:	Gather materials listed above. Print handouts and visuals as needed.
Target Vocabulary and Skills:	Concept words like: seeker, avoidant, sensitive, and under-reactive
Lesson:	Now that the learners have completed all of the Sensory Labs, the next step is to introduce them to the four Sensory Types on the Sensory Observation Tool. Tell them there are four categories possible to describe each sanner: Seeker, Avoidant, Sensitive, and Under-Responsive. These Sensory Types are used because they describe patterns of how someone experiences sensory input and can help learners understand more about themselves. Review the Characteristics of Sensory Types with Symbols handout with learners as a group to discuss differences between each category. After the definitions on the handout have been discussed, allow learners to work independently in small groups, or as a large group to complete Sensory Type Matching Activity, page 1 , and Sensory Type Matching Activity, page 2 . This activity allows the learners to practice matching characteristics of a person's sensory needs to each of the 4 sensory types. Tell the learners to read (or read aloud) each of the sample sensory needs on Sensory Type Matching Activity, page 2 and try to match it to one of the four sensory types on Sensory Type Matching Activity, page 1 . Learners may cut out samples and Sensory Types and glue matches together if desired. Review answers and compare back to Characteristics of Sensory Types with Symbols to check work.
Handouts and Visual Supports:	Characteristics of Sensory Types with Symbols (pg. 63) Sensory Type Matching Activity (pg. 64-65)
Check for understanding and extension questions:	1) Which Sensory Types seem to be opposites of one another? 2) Which Sensory Types seem to be similar to one another? 3) Do Sensory Types matter? Why or why not? 4) Does anyone in your family come to mind when you think about the different Sensory Types?
These questions are starting points for further class discussion, argument and accommodate as needed. Groups of learners have an opportunity to participate.	

Quotes from HIPsters



"WOW! I'm advocating for myself again!" - Adam Y.



"Y'all are the first people who have asked about our feelings and feedback." - Devynne S.



Advice for his peers: "I would ask them what makes them calm down and tell them to take a deep breath." - Bennie P.

Next Steps

- Promote awareness of sensory needs in classrooms, via posters and sensory bins.
- Continue education for current and new HIPsters to help them understand and advocate for their sensory needs at MP and in the community.
- Continue collaboration between TWU OT students and My Possibilities HIPsters.

References and Resources

References:

1. Frentzel, Elizabeth, Zoe Geyman, Jeremy Rasmussen, Chad Nye, and Kathleen M. Murphy. "Pre-Employment Transition Services for Students with Disabilities: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 54, no. 2 (2021): 103–16. <https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-201123>.
2. Westbrook, John D., Carlton J. Fong, Chad Nye, Ann Williams, Oliver Wendt, and Tara Cortopassi. "Transition Services for Youth With Autism: A Systematic Review." *Research on Social Work Practice* 25, no. 1 (January 2015): 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731514524836>.

Resources:

planningforautism.com
<https://mypossibilities.org/>
[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.VIEWTAC?tac_view=3&ti=19&pt=2](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.VIEWTAC?tac_view=3&ti=19&pt=2)
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>

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