



Active Play Zone



All children need to move for so many reasons (physical development, sensory integration, social/emotional development, and attention regulation) but some children with disabilities move differently and need different levels of movement.

In your active play zone, consider:

Lifting/Pushing/Pulling/Pressing Down/Jumping: These types of activity can help some children with Autism stay regulated! They provide the kind of physical input that can calm the nervous system.

Adaptation: If doing a group game, consider how to adapt to support children with disabilities. Also consider that smaller group games may benefit children with Autism.

Adaptation examples include:

Hot potato: peers who can use hands will be paired with peers who cannot

Freeze dance: Instead of freezing, a child can do a pose or motion they find comfortable if they can't hold still for the required time

Hop Scotch: Have a teacher stand at the finish of the game and require the child to high five you to complete it, which provides physical eye contact

Social/Emotional Learning: Small, short pocket games are a great way to inspire communication, eye contact, turn taking, and social interaction. Try games that pair students one-to-one (ball toss) and encourage eye contact and communication. Simple activities like counting the freckles on a child's face or pushing them on a swing in front vs. behind them to encourage eye contact can support those connections.

Making Connections: Relate the games you are playing with things the student loves, like Disney characters, Minecraft, Daniel Tiger, etc. This can both have a calming effect and encourage the child to participate.

Active Movement Play Tips

- Stay flexible with the duration/length of the games and activities to accommodate different sensory systems and cognitive abilities.
- Use larger and softer balls or use lightweight bats to avoid muscle injury for students with physical impairments.
- For games with balls, allow students to walk OR run in during the game.
- Increase the length of time between turns if a student is unable to quickly respond.
- To make directions more easily understood, you can use pictures or provide verbal prompts to show what they should be doing. Use these prompts for all students to learn and follow.
- Use equipment that differs in size, weight, and texture to kids with visual impairment to identify different objects.
- Provide a variety of sensory play opportunities in different locations throughout the playground so that they can explore these at their own rate.