

The classroom in practice

Spaces, play and connection



“ We are all sensory beings, so every room is a sensory room.

The key question is how well the room serves the needs of the people in it.

The physical classroom



Regulation, always

Regulation activities are always available.



No closing off zones

The whole room belongs to the children.



No segregated work stations

But a quiet space is there if a child seeks it.



Built around your kids

The room and routines fit the children, not the other way around.



No locked-away toys

High-interest toys are never a carrot or a reward.



Snacks welcome

Access to snacks and the lunchbox. It might seem small, but it's not!

The classroom in practice

Simple things to be aware of

-  **Lighting:** lamps and dimmers are great.
-  **Noise:** clocks, low electronic hum. Can the intercom be turned down or off?
-  **Visual clutter:** keep walls simple.
-  **A home for everything:** permanent, predictable spaces for toys and supplies.
-  **Ask first:** check with the school community before buying toys or beanbags.
-  **Rest:** lots of options, not just one cosy corner.
-  **Flexible seating:** wobble stools, beanbags and peanut balls.



Room to move

Jane's equipment wish list

- Swing
- Peanut ball
- Beanbags
- Climbing wall
- Crash mat
- Wobble board
- Slide (outside)
- Balance bike (outside)
- Water and sand trays
- Mini trampoline
- Bubble tube
- Tent
- Weighted blanket
- Cushions and blankets
- Projector light
- Cause and effect toys



A word on safety

What about children who eat non-food items? It was a huge concern in year one. It may not last forever, and there are lots of taste-safe options for sensory play. You will figure out ways to make it work for your classroom.

Strewing

Originated with Sandra Dodd. The best way to offer interesting activities, especially for children who find demands hard on their nervous system (PDA: Persistent Drive for Autonomy).

1

Set it up

Leave an activity out, or start it yourself.



2

Zero expectation

No need to finish it, or even touch it. Be nonchalant. Don't cajole.



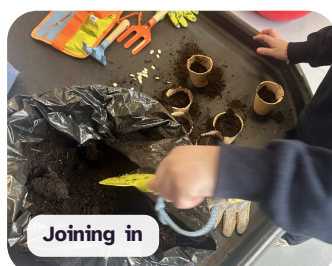
3

Watch, and try again

Watching from the fringes is participating too. Try again tomorrow.



Strewn and waiting



Joining in

“ It's not a failure if no one shows an interest. It's just information.”

A CLASSROOM CAN BE FULL OF EQUIPMENT, BUT

The greatest regulation of all comes from human connection and attunement.

Discovering what a child needs to feel safe unlocks all future learning.



Connection first



Cause and effect

Throwing, flicking switches, dropping things to watch them fall: these produce a **predictable result**. The child is seeking predictability, and it's regulating.

Action



Same result



Regulation

Cheap or free ideas: blowing bubbles, rolling things down a ramp, letting balloons fly.



Gestalt Language Processing

Some children learn language in **whole phrases** ("gestalts") rather than single words. These can be deeply meaningful.

- ✓ Repeat gestalts back in the same tone and volume: connection, regulation and shared joy
- ✓ Ask parents to fill in a simple Gestalt tracker

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The reframe that changed everything

THE STORY

A little girl kept climbing onto the window sill.



WHAT WE TRIED

"No, get down!"
Visuals. Then
"planned ignoring".
None of it worked.



THE REFRAME

Not attention seeking. Connection seeking.



WHAT CHANGED

Each time, we connected and swung her down. Joy all round. She rarely climbs up now.



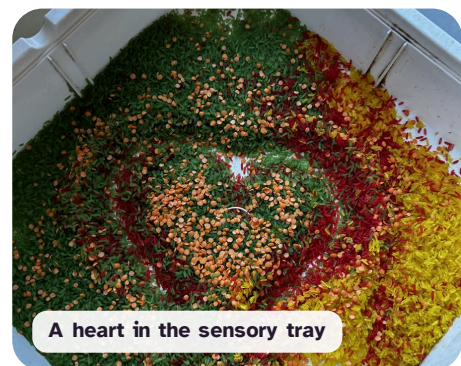
Relationships with parents

Unconditional positive regard extends to families. Many have advocated tirelessly, felt othered, or heard their child pathologised again and again. Some may find it hard to trust us at first.



For school leaders

Opening an autism class? Prioritise whole-staff training in neuroaffirmative, inclusive practice. Agree staff breaks and supervision from the start.



A heart in the sensory tray

All children are little human beings who will thrive in the right environment.

Thank you. Training and resources: neurodiversityireland.com · Instagram @neurodiversityireland · info@neurodiversityireland.com