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Creation of Preschool Evaluation for Children Experiencing Sensory Processing Disorders

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The ASECRET Model for Regulation in Preschool

For our thesis project, we partnered with Dr. Michelle Suarez, the co-director of the Resiliency Center at Western Michigan University. When we first met with her, she informed us about the high rates of expulsion for Kalamazoo preschool students with various regulation challenges relating to sensory processing disorders, regulation, autism, and trauma. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, preschool students are expelled at three times the rate of children in K-12 (2022). Additionally, according to the Equal Justice Society, 250 preschool children get suspended or expelled each day nationwide (2021). The article continues to explain how this prevents them from creating a strong academic foundation and being successful students in the future. This also contributes to the preschool-to-prison pipeline, which explains the correlation between preschool expulsion rates and increased risk of incarceration. These statistics prompted us to immediately begin researching whether a current evaluation tool existed considering this population of children, but we were unable to find one, which inspired us to create a tool prototype to assess how well-equipped preschools are to support children with these specific regulation needs properly. Through much revision, collaboration and observation, we created the evaluation tool, “The ASECRET Model for Regulation in Preschools.” The tool utilizes the ASECRET clinical reasoning model found in the book Sensational Kids by Lucy Jane Miller while highlighting important preschool characteristics found in the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale by Thelma Harms, Richard Clifford, and Debby Cryer. Our tool is concise and organized yet flexible regarding the layout to make it easy to evaluate a preschool setting. The first page of the tool has the ASECRET categories listed underneath a space for the evaluator to provide the given classroom activity they are observing, allowing the observer to focus on one classroom activity at a time. This also allows the observer to print as many pages as they want, depending on the number of preschool activities they observe. The tool also lists our ASECRET definitions and provides suggestions for the observer to consider in each category. The strengths section will allow the observer to write positive characteristics that support children with SPD or regulatory challenges. In contrast, the areas of improvement section will allow the observer to include suggestions for the preschool to help improve their support for these children.


The ASECRET Model for Regulation in Preschool: Tool

Classroom Activity:

Attention:

Sensation:

Emotional Regulation:

Culture:
Relationships:

Environment:

Tasks:
Evaluation Definitions and Considerations Key

**Attention:** Drawing and maintained the child’s engagement toward a purposeful, appropriate activity that is sustainable

Cultural differences
Wait time during transitions
Access to fidgets
Individual materials for each student
Developmentally appropriate activities

**Sensation:** The properties of the classroom being designed to meet individual sensory needs to facilitate optimal arousal level

Olfaction
Auditory
Visual
Proprioception
Vestibular
Interoception
Tactile

**Emotional Regulation:** Focusing on understanding and naming specific emotions a child may be experiencing and helping to provide strategies for them to help regulate emotions

Connection with adults
Problem solving
Coregulation
Identifying feelings
Picture schedule
Transition routine
**Culture:** The classroom philosophy, routine, and structure in an individualized way to promote empathy and awareness toward a child and their behaviors

- Cultural differences
- Level of structure
- Use of safe space
- Connection before correction

**Relationships:** Creating a strong sense of community within the preschool

- Frequent and connected interactions
- Effective communication
- Ask relative questions
- Appropriate physical contact
- Social skills modeled

**Environment:** Physical space and how alterations can be made to fit each child's individual needs

- Flexible, comfortable furniture
- Enough space
- Accessible books
- Fine and gross motor materials
- Temperature Control
- Noise level
- Lighting

**Tasks:** Individualized activities and learning strategies to meet each child’s developmental stage and create the ‘just-right’ challenge for each child.

- Graded/alternate activities
- Learning accommodations
- Individualized teaching
Problem anticipation
Structure
Outdoor time

Strengths:

Areas For Growth: