United in SEND

news, guidance and signposting for USF families

Welcome to the United Schools Federation's SEND newsletter, created especially for parents and carers. In each issue, we'll share helpful advice, school updates and trusted resources to support children with special educational needs and disabilities. Whether you're looking for guidance, local services, or simply some reassurance, United in SEND is here to help you feel informed, connected and supported.

Together, we are united in supporting every child to thrive.

Sensory Regulation

We know that children cannot always regulate their emotions, behaviour and sensory needs on their own. Sometimes, what looks like challenging behaviour is actually a child communicating that their nervous system is overwhelmed or struggling to cope. In this newsletter, we are focusing on sensory regulation and how we can help children move towards a state where they feel safe, settled and ready to learn.

Helpful to all, harmful to none and crucial for some.

Sensory regulation is the way our brains and bodies respond to information coming from our senses. We are constantly receiving sensory information through:

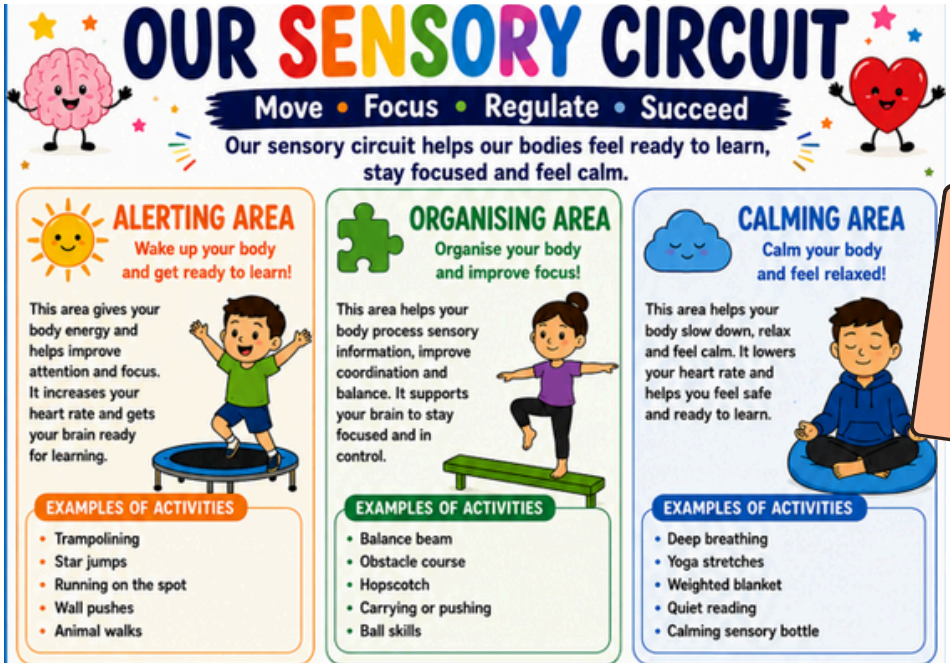
👀 Sight 👂 Hearing 👃 Smell 👅 Taste ✋ Touch ⚖️ Balance and movement 💪 Body awareness and muscle/joint feedback ❤️ Internal body signals such as hunger, tiredness, temperature and needing the toilet.

Every child responds to sensory information differently. Some children may actively seek certain sensory experiences, while others may find particular sensations overwhelming.

One useful way of thinking about sensory regulation is through three broad zones:

- **Alerting** - activities that help wake up our bodies and brains so we are ready to learn
- **Organising** - activities that help us feel focused, balanced and ready to concentrate
- **Calming** - activities that help us slow down, relax and feel settled.

Across all of our Federation schools, every class takes part in sensory circuits at least twice a day. These short sessions provide opportunities for movement and sensory input that help children feel comfortable, regulated and ready for the day ahead. Whether a child needs help waking up, focusing their attention or calming their body, sensory circuits support them to be in the best possible place for learning. We have found that these regular opportunities to move and regulate positively impact children's concentration, wellbeing and engagement throughout the school day.



Why not try some of these activities at home 🙂

Co-regulation

Co-regulation is when we help our child's overwhelmed nervous system feel safe and settled before expecting them to manage things for themselves.
You can try:

- **Stay calm:** use a quiet, gentle voice and slow your own breathing
- **Stay close:** sit alongside them if they will allow you to and let them know you are there
- **Reduce or add sensory input:** find a quieter space, offer a cuddle or movement, depending on what your child needs
- **Listen and ask:** when they are ready, gently ask "What would help you right now?"
- **Give them time:** being calm and connected together helps their nervous system settle.

Co-regulating with your child helps them to understand their bodies and emotions better so they can calm more easily and independently, over time.

Working together and using a shared language at home and school gives children consistency and helps them feel understood, supported and confident in meeting their own needs.

Thank you for reading, the SEND team