

Sensory Integration Dysfunction

Sensory Integration Dysfunction, (SID) also called Sensory Processing Disorder, is a neurological disorder causing difficulties with processing information from the five senses. While SID is considered its own diagnosis, it is associated with a number of other conditions including Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD, and Tourette syndrome. Those with SID sense information normally, however, they process it incorrectly, leading to confusion and distress. Children with SID may be hypersensitive to sounds, lights, or textures, experiencing sensory input as painful. Conversely others may be hyposensitive to some sensory experiences, seemingly numb to normal levels of input. These children may appear restless and seek sensory experiences.

The Harris School (THS) addresses the needs of children with SID in numerous ways. The classrooms are simplified. THS incorporates rugs, soothing colors, natural light and floor lamps - well suited for children who are overwhelmed by sensory input. Additionally, these children are given the option to take "breaks", and find quiet spaces away from the sensory input that confuses and distresses them. The sensory seeking children with SID are encouraged to find the stimulation they need by using therapy ball seating (a type of seat that allows the child to feel connected and "grounded"), and are allowed to complete their work wherever they feel comfortable, whether lying on a rug on the floor or standing at a table. THS teachers are trained to respect each child as an individual, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance that the students internalize. Children with SID are encouraged to reflect on the issues that cause their distress, and become empowered to deal with them, via supportive interactions with the teachers and the weekly group therapy for the older children.