LEARNING TREE THERAPY NEWSLETTER

Back to school can be fun, but change can be hard. Help your little one adjust to the demands with these 2 sensory based calming crafts to be used in the classroom.

WEIGHTED LAP PAD

Directions:

1. Measure enough rice to match 10% of your child's body weight (ex. 75 lb child = 7.5 lbs rice)
2. Divide rice evenly between 8-10 bags and roll the bags to remove all of the air
3. Cover each bag with duct tape so the rice can't escape later
4. Once all bags are filled, tape them together in the shape of your pillowcase
5. Lay your taped bags on top of the towel and fold the towel over
6. Tape the sides of the towel closed
7. Slide your weighted towel into your pillowcase

Supplies:

- 8-10 Sandwich Ziplock bags
- Rice, beans, pebbles, or pellets
- Duct tape
- Dish towel
- Pillowcase
- Essential oil (optional)

STRESS BALL

Directions:

1. Blow up balloon until it is 5 inches wide
2. Pinch the top of the balloon shut (2 in from opening), leaving room for funnel to be inserted
3. Place funnel inside opening of balloon while still pinching balloon
4. Fill balloon with small amounts of cornstarch at a time using your free hand
5. Continue adding cornstarch until balloon is filled 3 inches
6. Pinch out extra air and tie balloon

Supplies:

- Funnel
- Scissors
- Balloon
- 1 cup cornstarch
- Permanent marker (optional)
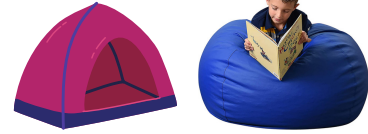- Essential oil (optional)

CALMING ACTIVITIES USING ALL OF THE SENSES

- **Calm Down Corner - a great way to limit auditory, visual, and other input so a child can regroup and calm themselves down**
  - A corner with a bean bag chair and some pillows
  - A small tent
  - A private desk

- **Touch - promotes full-body relaxation for children who are overwhelmed or anxious**
  - A shoebox-sized plastic container with sand, dry rice, or dry beans
  - Weighted blankets or weighted stuffed animals
  - Squishes with a pillow or beanbag chair

- **Taste - chewing and sucking are great for self-soothing**
  - Chewing on oral sensory snacks (fruit leather) or jewelry (Chewigems)
  - Sucking against resistance (smoothie through a straw)

- **Sound - soothing noise can help when kids are overstimulated from school**
  - Using a quiet voice
  - White noise (rain sounds, using a fan)
  - Calming music

- **Sight - decrease visual stimulation or provide calming visual input can promote regulation**
  - Turning off or dimming lights
  - Maintaining a clutter-free workspace
  - Using dividers
  - Looking at a glitter jar as it moves
  - Providing a visual picture schedule to help kids follow a routine

- **Exercise - heavy work or moving the body against resistance provides stimulation to the muscles and joints which can be calming and organizing**
  - Squeezing Playdoh or a stress ball
  - Pulling against resistance bands
  - Pushing chairs or desks
  - Climbing
  - Carrying books or laundry

- **Movement- repetitive and rhythmic movement helps with kids who are overstimulated, overwhelmed, or have tantrums**
  - Rocking in a chair
  - Swaying in a parents arms
  - Swinging

SPEECH STRATEGY

INCORPORATE
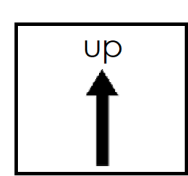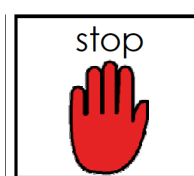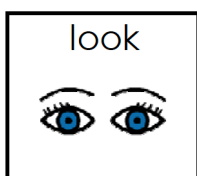## CORE WORDS!

**What are Core Vocabulary Words?**
- They are a list of highly useful words that make up the majority of what we say everyday.
- Words that apply across all settings (e.g., during play, while at home, with other peers, etc).

Why is Core Vocabulary important?
- Teaching core vocabulary words to our children allows for flexibility across any settings and communication partners.
- They can provide our children with the opportunity to communicate for a variety of functions and does not limit them to specific topics.

How can we use them with our kids?
- You can print out and laminate the core vocabulary board visual found here: Universal Core Board
- As your child is playing, you can point to the corresponding word while modeling the word (e.g., if playing with a ball, you can say the word "up" while pointing to the visual picture of "up" on the board).

up

more

look

go

stop

up
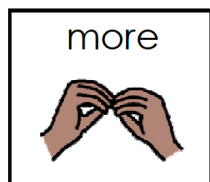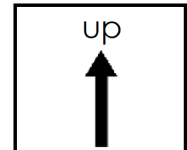
These are examples of some of the core words you can incorporate at any setting, any time! To access more core words, please reference the Universal Core Board.