

MAKING WAVES AT DCS



DEEC Sensory Pathway

Building connections through the use of balance, core muscle strength and coordination

It's no secret that elementary students have a lot of energy, and opportunities for movement throughout the day is crucial in order to regulate their bodies and make them more available to learn. During the winter months, when low temperatures and weather conditions often necessitate indoor recess, elementary teachers look for alternative movement opportunities for students during the school day.

DEEC Occupational Therapist Karly Smith and Beacon Principal Brooke Stidham had a long-time dream to create a permanent sensory pathway, and with support from K-4 Instructional Coach Pam Krebs and Resource Room teacher Connie Myers, their idea came to fruition this past week in the DEEC Marketplace.

"This pathway is a universal opportunity for students to move through the day," Smith shares. "Students with increased sensory needs, or those who just need a brain break, can utilize the pathway."

Designed to be a regulating, multi-sensory movement experience, students participate in a variety of activities designed to give their body the movement it needs (like spinning), followed by an activity that is very regulating (like bear walking or deep breathing). The order in which these activities are completed is designed to target specific sensory systems in order to maximize the benefit of participating in the pathway.

The pathway begins with the letters A-Z, laid over different-colored shapes, arranged in a zig-zag pattern. Students jump from one letter to the next with both feet. This element (as with others) can also be utilized in different ways: teachers can ask students to stand on the first letter of their name, or find a certain shape or color. In this way, the elements of the pathway are an opportunity for learning as well as movement.

Other pathway activities include breathing like a lion, standing tall like a giraffe, yoga poses, spinning, stomping like a dinosaur and breathing exercises. As mentioned above, these elements are laid out in a deliberate order, activating one sensory area, then another, down the line. The path can be performed either backward or forward with the same benefits.

Watching students go through the elements, one can see the reward immediately. When asked why she liked the pathway, one student replied, “when your body is wiggly, it helps you get calm.” This is exactly the result Smith and Stidham hoped to achieve. Both Beacon and Anchor teach students Zones of Regulation to interpret their feelings, and when asked how they felt after the pathway, a student replied, “green,” which is calm and ready to learn.

[Click here](#) for a student demonstration of the DEEC Sensory Pathway.

