

Heavy Work Activities List for Teachers

Compiled and Edited by Elizabeth Haber, MS, OTR/L and Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L

Following are activities school teams can use to provide heavy work activities for students. All the activities on this handout are "naturally occurring activities." This means they can be easily incorporated into the student's daily routine within the school environment. Special thanks to all the therapists who openly shared ideas! **Note:** This list was published in Answers to Questions Teachers Ask About Sensory Integration, Second Edition, by Kranowitz, Szkut, Balzer-Martin, Haber, and Sava (2001), Sensory Resources. This is a very useful resource for teachers. For more information, go to www.sensoryresources.com.

1. Place chairs on desks at end of day or take down at beginning of day.
2. Erase the chalkboard/dry erase board.
3. Wash desks and/or chalkboard/dry erase board.
4. Help rearrange desks in the classroom.
5. Help the janitor with emptying wastebaskets, mopping the floor, etc.
6. Fill egg crates (small ones that students can carry) with books to take to other classrooms. Teachers could ask students to move these crates back and forth as needed.
7. Help the gym teacher move mats, hang them up, etc.
8. Take chewy candy breaks with licorice, Fruit Roll-ups, Starburst or Tootsie Rolls.
9. Take crunchy food breaks with dry cereal, vegetables, pretzels or popcorn.
10. Sharpen pencils with a manual sharpener.
11. Cut out items for display from oak tag.
12. Carry appropriately heavy notebooks to the office or from class to class.
13. Carry books with both hands hugging the book to the chest.
14. Push the lunch cart or carry lunch bin to the cafeteria.
15. Staple paper onto bulletin boards.
16. In the classroom, fasten a large phone book to the bottom of the student's chair with heavy duty tape. The teacher can rearrange the student's schedule so the student has to move to a different location within the classroom (carrying or pushing his/her weighted chair) between certain subjects or activities.
17. Have student move several packs at a time of Xerox paper from the storage area to the school copy center.
18. Use the Ellison cut-out machine. Students can collect orders from teachers (who provide the paper and use these cut-outs for bulletin boards, etc.) and then press out the number of pieces required under the supervision of an adult. This very heavy work is a great strategy for organizing behavior.
19. Climb on playground equipment.
20. Swing from the trapeze bar.
21. Perform sports activities that involve running and jumping.
22. Run around the track at school.
23. Push against a wall. For younger students, you can use the idea that "the room feels small this morning. Can everyone help me push the walls out to make the room bigger?"
24. Fill up big toy trucks with heavy blocks, push with both hands to knock things down.
25. Have the student color a "rainbow" with large paper on the floor while on hands and knees.

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26. Play "cars" under a table in the classroom where the student pushes the car with one hand while creeping and weight bearing on the other hand.
27. Open doors for people
28. Use squeeze toys that can be squeezed quietly on the student's lap under the desk so that the student does not disturb the class.
29. Do chair push-ups.
30. Do animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl).
31. Jump on a mini trampoline.
32. Stack chairs.
33. Take isometric exercise breaks.