

Back-to-School Sensory Obstacle Course

Materials Needed:

- Backpack
- 2-4 books (for weight)
- Painter's tape or yarn to create a line on the floor
- 1 Pencil
- Child-safe scissors
- 1 piece of paper with straight, curved, and zig-zag lines drawn on it
- 5-10 small erasers (or other small, soft items like cotton balls)
- A small container (e.g., a pencil case, a bowl, or a small box)
- A timer (optional, to keep the lesson on track)

Lesson Plan (20 Minutes)

1. Warm-Up: School Bus Stretches (3 minutes)

Goal: To prepare the body for movement with dynamic stretches and get into the school mindset.

Instructions:

1. **"Look for Your Friends":** Stand tall and gently turn your head from side to side, as if looking out the bus windows. Do this 5 times each way.
2. **"Reach for Your Backpack":** Perform 10 big arm circles forward (placing your backpack in the overhead bin) and 10 big arm circles backward (taking it down).
3. **"Step Up the Bus Stairs":** Do 10 high knees, alternating legs, as if you're climbing the big steps of the school bus.
4. **"Bumpy Bus Ride":** Do 15 seconds of gentle jumping jacks or jog in place to simulate a bumpy ride to school.

2. Main Activity: Classroom Challenge Obstacle Course (14 minutes)

Goal: To engage in a series of fun, themed tasks that target gross motor, fine motor, coordination, and sensory processing skills.

Instructions:

Set up the following stations around the room. Explain each station first, then let the student go through the course 2-3 times.

- **Station 1: The Backpack Delivery (Gross Motor & Proprioception)**
Place the backpack with books at one end of the room. The student must put the backpack on, walk or march across the room to a designated "desk" spot, take the backpack off, and set it down gently. This "heavy work" is great for body awareness and calming.
- **Station 2: The Hall Pass Walk (Gross Motor & Balance)**
Using the painter's tape or yarn, create a 6-8 foot line on the floor. The student must walk along the line like a balance beam. To make it a challenge, ask them to walk heel-to-toe or say the Pledge of Allegiance while they walk.
- **Station 3: The Eraser Toss (Hand-Eye Coordination)**
Place the small container on the floor or a low table. Have the student stand a few feet away and try to toss the 5-10 small erasers into it. This works on aiming and graded force.
- **Station 4: Scissor Skills Practice (Fine Motor & Bilateral Coordination)**

At a table, have the student use the scissors to cut along the different lines (straight, curved, zig-zag) on the paper. This builds hand strength and coordination between both hands (one to hold, one to cut).

- **Station 5: Pencil Push-Ups (Fine Motor & Finger Dexterity)**

The student holds a pencil vertically against a wall or a large, upright book. Using only the thumb, index, and middle finger of one hand, they must "walk" their fingers up to the top of the pencil and then back down. Repeat 3 times with each hand.

3. Cool-Down: Quiet Reading Time (3 minutes)

Goal: To help the student transition from a high-energy activity to a calm, regulated state using deep breathing and focus.

Instructions:

1. **"Book Breathing":** Have the student lie on their back and place a single, light book on their belly.
2. Ask them to breathe in slowly through their nose, making the book rise gently.
3. Then, ask them to breathe out slowly through their mouth, making the book fall.
4. Repeat this for 5-8 slow, deep breaths. This provides calming deep pressure and a visual for mindful breathing.
5. Talk briefly about their favorite part of the "school day" obstacle course.

Differentiation and Scaffolding

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Use fewer books in the backpack to make it lighter.
 - Make the balance beam line wider or shorter.
 - Have the student stand closer to the container for the eraser toss.
 - Draw thick, straight lines for cutting practice.
- **For an Extra Challenge:**
 - Add more books or have the student try walking backward with the backpack.
 - Ask the student to walk the balance line backward or while balancing an eraser on their head.
 - Increase the distance for the eraser toss.
 - Create more complex shapes or spirals to cut out.

Notes for the Teacher

The primary goal is fun and participation! Focus on effort and enjoyment, not perfect execution. Observe which activities the student enjoys most and which ones are more challenging. This can provide valuable insight into their sensory and motor preferences and needs. You can easily swap out stations with other school-themed ideas, like sorting colored paper clips (fine motor) or doing "chair push-ups" at a desk (heavy work).