Competencies
S2 Demonstrates the ability to adapt, modify, or structure the environment based on an understanding of which auditory, visual or other sensory stimuli may be distracting, offensive, reinforcing, or calming for the individual student under the direction of licensed staff.

Sensory Defensiveness

Read the scenario and then answer the questions that follow.

Scenario
Bethany is a 15 year old young woman with ASD. She attends classes at a large public high school. Bethany is known to have tactile defensiveness, and is especially upset by light touch. She actively avoids crowded situations and becomes upset and withdrawn when lightly touched by others.

For most of her school day, Bethany receives instruction in the school’s special education resource room. This fall, however, Bethany will be spending part of her day in mainstream classes with non-disabled peers. Bethany’s parents are concerned that problems may arise when she starts attending mainstream classes with non-disabled peers.

Questions
Considering Bethany’s sensory defensiveness, answer the following questions about this scenario.

1. In addition to being lightly touched by others, what other kinds of tactile input might prove upsetting for Bethany?
2. How might Bethany’s sensory defensiveness pose a problem in the classroom and other areas of the school?

3. What kinds of modifications could be made in the classroom to accommodate Bethany’s sensory needs?

4. What other kinds of modifications could be made to help Bethany in other areas of the school (such as in the hallways, the lunchroom, etc.)?