



Cindy's Corner

Cindy O'Connell is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired with 35 years of experience working with students who are visually impaired including those with additional disabilities and has served as a mentor and a consultant in the field both nationally and internationally. "Cindy's Corner" shares activities that have been adapted to meet the needs of these students. The activities have been developed to be used by teachers and families alike. Each month a new hands-on activity will be presented that will provide students with a fun way to work on meaningful skills.

Salad on a Stick

Hands-on activities are a great way to work on meaningful skills. Here's a nutritious idea from Family Fun Magazine, called "Salad on a Stick," with simple tips on how to adapt it for children with multiple impairments. You can be having fun in a natural setting while you work on entry-level mathematics!

You will need:

- Feta cheese, cut into cubes
- Cherry tomatoes
- Olives
- Skewers or toothpicks *
- Latex gloves if preparing for others

**If skewers are too difficult, just use individual snack containers or Ziploc bags.*



There are lots of educational opportunities (*Number Sense & Operations and Patterns, Relations, & Algebra*) embedded in this fun activity. For many students, focusing on simple *grasp and release* (transferring each ingredient from a tray into a separate, open container) is the appropriate place to start. At higher levels, work on *classification skills*, sorting the cheese, olives and tomatoes into like-groups from a tray of combined ingredients. Incorporate *counting skills* by

counting out, e.g., 10 tomatoes, 10 cubes of cheese and 10 olives into each container.



Work on *sequencing skills*. Set containers up in an organized left right progression. Provide a sample (use pictures, or a completed skewer) to illustrate the pattern. Working from left to right, place one ingredient from each container on a skewer (this is a good opportunity to work on functional hand skills by using *one hand to*

stabilize, one to manipulate). Continue the pattern until skewers are full, or ingredients are used up. Focus on just two items to simplify the pattern, or expand the activity by adding more veggies or fruit.

In a school setting, you can adapt this activity on lots of different levels depending on the needs of your students. For example, set the activity up assembly-line style as a co-operative snack prep activity. Put one student in charge of each ingredient. Focus on *structured social skills* by modeling how to use a peer's name to get their attention and saying please, thank you and you are welcome. Work on *money skills* by selling skewers for ten cents each from a snack cart. If a student is reinforced by social interaction, focus on appropriate *social skills* by taking orders and delivering skewers to offices and classrooms. At home, pack into zip-loc bags for sibling lunch bags. Or, set out "just one" skewer to a plate for appetizers or desserts (*one-to-one correspondence*).



However you use this activity, remember to provide constant positive reinforcement and to keep it fun!