

## WEIGHTED VESTS

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### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, intellectual disability or ADHD may be inattentive, distractible, over-active, or clumsy or may have stereotypic behaviour.

### PROPOSED SOLUTION/ INTERVENTION

Wearing a weighted vest for some time each day is claimed to calm children, to reduce problem behaviour and increase attentiveness. Vests typically have pockets that can contain weights of around 10% of the child's body weight. They may be worn for varying periods of time and for one or more periods during the day. They may be used alone or combined with other interventions.

### THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE – HOW DOES IT WORK?

Weighted vests are one intervention that may be recommended by therapists working within a Sensory Integration framework. It is claimed that problem behaviour may be due to over- or under-sensitivity to sensory input. Weighted vests are believed to provide sensory input through providing deep pressure stimulation that can affect brain functioning and decrease arousal.

### WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR ITS EFFICACY?

There are only a few studies exploring the use of weighted vests (seven were located in a recent review). All studies were small n designs and only 20

children were included. There was considerable variation in the way the vests were used with different weights and different time periods. Some observed students while they wore vests, and others immediately afterwards. Of the seven studies reviewed, four reported no effects, one reported mixed results and two claimed positive effects. The positive effects reported were very small and were unlikely to have been clinically significant. The designs, data reporting and interpretation of the studies reporting positive results were seriously flawed.

### CONCLUSIONS

At this time the best data suggest that weighted vests are ineffective and their use cannot be recommended.

### THE MUSEC VERDICT: NOT RECOMMENDED

Key references may be found at:  
[http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/co\\_brief.aspx](http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/co_brief.aspx)

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