

Attention in the Classroom

HELPFUL HINTS

- Sitting near the front will reduce the distraction in their visual field during carpet time.
- Allow them to sit beside the teacher to help maintain attention.
- Using a 'defined' spot for them e.g. carpet square, sequencing spot during carpet time or assembly.
- A regular change of position can help them to maintain their attention e.g. Lying on tummy, sitting on the floor, sitting on a chair during circle time, kneeling.
- Work with in success; if they can stay in circle well for 20 seconds, use this as your baselines and increase your time from this point.
- Try a short walk around the circle and then try sitting again.
- Have a box of fine motor activities that they are allowed to go to during transitions between lessons or classroom activities e.g. puzzles, threading, peg boards, pencil tasks.
- Taking regular short breaks to walk around classroom, to carry out a chore such as handing out books or tidying away involving carrying objects to different places.
- Provide as many opportunities as possible for active work during the day e.g. instead of sitting to do Math have them do the problem on the board standing up.



Reduce movement when seated:

- Provide a solid seat with armrests of the correct height.
- Provide a Tilted desk top (angle board) to help him to maintain an upright posture.
- Provide 'heavy work' activities during the day especially prior to handwriting tasks or those which require long periods of sitting e.g. cleaning the board, handing out books, pushing tasks, moving furniture, and the activities on the attached sheet.
- Providing a fidget toy to keep their hands busy for example a squeeze ball, blue-tack, and theraputty. To use at their desk so as not to distract other children.
- Provide a 'sit-fit' cushion which allows them to have the sensation of movement in a more appropriate and less distracting way for the classroom environment.
- Prior to handwriting activities or at the beginning of the day carry out hand writing warm-up exercises. This will increase the strength in their hands and provide the feedback to their joints which they are seeking by fidgeting. (see attached sheet)



ACTIVITY IDEAS

• •

Movement Breaks:

Have these scheduled into their timetable at times when they usually need to on the move rather than waiting for them to begin moving you are trying to pre-empt it so that their body is getting the movement it needs in a more functional and structured way.

Try a combination of these for 5 minutes directly before you want them to focus their attention well. Make sure the movement is either up and down or back and forth as going around in circles can often increase arousal levels.

- Wall push ups or 'pushing the wall down'.
- Walking like a bear on hands and feet with bottom in the air.
- Tug of war.
- Pushing out play dough on the desk.
- Using the handwriting preparation activities.
- Doing jobs in the classroom such as carrying boxes.
- Going on a climbing frame/ monkey bars or gym hoops.
- Taking a walk but with a back pack with books in it for weight to provide deep pressure for the shoulders.
- Knee walking or batting a balloon whilst on their knees.
- Row Boats – sit facing another child, put feet together and hold hands: push and pull as though rowing.
- 'Animal Walks e.g. bunny, crab, frog jumps, kangaroo.

Classroom:

Following are activities that provide heavy work for students. All of the activities are 'naturally occurring' activities. This means that they can be easily incorporated into the student's daily routine within the school environment. Again these can be incorporated into movement breaks.

1. Place chairs on desks at end of day or take down at the beginning.
2. Erase the dry erase board.
3. Wash desks or dry erase board.
4. Help rearrange desks in the classroom.
5. Fill crates with books to take to other classrooms Teachers could ask students to move these crates back and forth as needed.
6. Sharpen pencils with a manual sharpener.
7. Staple paper on to the wall for wall displays and bulletin boards.
8. Have students push against the wall.
9. Use squeeze toys that can be squeezed quietly on the students lap or under the desk so that the student does not disturb the class. e.g a fidget toy.
10. Do chair push ups.

Programmes: Adapted from Yack, Aquilla and Sutton (2002): 'Building Bridges through Sensory Integration' Sensory Resources: USA. Gemma Cartwright October 2005.

