

## EDUCATION PAYING ATTENTION

### STAYING CALM IN THE CLASSROOM

The overall goal is to incorporate additional sensory input into the child's routine so that their sensory needs are met within their daily life.

#### Hints and Tips

- Observe the child and identify what they are seeking and needing and provide this subtly within the class (e.g. a child who is swinging on their chair/fidgeting requires regular opportunities for movement).
- Try an air filled cushion and provide regular opportunities for changes in position in the class (e.g. sitting on a cushion, sitting on the floor, standing, sitting on a gym ball etc). Also consider supported seating (chair with back and arms or use of a lap buddy).



- Call the child's name to get their attention before giving them an instruction.
- Use low level lighting or dim the lights.
- Provide regular opportunities for movement breaks between tasks. These are best to be purposeful (e.g. being a helper, taking a message to the office etc.) and make use of playground activities.
- Provide opportunities for heavy muscle work (Proprioceptive) activities, e.g. carrying box of books, pushing and pulling activities. This will help particularly with encouraging focus/concentration and would be beneficial to complete prior to activities that require focus. Activities with resistance can also help to work the muscles.
- A backpack for outdoors or a weighted gilet or waistcoat can be worn for short periods, to provide sensory input.

- Some children like to wear tight fitting garments under their school jumper such as body armour or a squeeze vest.
- Provide opportunities for the child to explore noises, visuals, smells, textures etc. A fidget tool or a sensory box may help in the class. Use as part of the child's daily routine timetabling into the day. Use in conjunction with a timer or clock and time limit the session.
- Have a 'safe space' a quiet space where a child can go to calm down and have some time out to regulate.
- Lying in a ball pool buried under the balls (keep head free) can also induce relaxation for some children. Lying on a bean bag with smaller bean bags on top can also induce relaxation.
- Encourage the child to listen to quiet music or stories with headphones.
- Quiet, soothing music such as relaxation CDs that are commercially available may also be helpful.
- Often children can find having things in their mouths is calming hence the reason so many people bite their nails or chew pens.



## Calming and Alerting

You may be surprised at the different ways you can alter a person's "arousal" level (e.g. his concentration/relaxation/activity levels).

Certain activities or environmental stimuli can be used to stimulate your child and improve his concentration; other strategies can be used to calm him down. The following table may give you some ideas – chose ones to try which are appropriate given your child's age and needs.

Calming	Alerting
Use of soft, dim lights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of bright lights.</li> <li>• Use of a torch to draw attention to a particular thing (e.g. on the blackboard).</li> </ul>
Use of soft, slow music (e.g. commercially available relaxation music). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing student to use headphones when working</li> <li>• Mozart is good for calming</li> </ul>	Classical music with a varied beat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing student to use headphones when working</li> <li>• Vivaldi is good for alerting</li> </ul>
Use of a soft, slow, monotone voice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varying the pitch, speed, volume and intonation of your voice.</li> <li>• Some children respond to being given a "fidget" item e.g. a (quiet) squeezey toy, "koosh ball".</li> </ul>
Sitting in a small, enclosed space e.g. tent, or for young children, inside a large box, being surrounded by cushions.	Larger, open spaces, with lots of different colours/objects.