

## 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 toy 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. Try different oral motor strategies to promote the same affect:
  - Allow child to chew gum, eat chewy or crunchy foods.
  - Drink thick liquids (thick milkshake, smoothies or yoghurt drinks) through a straw.
  - Sports bottles provide sucking resistance.
  - Allow bubble blowing during break times.



## 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>
Holding something warm (e.g. hot water bottle).	Holding something cool (e.g. an ice pack, water bottle with ice or cold face cloth).
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>
Being given a firm massage, cuddle or being gently "sandwiched" between pillows or thin mattresses.	Being "tickled".
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.