

## **Sensory friendly classroom.**

A sensory friendly classroom gets the student ready to learn; improves the overall functioning of the student including learning, attention, concentration, social functioning, and behavioural presentation; and lowers their stress and anxiety levels. Without a sensory friendly classroom and a well-integrated sensory system, the student's basic needs for a calm and responsive state of functioning are not met, therefore, academic learning can-not take place effectively.

- ❖ Where possible, limit the use of artificial lighting (especially fluorescent lighting).
- ❖ Have one wall without distractions such as posters or bulletin boards and encourage the student to sit facing it. If you work from the white board, make this wall the distraction free wall.
- ❖ Start class with movement activities.
- ❖ 2-3 mins of movement can increase concentration for 15-20 minutes. Encourage students to move every 20-30 mins. This could be by moving to a new table, doing stretching activities or by creating proprioceptive breaks at the table such as:
  - Chair pushups – encourage the whole class to push up through hands on seat of chair. Keep feet flat on floor but hold body up for 10 seconds.
  - Chair pull-ups – while sitting on the chair, hold onto the seat and pull to 'lift the chair up'. Hold for 10 secs then release.
  - Table push ups – in standing, rest hands on table and slowly lower straight body towards table and back again. Encourage movements to be as slow as possible.
  - Head/neck compressions – clasp fingers together, place palm down on top of head and push down firmly with straight neck. Hold for a short period.
  - On line resources which provide short, quick movement/activity breaks for the whole class may be beneficial; <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
- ❖ Provide a clear structure for the lesson so the students are aware of expectations and timings. Ensure that there is a clear start and end to tasks. You may need to use a visual prompt to help.
- ❖ Reduce/eliminate clutter and visual distractions.
- ❖ Reduce/eliminate distracting noise.
- ❖ Intersperse table based and physical activities.
- ❖ Limit table and chair based activities. For example, encourage the children to work when lying on their stomach on the floor, kneeling next to the table, standing leaning over the table etc. Work on the floor or against a vertical surface (such as easel or with paper stuck to the wall).
- ❖ Use highlighter or different coloured pens on whiteboard or handouts.

- ❖ Ensure that tables and chairs are the correct height.
- ❖ To aid concentration, students may need to fidget. Consider providing fidget objects – thick elastic band, stress ball, hairband, or blue tack. This can provide sufficient sensory feedback to aid concentration. Rules may need to be attached and object removed if causes distraction to others though.
- ❖ Chewing or sucking can help aid concentration.
- ❖ Do not expect eye contact. It may be difficult to process auditory and visual information simultaneously.
- ❖ Allow extra processing time. Provide a 6 second gap before repeating instructions or providing new ones.
- ❖ Try not to talk/provide additional instructions when students are completing tasks.
- ❖ Allow time out if required.