

10 WAYS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH HYPERACTIVITY & ATTENTION NEEDS!

1. Thera-Bands



You have probably seen them used in Pilates classes, but they work great for wrapping around the legs of chairs. It helps with those wriggly legs and keeps them from unintentionally kicking their desk (and their peers!) When they sit in their chair, they place their feet behind the Thera-Band and try and pull their legs forward (it's really hard to do!) It is a great way for them to expend energy, and helps them keep a safe body in the classroom. (And Yes! We wear slippers in my classroom... I like to be comfortable while I read and take in information, so I figure I should let my kids do the same!)

2. Move-and-Sit Cushions



When I taught first grade, I had over a dozen of these in my classroom. It helps students get sensory input as they sit, because the slightest movement causes a great shift in balance. It gives students the feeling of a lot of movement without it distracting those around them. I like to make them available to all of my students, because these cushions are great for developing core strength (a great combatant to the wriggles!)

3. Weighted Balls

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I used to use fidget toys in our meeting area, but even with consistent previewing and modeling, they often became toys and projectiles. Now I use weighted balls, and it has alleviated many of the issues I had with fidget toys. Students sit criss-cross and place the ball in their lap. It helps them to feel grounded in their place, while providing sensory input. They are allowed to lift it with the arms, but only to their chest and back. They are generally too heavy for them to move more than that, and I no longer find things flying across our meeting area in the middle of our discussion. I got mine from the exercise department at Marshall's.

4. Stability Ball Chairs



Don't get me wrong, I LOVE using stability/yoga balls in the classroom. Like move-and-sit cushions, they are great for providing the feeling of movement with limited distraction, while simultaneously developing core strength. However, with some students, their mobility posed a problem. Even with the donut rings at the base, or the built in legs, there are some students that will bounce their way into the hallway. If this has happened to you, you know how frustrating this is as the teacher...and then, you feel horrible because you know they WANT to do what's right, but they physically can't! These chairs have made a huge difference! They run on the expensive side, but I have purchased all of mine from Craigslist for very cheap! A quick clean, and you have a great way to give your students all the benefits of the yoga ball, while keeping them to a fixed location.

5. Fidget Pencil Toppers



These are amazing for students who need something to play with while listening to directions at their tables or

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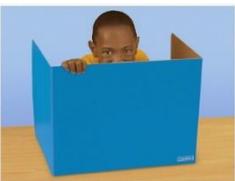
desks. I also find it a helpful focus tool for students while they are brainstorming ideas independently. They are also really easy to transfer from one pencil to another!

6. Chewable Pencil Toppers



For schools where chewing gum isn't allowed (or you just hate finding gum stuck under desks!) these chewable pencil toppers are great focus tools! Chewing is a great way to give students the sensory input they are seeking while they work. They chew and think, write something down, and then go back to chewing as they think. It works wonders! If you can't get your hands on these toppers, a bag of pretzels or goldfish crackers can be a great supplement!

7. Individual Partitions



Our PTO sponsored a grant that allowed me to purchase a class set of these partitions. They are available to all students, but they are particularly helpful to my students with attention issues. Limiting the amount of visual stimulation that can distract them is key, and these partitions do the trick. I forgot to take a picture of them, but I have protector sheets taped to the inside, where I put checklists and directions for students that need that individual reminder. Grabbed my class set from Lakeshore Learning.

8. Time-Timers!



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Often students who struggle with attention also struggle with recognizing the passage of time. These are often the kiddos that you find still at the water fountain ten minutes later! Having a class time-timer (as well as smaller, independent ones available) has been a HUGE help in keeping kids on track and focused. It is a great visual reminder for students, and helps them feel more independent. Actually, one of the jobs in my classroom is the TIME CHECK. This student is responsible for setting the class time-timer at the beginning of each work block. I set individual ones, often at 10-15 minute intervals, saying, "When I come back, let's see if you can have 3 ideas on your paper." I cannot stress the value of this tool enough!

9. Egg Chairs



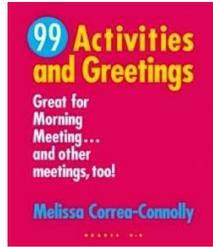
These are great for students that struggle with transitions. You know which kiddos I'm referring to... the rest of the class is cleaning up their work, putting things away, and making their way to the next activity, but they are spinning in circles with their arms out at meeting. Transitions can be incredibly over-stimulating for some kids, and so modifying their transitions can really help! I bring you... the IKEA EGG CHAIR!

About two minutes before ringing the chime to begin the transition, I have my one or two students head to their "transition spot," where they generally have a book waiting for them. They have a quiet seat in the egg chair and pull down the chair cover. This blocks all visual stimulation for them. Then I have the rest of the class transition to the next activity, whether it is to meeting, to line up, or to a center. After the rest of the class is settled, my students in the egg chairs join us, having avoided the chaos of the transition completely. Now, I don't like to use this all year, as it doesn't offer them a chance to learn how to deal with transitions (which is a necessary skill in life!) I slowly pull back this support as the year progresses, sometimes completely.

10. Incorporating Movement into the Classroom

I know we are all weighed down by increasing demands in the classrooms with fewer resources and what feels like an ever-increasing student case-load. However, I have found that carving out even a two-minute movement break between activities actually ends up saving me time. Being proactive in this way means that I have to interrupt lessons less often with reminders and redirections. Also, when planning out my day, I try to be conscious of how long I am asking students to sit in the same place. Between longer blocks, I try and break it up with a quick movement break, or at least a change of setting (rug to desk). I also try and have more "hands-on" activities available during center time, although I could do better there! The book 99 Activities and Greetings has a lot of great ideas for quick activities that build community and incorporate movement.

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I hope you found some of these ideas helpful. I'm curious to know strategies that you might use to support students in your classroom. I'm always looking for new ideas!

<http://www.starrspangledplanner.com/2014/09/supporting-students-with-sensory.html?m=0>