

## **Keeping Calm in the Classroom:**

### **Suggestions for regulating students' activity levels & facilitating attention**

Incorporate movement into the day whenever possible by having students:

- Run errands such as taking notes to the office. Carrying heavy items can have a calming effect, so try having the student return a large stack of books to the library or pull larger items in a wagon.
- Stack or unstack chairs or place them on the desks at the end of the day.
- Move books or furniture within the classroom.
- Erase and/or wash the white board, classroom tables or desks.
- Pass out papers to other students, and deposit finished work in a designated space.
- Water classroom plants or the school garden with water cans.
- Participate in class movement breaks between activities (see Energizers! handout).
- Assist with reorganization of classroom or library bookshelves.
- Sharpen class pencils using a manual pencil sharpener.
- Mimic clapping rhythms to gain class attention before offering verbal instructions.
- Staple items to a bulletin board or tack projects to a board with a rubber mallet.
- Try alternative positions during work times, such as standing or kneeling at a table or lying on the floor.
- Hop on one foot or imitate animal walks when transitioning between work centers, lining up to leave the classroom, or gathering for a group lesson.
- Encourage active recess activities and avoid restricting or limiting recess time as a consequence for poor behavior.

Allow student to use "fidgets" & other methods to facilitate improved focus:

- Tie theraband or tubing to desk or chair legs for "heavy work" while sitting.
- Remind student to use "readiness exercises" to warm up before quiet seatwork or to encourage self-calming when needed (see handout).
- Use alternative seating such as therapy balls, t-stools, and "move n' sit" or sissel seat cushions.
- Place a heavy item such as a large book or weighted lap pad in a student's lap to provide calming deep pressure.
- Consider allowing students to use "fidgets" such as squeeze balls, koosh balls, hair elastics, Silly Putty, or stretch toys during listening activities.
- Allow students to chew sugar-free gum or short lengths of refrigerator tubing attached to their pencil end for calming oral motor input.
- Have students keep sports water bottles at their desks to alert their body with a cool drink.
- Speak with your school occupational therapist regarding other calming strategies for specific students, such as the use of weighted vests, pressure garments, weighted shoulder wraps and individually designed sensory breaks.