

## **SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS BEFORE YOU ASK THE OT**

- Interventions and strategies to use BEFORE requesting an OT observation or referral for OT Screening or OT Evaluation.
- Interventions and strategies need to be tried with fidelity for a minimum of two weeks.
- Remember to document outcomes.

## **TOPIC: ATTENTION, OUT OF SEAT (bouncing, rocking in chair), WORK INITIATION / SUSTAIN / COMPLETION**

### PRE-REQUISITE TO ATTENTION / FOCUS

1. PROPER FITTING of CHAIR, DESK, STUDENT



2. RULE OUT MEDICAL PROBLEMS
3. CONSIDER ANY MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS, HEALTH ISSUES, NUTRITION, SLEEP, etc
4. CONSIDER DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL as well as CHRONOLOGICAL AGE
5. ENVIRONMENT that is CONDUCIVE to FOCUS AND ATTENTION

### CONSIDER "HEAVY WORK" ACTIVITIES FIRST

Having a classroom of students at different levels of attention/alertness can be a particular challenge to teachers. Some students are under-attentive: looking sleepy, appearing uninterested and yawning. Others are over stimulated, ready to run a marathon, but not ready to sit, listen or write. One activity category to address the needs of all these students is known as HEAVY WORK. When children engage in focused, heavy work activities, they arrive at a "just right" state of attention. HEAVY WORK is a teacher's best friend. It can bring down those revved up students and speeds up those slow students.

### What is HEAVY WORK?

Heavy work activities are those that activate sensory receptors in our muscles and joints. These receptors are responsible for our "body awareness" and help with our state of attention/alertness. When we intensify how much these receptors are given, we often see more organized behavior and better ability to follow directions for either students who are under attentive or over stimulated.

### EXAMPLES OF HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES

1. Whole body actions involving pushing, pulling, lifting, playing and moving using BIG muscle groups
2. Oral actions such as chewing, sucking and blowing
3. Using the hands for squeezing, pinching or "fidgeting"

MORE HEAVY WORK EXAMPLES AND LINKS AT END OF DOCUMENT.

Movement in general, that is controlled and purposeful, can be a powerful tool to use for attention and focus for all students. Movement breaks can be short and still be effective. There are several online options for a variety of exercises, breathing, movements, etc. Examples include:






GONOODLE <https://www.gonoodle.com/>


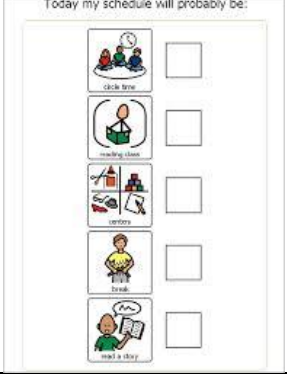

COSMIC KIDS YOGA <http://www.cosmickids.com/>

BRAIN BREAKS <http://teachtrainlove.com/20-brain-break-clips-fight-the-fidgeting/>

FITNESS ADVENTURE <http://adventuretofitness.com/>

BRAIN DANCE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UelcKjKafNQ> (one of many you tube videos)

IF YOU SEE	TRY THIS	TOOLS TO USE (NOT TOYS)
POOR FOCUS POOR ATTENTION to TASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider alternate seating</li><li>• Sensory input via HEAVY WORK</li><li>• Sensory input via ORAL</li><li>• Sensory input via HAND FIDGETS (See additional ideas at end of document)</li><li>• Sensory Diet Ideas: <a href="http://www.school-ot.com/Sensory%20Strategies.html">http://www.school-ot.com/Sensory%20Strategies.html</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disc cushion</li><li>• Ball chair</li><li>• Chair leg bands </li><li>• Isometric exercises</li><li>• Chewies, water bottles </li><li>• Fidgets </li></ul>
MAKES NOISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify pattern (ex during independent work vs. instruction)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whisper phone  </li></ul>
CHEWS ON PENCILS AND SHIRTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sensory input via HEAVY WORK</li><li>• Sensory input via ORAL</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See HEAVY WORK list of activities</li><li>• healthy foods carrots, celery</li><li>• Chewies, water bottles, straws</li></ul>

<p>OUT OF SEAT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual boundary</li> <li>• Allow to stand to work</li> <li>• Consider alternate seating</li> </ul>	
<p>WORK INITIATION / SUSTAIN / COMPLETE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timer</li> <li>• Visual schedule</li> </ul>	<p><b>Visual Schedule</b></p> <p>Today my schedule will probably be:</p> 
<p>LACK OF SELF-REGULATION CAN'T MANAGE / TOLERATE STRESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep breathing</li> <li>• Positive self-talk</li> <li>• Resources from SEDNET</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://sednetregion13wiki.wikispaces.com/C.+Self-Regulation">https://sednetregion13wiki.wikispaces.com/C.+Self-Regulation</a></p>	<p><b>Chill Out Plan</b></p> <p>Learn and practice strategies BEFORE needed.</p> <p>Example: breathing</p> 

**HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES**

From <http://www.pisp.ca/> Naturally occurring activities within the school environment:

Seated activities

- Wring a thick piece of rope
- Use elastic bands on the fingers and doing “finger exercises”
- Sit on hands
- Use a disc ‘n sit
- Use quiet squeeze toys that won’t distract others
- Chair push-ups
- Prior to seatwork, have student pinch, roll, pull theraputty or squeeze balloons filled with flour. Give student firm pressure on shoulders
- Take chewy candy breaks – such as licorice, fruit roll-ups, Starburst or Tootsie Rolls or crunchy foods such as dry cereal, vegetables, pretzels or popcorn
- Sip from a water bottle with a straw
- Use a beanbag chair in the classroom during silent reading or independent work tasks.
- Stretch exercise band

Whole body activities

- Place chairs on desks at the end of the day or take down at the beginning of the day.
- Wash desks and/or chalkboard/dry erase board

- Help rearrange desks in the classroom
- Sharpen pencils with a manual sharpener
- Carry heavy notebooks to the office or from class to class
- Push the lunch cart or carry lunch bin to the cafeteria
- Run around the track at school Wear a weighted backpack when walking from class to class. Be cautious about how much weight goes in the backpack so that it does not result in lower back pain
- Carry books with both hands hugging the books to the chest
- Have student move several packs at a time of photocopy paper from storage area to the school copy center
- Perform sports activities that involve running and jumping
- Have students push against a wall
- Stack chairs
- Animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl)

LINKS to other lists of HEAVY WORK activities

- <http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/heavy-work-activities.html>
- [http://www.aea1.k12.ia.us/documents/filelibrary/special\\_education\\_services/occupational\\_therapy/Classroom\\_heavy\\_work\\_8a\\_990FC1C03167D.pdf](http://www.aea1.k12.ia.us/documents/filelibrary/special_education_services/occupational_therapy/Classroom_heavy_work_8a_990FC1C03167D.pdf)

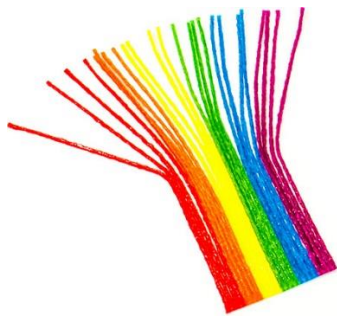
**HAND FIDGETS**

Hand Fidgets are great self-regulation tools to help with focus, attention, calming, and active listening. There are countless items that can be used as hand fidgets. It is important that they are used as “TOOLS” and NOT toys.

- Stress Balls: You can make them with cornstarch or sand and balloons.



- Corks: for people who like to pick at things.
- Wikki Stix



- Marbles in a small bag

- Squish balls: kids love the ones that an effect happens when you squish it (eyes pop out, or different colors turn on)
- Ponytail bands
- Soft pipe cleaners with ends cut off (not sharp)



- Silly Putty or knead eraser



- Velcro: Attach a 5-inch strip of adhesive velcro underneath the desk for students to rub with their fingers. Most kids like the soft-loop velcro but some prefer the more prickly side – either one will do the trick.