

## OT Ideas for Keeping the Older Student Focused

Here are some brief ideas of how to keep an older student attentive and focused. Many students often respond to sensory input differently. There are those that are sensory seekers (talking constantly, unable to sit for very long, and often seem hyperactive) then there are the ones that are under responsive to sensory stimuli. These students often stare off into space, seem like they are in their own little world, and often miss important things such as verbal directions and information. This will often affect their grades as well as their self esteem. Below are some ideas to assist in these areas:

- 1) Give student preferential seating. If the student has a window to look out of, a noisy classmate, or a loud pencil sharpener to try to overcome, they are probably not going to be able to attend where they are currently sitting.
- 2) Use recess as a tool, students are most alert and focused right after they come in for recess. Many teachers use this time right after recess for snack or quiet reading when in fact this is when the most important lessons and information should be taught.
- 3) Use the computer or other media for students who seem bored with the traditional way. Use slide shows, the computer, or physical props or models of the concepts that you are teaching.
- 4) Give the student a specific job, this could include passing out the papers before the lesson, or sharpening each classmates pencil before the teacher starts, anything to get the student up and moving will increase alertness and focus.
- 5) Give breaks as needed. For the student that has trouble attending, have them make a trip to the office 2-3 times per day taking papers or checking the teacher's mailbox. Anything to break up the structured time so that they student feels important but is also able to have a few minutes of quiet time to themselves. Use this sparingly though as students may miss too much important information.
- 6) Determine when the student is most distracted, is it all day, during a particular subject, or during a specific time of the day? Keeping track of when the student is distracted and when he is most attentive can help in deciding what he/she needs for improved focus and attention.
- 7) Active participation is also key. If you need a student for a demonstration, call on that student to come to the front of the class where they can actively participate. Maybe halfway through the lesson when the student begins to lose focus, call on them at that time to be your assistant to demonstrate the point you are trying to get across. After this short break it will help them to attend to the rest of the lesson.
- 8) Make sure that the student is not bored due to lack of being challenged. If the student is performing work that is too easy, none of the sensory strategies listed above will make a difference. This is also true for the student that is trying to complete work that is too hard. Students need to be performing appropriate levels of work to maintain optimal attention.