

Incorporate Calming Music, cont.

- Variations:
 - Play slow, relaxing music during work times, during silent reading times, during relaxation times, or in the hallways.



Incorporate Movement

Movement and sensory rich activities promote endorphins and calming chemical reactions in the brain. Incorporate movement activities throughout the day.

- Technique:
 - Start a session with relaxation breathing. Follow with a sensory-rich movement activity to “get the wiggles out”. End with relaxation breathing to practice relaxing after getting “revved-up” by movement. This sequence (relax, move, relax) can be very organizing for students.
- Variations
 - See Movement Activities (Handout #5) for movement ideas for pre-school/elementary and middle/high school.
 - Brain Gym (www.braingym.com) activities work well here.

Encourage Active Imagination

- Technique:
 - Create stories and scripts to develop visual imagery and pictures to evoke relaxation.
 - Purchased programs such as **READY...SET...RELAX PROGRAM**, by Dr. Roger Klein are designed to be used in classrooms for creating imagery to promote relaxation. It systematically provides relaxation activities (muscle relaxation, deep breathing, thinking positive thoughts and listening to relaxing music) through a progressive set of scripts.

It includes scripts to teach breathing and relaxation, decrease test anxiety, improve school performance, and improve self-concept.

Incorporate Yoga Movements

- Technique:
 - Introduce yoga and explain how yoga movements address breathing, strength, balance, coordination, relaxation and endurance.

Programs and materials are available (see resource list below) to teach progressive postures and the use of yoga movements for different age ranges.



For more information on this topic, contact the building principal, the building physical or occupational therapist, and/or refer to the following resources:

- * American Yoga Association, www.americanyogaassociation.org
- * Bersma, Danielle, et al., **Yoga Kit for Kids**; Imaginazium at (800)-800-7008, www.imaginazium.com
- * **Brain Gym**: www.braingym.com
- * Klein, Roger, PsyD and Allen, Jeffrey S., M.Ed, **Ready... Set... R.E.L.A.X.**; www.innercoaching.com
- *Mozart CD entitled “Relax, Daydream and Draw”- www.integrationscatalog.com

Developed by the MMSD OT/PT Relaxation Committee, Teaching and Learning Staff, Educational Services Program Support Teachers and Staff.

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REGULAR EDUCATION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING PROCESS

Relaxation Strategies for the Classroom

What Is Relaxation?

The relaxation response is a natural and innate protective mechanism against “over stress”. When bodies are relaxed, heart and breathing rates are normal to slow, blood pressure is normal, and body systems are in balance.

What Is Stress?

Stress is anything that happens that is out of the ordinary. It can be positive or negative and have a small or very dramatic impact.



- Normal Adaptive Reaction to stress:
 - Source is identified
 - Challenge is met
 - Body returns to normal functioning
- Harmful Reaction to stress
When stress is prolonged, undefined, or from multiple sources;
 - The body does not return to baseline as rapidly
 - There continues to be a potentially damaging stress response, the “Fight, Flight, Fright or Freeze” response.

Why Do We Need Relaxation?

We need relaxation to combat the negative effects of stress. The relaxation response turns off the “Fight, Flight, Fright or Freeze” response.

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Negative Effects of Stress

“Fight, Flight, Fright or Freeze” response:

- Releases chemicals in the brain
- Increases heart rate
- Makes muscles tense up
- Increases respiration rate
- Sharpens senses
- Shuts down digestion



Negative effects of stress related to excessive anxiety in children:

- Lowers achievement scores
- Interferes with memory
- Impairs problem solving ability
- Creates dependent behaviors
- Lowers self concept
- Interferes with peer relationships

Signs of Stress in Children

- Stomach problems, eating problems
- Headaches, aches and pains
- Heart pounding
- Muscle jerks or ticks
- Sleeping problems, feeling of tiredness
- Dry mouth or throat
- Stuttering
- Uncontrollable crying or not able to cry
- General anxiety, tenseness
- Dizziness, weakness
- Irritable and easily set off
- Depressed, bored
- Accident prone
- Feeling angry in general
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Never laughs or displays nervous laughter, jumpy
- Feeling rejected, does not have friends
- Unable to concentrate, does not finish work
- Attention seeking behaviors



Using Relaxation Strategies in the Classroom will:

- Decrease effects of stress
- Increase self esteem
- Decrease depression
- Calm students down after physical activities or conflict
- Teach students a relaxation response they can use themselves at any time
- Improve school performance, including increased reading scores
- Help children stay calm in tense situations
- Combat test anxiety
- Increase concentration
- Decrease hyperactivity
- Encourage listening skills
- Encourage positive thinking and self-talk

RELAXATION STRATEGIES TEACHERS CAN USE

Teach Relaxation Breathing

Relaxation breathing is useful to slow the class down in hallways, after specials, and before and after stimulating events. Be sure to explain to students why they need to practice relaxation breathing.

- Needed: a quiet environment, a repetitive word or phrase, a passive attitude and a comfortable position
- Technique:
 - Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth slowly
 - Purse lips slightly when exhaling
 - Breathe slowly and repetitively from the diaphragm (belly breathing)
- Variations:
 - Pause between inhalations and exhalations
 - Count while breathing
 - Move arms up and down while breathing

Teach Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Technique:
 - Ask students to get in a comfortable position and do relaxation breathing.
 - Ask them to systematically feel different parts of their body tense and then slowly relax.
 - Discuss how it feels to be tense/relaxed.
- Variations:
 - Ask students to pretend they are squeezing a lemon with their hands and then relax.
 - Ask students to lift their shoulders up towards their ears, hold, and then relax.

Incorporate Massage

- Technique:
 - Have students sit in a circle facing the same direction with their bodies turned to the side.
 - Ask the students to reach forward to the person in front of them, gently massaging their friend's shoulders and neck.
 - Ask each student to check with their partner to determine if they are touching them in a comfortable way.
 - Monitor the amount of pressure that students use and ensure students are respectful of their partners comfort.
- Variations:
 - “Erase” the back surface and draw a letter, and perform an action or draw a picture relating to that letter, (e.g. B-bee buzzing from flower to flower).
 - Teachers or students make up stories that students can “draw” as the story is read out loud.

Incorporate Calming Music

- Technique:
 - Use classical, baroque, Celtic and “new age” music that is flowing and continuous. Look for slow rhythm, low frequency rhythm beat, and repeating or cyclical patterns.