

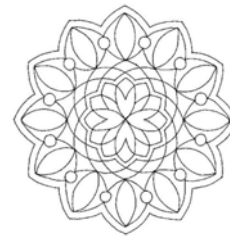
A Dozen Common-sense Strategies to Maintain Focus, Attention, And Enhance Learning in the Classroom!

Do you ever get to a point in the school year where students stop hearing your voice? Do you wonder if they have completely forgotten how to pay attention? How can we refocus that extra energy from tapping pencils, falling out of seats, constant chatting, or doodling into positive learning experiences? Here are some tried and true suggestions for channeling student energy and regaining focus:

1. Use a noisemaker such as a chime, maracas, or bell to get students' attention instead of using a teacher voice. The brain tunes out the teacher's voice because it becomes "normal" over time. Consistently using a distinct sound to get students attention works to create a positive habitual response: their attention on the teacher.
2. Silence the pen tapper with the sponge from a curler
3. Give an angry or over excited student some Silly Putty or TackyTac to knead as a calming strategy.



4. Provide inexpensive craft rings threaded with beads to fidgeting students for calming.
5. Stick a soft, fuzzy side of a strip of sticky backed Velcro to the underside of a desk for students who "pick" at things. Agree on a non-verbal cue to encourage the student to "pick" at the Velcro strip instead of other less desirable places.
6. Play calming music (without words), 60 beats per minute or less as students enter the classroom from recess, specials, the hall or cafeteria to create an environment that enhances learning. Turn off the music when you begin to teach.
7. Use natural lighting whenever possible (Windows, "natural light" bulbs in table or floor lamps) because natural lighting calms and increases productivity.
8. Have students who doodle, create doodles that illustrate their notes. Ask them to paraphrase what their doodles mean.
9. Keep Mandalas and markers or color pencils handy in the classroom for calming students. Coloring from outside in focuses attention, coloring from the inside out opens up creativity.
10. Attach a Mandala to the back of a test. Students color the Mandala when finished rather than bother other students.
11. If students are getting chatty, rather than tell them to be quiet, assign a Think/Pair/Share as a reinforcement of the lesson just taught.
12. If students are getting wiggly, have them stand and stretch.
 - a. A variation on this is to have them answer a review question or paraphrase something they just learned as a "ticket" to sit down.
 - b. Another variation is to have them stand up to answer questions in a "whole class chant".



About the Author



Susan Fitzell is a nationally recognized speaker and author of several educational resource books. She has over two decades of experience with differentiated instruction, teaching youth with special needs, students with behavioral and anger management issues, and students who experience bullying. Susan's company, AIMHI Educational Programs, focuses on building caring school communities.
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