

Ideas for assisting your child's success with homework or table top activities

During our last parent gathering (Parent Chat #2) which is held just prior to the monthly PTC meeting, we made a list of helpful strategies along with things to keep in mind. The following is what we spoke about:

How to set up the space?

1. **Familiar and expected:** Decide upon the surface/space where your child can be the most productive and try to stick with this area/table top which is most always the place where they do their homework or other practice of skill sets. You may also establish with your child, that lying on their stomach as mentioned in section D would be a great way to vary the option as mentioned in section D. below.
2. **Calming strategies: Think about:**
 - A. **Lighting:** Calming light, as natural as possible. Fluorescents tend to be alerting vs. other bulbs and natural light, calming.
 - B. **Sound:** Background sounds from a TV or alerting music may take away from their ability to focus. Find out from your children whether there is a calming rhythm type of music that may work in their favor to assist in their focus. If there is no way to block out the background noise, they may benefit from ear plugs or ear buds plugged in to calming Music.
 - C. **Touch:** While listening to stories being read or directions, your child may benefit from holding something that is not a toy but a texture to assist with centering and focus. Having putty at the station where they do their writing is a great way to begin any writing task for preparing the muscles of their hands for that task.
 - D. **Proprioception:** Deep pressure input is calming for the central nervous system. Using weight via a rice pack draped over the shoulders or lap is very helpful, often for calming & assisting with focus. If your child finds a subject matter or task such as reading or writing particularly challenging, then this may be just the ticket! The ones which have Lavender as the scent have an added olfactory benefit, as that herb is very calming for most people to smell. Maybe you have a sleeping bag that they could put the lower part of their body in while at the table doing their homework. Chewing gum may be a helpful tool for assisting your child with being in the "alert and ready to learn" place. Chewing can be calming for the central nervous system. Think about positioning. It often is the case, that when a child spends time lying on their stomachs with a 3 ring binder for their work space, that they are more grounded. They are then working on muscle strengthening in a new way. Variety is the spice of life!
 - E. **Temperature:** Cold Facilitates, heat calms: If your child is functioning in the "Blue Zone", (sleepy, slow moving, head on the table), they may need a cold pack to assist with alerting into the "Green Zone" (Just right and ready to learn::) If they are in the "Yellow zone" (super active, silly, anxious) they may benefit from that rice pack being warmed up and then offered to the child.
 - F. **Kinesthetic or Movement sense:** Your child may benefit from sitting on a pillow that offers movement while sitting. If you have a large therapy ball or can find one at tj maxx etc. There is something called a Hoki stool, otherwise called a wobble stool which may be helpful for improving the length of time someone can sit. Sometimes, as long as their

feet touch the floor (super important) adding a pillow under their feet can act as the movement their body may need to improve their focus.

Our next parent group will be held next Tuesday, February 4th from 5:30-6:00! Love to see you! Kristin Cameron, Occupational Therapist