

Managing Restless Young Learners

	Context	In my primary classes, I have a few learners who struggle to sit still for even short periods of time. Although this factor is relatively minor in the majority of my students, it is particularly acute in two boys I teach in one of my primary classes.	Behaviour		From my own experience, this behaviour, if left unchecked, can lead to inattention, learners wandering around and disrupting others, arguments, shouting out and a variety of other interruptions. Curtailing this behaviour by asking learners to <i>sit down</i> typically has limited effect.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve movement activities. • Include variety when it comes to activities. • Include a mixture of stirrers and settlers. • Weather permitting, engage in a variety of outdoor team sports which require communication and strategizing. • Promote independence by allowing learners to direct their own learning process. • Give learners a role which requires a degree of responsibility. 	Responses		<p>In looking for answers, I posed this question to the colleagues I work with via email and colleagues in the wider community via Twitter:</p> <p style="color: #6a994e;">How can I manage the energy levels for restless young learners, especially those who have difficulties sitting for even short periods of time?</p>	Question
Research	I also read some journal articles to bolster my own thoughts and the opinions of my colleagues. I found ideas that revolve around the topic of ADHD to be the most salient: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hockly, N. 2016. <i>Five things you always wanted to know about using technology and special educational needs (but were too afraid to ask)</i>. English Teaching Professional. Issue 104. • Greenaway, F. 2016. <i>Teaching students with ADHD</i>. English Teaching Professional. Issue 104. • Cunniffe, D. 2018. <i>Learners with special needs</i>. English Teaching Professional. Issue 104. • Delaney, M. 2014. Teaching Students with attention, concentration and hyperactivity difficulties - how to stop those spinning tops. Http://goo.gl/w1Se3R OUP. Accessed 05/11/2018. • TE Editor. 2010. <i>Stirrers and settlers for the primary classroom</i>. 		Points of interest		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employing guidelines and class rules. • Seating specific children closer to you. • Asking the child directly how you, as the teacher, can help. • Drawing attention towards positive behaviour. • Speaking to the parents and agreeing how best to support the child. • Giving children a stress ball to play with. • Ignoring minor behavioural issues. • Building class routines. 	
	Giving fidget toys to those who need them. I thought it might be fruitful to encourage learners to spin a pen over their fingers. This serves two purposes as it helps learners to fidget and at the same time allows them to be poised to write.	1			As I already include routines, a variety of tasks, and use of movement, thus limiting the amount of time learners are sat down, I wanted to experiment with:	Action points
Action/Outcome	I showed learners some Youtube tutorials and tried to teach them some rudimentary pen spinning skills. There was very limited success as most learners have not developed the necessary motor skills. In fact, many found the process frustrating.		2		Giving responsibility to some learners - creating a teacher's assistant. With my Saturday morning class, I have two boys who I thought would benefit from this process.	
	On reflection, there is clearly value in this. The boys were kept occupied and encouraged to work out the responsibility together. There was less squabbling than I imagined and much more give and take, which is good. Instances where these two learners were distracted and tempted to get up were marginalised. When they did stand up, with the view of interrupting others or generally behaving in an unfocused way, this was curtailed as they were required to take their seat and operate the computer when needed.	Action/Outcome			As my learners are now familiar with our class routines, I asked both boys to sit at the teacher's desk for the duration of the lesson and operate the computer. This did not detract from pair and group work or any activities involving movement. Both boys were responsible for changing the IWB slides, displaying answers and playing audio and video clips. They were informed this was their responsibility and they would need to work together to share the role.	Action
Summary	I will keep this routine until the end of term but imagine it will need to be changed or adapted as these learners may become bored of performing this task. It is also clear that some other students are starting to argue that they would also like the chance to be a teacher's assistant, too. It should be kept in mind that some may see this as favouritism given to a select few.			Questions? Comments?		