

North Tahoe High School SpEd Dept.

Elizabeth Erdelyi, Resource Specialist

2945 Polaris Road
Tahoe City, CA 96145
(530) 581 - 7000 ext. 31325

Brain Break Boxes

Spring 2018 Grant Cycle

Background & Overview

For students that are continually distracted or struggle with a learning disability, especially sensory processing disorders such as ADHD, Dyslexia, or other learning impairments like anxiety and stress, sitting in class for an entire day can be nearly impossible. Focus tools like fidgets can help students regulate their bodies, remain calm and focused, and help them participate in class in more appropriate ways.

Tactile learning, sensory integration and movement helps the right and left sides of the brain work together (Integrated Learning Strategies, 2016) and connects both the creative side with the logical side, providing much needed balance to a student's academic development. By providing North Tahoe High School students with Brain Break Boxes in their general education classrooms, students with and without learning disabilities can access these tools to help them self regulate in all their class periods, while maintaining focus on the material being discussed.

This grant seeks funding to purchase 24 sets of materials for Brain Break Boxes for all general education and special education classrooms at North Tahoe High School. These boxes will allow students to continue to access the district curriculum and keep up with important concepts, while maintaining focus and control over their bodies and behaviors. Having access to these tools will allow teachers to focus more on instruction and ensuring student

comprehension of the subject matter and will provide different behavior management strategies for teachers to implement with students who are struggling to remain engaged in their learning.

The Brain Break Boxes will allow students at North Tahoe High School to develop self-awareness and emotional regulation strategies, which will benefit not only their academic lives, but their lives outside of school as well. Students who are allowed access to these kinds of materials and self-regulation practices are more likely to stay in class and retain the information presented, instead of excusing themselves and missing critical components of classroom lectures / lessons.

Goals & Benefits

1. **Provide Academic Supports for Students:** Movement helps control the body and improves learning, so the inclusion of tactile learning and sensory tool integration into the classroom helps develop the right and left sides of the brain and encourages both sides to work more cohesively. Lessons can also include the use of fidget tools, which can help engage students in the learning process more authentically and can help concepts become more concrete in their brains.
2. **Provide Emotional Regulation for Students:** Students with emotional imbalances or who are “having a rough day” are able to focus their energy on a fidget toy while still remaining in class and getting the information that is being presented. Having the intervention of providing fidget toys can prevent student referrals or time spent in the office or outside of the classroom. Fidget tools will also allow for students to develop their own emotional regulation, which is a skill that will help them throughout their academics and in their daily lives. Students that physically can’t stay still in their seats often depend on other stimuli to control their emotions when they do not have a positive outlet, like fidget tools. The use of fidget tools within the classroom can free up their

brain for critical thinking, reading concepts, communication, getting thoughts on paper and making their skill set more automatic.

3. **Provide Behavioral Support for Students:** Behavior is communication and students who act out in class could be given fidget tools as an intervention that would prevent their behavior from escalating to an interruptive or unsafe level. Behaviors that can often surface and be disruptive to the classroom environment are usually masking other needs that are not being met in that student's life. These underlying issues can be anything from not feeling physically safe, lack of sleep or food, a developmental delay, or a delay in executive functioning skills to low self-esteem, lack of appropriate social skills, need for attention or sensory needs. Fidget tools can act as a Tier I intervention to keep students calm, engaged and active in their learning and will reduce the amount of time spent out of class due to behavior problems.
4. **Provide Teachers with Additional Interventions:** The more interventions and tools we provide teachers within their own classrooms, the better it is for both the students and the staff. Teachers who have options for how to manage and prevent emotional or physical outbursts in their classrooms will not only keep students in their classroom more frequently, which allows for them the ability to better comprehend the material, but will also help develop relationships with students that can help the overall classroom environment. Teachers who are able to have access to Tier I and Tier II supports in their classroom are more likely to have less interruptions and will have better behavior management strategies and expectations in place with their students.

Program Success & Milestones

1. Less Behavior Referrals

A reduction in behavior referrals and the increased access to sensory tools will keep students in class and engaged. Less referrals will mean less time out of class for

students, more cohesive and uninterrupted instructional time, and less administrative time spent dealing with discipline. More issues can be dealt with at the Tier I or Tier II intervention level, as opposed to behavior escalating to an inappropriate level.

2. Improved Interpersonal Relationships Between Students & Staff

TTUSD prides itself in creating meaningful, personal connections with students. The goal of TTUSD and NTHS is for student to feel that they have at least one, if not multiple, caring adults in their lives at school. By providing interventions that increase student time in class, they will also increase student-teacher interaction time which can improve and strengthen current relationships, as well as develop new relationships among students and staff.

3. Increased Self-Awareness in Students

Students can have an indirect instructional method to help them regulate their emotions and learn how to handle stress, anger, sadness and other emotions that may otherwise get in the way of their ability to learn. Increased self-awareness can also cut down on referrals for negative behavior, altercations between students, and a safer school environment. Students who develop self-awareness will also help create a school culture of tolerance, acceptance and community, which will produce positive outcomes for all students and staff.

Specifications

Implementation

Each general education classroom will receive (1) Brain Break Box that contains a variety of sensory support tools. The included tools are selected based on the grade level of the students (grades 9 - 12) and for their ease of use within a classroom setting. Training and support will be given to teachers at the beginning of the school year during a regularly scheduled staff meeting

5

to make sure that all staff members are comfortable with the boxes being used in their classrooms.

**Additional support and training may be provided to staff depending on where materials are purchased from. Training for sensory tools may also be purchased or provided separately from the boxes if funds are limited.

Sustainability

Sensory tools can be used for all students, regardless of whether they are considered to be general education or special education students. By providing these tools in every classroom, students will have consistent access to the Brain Break Boxes throughout the day and will know that they can regulate their behavior and emotions, regardless of who's class they are in. These sensory tools can be used for the entire population of the school for many years to come, making it extremely sustainable for North Tahoe High School.

Target Population

All general education and special education students within North Tahoe High School. Current student population is 400 and the Brain Break Boxes would be made available in every classroom throughout the school, providing all 400 students with continuous access to the sensory tools.

Budget

Materials Requested

All materials are purchased in quantities of 24 and would be purchased from Amazon;

1. Challenge Boxes (2 sets) - \$767.52
2. Weighted Worm - \$767.76
3. Weighted Lap Pad - \$959.76

6

4. Emotions Putty Set - \$383.76
5. Tactile Sensory Balls - \$455.76
6. Tactile Sensory Bean Bags - \$479.76
7. Putty Elements Set - \$527.04
8. Pressure Foam Roller - \$599.76
9. Monkey Noodle (5 pack) - \$191.76
10. Sensory Bundle - \$599.76
11. IRIS 12 quart storage bins - \$648.00

Total Materials Cost: \$6,380.64

Shipping & Taxes

Shipping & Handling costs will be FREE through Amazon

Shipping & Handling costs for training only ordered through Fun & Function will also be FREE

Tax amount for purchases (\$549.60) was calculated using the California state standard tax rate of 7.25%, but may vary depending on the distributor and who the order is placed with (Amazon or Fun & Function).

Training

Training may be purchased separately through the company Fun & Function. It would be an online webinar model provided to each teacher, with a certificate of completion upon finishing the training.

Total Cost for Training Only: \$1,200

Total Amount Requested

Total Cost for Materials + Training: \$8,130.24

Budget Notes

Training can be provided in-house via the Special Education Department, if needed. However, outside training will include more in-depth knowledge of materials and the different uses within the classroom setting and can provide teachers with more confidence in using the provided materials.

Supporting Links & Research

Sensory Processing and Classroom Emotional, Behavioral, and Educational Outcomes in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder - <https://ajot.aota.org/Article.aspx?articleid=1867114>

Fun & Function Research - <https://funandfunction.com/research>

Integrated Learning Strategies, Learning Corner - <https://ilslearningcorner.com/2016-09-fidget-toys-for-better-attention-and-focus-in-the-classroom/>

The Evolution of the Importance of Multi-Sensory Teaching [in Elementary Mathematics]: Theory & Practice - https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Catherine_Kelly5/publication/26522728_The_evolution_of_the_importance_of_multi-sensory_teaching_techniques_in_elementary_mathematics_theory_and_practice/links/00b4951d634021ea97000000/The-evolution-of-the-importance-of-multi-sensory-teaching-techniques-in-elementary-mathematics-theory-and-practice.pdf