

Intervention Continuum – In the Classroom

Designated Area within the Classroom – A Meaningful Intervention

Creating a Designated Area in your classroom

Rationale:

A place for students to go to when they need:

- Quiet time
- Thinking time
- Alone time
- Reflection time
- Calming time
- A change of environment
- A break
- Self-monitoring
- A “re-set”!
- To work through emotions



Who benefits from this?

- Students with high sensitivity and/or are anxious
- Students who struggle managing their emotions
- Students who occasionally require some time for themselves to switch gears or transition to another activity
- The class group – if a student makes use of the Designated Area because they are upset, they are not instigating or bothering other students
- Teachers – the learning environment is preserved

When to use the Designated Area:

When I notice that a student is:

- Showing signs of anxiety/stress
- Tired
- Asking to have a break
- Not available to learn
- Acting up

The keys to a setting up a **‘Designated (Quiet) Area’** in your classroom:

- Often, many items (ex. Furniture, alternate seating options, curtains, cushions, etc.) can be found in your classroom or your school that are not being used. These can be given a second life to begin or add to your existing resources to create your personalized Designated Area.
- It is important that a space be cleared out to set-up your Designated Area, preferably away from the door and away from ‘heavy traffic’ in the classroom.
- A small tent can be a useful tool, a large refrigerator box can be painted to become a ‘cocoon,’ a cave or an island – good places to retreat to.



Materials inside the Designated Area can include an array of the following...

Visuals	Hands on	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breathing techniques ▪ Exercise/yoga pictures (how to) ▪ Emotions/feelings ▪ Search and find bottle ▪ Search and find books ▪ Nature scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calming basket (range of fidget tools) ▪ Books (picture books, mazes, emotions, etc.) ▪ Tactile bins (rice bin, lentil bin) with small items to find ▪ Different writing utensils (white board and dry-erase markers, paper on a clipboard etc.) ▪ Felt marble maze ▪ Never ending drawing pad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calm lighting (flashlight, lava lamp, etc.) ▪ Timers (sand timer, time timer) ▪ Earbuds and music

Best Practices: Using the Designated Area

- Students can ask to use the Designated Area or the adult can encourage that they visit the area, for a short break, to provide privacy in managing their emotions, to re-center themselves and better return to the group to follow through on adult requests.
- A 'break pass' or other item can be used as a visual prompt if some students are sensitive to being singled out in front of their peers.
- Establish pre-set times for particular students who will benefit from visiting the area (ex. Morning entry, transition from recess/lunch for a few minutes)
- Using a timer or sand timer may be considered but is not always beneficial, at times this may trigger certain students
- Set the parameters for using the Designated Area;
 - 1 student at a time
 - If it's busy you must respect the person's privacy and come back a little later

- Explain that it's not a play zone, it's a safe, calm place to have personal time to help you get back on track.
- Explain and model how the intervention materials are intended to be used
- The materials present in the area need to be handled with care
- Students in area returns to the group when they are ready and able to follow adult cues
- Acknowledge the proper use of the area by providing feedback to the student after they have used the area
- Try to conference with the student on the same day, to understand why the student went and if your intervention and support may be needed in other areas of their day to help prevent frequent or increased use of the Designated Area

Benefits

For the student:

- Provides time and a safe space for the student to feel and experience their emotions
- Increases self-awareness
- Provides a context where the student can manipulate different tools to help process and manage their emotions, discover what works best for them
- Over time may decrease impulsivity
- Can increase attention/focus skills
- A respectful way of working with emotions
- Benefits from support within the classroom, easier to reintegrate in group than if they had physically left the classroom.

For the class group:

- When a student is upset and goes to use the Designated Area, the learning environment is preserved.
- When a student is upset and they walk around the room, they often touch, poke and bother other students. Their attention is then deflected, this may also increase anxiety and apprehension as they are scanning the room to see whether the student will head in their direction. They also wonder if their belongings will be touched or taken.
- As different students use the Designated Area, it models that emotions can be managed with support and the day can continue to unfold – it normalizes and de-dramatizes emotional waves.

For the teacher:

- Continues to build the student-teacher relationship
- Demonstrates empathy and understanding towards a student
- Provides a context where emotions are normalized, welcomed and given a safe place to be experienced
- Prevention and intervention rather than managing challenging situations or crisis due to unmet needs
- May decrease disruptive student behaviour
- Enables the teacher to manage the group and then provide individualized attention to the student in the Designated Area
- Can eventually increase teaching time