Responsive Classroom®

What Is Quiet Time?

Consider the energy and intensity that often accompany the middle of the day. Lunch and recess provide students with opportunities to run, play, eat, and socialize, and teachers often see this energy spilling over into the classroom as students reenter for the afternoon. They often run into the room, bumping and shoving, laughing and talking loudly; sometimes they return upset about something that happened at recess or lunch. The energy can be overwhelming, for both teachers and students.

Quiet time offers an opportunity for students to transition back into the classroom in a purposeful and relaxed way so they are better ready for an afternoon of learning. Just 10 to 15 minutes of time to read, write, draw, work on a puzzle, or do some other quiet work can help children take a physical, mental, and emotional breather so they are more ready to engage in learning in the afternoon.

Structure of Quiet Time

Teachers structure quiet time in a variety of ways. The following tips offer some ideas to consider.

- **Time:** Generally, 10 to 15 minutes is about right. It might be hard to think about setting aside time each day for quiet time, but teachers who use quiet time often say they can't live without it. Some teachers even say they save time, because many disputes and worries that spill into the room after lunch often dissipate as students relax into quiet time. Whatever time you choose, try to be as consistent as possible so that students can count on that time each day.

- **Choices:** When students can choose what to do during quiet time, they have a sense of power and control during that time and are more likely to engage positively in their work. At the beginning of the year, consider limiting choices to keep things simple. They might be able to read, write, or draw, for example. As the year goes on, you might offer more choices as students are ready.
  Some teachers keep choices focused on the daily work of the room. For example, students can read, write, work on unfinished classwork, or get a start

on upcoming homework. Other teachers offer choices such as doodling, playing a solitary game, or meditating or resting. Consider your goals for this time as you decide what choices to offer.

- **Teacher's Role:** What do teachers do during quiet time? Sometimes, they give themselves the same choices as their students. It can be a welcome break for teachers and can help recharge adult batteries for the afternoon to take a few minutes to read, write, or draw. Some teachers use quiet time to get ready for the afternoon or catch up on some paperwork. Something teachers should not do is to walk around and chat with students, as children may have a hard time following the rules of quiet time if adults aren't following them as well.

Teach Quiet Time

Like any other routine or structure, teachers need to teach students how quiet time will work. They may use Interactive Modeling to teach skills such as how to transition into the room, how to make productive choices, and what to do if you finish what you're working on. Teachers can also help children build into quiet time gradually, first setting up the routine, and then trying just 5 minutes for a while before building to 10 or 15 minutes.

When used effectively, students and teachers alike look forward to this oasis of peace and quiet in the midst of a busy and energetic school day.

Ideas for Quiet Time Routines/Skills to Model

- ◊ Transitioning into the room
- ◊ Making productive choices
- ◊ What to do if you finish your work