

QUIET TIME PRIMER

Purpose

The purpose of Quiet Time (QT) is to provide students a regular quiet, peaceful, restful period so that they are less stressed, healthier, and *more ready to learn*. The teacher's role is to create a safe, quiet environment for the students during QT.

The main expectation during QT is quiet in the classroom, as well as in the hallways and throughout the school. The more that all teachers and staff support quiet throughout the school during QT, and have a positive attitude about QT and QT activities, the more successful the program will be.

Rationale

In today's culture students and teachers are exposed to increasingly high levels of stimulation and stress. Whether in a low socioeconomic status (SES) urban school, or in a high SES suburban school, stress is high and generally on the rise. Certainly low SES students are more at risk, but most students are affected by high levels of stress. This stress impacts several psychological and physical dimensions that directly compromise learning and successful education. (See references below.)

Research indicates that high levels of stress negatively impact physical health, brain functioning, working memory, attention, motivation, self-esteem, and creativity, and increase the incidence of depression, suicide, and violence. In our society today, in order to have effective educational environments, we need high impact stress-reduction and human-development programs that support healthier and happier students, teachers, and administrators, and counterbalance the high stress environments of our schools.

QT Activity Options

The general recommendation for QT activities is that they should be relaxing and not focused. The concept is to be unpressured and peaceful. If using meditation, it is best to use meditation techniques that have evidence to support their efficacy at reducing stress, increasing self-esteem, increasing happiness, increasing attention, and/or increasing performance. General recommended activities for QT include:

1. Meditation
2. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)
3. Free drawing or painting

When first implementing a QT program, starting with a standardized SSR program is a good option. Reading is a relaxing activity, develops appreciation and skill of reading, and is relatively easy to implement. See appendix at the end of this document to see an example of SSR guidelines.

Homework is not a QT activity. Homework is associated with pressure and therefore not recommended. QT is not a study hall

If using meditation as an option, the technique should be evidenced-based, easy to practice, and the follow-up support should be high-quality to facilitate good results.

For a QT schedule, it is recommended that QT is a consistent, daily practice first thing in morning before academic classes and then at the end of day as a transition to after school. The length of the QT period ranges from 5 to 20 minutes, depending on the age of students and the time available in the schedule.

QT Procedure

1. Close the door to minimize noise.
2. Seating arrangement is important. Students ideally are separated and comfortable to reduce disturbances.
3. Have students clear their desks, except for reading or writing materials if used during QT.
4. Have students remove all other items from their hands, ears, etc. (no cell phones!).
5. Instruct students to sit up and sit comfortably.
6. You may use a quiet bell to start and end QT.

General Point: Maintain a positive attitude with students in preparation and during QT. Do not get frustrated if students are not completely quiet initially --- be patient. Being quiet for many students is an acquired skill and it takes time to develop. Explain to the students that during QT, we want to respect each other by being quiet and not disturbing each other. Consistency over time is important.

Main Guidelines of QT

1. Quiet (no talking, whispering, moving about, etc.)
2. Do not disturb or interact with others

APPENDIX

Sample Guidelines for Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

The explicit purpose of SSR is to support the growth in reading skills of the student. But SSR also has the benefit of providing a relaxing, peaceful, non-pressured activity for students, providing a break from their high-pressure, hyper-stimulated lives. Below is a sample of guidelines for SSR.

1. Students select reading material that is of interest to them. Many SSR proponents maintain that it is optimal for this to be a book, fiction or non-fiction, that tells a story (e.g., biographies, novels, etc.). Some SSR guidelines allow for magazines or newspapers; some do not.
2. SSR students should be on task reading during the whole QT period.
3. Students should have easy access to reading material. They should either have it in their possession prior to QT beginning, or select from an in-classroom library just prior to the start of QT.
4. The standard rules of QT apply: no noise, no interacting with or disturbing others, no headsets or cell phones.

General Resource References on Stress

- <http://www.stress.org/topic-effects.htm> -- American Institute of Stress
- <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml> -- National Institute of Mental Health
- www.nmha.org -- National Mental Health Association
- http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm
- www.psych.org -- The American Psychiatric Association
- www.psychologicalscience.org -- The American Psychological Society
- http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/helping_teenagers_with_stress -- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Specific Research References on Stress and Stress Reduction

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