Classroom Environment Reflection

The environments we are in are full of stressors across the 5 Domains of Shanker Self-Reg®, and classrooms are no exception. Classroom environments are known to have a substantial impact on children's learning and behaviour. Although ideal environments are individual and context dependent, this poster identifies some key areas to consider and offers some suggestions as to how to make your space as Self-Reg friendly as possible.

Possible Stressors

Stressors come in many shapes and sizes.
Below are some examples of possible stressors you may find in a classroom.

Visual Clutter

Consider decluttering wall, bulletin boards, shelves and furniture, particularly in instructional areas. Minimize, organize and group visual material on walls and shelves, as well as student and teacher work areas. Consider an art gallery which focuses on grouping similar items, simply, tastefully and even colourfully done for visual pleasure and to grasp the attention of the viewer. This helps students find information more easily.

Noise

Allow students to reduce background noise by making noise cancelling headsets or ear buds available. Headphones do not need to be connected to a device.

Scents

Minimize the presence of strong scents, like perfumes, certain foods, or cleaning chemicals.

Lighting

Adjust the amount of lighting needed throughout the day, according to the arousal needs of the classroom. Do what you can to maximize available natural lighting or lessen the intensity of fluorescent lighting.

Hydration & Nutrition

Make sure students have access to, and are encouraged to take, hydration breaks throughout the day. Also ensure that students have access to healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

Seating Options

Offer a variety of seating or standing options allowing for the child to change their body positions. For example, standing desks, a couch, bean bag chairs, peddle desks, etc.

Microenvironments

Microenvironments are spaces within spaces that meet a diverse range of Self-Reg needs. Within a single room, multiple microenvironments can be used to reduce the stressors that negatively impact children's learning and behaviour. Consider incorporating microenvironments into your classroom by creating areas which down or up regulate, for example:

- A carpeted floor area with clipboards
- A tent or fabric over a desk
- A comfy chair or couch away from the desks
- Stationary bikes or foot pedals under desks
- A long table with curtains over the front and pillows underneath

Teach Your Students About Their Environment

Talk to your students about the impact of stressors in the classroom and teach them how to use what you have put in place in their environment (e.g. noise cancelling headphones or a stationary bike) to help them better self-regulate.