

Dear SLES Foundation,

Thank you for providing third grade with this extraordinary opportunity.

With the SLES Foundation mini-grant funding, the third grade team was able to provide flexible seating, fidget tools, and sensory options to students. These tools maximized student learning potential by individualizing the instructional environment to meet our students' diverse learning needs. This grant allowed us to create proprioceptive, focus-friendly, brain-based, classroom environments that directly and positively impacted both student behavior and learning outcomes.

We were able to purchase wobble stools, kick bands, fidgets, noise-dampening headphones and other learning tools for our classrooms. By engaging with these various learning tools, our students were empowered to know themselves as learners and develop ownership over their individualized learning needs. We found that the innovative shift in mindset that came with making these changes within the classroom ensured higher motivation, engagement, and accountability among our students.

The act of empowering our students to recognize their individualized learning needs and respond appropriately to those needs combined with the comfort of knowing that their needs were being recognized and met within the classroom environment has been impactful. We have found this self-knowledge to positively influence both students' academic performance and behavioral achievement as it has promoted self-awareness, built self-confidence, and given students control over their learning.

We found that the intentional, strategic use of fidgets in the classroom helped our third grade students to sharpen their focus and increase their attention. This enhanced attention ultimately led to improved academic performance. We found these fidget tools to be beneficial to most students but especially helpful to those with learning variances, sensory processing differences, and attentional needs. We observed that the more sensory input our students received from the kick bands, wobble stools, and fidgets, the better their concentration, attention and engagement.

Additionally, the noise-dampening headphones were immensely beneficial and highly sought after by students. Not only did the use of these headphones lead to an increase in sustained focus and work completion, it also decreased stress and enhanced relaxation and contentment in a number of students. Students who have a difficult time filtering out extraneous noises and external stimuli made marked improvement in the areas of focus, attention, concentration and output when wearing these headphones. Students with performance anxiety benefited from these headphones as well since they were able to drown out distraction and stay grounded and centered in the moment.

The wobble stools were particularly useful for providing an outlet for third graders' extra energy output since these stools engage students' core and enable them to gently rock while seated. The subtle input these wobble stools provide the vestibular system is

known to promote engagement and attention. We found this to be accurate as our students exhibited an increased ability to attend and engage for sustained durations of time while seated on wobble stools during whole group and/or small group lessons. There was a clear association between the use of wobble stools and increased stamina and sustained focus.

In conclusion, these learning tools met the diverse learning needs of our third grade students, supported their attention, and allowed them to channel their energy in positive, academically-focused directions.

Student Testimonials:

“The grant Ms. Creticos wrote benefitted me in many ways. The fidget helped me because when I’m stressed, I can squeeze a ball and I feel my stress go into the ball. The noise-dampening headphones helped me because the classroom is usually loud and the headphones make all the noise go away which helps me focus.” - Yashvi Bhandari

“The headphones help me be focused and keeps loud noises out. Wobble stools get my wiggles out.” - Mason Carroll

“The fidgets, wobble stools, and headphones help me focus on my work by showing me how to squeeze out stress and anger, wobble it out, or block out slamming lockers.” - Ella Rose Datch

“The fidgets have helped me because it keeps my hands busy so I can listen to the teacher when she is talking and reading and listening to a student.” - Rocco Maloni

“The wobble stools and fidgets help me get my energy out so I can focus, while the noise-dampening headphones help me block out noises around me when I need to.” - Peyton Pegues

“The headphones help me because if someone or something is distracting, the headphones block it out. The fidgets help because sometimes I need to fiddle. The kickbands help because my legs like to bounce a lot.” - Ethan Ansah

“The fidgets help me a lot when I work. They have bright colors that make me happy when I look at my fidget. The noise-dampening headphones also help me when classmates disturb me. The wobble stools help me concentrate.” - Dahlia Monzavi

“The fidgets help me think when I work because when I squish them and tangle them, they help me think of ideas of what I should write.” - Layla Gorgi

“Fidgets are helpful because they help me concentrate. I say that because some people have a hard time staying on the carpet and the fidgets keep people entertained.”
- Coleman Jones

“The kick bands have helped me a lot because they help me to concentrate on my work and never kick my friends. It helps me when I’m frustrated on my work and drifts my feelings away like frustration.” - Joel Bolkar

“The fidgets help me in school because sometimes I need to move and the fidgets help that need to move because I can squish and stretch the fidgets to control that need to move. Also, when I’m controlled, I can learn better.” - Lucas Ebert

“The head phones help me block out loud noises that distract me. The stools are helpful because they help me calm down. Last but not least, the fidgets help me focus all the time. The kick bands are personally my favorite. They also help me focus. Ms. Creticos’ class is soooo thankful!” - Campbell Wallace