

TIS Engine Changers and Classroom Engine Tools

TIS will continue our collaboration with the UNM Occupational Therapy Graduate Program this year. If you are a returning TIS family, you might remember your student talking about their 'engine' and 'engine changers' they use at school.

If this is a new concept for you or your child, think of your body or brain as your 'engine'. It can run on high, low, or 'just right'. Engine changers are strategies or tools to help your engine get to a 'just right' spot for whatever you are doing. 'Just right' can be a tricky concept, but even little ones realize that our engine is different when we are sleeping than when we play on the playground, and just right for playing soccer is not the same as just right for watching a movie. We talk about 5 different ways to change your engine: mouth, move, touch, look, or listen. Here are some examples you might use as an adult:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Mouth | - a cup of coffee in the morning to get going
- a chewy snack to refocus in the afternoon |
| Move | - tapping your foot while listening during a meeting
- doing some yoga when you are stressed |
| Touch | - taking a warm bath to relax before bed
- wearing your favorite soft sweater for an important event |
| Look | - turning the lights down as you read a bed time story
- opening the blinds wide in the morning |
| Listen | - quiet music in the background while working
- wearing headphones in a crowded room |

The staff and teachers at TIS are committed to helping students do their very best at school – thinking is hard work! We know learners are most successful when they are in a 'just right' place for listening, writing, working with a partner, or taking a test. Teachers are encouraged to be 'detectives' and recognize when some or all of the 'engines' in their classroom are running too slow or too fast for the learning activity going on. Students are working on figuring out what engine changers help them during the day – often coming in from recess, switching from an art activity to listening to a story, and cleaning up/lining up tend to be times when our engines need a little help shifting gears. Some of the students' favorite engine changers are chair push-ups, getting a drink of water, dots & squeezies, hand presses, finger push/pulls, taking 3 deep breaths, and eating crunchy foods for snack. Of course, each student and classroom group is different.

The goal is for students to experiment and learn what works best for them. Many teachers have 'engine changer' posters with pictures of some good options to use in the classroom. When you are on campus, you might also see stretchy chair bands, wiggle cushions, headphones, and weighted lap pads available in classrooms. It is all about giving our students the knowledge and tools they need to help them be even more successful than we can imagine!

For more information, visit www.AlertProgram.com or click on this link [Overview of the Alert Program for Parents](#)

Please contact Robin Leinwand (our school occupational therapist) at rleinwand@tism.org if you have any questions or would like more information.