



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
COVER SHEET – PART II  
Application for Grant:  
2026-2027 Funding Cycle**

Assigned Grant Proposal #: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level(s): \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students DIRECTLY involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Requested: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Focus Area(s):** In order to be considered, Waco Education Foundation Innovation Grant proposals must fall under one or more of the E4 focus areas: early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance. NOTE: In addition to meeting one of the E4 focus areas above, grant readers are especially interested in creative and innovative grant requests that target fine arts, STEM, literacy, or enrichment.

**(check all that apply)**

Early Childhood Development

Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students

Fine Arts

Literacy

Extended Education for Staff

Emphasis on Student Performance

STEM

Enrichment

Assigned Proposal #: 87

## **Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds**

Students learn best when they are able to regulate their emotions, focus their attention, and actively engage in the learning process. Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds is a classroom initiative designed to support students' emotional regulation, focus, and positive behavior through the use of sensory tools and structured calming strategies. Many elementary students struggle with managing energy levels, maintaining attention, and responding appropriately to frustration. This project will provide movement seating, tactile sensory tools, noise-reducing headphones, and quiet focus materials that help students calm their bodies and remain engaged in learning. By integrating these tools into daily classroom routines, students will develop self-management skills that support improved behavior, increased engagement, and greater academic success.

### **1. Rationale**

Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds aligns with the Waco Education Foundation's focus on creative classroom projects by introducing innovative strategies and tools that support student self-regulation, engagement, and academic readiness. When students are able to manage their emotions and maintain focus, they are better prepared to fully participate in learning and achieve academic success.

This project supports district and campus improvement goals related to student engagement, positive behavior, and academic achievement by providing structured tools that help students calm their bodies, focus their attention, and remain actively engaged in instruction. Sensory supports and movement-based seating allow students to meet individual sensory needs while continuing to participate in classroom learning. When students do not have effective strategies to regulate their behavior or energy levels, valuable instructional time can be lost while teachers redirect behavior or remove students from learning activities.

By proactively addressing students' behavioral and emotional regulation needs, this project will help create a more focused and productive learning environment where students can fully engage in academic instruction and develop the self-management skills necessary for long-term success. When students are able to regulate their bodies and attention, more classroom time can be devoted to meaningful instruction rather than behavior redirection. These tools allow students to meet sensory and focus needs in appropriate ways, reducing disruptions and increasing time spent actively engaged in learning.

## **2. Goals**

The goal of Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds is to improve students' ability to regulate emotions, maintain focus, and demonstrate positive behavior during classroom instruction.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase student engagement during instructional activities by providing appropriate sensory and focus supports that help students remain actively involved in learning.
- Improve students' ability to independently use calming strategies when experiencing frustration, stress, or difficulty concentrating.
- Reduce classroom disruptions and off-task behaviors by providing structured tools that support self-regulation and attention.
- Increase the amount of time students remain on task during independent work, reading, and instructional activities.
- Teach practical self-management skills that support long-term academic success, emotional regulation, and positive classroom behavior.

## **3. Plan of Operation**

Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds will integrate sensory supports and calming strategies into daily classroom routines. Students will receive explicit instruction

on how and when to appropriately use sensory tools to help regulate emotions, manage energy levels, and maintain focus during instruction.

The project will include several tools designed to support self-regulation. Floor seat rocker chairs will provide controlled movement for students who benefit from gentle motion while learning. Some students focus more effectively when they are able to move slightly while seated, and these chairs allow students to meet that need without leaving their learning space or distracting others. Noise-reducing classroom headphones will help students limit auditory distractions during independent work and reading activities. Slow-rising stress cubes, worry stone sensory tools, and quiet twisty fidgets will provide tactile input that helps students calm their bodies and maintain concentration without disrupting instruction. Mini Etch A Sketch boards will provide a quiet outlet for restless energy during calming breaks or transition periods.

A designated calming space within the classroom will allow students to briefly reset and refocus before returning to instruction. Students will be taught clear expectations for using these tools so they remain learning supports rather than distractions. These strategies help students recognize when they need to pause, regulate their emotions, and successfully transition back to learning activities.

## **Timeline**

August – September 2026

- Introduce self-regulation strategies and classroom expectations
- Teach students how to appropriately use calming tools
- Establish routines for movement and focus supports

October – May 2027

- Integrate tools into daily classroom routines
- Reinforce self-regulation strategies throughout the year
- Monitor student engagement and behavioral progress

## **Parent and Community Involvement**

Parents will be informed about the project through classroom communication describing the strategies students are learning to manage emotions and maintain focus. Families will be provided simple techniques that can be used at home to reinforce self-regulation skills.

Materials purchased through this project may also be shared with other classrooms when available to maximize the benefit for students throughout the school community.

#### **4. Communication & Dissemination**

The Waco Education Foundation will be recognized as a partner in the Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds project. Foundation representatives will be welcomed to observe the classroom implementation and participate in photo opportunities that highlight the impact of the grant.

Project outcomes and strategies may be shared with other educators through informal collaboration, campus discussions, and potential staff development opportunities. The project may also be highlighted through district communication channels such as newsletters or WISD-TV to showcase innovative classroom practices that support student success.

#### **5. Evaluation**

The effectiveness of Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds will be evaluated through classroom observations, behavioral tracking, and student engagement data collected throughout the school year.

Indicators of success will include:

- Increased student engagement during instructional activities
- Reduction in classroom disruptions and off-task behaviors
- Improved student ability to independently use calming strategies
- Greater focus during independent work and reading activities

Teacher observations, behavioral tracking, and engagement data collected throughout the school year will be used to measure improvements in focus, behavior, and participation in classroom learning activities.

## **6. Long-Term Implications**

The materials purchased through this project are durable, reusable resources that can benefit students for multiple years beyond the grant period. These tools will continue to support student self-regulation, focus, and engagement in future classrooms.

In addition to the long-term use of materials, students will develop lifelong skills related to emotional regulation, responsible decision-making, and self-management. These skills contribute to improved academic outcomes and positive social development both inside and outside the classroom.

## **7. Key Personnel**

The classroom teacher will be responsible for implementing the Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds project.

Responsibilities include:

- Teaching students how to appropriately use calming and sensory tools
- Integrating self-regulation strategies into daily classroom routines
- Monitoring student engagement and behavioral progress
- Communicating strategies with families
- Maintaining materials and ensuring responsible use

The educator implementing the project is committed to creating a structured classroom environment that promotes emotional safety, focus, and academic engagement.

## **8. Budget Narrative / Justification**

1. Floor Seat Rocker Chairs (4 sets / 24 chairs)

Floor seat rocker chairs provide controlled movement that supports students who

benefit from gentle motion while learning. Movement seating allows students to meet sensory needs while remaining engaged in instruction, helping reduce disruptions and improve focus.

2. Slow Rising Stress Cubes (3 packs / 12 cubes)

Slow rising stress cubes provide calming tactile input that helps students regulate emotions and manage stress. The slow rebound material encourages calming movements that support improved concentration during learning activities.

3. Worry Stone Sensory Tools (4 packs / 24 stones)

Worry stones provide quiet tactile stimulation that allows students to redirect nervous energy while maintaining attention to instruction.

4. Quiet Twisty Fidget Tools (1 pack / 24 tools)

Quiet twisty fidget tools allow students to engage their hands in a silent activity that helps maintain concentration and reduce disruptive behaviors associated with excess energy.

5. Noise-Reducing Classroom Headphones (3 sets / 30 pairs)

Noise-reducing headphones help students minimize auditory distractions during independent work, reading activities, and assessments.

6. Mini Etch A Sketch Boards (6 units)

Mini Etch A Sketch boards provide a quiet outlet for restless energy while supporting fine motor engagement and creativity.

All materials requested are durable, reusable resources that will benefit students for multiple years. Materials will be distributed to students who demonstrate a need for sensory or focus supports and will be collected daily to ensure proper care and accountability. When available, materials may also be shared with other classrooms to maximize the impact of the grant.

**Optional: Additional Information**

Helping Hands, Calm Bodies, Focused Minds is designed to give students practical tools that support regulation, focus, and engagement in learning. When students are provided with appropriate strategies to calm their bodies and focus their minds, classrooms become more productive and instructional time increases. The resources requested through this grant will help create a learning environment where students are supported, focused, and ready to succeed.

**Total Amount Requested**

\$701.49

