

Dear Parents;

At St. Martin de Porres we are dedicated to providing an optimal learning environment for all students. Something that is becoming quite popular is fidgets. These are intended to be tools to aid in the learning conditions for specific students. With 'fidgets' being marketed as spinners and other toy-like items they are becoming all the rage for children. The question we are facing is if they are attention tools or distraction toys?

Fidgets that are learning tools are designed to help children with a variety of special needs to focus, cope with requirements for movement or calm when needing to tune out sensory information. It is a little bit different for every child. We call them tools because they are learning aids and are different from toys. A fidget tool that is effective isn't going to draw attention to it, for the person using it, and it will also not be distracting to others. There are many types of adaptive learning tools; just like some children need glasses or braces for their physical needs, others need fidgets, which would be specific to each child requiring them. ***Fidgets are not tools that everyone needs and will be specific to the child.***

With our efforts at St. Martin to provide learning conditions that are best for each child, it is essential to distinguish fidget tools from toys. ***Please do not send toys to school as a fidget.*** For a fidget to be useful it is specific for a child who has individualized circumstances, such as anxiety, need for movement, sensory conditions, ADHD or Autism to name a few of the areas these tools are most helpful. ***The need for the fidget will be determined in collaboration by the teacher, parent, and student who require that type of support.*** Different items may be tried before there is a good fit as they cannot be distracting to the student or others in the room. Some examples of fidget tools that allow for attention to be focused on learning could be velcro under the table, a hand-sized smooth stone, corks, small stress balls, paper clips, sticky tack, poke balls, etc. There are many items marketed as fidgets, and some may be beneficial but are not needed for all students. When they flash, light up, make noise or are a draw for attention like small stuffies, for example, they are not functioning in the manner that an attention tool would. If you would like more information attention tools versus distraction toys or have any questions regarding this, please contact the school counsellor.

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