

Movement in the Classroom

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In John Medina's Brain Rules, he says "Exercisers outperform couch potatoes in test that measure long term memory, reasoning, attention, problem solving, even so called fluid intelligence testing. These tasks test the ability to reason quickly and think abstractly, improvising off previously learned material in order to solve a new problem. Essentially, exercise improves a whole host of abilities prized in the classroom and at work."

If this is true than we need to get students moving more throughout the school day. Medina suggests thirty minutes of aerobic movement twice a week. This is not always possible but you can begin getting the movement into your classes by doing small things throughout the day. If you begin to do these on a regular basis the students learn to stand up, find their space, move for five to ten minutes and then they are ready to get back to work. Before a test, this is a sure way to get the blood flowing to the brain.

At first the students will need to know what is expect and have clear signals. After you repeat the same movements and have a name for these movements students can get up and do the movements quickly. If I have had them performing a lot of jumping patterns, I will always conclude with a few stretches to stretch out their muscles. This also gives their heart a chance to recover.

Many of my "wake up the brain" movements involve the 5 star pattern. It gives the students a spot to stay in control yet add a lot of variations to their movements. I also like to do many movements that cross the midline. I am always amazed at how my lower readers will do fine one direction but will struggle the other directions. This would be movements like cross overs, windmills, grapevine, straddles, and straddle crosses, hand clapping patterns.

I also like to do movements that will build strength in their arms, like desk or wall push ups or simple arm circles; strength in their stomach for example: bicycle legs in their chair or movements where they sit on the floor and keep their legs off the ground. Again I always try to include some flexibility movements to challenge the students and increase their flexibility.

When students are comfortable with movement patterns you can begin adding academic concepts to go with each of the movements. If the students do not have the patterns down they will struggle with the academics you want them to remember. Ex: if the students can't jump rope don't add saying the abc's to the timing of the rope. They have to attend to two different skills and they won't be able to do either. It will be jumping rope or saying the abc's.

Sometimes I use movement to help student get a better understanding of a concept like maps by having them physically move to where they think these places would be in space. Other times I use the movement to help them get the meaning of a vocabulary word.

Games are always fun to play to reinforce academic concepts but I will go outside in a larger space to play these.

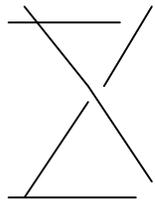
Two other resources are:
Jean BlaydesMadigan Thinking on Your Feet

<http://www.emc.cmich.edu/brainbreaks/TOC.htm#ALL SUBJECTS>

The next two pages are just a few ideas that I use on a regular basis in the 6th grade classroom.

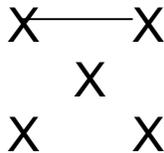
5 Star Patterns

Hour glass
or
Skier



Start bottom right, two feet to the center, top right, left top, backwards to center, then left bottom. after a short period switch to start at bottom left and go the reverse directions.

X pattern



Start bottom right, two feet to the center, continue to the top left, cross to the top right, back to the center and finish the left bottom. Move in the shape of an X. Remember to move in the reverse way to work the opposite side of the brain.

Straddle – One foot on each bottom X, jump to the center with both feet, one foot on each top X. Reverse the pattern. You can do the same pattern always moving forward and turning at the top and go back forward.

Middle-out – One foot on each bottom X, jump to the top two Xs, then back to the bottom two. Again you can switch at the top and always move forward.

Students like to make up patterns. It is really important to practice one pattern until the students can move through the pattern comfortable. When the students have one of the movements with out thinking you can add spelling words to the movement, one letter for each step. I usually will point to the word on the board as we spell the word. I then have the students spell the word with their eyes close as they go through the movement. The last time I have the students continue with their eyes closed, spell the word to the pattern but I do not say the letters.

You could do math – counting, counting by 2,3, 4 etc. You can do multiplication. Only work on one times table at a time. $1 \times 2 = 2$; $2 \times 2 = 4$; $2 \times 3 = 6$

Key - if the movement is not automatic don't add math or spelling.

Reading

Fluency - Students open their reading book. On signal students start reading the same story out loud at their own pace. After one minute the students stand up and move to another seat and begin reading again for one minute. Continue this pattern. The students get to practice reading at the same time they are up and moving every minute.

Answering questions - Students stand up with their book in a large circle around the perimeter. Each student has a partner. Teacher asks a question and the student responds to the answer. (I generally have ones answer first and then twos answer the next time.) The students then rotate one person forward and answer the next question. Here you have the students discuss the questions with different students plus the students are standing and moving.

Spelling – straddle jump to spelling the words. Using tennis balls- bounce & catch the ball to the spelling of the word.

Social Studies

Maps – ask the students to move to different walls according to the directions. Students move to different places in the classroom when you call out a continent or ocean. When you call out major rivers or mountains, students move to the continent that it is located in. Have the students hold their arms out according to which direction the rivers flow (ex: Mississippi flows north and south). You can ask questions like travel to the country that has the highest mountains, the longest river, the largest deserts. The questions would be based on what you have taught the students and what you want them to know.

Math

Graphs- keep track of exercise. Use this time to talk about how to make a graph, different ways to graph (bar, line, circle graph). Take heart rate at resting and take heart rate during exercise. Graph the two. Use this time to discuss wellness concepts.

Step Counter - Have the students wear these and keep track of how many steps the students take in the day. (Talk to them about using them correctly- my saying is “Shake it , I Take it”) Eventually the students will use them normally. Use the graph and the keeping track of steps to have teachable moments about exercising and graph skills.

Tennis Balls – Bounce and catch the balls to spelling a word, times table, counting by 2's, 3's 4's etc.

Partner Clap – face partner and clap right hands then left hands on an even rhythm. Partner A says 1,2 then partner B says 3,4 counting on each beat up to thirty. Then try this with Partner A says 2,4 and Partner B says 6, 8 counting by twos. Same for 3s, 4s etc

Multiplication tables – Partners clap right, clap left, then clap both. The pattern of the times table is right hands touch they say 2, bring hands back into place say

times, left hands touch say 1, bring hands back into place say equals, both hands clap say 2

Vocabulary

As teachers we want increase students vocabulary. I choose a word like walk and I have a chart with many different ways to walk. We get up and move the different ways so the students understand the meaning of the words and then when they go to write a paper they will begin to use different verbs in their stories instead of the same basic words

Notes: