



Make Movement Part of Your Classroom Culture

BY LYNN PANTUOSCO-HENSCH

Physical Education (PE) isn't the only class that should emphasize movement! Whatever the grade or subject area, every teacher can effectively incorporate movement into the school day. Most students take fewer than 5,000 steps during a non-PE school day. (That's including one recess!) Health experts recommend at least 10,000 steps or 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Adding physical activity to classrooms will result in more focused, better-behaved students who can accomplish even more throughout the school day.

Physical Activity Improves Academics and Social-Emotional Well-being

It should go without saying that movement is good for us. Emerging research suggests that more physical education, recess, and physical activity can improve academic achievement (CDC, 2015). Physical activity in the classroom has been shown to increase cognition, memory, and recall. Increases in daily physical activity are

also positively associated with social-emotional aspects of learning such as mood, behavior, and stress level.

Make Movement Part of the Classroom Culture

Most teachers already implement sensory or movement breaks, which are a great start. Examples of effective movement breaks can be found at www.GoNoodle.com and www.brain-breaks.com. Once physical activity is woven into the daily routine, it can become part of the classroom culture. Students and teachers will feel the positive effects of being active. Lead by example! Let students see you enjoy moving in the classroom throughout the day.

Simple Strategies for More Movement in the Classroom

Don't just sit around: When students need to be seated, consider seating such as physio-balls, balance discs, or ergonomic stools. Standard desks can also be modified for movement by using resistance bands or

rubber bands around the legs of the desk to use as a wiggle bar.

Stand up: When convenient, students can use standing desks or stations). The act of standing burns more calories and expends more energy. It also increases blood flow, oxygen uptake, and muscular fitness.

Walk and talk: When students work in pairs, why not walk and talk? Teachers can encourage movement through walking in the classroom and the school building as space allows.

Keep count: When students arrive at school, keep count of their steps using inexpensive pedometers or phones (for older students). Tracking steps is motivating and can be incorporated into the classroom and reinforced at home. Help students set goals, track steps, crunch numbers, chart progress, and more.

Take it outside: go Students enjoy the change of scenery and benefit from fresh air. Outdoor space allows for plenty of gross motor movement.

Physical activity should become an expectation during the school day. If teachers appreciate the connection between exercise and learning, students will too. 🦋

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