

WHEN BODIES MOVE, BRAINS WILL IMPROVE

(Jump Rope, Bal-a-vis-x and Brain Gym)

Single and double jump ropes, speed stacks, juggling scarves, bean bags, and racquet balls.

Do these topics really have anything to do with increasing the reading and math scores in your school?

They certainly can with a very disciplined approach to teaching these units.

Crossing the midline is very important in brain development. All of these activities cross the midline constantly. If these units are done correctly and put into a school curriculum a difference will be seen on test scores. Also, a difference in the students' self esteem and confidence will be seen.

JUMP ROPE UNITS SHOULD BE TAUGHT ANNUALLY FOR AT LEAST FOUR WEEKS IN K-12

Jumping rope may not only be an ideal cardiovascular exercise but it may be an ideal brain exercise as well preparing the brain for optimal learning. **Jumping rope is the number one activity that increases bone density and helps to prevent osteoporosis in students under 20 years old. Thus, K-12 jump rope should be taught and emphasized annually.

Every school should have a very extensive jump rope unit in their curriculum that is done annually in K-12. The benefits from this unit are endless. Jumping rope is not only a good hand eye coordination activity but it continually crosses the midline and forces the brain to work really hard while sending signals to the body. K-1-2 students should learn to double jump using the basic footwork moves. By third grade speed jumping is expected with all the jumps they have learned through Brainercise routines. Jumping two and three jumps per second for 20 seconds having mastered all the jump rope moves by 5th grade. 6-12th grades jumping rope continues to improve coordination in all students. Jump ropes should be available at all recess times. Long ropes games, routines, rhymes, and contests such as Kangaroo Chase, Double Dutch, Banana Split, Double Irish, Triangle, 5 by 5, and the Egg Beater will keep students interested in moving for a long time.

Cross lateral movement organizes brain functions. Brain gym exercises should be used 4 to 5 times a day. Each exercise improves certain skills in academics as well as activities.

The brain can organize itself when crossing the midline occurs. When students perform cross lateral movements, blood flow is increased in all parts of the brain making it more alert and energized for stronger, more cohesive learning. Movements that cross the midline unify the cognitive and motor regions of the brain. Most all activities in physical education that we do cross the mid-line and therefore makes physical education essential for learning.

THE BRAIN---Two hemispheres—right and left---when crossing the midline, both hemispheres are accessed—therefore the brain will function better and the person becomes more intelligent.

If the brain needs 10% more oxygen than any organ in the body—how is that accomplished?

The carotid artery first allows fresh oxygenated blood to the brain. You do not want that artery to be clogged. The only way to get fresh oxygen to the brain is through vigorous exercise; so have an aerobic song before the brain gym exercises.

SCREEN LOCK

One of the reasons students have trouble reading is because of the lack of eye fitness. When a student watches screens, their eyes lock in constant distant vision and the muscles that control eye movement atrophy. P.E. curriculum provides this avenue for strengthening eye muscles. Teachers should have students track with their eyes before every unit they teach each day especially reading and math. The eyes are not fit to read when a student has “screen lock” and that cannot be fixed unless eye exercises are used.

Screen lock occurs when students spend time staring at any kind of screen. Think of how many hours a screen is in front of a student from cell phones to game boys to tv's to computers and many more. The eyes become weak muscled and they cannot function properly for peripheral vision or even movement needed in something like reading, playing a piano or other instrument, and driving a car.

Students with screen lock tend to stare straight ahead, have trouble looking you in the eye when speaking, and spend time in class day dreaming or virtually playing a screen or video game in their minds. Sometimes, teachers can even see students moving their fingers playing an imaginary game.

STUDENTS SHOULD SPEND TIME JUGGLING, SPEED STACKING, AND DOING BAL-A-VIS-X (BALANCE-AUDITORY-VISUAL EXERCISES) WITH BEAN BAGS AND BALLS

JUGGLING SCARVES—USE SCARVES OR GROCERY BAGS, TEACH ONE SCARF THROW, TWO SCARF AND X'S, AND THREE SCARF CASCADE.

SPEED STACKS----USING CUPS-MAKING AND STACKING PYRAMIDS TO A TIME LIMIT---- STUDENTS WILL LOVE THE CHALLENGE AND WILL PRACTICE AT HOME. SPEED STACKS.COM

BEAN BAGS AND RACQUET BALLS—GREEN AND YELLOW ARE THE TWO MOST RECOGNIZABLE COLORS FOR YOUNG STUDENTS.

Bal-a-vis-x is a very disciplined approach to learning with the rhythm, sound, color, and commands being very good for listening skills and improvement of hand eye coordination along with crossing the midline and improving the brain as well.

Bean bags are tossed up with a command of “GO” as a group.

Balls are bounced down on the command of “GO” using single, double, and even triple balls for juggling, paralleling, pop-pops, etc.

Group work as a class or single work develops better self-esteem in all students, gives them a challenge, improves coordination, and gives them one more fun activity for home and school.

THE PACE PROGRAM

This program is usually done at the beginning of the day or after recess and lunch to effectively prepare the student for learning.

It stands for Positive, Active, Clear, and Energetic learning. It is a learning readiness sequence done in the classroom or gym.

It includes drinking water for energetic learning, and then doing Brain Buttons, Cross Crawls, and Hook-ups. This routine, easy to get implemented can help a teacher get the students settled down and prepared to listen and learn more easily.

1. **Water**---just a drink needed
2. **Brain Buttons**-thumb and middle finger of one hand rub in circular motion in the soft spot under the clavicle-----put the other hand over the naval, bringing attention to the center of the body. This action stimulates the brain and wakes it up for incoming input. If a person is staring, this activation will get the eyes moving again so the brain can take in visual information. The hand that is rubbing under the clavicle stimulates blood flow through the carotid arteries, the first arteries that supply nutrients and oxygenated blood to the brain. Many students will say that brain buttons brings them back to focus when taking a test.
3. **Cross Crawl**-cross lateral walking in place, may touch the inside of the knee or go on the back side and touch the heels. This all crosses the midline and makes a person more intelligent by working both brain hemispheres. The slower the exercise is done more fine motor involvement and balance is required. Less balance is required when going too fast. You can use many variations, like touching elbows to the knees or bouncing balls when twisting to the side.
4. **Hook-ups**-Cross one ankle over the other, the hands cross, clasped, and inverted. Start by stretching the arms out in front and cross your arms, link your fingers, invert and go under to your sternum, elbows down. It causes focus and balance to happen, activates both hemispheres, and relaxes the mind. Rest the tongue on the roof of the mouth, and stand quiet for 2-5 minutes. This can relieve tension between students and can relieve stress on students. Can be used for disruptive or non-listening classes.

Do your students indicate---“MY BRAIN NEEDS A BREAK!” REMEMBER THIS: “THE MIND CAN ONLY ABSORB AS MUCH AS THE SEAT CAN ENDURE!!”

