

Exploring the Connection between Literacy and Physical Education

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Cross-Curricular Connections

In many schools today, teachers and school administration are emphasizing and supporting the idea of cross-curricular connections: the idea that even though different subjects are being taught, there are still similarities and connections that can be made between them.

Unfortunately, it seems that in many instances, physical education is not included in this. Sure, some teachers recognize the importance of having their students participating in physical education; others, however just send their children to PE class to “get their wiggles out”, or to exercise for a short time.

However, physical education can bring more to the table for students in their formative years. Contrary to seemingly popular belief; physical education and movement not only has an impact on students’ health and wellbeing, but can also be an aid in their learning.

Physical education and movement should certainly be integrated into more of the core school subjects and into the curriculum, and here you’ll find reasons why.

What’s the Connection?

Physical education not only impacts the students physical health, but it also has benefits that can help students in the classroom too.

Physical movement helps to “improve a students’ focus, retention, memory, creativity and mood” (“Farmer Kris”). This is a great solution to the age old question of how to deal with students who just cannot stay still. If you give your students the opportunity to move in appropriate ways during instruction, they can learn better.

Even the smallest of movements, such as shifting your weight from one foot to another, stretch breaks, or recess can help boost students mental sharpness (“Farmer Kris”).

This concept is nothing new. In 1905, well known American naturalist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau said “... the moment that my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow, as if I had given vent to the stream at the lower end and consequently new fountains flowed into it at the upper” (“Thoreau”).

Bringing Physical Education to the Classroom

Physical Education, in many school settings, has its’ own time during the school day. In the younger grades, students can count PE as part of their daily routine, However, as students get older they got the chance to participate in physical education less and less often, and oftentimes by high school, they don’t get the chance anymore.

That’s why it’s important to incorporate movement into the classroom. While it may not be as effective as PE class, it can still certainly be helpful. The National Education Association (NEA) gives some great advice on how to introduce movement into your classroom.

The NEA suggests methods such as having students stand up during class, walking and talking, and taking class outside helps students stay on task (“Pantuosco-Hensch”)

Also, prepping your lesson plans in a way that includes movement in one way or another is another great way to ensure that your students can have movement integration in their lessons.

What’s the point of movement integration?

As mentioned in the previous sections, movement integration is important because it gives students other ways to learn. Students that have may struggle with traditional classroom teaching methods, such as sitting in silence and trying to concentrate on their work may not learn as best as they can because they are trying to learn in a way that may not work for them.

Movement integration gives students another option of learning, allowing students that learn better in less traditional ways to succeed.

REFERENCES

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