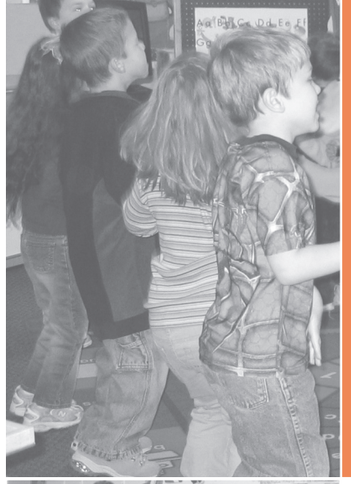

Tying It All Together

INTEGRATING MOVEMENT INTO THE CLASSROOM

Julian A. Reed

ASK YOURSELF:

Can movement enhance learning?

Can movement be taught in the classroom?

Can Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science be taught using movement?

The answer to these questions is, "yes:"

- Standing appears to provide a 5–15% greater flow of blood and oxygen to the brain, thereby creating more arousal of attention (Jensen, 1995).
- Specific movements can stimulate the release of the body's natural motivators, such as noradrenaline and dopamine, which wake up learners and help them feel good, maximize their energy levels, and improve their storage of information and retrieval (Jensen, 2000).
- Neuronal connections made through movement of the body help children develop the neuronal systems they will need when ready to read (Hannaford, 1995).

These workshops will provide elementary teachers with a variety of integrative teaching experiences and pedagogical strategies to incorporate movement into the classroom. Each candidate will understand the importance of physical activity and how it can enhance the learning outcomes for students.

Not convinced? Keep reading to find out why movement in the classroom is important and effective.

"Interdisciplinary learning through movement addresses a variety of learning styles, nurtures those children who learn through a body-kinesthetic intelligence and combines cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning together in a holistic fashion."

—Marty Siegel

NEW MOVES IN EDUCATION

EXCERPTS REPRINTED FROM *The Greenville News*, PUBLISHED TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

by Mike Foley, *Staff Writer*

A REVOLUTION

Integrating movement into classroom lessons is the latest revolution for schools that are increasingly filled with sedentary and overweight children. The Federal Centers for Disease Control says the number of children who are overweight has more than doubled since 1980, and among adolescents, the rates have more than tripled.

That's led to increased illness among the nation's youth. Just 10 years ago, Type 2 diabetes was virtually unknown in children and adolescents. In fact, it was commonly referred to as "adult onset diabetes." Today, Type 2 accounts for almost 50 percent of new cases of pediatric diabetes in some communities.

Julian Reed, an assistant professor in health and exercise science at Furman University, said he became interested in childhood obesity while studying for his doctorate. He found numerous scientific studies supporting movement for greater physical and mental improvement.

"The beauty of this thing is two-fold," he said. "It's not only increasing movement time for kids to intervene in obesity, but it also enhances knowledge retention and brain changes."

Reed has taught two graduate-level classes and a handful of workshops to Greenville County elementary school teachers. While other school districts have done the same thing, they've focused on PE teachers.

"We are doing movement with classroom teachers," he said. "We're using movement to teach language arts, using movement to teach math, using movement to teach science.

"It's not just movement for movement's sake; it's using movement as a way of enhancing and putting into context these different disciplines. It's awesome."

The response from teachers like [Rachel] Parris is overwhelmingly positive. Teachers have concrete evidence — improved grades and fewer discipline problems — after implementing specific movement skills in their classes, Reed said.

How it works

Keeping class fresh is a constant challenge for teachers. "Sometimes you feel half of the kids are with you and half are zoned out," said Parris, a third-year teacher. But after taking Reed's class and learning how to work movement into her lessons, she observed that "my lower-achieving kids, their reading has gone up."

In a typical school day she'll incorporate a movement game into her lessons at least once. She also uses at least three "Brain Gym" exercises — a series of 30- to 60-second exercises designed to develop neural connections in the brain — as transitions between lessons.

According to the CDC's 2004 Weekly Report on Youth Risk Behavior, 33.4% of students did not participate in "sufficient moderate physical activity" in the seven days prior to the CDC's survey.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in a report dated March 2005, states that "the prevalence of overweight among children aged 6-11 had more than doubled in the past 20 years."

"They're cross-hemisphere, so that they're working both the right-side and the left side of the brain," she said about Brain Gym. "The kids love them and they can do more afterward. I'll have kids ask about them: 'Can we do another Brain Gym?' It's cute."

Greenville County buys in

Elementary school students in Greenville County get just one 45-minute physical education class a week. Many health and government guidelines call for a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise a day.

So any extra movement, whether in an after-school sports or recreation program or as part of daily classwork is welcomed. Brenda Mays, consultant for health and physical education for the school district, said she'd been looking at ways to increase activity for the district's youngest children.

"You have to get kids at ages 3, 4 and 5 years old moving so you can prevent the risk of inactivity and obesity," she said. "The idea is to create a group of kids who don't have to be 'fixed' later."

Mays pays for district teachers to take Reed's classes and workshops, and she's been amazed by the response from teachers. "It didn't take any selling. They were ready," she said. "I sent out an e-mail about a workshop and it filled up within 24 hours. And I had more than 100 people on the waiting list. It's just caught on like wildfire."

Catherine Dillon, the ESOL program lead teacher for the school district, took Reed's graduate class figuring additional movement in the classroom would simply burn more calories for her students. What amazed her was the educational impact.

"The successes they've had, just from implementing simple activities is amazing," she said. "It never occurred to me before taking the class that you can get a person to learn much more easily doing a relay race than in a lecture."

Heartbeats

When she taught her first-graders how to take their own pulses, Parris said they were fascinated about feeling their hearts beat beneath their chins. She turned that into a mini-science lesson.

Another morning, she taught spelling by having kids move their bodies to form letters, like a crowd at a ballpark singing and moving to the song "YMCA." She demonstrates how the earth moves in a 24-hour rotation and how it revolves around the sun by having children pretend they are the Earth. They circle and spin around one student holding a flashlight — he's the sun — in a partially darkened room.

When she did the math and realized statistics show that many of her first-graders — one in three — are likely to become overweight and get diabetes, heart disease and worse, she decided to do something to help.

"I like to think this is making a difference," she said. "It would be awesome if I could prevent the kids in my class from ever getting diabetes." Even better, she feels she's become a better teacher as she sees her kids learn more quickly.

"The class I took just opened me up to tons of things you can do instead of just talking to students," she said. "And as long as I'm covering my standards, my principal is cool with it. "As for me, I'm loving it."

A report by the School Health Policies and Programs Study (2000) illustrated that only 8% of elementary schools, 6.4% of middle schools, and 5.8% of high schools provide daily physical education or meet the current Council on Physical Education for Children recommendations.

ABOUT DR. REED:

Dr. Reed is an Assistant Professor in the Health and Exercise Science Department at Furman University. His research interests include applying an ecological approach to promoting youth physical activity. Recently, Dr. Reed developed a new course for classroom teachers entitled "Physical Activity and Health Education." This course was designed to teach classroom teachers how to integrate movement into the classroom. He has presented his work at regional, national and international conferences and has published numerous manuscripts in such journals as the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, *Strategies*, *The Physical Educator*, *Journal of American College Health*, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *Journal of the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance*, and *Preventive Medicine*.

Dr. Reed teaches workshops in Integrating Movement into the Classroom. Workshops range from two hours to full-day seminars. Varying rates apply. Contact Dr. Reed for information concerning dates, times, and availability:

Julian A. Reed, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Health and Exercise Science
Furman University
Greenville, S.C. 29613
email: julian.reed@furman.edu
Phone: 864.294.2328
Fax: 864.294.2942

BMR Ventures, LLC