Movement Integration Tips

Integrating movement into the daily school schedule is necessary for student well-being. Regardless of the age group, movement stimulates the mind and activates the body. The problem is that students spend far too many hours sitting, which can lead to fatigue, a lack of engagement, and a diminished ability to learn. While most schools have a dedicated time for recess each day, not all students spend that time moving. It is also common for schools to have a physical education program, but it is rarely taught on a daily basis.

Furthermore, additional movement that is included in the school day is often done with the purpose of making students exercise, or at least, to elevate their heart rates. The problem is that many students do not enjoy this type of movement unless it is fun and fresh each time. Unfortunately, the average teacher is not trained in physical education, and lacks the resources, time and space, to make this type of movement enticing.

Rather than think of movement as exercise (e.g., recess, physical education, or a daily physical activity add-on), we recommend it as an integrative process. Exercise can often feel like an obligation (something that *has* to be done), whereas movement integration is about naturally including the body throughout a full day of learning.

> ## Research says…
> Sitting for long periods of time can have serious health consequences even for those who exercise regularly. According to researchers at Columbia University, it is recommended that individuals move every thirty minutes to improve their well-being.

Here are a few simple tips for integrating movement into the school day:

- **Start of Day:** Consider starting the school day with a movement ritual that brings students together as a community. Students may arrive at school feeling excited, tired, hungry, apprehensive, or sad. Creating a welcoming morning routine can help them settle in and prepare for the day ahead. A movement ritual might include a mindfulness exercise, simple stretches, a song with actions, or even a dance. It can change from day-to-day or week-to-week depending on the needs of the class.

- **Transitions:** A simple way to integrate movement throughout the day is during moments of transition. For example, you can invite students to move in fun ways, to line up at the door for recess, or move from desks to carpet or carpet to desks (e.g., s*how me how you can jump like a kangaroo to the carpet . . . show me how you can do a wiggle dance back to your desk . . . fly like a butterfly to line up at the door*). Movement also works well in between lessons. For younger students, consider a quick game of "dance freeze" or have the class come together with an action song. For older students, have them participate in a theatre game that uses their whole body (many can be found online) or invite them to walk around the class and stretch their bodies while you play one of their favourite tunes. The ideas are endless.

- **Curricular Integration:** There are so many ways to bring the curriculum to life. Almost any topic, in any subject, can be explored through movement with a little creative thinking. It can be as simple as getting students out of their seats for five to ten minutes to explore a concept through the body. For example, students can dance the life cycle of a frog, explore the speed of protons, neutrons, and electrons, learn about a culture through their traditional dances, practice the x-y axis with students standing on a floor grid, and so forth. This is a way to make learning fun and create opportunities for embodied experiences.

- **End of Day:** Consider ending the school day with a movement ritual that brings students back together as a community to close the day. The movement could be the same as how the day began or something totally different. Perhaps invite students to share something they are grateful for that happened at school that day. For example, they could state what they are grateful for with a movement to express their gratitude. What is most important is that the students connect together as a whole class.

Reference

Chai, C. (2017, September 13). Sitting all day at work? Get up every 30 minutes to cut your risk of death. Global News. Retrieved from https://globalnews.ca/news/3740438/sitting-all-day-at-work-get-up-every-30-minutes-to-cut-your-risk-of-death/