

EDUCATORS QUICK GUIDE

CLASSROOM MOVEMENT MATTERS



WE are TEACHERS

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Dear Educators,

We are convinced that classroom movement matters! Not only is it a key to helping kids lead an active, healthy lifestyle, but recent research has shown that kids who move while they learn are able to focus better, stay on-task for longer and learn more in the course of a school day. There have been countless recent studies about classroom movement and they all came to the same conclusion: Kids should be moving when they are in school. And often.

Classroom movement is important. That's why we put together this downloadable guide for teachers, parents and administrators. We hope that in the coming pages you will find the inspiration, ideas and encouragement you need to implement movement into your daily classroom activities this year. And if that's not enough, we're issuing a "5-Minutes-an-Hour Challenge" for all teachers. Do you think you can do it?

We look forward to hearing how teachers—and your students—are changed by classroom movement this school year.



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WHAT'S STOPPING TEACHERS FROM IMPLEMENTING MOVEMENT INTO THEIR CLASSROOMS?



There's evidence galore that implementing movement into the classroom is a good thing. Kids get the wiggles out, yes, but new research has also shown that a little bit of movement interspersed throughout the day helps kids learn better. The benefits are countless! Kids who move throughout the school day are able to concentrate longer, focus harder and remember more.

So, with all of this evidence that in-class movement is a good thing, why aren't more teachers jumping on the bandwagon? We asked a bunch of teachers why and they

shared their reasons with us. Then, we asked former third grade teacher and the CEO of Classrooms in Motion, Dr. Hildi Nicksic, to tell us how teachers can overcome those barriers so that every classroom can get moving.

Issue #1: Core Subjects Take Up So Much Time

"I am under immense pressure to focus on core academic subjects like math, reading and science. In fact, the teachers in my district are being evaluated on their students' standardized test scores, so I have no choice but to make core subjects my top priority. My principal has



"The benefits are countless!"

begun emphasizing 'time on task' as proof of performance, so I have to keep a log of the time my kids spend focusing on academic core subjects. Because of this, I just don't feel that taking valuable class time for movement can be justified."

—M.K., third grade teacher

The Fix: Learn the Benefits of Classroom Movement

While core subjects certainly do take priority, when you look at the research on classroom

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movement, it becomes clear that there is another side to the story. There are actually many benefits of classroom movement—yes, even on core academic performance—that often outweigh the loss of seat time.

For example, there is evidence that replacing just a few minutes per hour of seat time with movement does not have a negative impact on academic performance. In fact, one study (Erwin, Fedewa and Ahn, 2013) shows that students who participated in daily physical activity breaks not only had significantly higher fluency scores in both reading and math but higher averages on standardized math and reading tests as well.

Physical activity breaks also have a positive effect on attention and behavior.

One study (Donnelly and Lambourne, 2011) examined the effect of activity breaks on attention. After one hour of regular cognitive school tasks, students who were given a 15-minute physical activity break of moderate intensity scored significantly higher on selective attention tasks. Basically, if you give them movement breaks, they will be able to pay attention for longer when you are doing core tasks, which would actually help your time-on-task log.

Physical activity can also be beneficial as a strategy for increasing student classroom on-task behavior. One study (Herman, Beer and Morton, 2013) showed that regularly structured physical activity breaks resulted in significantly fewer individual and group disciplinary corrections, which meant that students were able to spend more seat time focusing on core subjects after spending a few minutes out of their seats.

Issue #2: There's Just No Time to Plan!

"I'm busy. Like really busy. During the school year, I often work 50 to 70 hours every

week, with a large part of that being planning, curating, honing and developing my lesson plans and classroom activities. With Core prioritization, not to mention constant pressures of updating to current technology, it's hard to find time to fit in one more thing, even if that thing is important." —*R.J., seventh grade teacher*

The Fix: Don't Plan!

The last thing you need as a teacher is one more thing to plan. So don't!

Instead, come up with a list of classroom movement activities that you can easily incorporate into your lesson and daily activities. Post that list on the wall, and make sure to implement them for a few minutes every hour.

Don't have time to come up with a list? We did it for you. The last article in this report has 40 movement-based activities for teachers. Print it out, then add your own ideas to make it work for your classroom and get moving!

Issue #3: We Just Run Out of Classroom Time!

"I teach high school English, and every period is just jam-packed. The bell rings and we start with reading a passage. Then we have discussions and assignments and writing practice, and before I can even glance at the clock, the bell is ringing and class is over. I haven't even had time to grab a sip of coffee, much less add classroom movement into our daily routine. We just don't have time for physical activity." —*S.J., 10th grade teacher*

The Fix: Write It Into the Lessons

It seems counterproductive to stop the flow of a lesson to do classroom movement, but just the opposite is true: It's very productive. Just like you probably can't sit at a desk and grade papers for hours on end, your students probably get a bit tired (and inattentive) after a long

lesson or assignment. By taking a few minutes to move, your students will be able to reset their brains and it will result in more attentive learning.

We recommend writing movement into your lesson plans just like you probably already add warm-up activities, discussion time and silent work time into your plans. Before silent reading, have kids get up and do 10 jumping jacks. Implement stations so kids have to get up and move from

many kid-friendly videos out there of popular songs.

Issue #4: Physical Education Isn't My Specialty

"I have absolutely zero, zilch, nada, none training in P.E. and health education. I was a band kid in high school, and I know so little about exercise that I can barely find my way to the water fountain at the gym. OK, I'm exaggerating. I have no problem finding the water



"Your students will be able to reset their brains and it will result in more attentive learning."

table to table. Find some movement-based curricular games. It doesn't take much movement to make a big difference.

You can also add movement into other parts of the day. For instance, you could have a movement station in a corner of your classroom. If students finish early, they can go there and do a silent callisthenic activity such as sit-ups or push-ups. When your class is moving through the hall (space providing), have them do arm circles, triceps kickbacks, lunges, high knees, bicep curls, etc. When you transition between subjects, do a 5-minute exercise video or dance to one of the

fountain, but it's sure hard to find the weight room. That said, I have no idea how to help my kids exercise and exercise correctly." —*C.M., 6th grade teacher*

The Fix: Just Do It

Thankfully, this isn't Spanish class where you need to know a whole language to teach it. And it's certainly not computer programming where you could infect your entire school with a nasty virus if you didn't know what you were doing! Classroom movement is just ... moving.

So, first things first, don't worry about not knowing what

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to do. In the words of Nike, just do it.

That said, if you want to know more about how to effectively implement classroom movement, you can get yourself up to speed in just a little bit of time. Do a bit of research over the summer so you are ready for the school year. Have a master list of activities available and ready to grab. Create a poster for the kids to have easy reference. Have a central location for materials you might use, such as silks, beanbags, stretchy bands and the like. Make sure your favorite classroom movement websites and video sources are bookmarked

activities that I so carefully plan dissolve into utter out-of-control chaos. My darling students—love them as I may—just don’t always have a firm grasp on the boundary between fun and Crazyville. How do I know that classroom movement won’t throw them over the line?”

—S.W., first grade teacher

The Fix: Lay Down the Law

The key here is to set classroom movement time up just like you would any other subject: It’s not a break from the day. It’s not fun time. It’s part of the school day just like math time and reading time and lunch time.

for students of all abilities and comfort levels. It’s also such a great opportunity to emphasize the importance of physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. Once students understand that this time is an important part of the school day and not designed to be a free-for-all, it will become an activity that is not only productive for learning but a fun time that they look forward to.

Issue #6: Exercise? Do I Have To?

“I have a little confession: I’m not a superpower athlete. I don’t run marathons on the weekends and I don’t go to the gym before school. And between the lesson planning, team meetings, professional development, paper-grading, classroom organizing and, oh yeah, the teaching, I limp to the end of each school day with barely enough energy to flop on the couch and work the remote. How can I tell my kids to exercise when I don’t do it myself?”

—D.M., ninth grade teacher

The Fix: You Got to Move It, Move It!

Even if you’re not exactly the poster child for fitness yourself, you can still be a role model. Research shows that teacher fitness level does not affect classroom movement (that’s good news, right?), so even if you are sitting at your desk barking commands at them while they do jumping jacks, your students will benefit.

But hey, we have another idea: If you join in too, you’ll check off one more thing on your should-do list and get healthier to boot! When you take the time to schedule movement for your students, it reminds you to make physical activity a priority in your life. You can cultivate a “we’re in this together” mind-set in your classroom, and you can bet students will appreciate seeing that physical activity is beneficial for people of all shapes, sizes and ability levels. ■



“It’s part of the school day just like math time and reading time...”

on your computer so you can quickly pull them up. Do a little bit of at-home preparation and let the movement flow!

Issue #5: What if My Classroom Dissolves Into a Puddle of Crazy?!

“OK, I’m just going to say it: I teach first grade. If I give them an inch to wiggle, they take a mile. I can just imagine myself watching with growing horror as the fun, happy classroom

And thus, the behavior expectations are exactly the same as they would be for any other classroom activity.

This is absolutely the time to do some front-loading with your class to establish very clear expectations of behavior and participation, as well as clear consequences for not using the time constructively. It is imperative to provide structured, teacher-led movement that can be easily adapted

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THE 5-MINUTES-AN-HOUR CHALLENGE



You're a teacher. You get how kids learn. And you know that even though time is short and expectations are high, adding some physical activity into your classroom repertoire is a proven way to make sure your kids are successful.

You're in, right? Good. Now we have a challenge for you: Can you make sure your students are moving for 5 minutes every hour during every school day? Just 5 minutes. 300 quick seconds. One-twentieth of an hour.

Can you do it?

If you are anything like the teachers we interviewed for this article, the number sounds a little daunting. You may wonder what will happen, if, say, you are in the middle of a big test and don't want your kids to lose focus. Or if your math lesson goes long and you have to move into science really quickly before lunch. Or if you get behind in reading and you just can't afford those measly 5 minutes.

Let us reassure you: You can't afford *not* to take those 5 minutes.

One fourth grade teacher we talked to told us that she

had been hesitant to accept the 5-minutes-an-hour challenge because she was worried about time. She knew that when she had a transition—say, math-to-science or lunch-to-social studies—her kids would take 5 or 6 minutes to get refocused. She worried that if she transitioned to 5 minutes of movement and then back to a subject, she would lose too much valuable instruction time. But she found just the opposite. When she began working movement into her lessons—for example, adding 20 jumping jacks between each section of the math assignment—her kids not only transitioned easily but seemed to stay on-task longer.

Another teacher wasn't sure what exercises her students would do for 5 whole minutes. But with a little bit of research, she was able to set up a movement center in her classroom with items like Clever Catch Activity Balls and Fitness Dice for movement inspiration. She also hung up pictures of a few yoga poses and taught her kids a few basic exercises using the Sworkit app, and voilà! Her kids were moving and grooving with very little effort on her part.

The point is: Accept the challenge. We think you'll quickly

go from skeptical to a believer. And your students will be learning better, problem-solving more and focusing longer because of it.

Here's how to get started:

Step 1: Say it: "I accept! I will implement 5 minutes of physical activity into my classroom every hour in every school day." There. That was easy.

Step 2: Get your supplies. In order for the challenge to be successful, you have to have easy physical activities on hand for your students. So print out the list on page 7 of this document for inspiration. Pick up a few movement-based games or classroom activities. Download an app like Sworkit or Tabata.

Step 3: Be unwavering. There will be times when your students are in the middle of something and you don't want to interrupt them. And there will be times that you just don't feel like getting up to move. But make a commitment to do it anyway. And see how it works. (Worst-case scenario: Your kids will get a few of their wiggles out before getting back to work.)

Step 4: Mix it up. Just like you assign a line-leader and a clean-

up monitor, assign a classroom movement leader and let your students lead classroom movement time. Who knows? You might learn how to break-dance or master that really tricky yoga pose with some help from your young protégés.

Step 5: Recruit your co-workers. The more students who are moving, the more successful your school is going to be. So tell your co-workers about the challenge! Feel free to print out a copy of this downloadable guide for them, or send them the link so that they, too, can join the classroom movement revolution.

Step 6: Have fun. Classroom movement may be part of the curriculum, but that doesn't mean it's not fun. Encourage your kids to lead a healthy, active lifestyle by making your classroom movement time fun and engaging. So put on some music. Mix things up. Let them dance. Let them wiggle. And let them know that movement is an essential part of the learning process.

So are you in? Take the challenge!

And come back to us at the end of the school year and let us know what a difference it made in your classroom. ■

THE ULTIMATE CLASSROOM MOVEMENT IDEAS LIST



Incorporating more movement into your students' school day is easy when you have a go-to list of easy-to-implement activities. These short but effective classroom activity breaks work for all ages and can be done at any time of day. Whether you are starting your day with movement, adding activity breaks to transition times, or using exercise to refocus students on their work, these ideas bring both physical activity and fun to your classroom.

1 Pass notes.

Invite every student to write an exercise or movement (that can be safely performed in class!) on a slip of paper or an index card. Have all students stand and quickly pass one another notes around the class. When you say "Freeze!" students must perform the actions on their cards. Repeat.

2 Measure around the room.

Challenge your students to measure a variety of things in the room—chairs, desks, doors, windows—using yardsticks and

rulers. Record their answers in a log and make a chart of the biggest and smallest things.

3 Dance Party Days.

Designate special days (Every Friday? Student birthdays? First Monday of the month?) as Dance Party Days. On these days, periodically play appropriate up-tempo songs and invite the kids to show off their best moves.

4 Take the long way.

Before your students move classrooms for specials, stop class 5 minutes early and take the long way to their next classroom or learning location.

5 Switch seats for math.

Put a math assignment on the board (e.g., p. 24, problems 1–15) and have students write their name on the paper and complete problem one. Then, when everyone has finished with problem one, have them stand up and move to the next desk, check their classmate's answer to problem number one, and then do problem number two. Continue until every student

has done every problem and checked every problem.

6 Play cards.

Take a standard deck of cards and assign one exercise to each of the four suits (hearts are leg raises, clubs are toe touches, etc.). The number on the card dictates how many times the exercise is performed (aces equal once, face cards equal 10). Then shuffle the deck and call out the cards, or give one card to each student and go around the room until everyone's card activities have been completed.

7 Avoid hot lava.

Give small groups of students balloons and have them count how many times they can finger volley a balloon to one another without it touching the "hot lava" floor. Once they become adept, challenge them to lob the balloon without hands, using heads, elbows and knees instead.

8 Sit down and sweat.

Look up chair exercise routines online and lead students in these seated movements.

Just make sure to have students pull their chairs out from their tables or desks!

9 Do the wave.

Take a hint from sporting events and between classroom "innings," take time to do the wave. Left to right, right to left, front to back and snaking around desk rows ... every variation is a winner.

10 Practice math outside.

Incorporate movement into your math lessons. Younger students can count steps and jumps, older students can practice tables and formulas while jumping rope and shooting baskets.

11 Make mirrors.

Have partners face each other, holding their palms up in front of their chests. One leader moves his hands and arms one at a time while the follower mirrors his movements. Switch every minute.

12 Play Active Rock, Paper, Scissors.

Take the old hand game to the

MOVEMENT IDEA LIST

larger muscle groups. Rock = feet together, paper = feet wide apart, scissors = crossed feet and legs. Students can pair up and jump three times in place and then choose their position. Best out of three wins, and then partners switch.

13 Do an old-school dance.

Load motion-focused vintage songs—such as “The Twist,” “Hand Jive,” “Bunny Hop” and even the good ol’ “Hokey-Pokey”—to your classroom iPod and do the dances together.

14 Use a standing desk as a reward.

Get a standing desk or two and reward students with the opportunity to use them during a lesson. Rotate which students use the standing desks, and by the end of the day, every student will have stood at least once.

15 Take a walk before tests.

Before tests begin, lead the classroom in a short walking break to help them unwind, relax and better focus on their task.

16 Toss balls while spelling.

Call out a spelling word, then toss one of your students a ball to spell it. For faster throwing, have students name one letter in the spelling word and then toss the ball to another student until the word—and eventually the entire spelling list—has been practiced.

17 Lunge it out.

Show students the correct form for standing and walking lunges. Have students do a series of standing lunges by their work areas for 1 minute and then lead students around the room in walking lunges for 1 minute.

18 Race ... slowly.

Students “race” from one end of the room to the other

while moving as slowly as possible. No fair stopping!

19 Roll fitness dice.

Make or purchase fitness dice, and every hour on the hour, roll them and have the students enact a series of whatever exercise comes up.

20 Search for nature.

The school campus is a perfect place for a nature walk. Have your students grab notebooks and pencils and take a walk around the schoolyard, taking time to look for varieties of plants and insects, to listen to birds and other noises, and to notice what scents waft into the area.

21 Take a seat.

Introduce your students to seemingly easy but seriously challenging wall sits. Students find a place on the wall for their backs and slide down the wall until their thighs are parallel to the ground, knees above ankles. Aim for 30 seconds per set at first and increase to 1 minute as their strength builds.

22 Host the Olympics.

Instruct students to mimic various sports movements for 15 seconds. Serve tennis balls, bump volleyballs, block a jump shot, cross-country ski, catch footballs ... the possibilities are many!

23 Have their backs.

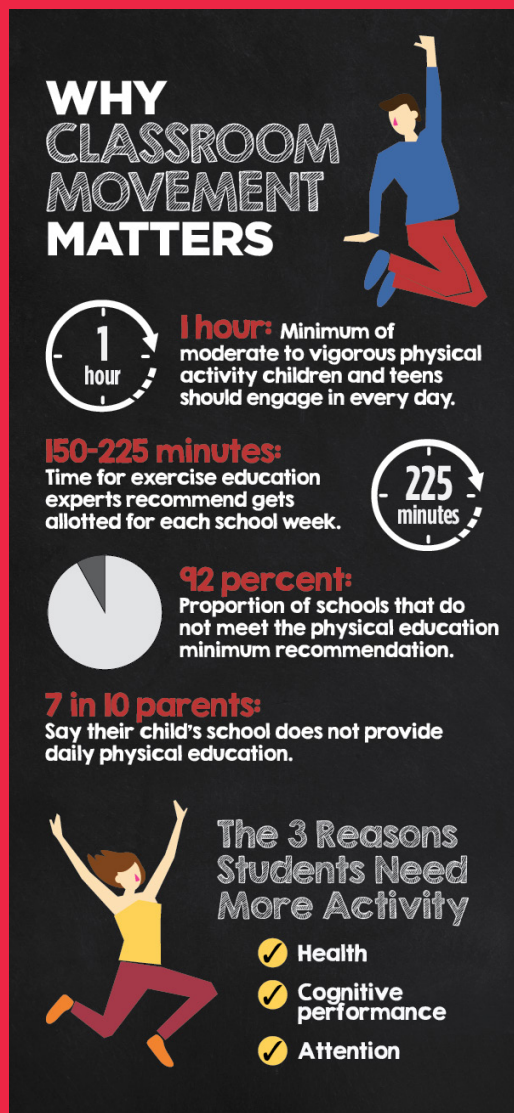
Students pair up and sit back-to-back, arms linked, knees bent, feet flat on floor. On your count, students stand up without using their hands and remain linked. Success depends on pushing against one another at the same time. Time the class to see how long it takes to have all pairs standing.

24 Walk and talk.

When it is time for small-group discussions, invite students to carry on their discussion while taking a walk.

Why Classroom Movement Matters

Any teacher can tell you that when kids get moving at school, they do better. But what does the data say? Download this infographic to get the research-based stats that prove that classroom movement really does matter.



Find out exactly why, how and when kids should get moving in order to improve cognition, pay better attention and perform better at school.

[Download the infographic now.](#)

MOVEMENT IDEA LIST

Upon returning, invite each group to share their insights.

25 Do the grapevine. Teach your students the grapevine movement (alternating side steps, crossing left foot over right, then right over left) and lead them around the room. Add music once they have the hang of it.

26 Keep it clean. Divide the class into two groups with an open space between and a masking-tape line down the center. Give each student two papers from the recycling bin to wad up and throw. On your count, students begin throwing the wads across the line. The object is to keep all paper off your team's side. After 1 or 2 minutes, call "Stop!" and see who has the cleanest side. Repeat.

27 Skywrite. Invite students to write their names in the air, using their index fingers as imaginary pencils. Try it both in print and cursive, with small and large movements. Repeat using different body parts as pencils, such as elbows, toe and knees.

28 Make it rain. Create a rainstorm in the classroom using teamwork. Have students follow your lead in this series of movements, spending at least 20 seconds on each action: Lightly rub hands together, snap fingers, slap thighs, slap thighs and stamp their feet, slap thighs, snap fingers, rubbing hands and then quiet.

29 Do a conga line: Have students create one long line with their hands on the shoulders of the student in front of them. Start the music and lead students around the classroom. Side kicks optional.

30 Recruit personal trainers. Pick a student to come up and lead a 3- to 5-minute physical

activity break doing any activities or games of his or her choosing. Rotate the trainer job amongst all students in the class.

31 Achieve balance. Assist students in learning to balance on each foot. Have students lift their foot off the floor at least 5 inches in front of them and hold for 30 seconds. Move on to lifting knees 90 degrees, balancing their foot on their inside calf (never on the knee joint) and lifting their leg behind them. Switch sides and work to improve balance over a series of days.

32 Pump (backpack) iron. Use students' backpacks with one or two books inside as "kettlebell" weights for basic arm curls, deadlifts and arm raises. Lead them in 12 to 15 slow reps, counting to 5 as they lift up and to 5 as they lower down with control. Try for three sets.

33 Walk a tightrope. Place a piece of masking tape in a line across the room and invite students to walk the line like a balance beam. Encourage them to use their arms for balance and concentrate their movements.

34 Raise your arms. Challenge students to stand holding their arms straight out to their sides for 1 minute. Complete daily over the course of two weeks so they can see how much longer they are able to hold them each day. Move on to longer than 1 minute, or while holding an object in each hand.

35 Quiz in motion. Review a unit or study for a test by asking your students a series of true-or-false questions. If the question is true, students should jump in place. If it is false, they should touch their toes. Change the motions up for each session.

36 Make movement stations.

Make signs designating three movement stations in different areas of the classroom. Assign different movements to the stations each day. Exercises can include running in place, jumping jacks, toe touches, etc. Divide students into three groups and assign them their stations, rotating throughout the activity period or throughout the day.

vasana by leading them in a gentle cool-down at the end of the day. Lead them in deep breaths while raising their arms over their heads, light stretches and then lay their heads on their desks for a period of quiet counting or silence.

39 Breathe deep. Have students stand up, take a deep breath for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds and breathe out slowly for 5



37 Do the desk relay.

If your classroom desks are in rows, give the first person in each row a small, safe object such as tennis ball. On your count, students pass the object overhead to one another until reaching the end of the row. The last student runs to the front of the room, touches the wall and sits in the first desk while everyone else moves down one desk to sit in the desk behind them. Continue for 2 minutes.

seconds. Repeat 5 times. You can also teach students the breathing pattern of inhaling in through the nose for 4 seconds, holding breath for 7 seconds and exhaling for 8 seconds, which is supposed to bring great relaxation before sleep.

40 Keep a Bag of Tricks.

After trying all the movement ideas on this list, write your students' favorites on cards or wooden blocks. Then throughout your day, have students draw a "trick" out of the bag and lead the entire class in that exercise. ■

38 Cool down.

Introduce your students to the bliss that is sha-

CLASSROOM MOVEMENT RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS

Take a look at these excellent resources to help get your school to the next level.

WEBINARS:

Enjoy [on-demand webinars](#) on subjects like:

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 - Building community
 - Deep learning in a digital era
 - Customized learning
 - Diverse learning needs
-

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-

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 - Information technology
 - Social studies
 - Test prep
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 - Science
-

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