Activity in the Classroom

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Because we live in a country that is becoming increasingly more obese, it is important to ensure that future generations do not fall to a similar fate. Children today are growing up in a time where technology, and virtual reality are almost, if not more important than actual situations and reality. Kids today spend more time inside watching TV that ever before. Not only are kids engaging in too much screen time, they are not eating as healthy as they used to. It is much simpler to grab a “happy meal” than make a healthy meal at home. It is easy to predict that if the trends in technology continue, kids will only be more inclined to live their lives completely online and in turn become more obese. In my opinion, the only chance these kids have at living a healthy life, is through the activity required of them at school. There are many quick and easy ways to get kids active throughout the day. By involving physical activity in each regular classroom, children will learn to make activity a part of their daily life.

I believe one of the main reasons it is important to involve physical activity into every day classrooms is to promote engagement of students. A lot of times in a general education classroom, these kids are being forced to focus for hours on end without a chance to re-wake up their brains! The Healthy U website agrees with such statements saying that the top four reasons to include activity in the classroom are: it “strengthens the bones, heart and muscles, improves academic performance, promotes positive social interactions among children (such as working together and problem solving) and increases classroom engagement for all students.” If students are allowed to get up and move for even thirty seconds between lessons, I believe it would make a difference not only in their ability to focus for the entire class period, but also in their attitude towards activity. If teachers do not give students a choice as to whether or not they want to participate, students will be forced to complete these activities which would in turn help their overall health. It may sound cruel to force students to engage in activity, but when it only happens in short increments it really is not too much to require.

Like the Healthy U website states, it is also important to keep kids active in the classroom because it increases overall academic success. One may argue that it is a stretch to say physical activity in a classroom can enhance overall learning. However, when you take into consideration that by the time some students get through the lesson the teacher is presenting, they are rarely able to focus for much longer. If students were given a break between lectures or even between each activity, it would give their brains just enough of a break to refresh them for the next activity. I believe the same can go for state testing or other standardized tests. If students are required to sit still for the entirety of the tests, scores are likely to be lower than if kids are given the opportunity to move around a bit between tests.

There are several ways to get students active in every day, general education classrooms. I believe these activities can be split into two categories. The first of these is the category that incorporates activity into class lessons extremely casually. Students may not even notice that they are being asked to do physical activity. The second of these categories is more obvious. This would involve teachers asking students, outright, to get up and be active. Both of these categories can be extremely affective in getting students out of their seats and moving.

The Healthy U website lists several ways teachers can discretely include different levels of activity into their daily lessons. One of these that I plan to use in my future classrooms is the gallery walk. This works extremely well for older elementary age as well as the young ones. If students have been working on projects or things of that nature, it is a simple activity where the class walks around the classroom or down the hallway, viewing other peoples work. Kids most likely will not even think twice about having to do this but it still gets them up and moving. Another great idea found on the Healthy U website is having kids use small pieces of exercise equipment quietly at their desks. These could include stress balls as well as hand exercisers. This is an easy way for kids to burn off excess energy or even stress. The website also includes that these activities could be great for when taking written essay tests in the older classrooms.

The more obvious the activity, the more beneficial it is going to be for the students overall. Activities that get student’s brains as well as bodies pumping are great for attention span as well as health. A website entitled LetsGo.org provides a number of different activities that work for getting kids out of their seats and moving. One of the ones that stuck out to me is called “Stop and Scribble”. In this activity, the teacher will call out some sort of activity (running in place, jumping jacks, mountain climbers etc.) and students will complete this activity for approximately thirty seconds. After thirty seconds, the teacher calls out either a spelling word, a math problem, or some sort of educational question. Students have to write down the answer and check with a partner before the teacher gives another activity. This is just one of four great activities given on the LetsGo website.

Imagine being seven years old again, and being told you have to sit in a desk all day while learning about thing that do not particularly interest you. This is reality for many students across America. I believe it is extremely important to keep kids active throughout the entire school day so this does not happen. The only two jobs children have are to go to school and to play. Although both are important, neither of these jobs should be taken with the seriousness that they sometimes are. Students need to learn in an environment that fosters their growth. If they are not able to focus, how can we expect students to give their full effort? It is important that students be active throughout the day to give them time to refresh their brain and prepare for the remaining part of the day. Through the addition of simple activities in the classroom, students would benefit not only academically but also socially as well as physically.

References

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