

Brain Gym in the Classroom

Tiffany Houghtaling

We have 50 trillion brain cells responding. These cells are either expanding or retracting. It's **our choice** what we put into those cells. (Positive vs. negative, movement vs. motionless)

Benefits of Brain Gym:

- Calms or energizes students
- Focuses students
- Change a behavior "brain state"
- Creates healthful habits
- Increases blood flow which supports memory function
- Creates a sense of hope and community

Supports for the Brain-Compatible Classroom

- Brain snacks & water bottles
- Thinking skills are taught (wondering, self-questioning & problem solving= self-reliance)
- Cooperative Learning & Multiple Intelligences
- Music or white noise
- Aroma (Consider allergies. The smell of freshly baked cookies or bread rarely draw complaints)
- Lighting (Research shows students with constant, appropriate lighting perform better than dim lighting)
- Temperature (68-72)

Brain Snacks in the Classroom

- **YES!** Nutritional deficits have been known to decrease test scores while supplements have improved them!
- We can't do it all- we must get the parents on board. We can **easily** make a difference here.
- **Suggestions to shape the brain:** popcorn, carrots, raisins, rice cakes, energy bars, yogurt, mixed nuts, fresh fruit, veggie sticks
- The brain perceives **water** as a nutrient.
- **Early habits** will have a positive lasting effect throughout children's schooling.

Best News Yet!

- Because the brain is a dynamic, opportunistic, pattern-forming, self-organized system of systems-
- **Every** student in a classroom has the capacity for change.

Experts in the Field:

- **Enriching The Brain , The Brain in Mind** by Eric Jensen
- **Teaching Struggling Readers** by Carol Lyons
- **Brain Gym** by Paul & Gail Dennison
- **Smart Moves** by Carla Hannaford

BRAIN EXERCISES AND ACADEMIC SKILLS



Alphabet B's

- Fine-motor skills
- penmanship
- cursive writing
- spelling
- creative writing



Elephant

- Listening comprehension
- Speech
- Spelling (decoding syllables; blending)
- Memory for sequences



Arm Activation

- penmanship
- spelling
- creative writing

BRAIN EXERCISES AND ACADEMIC SKILLS



Brain Buttons

- Crossing visual midline for reading
- Crossing midline for body coordination
- Correction of letter and number reversals
- Consonant blending
- Keeping one's place while reading



Galf Pump

- Listening Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Creative Writing
- Ability to process closure



Neck Roll

- Oral reading
- Silent reading
- Study Skills
- Speech and Language

BRAIN EXERCISES AND ACADEMIC SKILLS



Cross Crawl

- Spelling
- Writing
- Listening
- Reading
- Comprehension



Lazy B's

- READING- Left to right eye movement ; 1 to 1
- DECODING- Symbol Recognition
- Comprehension



Double Doodle

- Following directions
- Decoding & Encoding
- Writing, spelling, math

Brain Gym

Mrs. Houghtaling's Class

*Music selection depends on what I want to achieve.
(Up tempo to energize or slower tempo for focus.)

Shoulder rolls (front and back)

Thinking cap (rolling ears out)

2 finger rub above eye brows (Positive Points)

2 finger temple rub (Positive Points)

2 finger jaw rub

Energy yawn

Rotate head while rubbing shoulders (both sides)

Shoulder stretch -reach side, front, across, pull it (both sides)

Large arm circles

Small arm circles

Shoulder shrugs (shrug up, press down)

Lazy eights for eyes

Brain Buttons

Pinch Nose and Pinch Ear Lobe -arms crosses and switch

Cross Crawls (front) (do 4's, 2's, 1's)

Cross Crawls (back)

Opposite Cross Crawls

Rocking Horse

Large Eights (hands together)

Opposite Eights

Windmills (touching opposite toes)

Jumping Jacks

Cross Country Skier

Squats while pinching ear lobes (arms crosses)

Lat Stretches -reach down, side, up and stretch over

Calf Pump

Hook Up (give transitional directions)

Brain Breaks

Specific Movement for Reading Achievement

- ***Cross Crawl***
- ***Alphabet 8's***
 - ***Lazy 8's***
- ***Energy Yawn***
 - ***Calf Pump***
- ***Brain Buttons***
- ***Double Doodling***
 - ***The Elephant***
 - ***Thinking Cap***

Specific Movement for Writing Achievement

- ***Calf Pump***
- ***Energy Yawn***
 - ***Lazy 8's***
- ***Alphabet 8's***
- ***Arm Activation***
 - ***Thinking Cap***
 - ***The Elephant***

Specific Movement for Listening and Speaking

- ***Thinking Cap***
- ***Cross Crawl***
- ***The Elephant***
 - ***Hook-ups***

Brain Gym

Mrs. Houghtaling's 1st Grade

Dear Parents,

This year in first grade, we will be participating in Brain Gym. This is a 5 to 10 minute period in our class designed to help our brains! Sound interesting? It is! The current research concerning how we can help our brains make better connections is simply incredible. The Brain Gym activities allow both sides of the brain to work together more efficiently.

The activities your child will be doing will help them do the following better: cross the midline, increase the oxygen flow to the brain, increase balance, improve thinking skills, gain self-reliance and problem-solve. There are activities that focus on increasing their positive feelings, activating and energizing moves as well as clearing movements that help to prepare for new learning. Our children will learn how to reduce stress simply by sitting or standing in a specific position. This is just scratching the surface! Amazing enough, these activities ultimately improve learning! That is the goal. We will work up to doing these activities 2 times a day. The best part- the kids love it!

My thoughts are if we are going to engage in these powerful brain moves, let's follow it up with the snacks and hydration that is recommended by the researchers of this wonderful program!

How Can You Help?

Water: Plenty of water is required to help the brain. The better we are hydrated the better our brains are prepared for learning. (That goes

for adults too! :0) Our class will be allowed to keep a small bottle of water on their desk so they can sip as they learn. Please make sure it is plastic and easy to open and close to reduce unnecessary messes. Children can be responsible for their own bottle.

Brain Snacks: I'm not comfortable with some kids having a snack while others don't, so- we will all snack on the same snack while learning. If you would like to occasionally send in the following recommended items- I would be grateful.

Bagels (Each child will get $\frac{1}{2}$)

Graham crackers

Animal crackers

Fig newtons (kids usually like the strawberry)

String cheese

Raisins

Pretzels

Ritz Bits (or any peanut butter and cracker)

Occasionally, you can feel the energy levels drop and a snack makes all the difference in the world. I try to introduce a snack mid-morning and occasionally late afternoon. So a box or a bag usually lasts almost a week and any brand is fine.

Of course, we will take allergies into consideration and make appropriate adjustments. If you have suggestions of items that might be healthful and classroom friendly, I am always ready for suggestions!

Your youngster will be sharing Brain Gym activities with you in no time! Thanks for helping to ensure we have the most healthful school year!

What might be some behavioral situations that could be addressed with Brain Gym in your classroom?

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What might be some attention/ focus issues that could be addressed with Brain Gym in your classroom?

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What might be some academic concerns that might be addressed with Brain Gym in your classroom?

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How might Brain Gym be effective in your classroom?

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What might be some specific actions or moves you want to try?

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What might be some things you want to implement?

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