



**AN INTRODUCTION TO**  
**CLASSROOM**  
**MOVEMENT**

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# SCHOOL-BASED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Outpatient vs. school-based occupational therapy
- Occupational Therapists use meaningful activities (occupations) to help children and youth participate in what they need and/or want to do in order to promote physical and mental health and well-being.
- Students' Occupations:
  - Education
  - Play and leisure
  - Social participation
  - Self-care skills (ADLs or Activities of Daily Living)
  - Transition/ work skills.

# SCHOOL-BASED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Address skills (motor, cognitive, psychosocial, sensory components) that impact academic participation and occupational performance:
  - Coordination, flexibility, strength, balance
  - Self-regulation
  - Seating/positioning
  - Accommodations and modifications
  - Assistive technology
  - Management of classroom sensory experiences and level of focus and alertness needed for learning
- Occupational therapists also perform activity and environmental analyses and modifications in order to reduce barriers to participation.
- Collaboration with school staff is key!
- Growing niches
  - Childhood obesity and recess/play advocacy

# PLAY

- The primary goals of childhood are to grow, learn, and play
- Play helps children make sense of the world around them
- Play is a child's "job" or "occupation" that helps develop:
  - Physical coordination, strength, and balance
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Emotional maturity
  - Social skills and peer relationships
  - Self-confidence to try new experiences and explore new environments



# BENEFITS OF PLAY

- Research has shown that children who participate in play frequently **grow quickly, experience higher achievement in school, and develop healthy habits** for adulthood.
- When a child plays, he or she experiences **new ways to solve problems and learn skills** needed to become a healthy adult.
- A comparative study of 11,000 third graders found that those who participated in more than **15 minutes of recess per day behaved better in the classroom** and were more likely to learn than their peers who had little to no recess opportunities ( Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009).
- Using daily routines and activities throughout the day, encouraging the happiness and joy that can be experienced through play, and simply allowing children to be playful can **enhance their health and well-being**.

What is a favorite childhood  
memory of yours?

# PLAY

- Play today
  - Spending large amounts of time sitting throughout the day and not changing positions (e.g., rolling down hills, spinning, jumping) through play
  - Merry-go-rounds, teeter-totters, and swings are often things of playgrounds' past.
  - Recesses have been shortened and/or taken away
  - Passive activities (T.V., YouTube, technology)
  - Playing indoors
  - Cost of extracurricular activities
  - Riding and walking to school less
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Crime
  - Motor and sensory challenges could be impacted by lack of exposure play-based activities (e.g., running, catching, kicking, riding bike, a variety of textures such as paint, arts/crafts)
- Decreased active play opportunities and physical inactivity are contributing to a **rise in childhood obesity.**

# CHILDHOOD OBESITY

- The rates of childhood obesity in the U.S. have doubled since 1970
- Most children spend 4 to 5 hours a day doing sedentary activities
  - The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommend youth accumulate **60+ minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity per day for health.**
- 2 out of 3 kids are inactive
  - Decreased play opportunities
  - Physical inactivity
  - Technology
  - Sedentary routines at home and school
  - Recess
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Family factors
  - Special needs (twice as likely as other children to be overweight or obese)
  - Academic demands
  - Transportation



# CHILDHOOD OBESITY

- Being overweight or obese is unhealthy for all ages, especially children
  - Habits develop as early as pre-K and could be precursors to lifelong patterns.
  - Obesity is a physical and mental health issue as it affects a child's ability to socialize, learn, play, and develop a positive self-image.
  - About ***1 in 3 kids in the United States is overweight or obese.***
  - The current generation of kids could be the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents (Alliance for a Healthier Generation).

# PLAY AT SCHOOL

- Free or unstructured play
- Recess
- Physically active play
- Rough and tumble play
- Indoor and outdoor games
- Play-based curriculum
- Technology games and other practices that integrate physical movement and activity are contributing to a new kind of play in educational settings (e.g., Go Noodle).



# RECESS MATTERS!

- Increased opportunity for engagement in social participation, improved physical and emotional health, development of leisure and play to **counteract the imbalance between sedentary and physical activity**, and preparation of the body and mind for **attentiveness and engagement** in the classroom.
- Recess is a time to ***recharge students' bodies and minds***. Play in any form is a stress reliever from the world of more and more academic instruction and benchmark testing.
- **Better classroom behaviors** are found in classrooms receiving at least one 15-minute recess break each day.
- **Attention to classroom tasks is improved** after recess time.
- **Recess represents about half the available time** for children to dedicate to physical activity.

# MOVEMENT AND LEARNING

- Studies show that active kids perform better academically, have better attendance, and decreased behaviors.
- Movement increases brain function. Physical activity breaks in the classroom helps children get ready to learn and remember information better. Physical movement increases blood flow, bringing more oxygen to the brain and leads to improved concentration. Physical activity breaks can be used to energize a group after lunch or relax and calm a class before a test.
- Movement promotes:
  - **Play**
  - Learning
  - Coordination and strength
  - Creativity
  - **Healthy habits across the lifespan**
  - Peer relationships
  - Self-regulation
  - Attention and focus
  - Fun!!
- Classroom movement also helps engage diverse learners such as children who require more movement to focus or those with special needs (e.g., ADHD, Autism, emotional disturbance)



# WHAT ARE YOU SEEING IN THE CLASSROOM AND ACROSS SCHOOL SETTINGS?

- Excessive movement
  - Rocking
  - Tilting on side of chair
  - Sitting on the side of chairs
  - Constantly getting out of chair
  - “Can’t sit still”
- Chewing non-edibles (e.g., pencils)
- Easily Distracted
- Jumping
- Kicking feet
- Tapping on desk
- Running vs. walking
- Bumping into other students or walls
- Checking phone
- Excessive talking or shouting
- Humming, talking, singing to self
- Handwriting challenges
- Poor self-regulation
- Poor spatial awareness
- Coordination challenges
- Obesity
- Low muscle tone (leaning on desk, slouching)
- Under-reactive (appears sleepy, disengaged)
- Stress
- Not actively engaged at recess

# CLASSROOM MOVEMENT CHALLENGES

- Time
- Space
- Behaviors
- Cost
- Meeting the diverse needs of all students
- “One more thing”
- Where to start?
- What to do?

*Additional challenges?*



# WHEN TO MOVE?

- **Movement for Movement's Sake** – to communicate, create, and play!
- **Brain Breaks** – to relax, recuperate, or refocus
- **Transitions** – to between classroom activities or within the school building
- **Lesson Enrichment** – to reinforce content and its understanding through active learning



# MOVEMENT FOR MOVEMENT'S SAKE

## WHOLE-CLASS MOVEMENT (CALMING & ALERTING DEPENDING ON OBJECTIVE)

- GoNoodle
- S'Cool Moves
- Create a routine with a deck of movement cards or popsicle sticks (e.g., stretching, yoga, coordination)
- Indoor recess (jumping, hopping, skipping, dancing)
  - <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1473-active-indoor-recess>
- Go for a walk or scavenger hunt
- Sing songs that include movement
- Simon Says
- Change positions (stand, tummy) and work the room
- Game On <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges#classroom>

# MOVEMENT FOR MOVEMENT'S SAKE

## ADDRESSING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Desk and chair modifications
    - Disc-o-sit cushions
    - Ball chairs \*, rocking chairs, bean bag chairs
  - Place a desk organizer away from desk
  - Hand and foot fidgets
    - Theraband
    - Velcro under desk
  - Promote hydration
  - Provide access to a calming space if child shows signs of sensory overload with classroom movement or other periods throughout the day
  - Keep recess!
  - Desk strips
  - Make deliveries to office
- Heavy Work
    - Stack/unstack chairs
    - “Helper” at gym class
    - Open doors for others at natural opportunities (e.g., walking in from recess)
    - Pass out supplies/paper
    - Wipe down board, desks, tabletops
    - Sweep
    - Deliver books to library
    - Rearrange bookshelves
    - Chew gum (consult engineer and principal)
    - Sharpen pencils
    - Carry a basket of items (e.g., lunch bin)
    - Squeeze stress ball
    - Consult your school’s occupational therapist for additional strategies and/or questions

# BRAIN BREAKS

## CALMING

- Stretching and **basic** yoga poses
  - Focus on the exercises; Do NOT chant or use Sanskrit terms such as “namaste.”
  - <https://app.gonoodle.com/categories/stretch>
  - Yoga 4 Schools card deck
  - Safety first! If it feels unsafe or looks complicated—don’t do it!
- Create a calming space
  - Calming music
  - Low lights
  - Beanbag chair
  - Consult with school OT for universal strategies
- Deep breathing and mindfulness
  - <http://littlefloweryoga.com/blog/layers-of-sound>
  - <https://app.gonoodle.com/categories/enhance-focus>
  - Test Best <https://app.gonoodle.com/categories/test-best>
- Drawing or writing to calming music



## ALERTING/ENERGIZING

- Just dance!
  - <http://teachtrainlove.com/20-brain-break-clips-fight-the-fidgeting/>
- Get a drink of water
- Run an errand
- Stand up every 30 minutes
- ‘Listening ears’
- Cross crawls
- Non-locomotive moves (i.e., physical activities that students can do in place)
- Lazy 8s – writing, tracing, following
- Create / obtain a deck of cards or popsicle sticks w/ movement activities
- S’Cool Moves
- Active recess!
- [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/Brain\\_Breaks\\_for\\_Testing\\_-\\_March\\_2015.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/Brain_Breaks_for_Testing_-_March_2015.pdf)
- <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1252-brain-breaks-instant-recess-and-energizers>

# TRANSITIONS

- Prepare to leave and return
- Stand up / sit down like a... statue, mountain
- Push Up (i.e., wall press) / Line Up
- “Dots and squeezies” (S’cool Moves), palm presses, and deep breathing after recess or gym
  - Can complete with students sitting down and with lights off/dimmed for additional calming
- Chair press
  - This is a challenging exercise so it may not be appropriate or safe for every classroom, even with modifications.
  - Not safe on flexible seating (e.g., ball chairs, rocking chairs)
  - Modifications:
    - Stay seated and lift 1 or both feet up or keep feet on ground
    - Push on sides of chair to lift bottom



# LESSON ENRICHMENT

- “Show me” vs “tell me”
- Walking worksheets
- Partner/group work & learning stations
- Q and A to stretching / movement
- Walk and talk
- Stand Up
- **Social Studies:** Find and learn the games and dances of countries or regions being studied.
- **Math and Science:** Use movement tasks to practice measuring (jump distances, running speed throwing or kicking distance, etc.), graphing progress, monitoring heart rate before and after exercise, or determining percentages of hitting target in batting, throwing or kicking.
- **School Garden:** Learn about plants, growing, food sources, etc. the physical activities required in gardening include carrying, bending and stretching, digging, raking, weeding, Incorporate science concepts of plant biology or writing skills by having students write about the garden.



- **How are you including movement throughout the school day?**
- **What do you want or plan to do?**

*See resource slides for additional strategies*

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MOVEMENT EXPERIENCES

- Demonstrate, celebrate, and have fun
- Set clear expectations
- Create a safe and structured environment
- Stop an activity if things get out of hand or unsafe
- Start small and build gradually
  - Non-locomotive to locomotive
- Keep it simple and consistent
- Develop a strategy to get your classroom's attention
- **Finish movement breaks with a few deep breaths in and out in order to help students return to a calm body so they are ready to learn and focus.**
- Stick with it!
- Track what works and what doesn't
- Seek out resources
  - School staff
  - See slides at end of this presentation

# CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION & MANAGEMENT

- Decide your objective
  - What themes are you trying to convey?
  - What is your key point in providing the activity
  - Why does movement matter to you?
  - Why does movement matter to your students?
- Have awareness of what can be challenging about movement
  - Accidents
  - Too much too soon
  - Disorderly
  - Not enough space
  - How can it be altered/modified for inclusion of all students?
- Teach and model what is comfortable for YOU:
  - Know your own movement preferences – what you LIKE to do and how you enjoy moving.
- Set clear frameworks:
  - Time frames
  - Place holders ('sitting spots')
  - Space limits
  - Select inclusive and clear language
  - Check for awareness of rules
  - Involve learners in developing classroom guidelines
  - Use visuals if available
- Collaborate with school staff to support students with special needs
  - Occupational, physical, and speech therapists
  - Health enhancement teachers
  - Nursing
- Don't single out a student; celebrate whole class participation

# STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION

- Encourage/celebrate all students when they try hard, make a good effort, or succeed.
- Include non-competitive movement opportunities that provides action and skill practice and involvement of everyone.
- Slow down the activity
- Reduce the duration
- Alter the movement / activity
- Allow students to have extra rest breaks to catch their breath.
- Give reminders and visual cues for students who have trouble remembering or following directions.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Collaborate with school staff and if applicable, 504/IEP team members (e.g., therapists, nursing). for strategies and training.

# STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION

- Individually, ask the student with a disability if there are changes or modifications that would be helpful.
- Communicate with parents
- Peer helpers
- Monitor for signs of distress (e.g., asthmatic or diabetic students), sensory overload (e.g, shutting down, covering ears, bumping into others purposefully), and physical challenges (e.g., falling over)
- If something appears unsafe for any student, STOP, reassess the activities/environment, and consult with your school team for additional strategies and guidance.
- If you need help, ask!

# CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

- Reflect on how your students behave when they get out of chairs
  - “Move as still as a statue/mountain”
- Do they need to learn about personal space and practice spatial awareness?
  - Carpet squares
  - Painters’ tape (consult with building admin and engineers first)
  - “Movement bubbles”
- How do they best focus?
  - Pre and post observations
  - Give it time
  - Trial and error
- Movement breaks can vary throughout the day based on classroom needs
  - Do they need more alerting or calming?
- Practice methods for regaining group attention

# RESOURCES

- ABC for Fitness (Activity Bursts in the Classroom) <http://www.turnthetidefoundation.org/AbcFitness.aspx>
  - 79 pages! ☺ <http://www.turnthetidefoundation.org/ABCmaterials/ABCManual.pdf>
- Action for Healthy Kids (numerous resources!)
  - Active Learning <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1251-active-learning-opportunities>
  - Game On <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on>
  - Including All Children <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/what-we-do/programs/game-on/about-game-on/850-children-disabilities#benefits>
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation (register for access to multiple resources and trainings)
  - Active Learning For All Ages [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/\\_asset/6jsshc/16-0018\\_ClssrmPAHandout.pdf](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/6jsshc/16-0018_ClssrmPAHandout.pdf)
  - Middle School Activity Breaks [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/\\_asset/wmvkp7/14-6309\\_MSActivityBreaks.pdf](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/wmvkp7/14-6309_MSActivityBreaks.pdf)
  - Secondary Classroom Physical Activities [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/\\_asset/590hh0/10-1819\\_SecondaryClassroomPA.pdf](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/590hh0/10-1819_SecondaryClassroomPA.pdf)
  - Take Action [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take\\_action/schools/physical\\_activity/](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take_action/schools/physical_activity/)
- Alternatives to Withholding Physical Activity
  - [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/game-on/Alternatives\\_to\\_Withholding\\_Physical\\_Activity\\_at\\_School.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/game-on/Alternatives_to_Withholding_Physical_Activity_at_School.pdf)
  - [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/\\_asset/kvz6n2/13-6194\\_AltToWithholdingPA.pdf](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/kvz6n2/13-6194_AltToWithholdingPA.pdf)
- Classroom Energizers [http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Texts/Energizers\\_K-5\\_2015.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Texts/Energizers_K-5_2015.pdf)
- Classroom Strategies for Children with ADHD, Autism, and Sensory Processing Disorders [https://www.amazon.com/Classroom-Strategies-Children-Processing-Disorders/dp/1936128802/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1481291310&sr=8-1&keywords=sensory+strategies+classroom](https://www.amazon.com/Classroom-Strategies-Children-Processing-Disorders/dp/1936128802/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1481291310&sr=8-1&keywords=sensory+strategies+classroom)
- K-5 Energizers [http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Texts/Energizers\\_K-5\\_2015.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Texts/Energizers_K-5_2015.pdf)

# RESOURCES

- GFPS Student Wellness <http://studentwellnessgfps.weebly.com/> (Numerous resources!)
- Go Noodle <http://GoNoodle.com>
- Little Flower Yoga <http://LittleFlowerYoga.com> (Yoga decks, school-based yoga resources, trainings)
- My Therapy Source [http://www.yourtherapysource.com/files/10\\_simple\\_activities\\_classroom.pdf](http://www.yourtherapysource.com/files/10_simple_activities_classroom.pdf)
- Pesi [http://yogaandmindfulnessforkids.kajabi.com/sp/40201-yoga\\_mindfulness\\_tools\\_rehab](http://yogaandmindfulnessforkids.kajabi.com/sp/40201-yoga_mindfulness_tools_rehab)
- Pinterest
- Recess Before Lunch [http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School\\_Nutrition/SWellness.html#](http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/SWellness.html#)
- S'Cool Moves <http://www.schoolmoves.com/>
- Take a Break Cards  
<https://www.greeleyschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=14648&dataid=12831&FileName=Take%20a%20Break%20Cards.pdf>
- Teachers Pay Teachers <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Search:brain%20breaks>
- Tips for Teachers: Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in the Classroom  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/pdf/Tips\\_for\\_Teachers\\_TAG508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/pdf/Tips_for_Teachers_TAG508.pdf)
- Understanding Your Child's Sensory Signals: A Practical Daily Use Handbook for Parents and Teachers  
[https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Your-Childs-Sensory-Signals/dp/1466263539/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1481291782&sr=8-1&keywords=angie+voss](https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Your-Childs-Sensory-Signals/dp/1466263539/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1481291782&sr=8-1&keywords=angie+voss)
- Yoga 4 Classrooms <http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/> (see activity deck)
- YouTube
  - Just Dance
  - Go Noodle <https://www.youtube.com/user/GoNoodleGames>

Questions?



# REFERENCES

- <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org>
- <https://www.healthiergeneration.org>
- <https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Browse/Play/Learning%20Through%20Play%20tip%20sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/SchoolMHToolkit/Recess%20Promotion.pdf>
- <https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Secure/Practice/Children/PowerPoint%20Role%20of%20OT%20with%20children%20and%20Youth%20in%20School%20Based%20Practice.pdf>
- <https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/School-Administrator-Brochure.pdf>
- <https://www.aota.org/practice/children-youth/emerging-niche/childhood-obesity.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/features/key-findings-adhd72013.html>
- <https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/get-active>
- <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-teacher/spring-2013/everybody.-stand-up!/>
- <https://peacefulplaygrounds.com/>
- <http://www.playcore.com/userfiles/file/PRTM-Play-Coalition-White-Paper.pdf>
- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/07/08/why-so-many-kids-cant-sit-still-in-school-today/?utm\\_term=.7c4e8dfe7a5f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/07/08/why-so-many-kids-cant-sit-still-in-school-today/?utm_term=.7c4e8dfe7a5f)
- <http://www.wellnesscke.net/downloadables/Rationales,Strategies&ResourcesforMovementintheClassroom.pdf>
- <http://wonderteacher.com/tips-for-classroom-movement/>

# PRESENTATION BREAKS

- Yoga 4 Classrooms Card Deck
- Little Flower Yoga
  - Yoga Deck
  - <http://littlefloweryoga.com/blog/layers-of-sound>
  - GoNoodle Flow
- Game On!
  - <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges>
  - <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1473-active-indoor-recess>
- Go Noodle
  - Stretch <https://app.gonoodle.com/categories/stretch>
  - Melting <https://app.gonoodle.com/channels/flow/melting?s=category&t=Stretch>
  - Rainbow Breath <https://app.gonoodle.com/channels/flow/rainbow-breath?source=search>
  - Strengthen Your Focus <https://app.gonoodle.com/channels/empower-tools/strengthen-your-focus?s=category&t=Enhance%20Focus>
  - Indoor Recess <https://app.gonoodle.com/categories/indoor-recess>
  - GoNoodle at School Blog <http://blog.gonoodle.com/category/gonoodle-at-school/>
  - GoNoodle (free) vs. GoNoodle Plus (30-day free trial, \$10/month )