

Brain and Body Working Together

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Katie Scherrer



Betsy Diamant-Cohen is a children's librarian with a doctorate who loves to present workshops for educators, programs for children and families, and presentations at conferences. **Katie Scherrer** is the founder of *Stories, Songs, and Stretches!*, an early learning startup working to ensure all kids are school-ready in body, heart, and mind.



Using movement in the storytime setting is not new. Most presenters know that, at minimum, movement is a great tool for helping young children “get the wiggles out” and have fun before resettling for the parts of the program that require more attention and focus.

However, much like the use of songs, props, and conversation in the days before youth services staff were well-versed in the development of early literacy competencies, the use of movement in storytime is often intuitive rather than intentional. The great news is that these instincts to utilize movement are right on track! Not only does movement help children build gross and fine motor skills, emerging research indicates combining movement with early literacy practices actually boosts early literacy development as well.¹

The following resources provide concrete and practical information and activities for implementing elements of physical movement into your storytimes that are intentionally designed to support school-readiness development.

Three Principles for Intentional Movement in Storytime

www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2019/07/three-principles-for-intentional-movement-in-storytime

Post on the ALSC blog proposing, and briefly explaining, three guiding principles for making the use of movement in storytime intentional and effective.

Active for Life Lesson Plans

<https://activeforlife.com/lesson-plans-and-resources>

Active for Life is a Canadian nonprofit social initiative created to give children the right start in life through the development of physical literacy. Multiple free movement activities are described in detail and broken down by age.

A Hop, Skip and Jump: Enhancing Physical Literacy

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/05c80a_166260a29b374b3ab376b264419b5c4.pdf

An extensive resource created by students and professionals at Mount Royal University (Canada) to encourage active play in young children.

Cosmic Kids Yoga: A-Z of Kids Yoga Postures

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIj6qrCsgGE

A compilation of dozens of short video demonstrations of developmentally appropriate yoga poses and stretches for young children.

Let's Move in Libraries

<http://letsmovelibraries.org>

An international initiative that aims to support healthy communities by getting people of all ages and abilities moving in library spaces and programs. Find sample programs and connect with colleagues who are also working to share intentional movement activities within their communities.

SHAPE America Early Childhood Activities

www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/downloads-earlyChildhood.aspx

SHAPE America—the Society of Health and Physical Educators—is the national organization for health and physical education professionals. Find free, downloadable activity sheets for getting preschool-age children moving. Available in English and Spanish.

Brain Gym

<https://breakthroughsinternational.org/programs/the-brain-gym-program>

Using “educational kinesiology,” or learning through movement, the Brain Gym program consists of twenty-six activities and movement-based techniques that “awaken” children’s brains and synchronize body systems for optimal functioning. Each movement sequence targets a specific need, such

Reference

1. Deborah Callcott, Lorraine Hammond, and Susan Hill, “The Synergistic Effect of Teaching a Combined Explicit Movement and Phonological Awareness Program to

as being able to remember information before taking a test. *Brain Gym Teacher’s Edition* (2010) by Dennison and Dennison contains illustrations and easy-to-follow descriptions of all twenty-six Brain Gym movements.

Dancing to Learn

<https://sharpbrains.com/blog/2016/01/22/what-educators-and-parents-should-know-about-neuroplasticity-learning-and-dance>

The easily understandable explanations regarding the value of dance in this blog post provide scientific support for offering dance parties in the library. The information can also be used as developmental tips for parents and caregivers regarding the important benefits of dancing with their children.

Activity and Break Apps to Help You Move at Work

www.umsystem.edu/totalrewards/wellness/activity_and_break_apps

If you need reminders to get up and move throughout your workday, check here for the University of Missouri System’s annotated list of mobile-device reminder apps. Direct links to each app are included along with pricing information.

The Science Behind Exercise and the Brain

www.johnratey.com

Dr. John Ratey, author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, is often quoted for his research regarding the transformative effects of exercise on the brain. His book is a fascinating read and his website contains his TEDx talk, “Run, Jump, Learn! How Exercise can Transform our Schools,” a Brain Grains video that introduces us to children whose lives have been turned around through exercise, and a Mr. H. “The Exercise + Brain Rap” video. &

Preschool Aged Students,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 4 (May 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-014-0652-7>.