Whole Body Learning

Definition:
Whole body learning occurs when teachers and students engage physically, mentally, and emotionally in the learning cycle.

PHYSICAL

“The importance of the body is indisputable: the body moves, acts, rememorizes...and remakes the world. It’s absurd to separate the rigorous acts of knowing the world from the body.”
- Paulo Freire
Extensive research has been conducted to study the impact of physical activity on both academic performance and student behaviors. Physical activity has been found to enhance learning as well as improve student behavior (Fordyce & Wehner, 1993). Exercise has been found to affect executive functioning by increasing oxygen flow to the brain, increasing brain neurotransmitters, and improving cognitive functioning. (Basch, 2010)

Movement can be an effective cognitive strategy to:
- strengthen learning
- improve memory and retrieval
- enhance learner motivation and morale (Jensen, 2005)

The part of the brain that processes movement is the same part of the brain that processes learning.

The cerebellum is the area of the brain most associated with motor control as well as memory, attention, and spatial perception. (Jensen, 2005)
How does physical activity improve student behavior?

By learning the rules and guidelines involved in structured physical fitness and having unstructured movement time to engage with peers, physically active students tend to exhibit more responsible personal and social choices. (Basch, 2010)

Inside the Lesson
- Kinesthetic learning activities
- Utilizing all classroom learning spaces
- Connecting movement to content
- Structured movement during transitions

Beside the Lesson
- Fidgets
- Oral motor regulators
- Variety of active seating options
- Student break opportunities
EMOTIONAL

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”
-Maya Angelou

WHY the emotional aspect?

When kids have a greater social connection it fosters a sense of “coherence” or meaning and purpose in life, which, in turn, enhances the whole body (mental, emotional & physical processes).
(Antonovsky, 1987)

Emotional

How does emotional engagement improve student behavior?

• A caring and supportive environment improves student behavior
• Engaging in positive peer interactions is very motivating
• Knowing strategies for emotional regulation and navigating social situations is empowering
Emotional Regulation:
Our goal is for students to self-regulate their emotions within the classroom setting
• teach strategies for different emotions
• teach how to take a successful break

Emotional in the Classroom

My Thoughts When Feeling BLUE

My Strategies When Feeling BLUE

Emotional in the Classroom

My Stress Reflection Sheet

When I’m stressed my strategy is to...

What makes me feel better?
Emotional in the Classroom

Direct Instruction in Social Skills:
- personal space
- helpful words
- positive self-talk (self-image)
- cooperative play
- winning & losing
- conversation skills
- public and private

Social Thinking:
- self-awareness & self-monitoring
- being a part of a group
- recognizing expectations
- discussing how we affect others
- social behavior mapping
- video modeling
- perspective taking
- nonverbal and verbal communication

Student Self-Reflection
- social behavior mapping

Self-Advocacy
- students identify the strategies that work for them
- empower them to ask for what they need
- Learner Profiles
Emotional in the Classroom

Positive Language

Our goal is for our students to be a part of a community.

Therefore, we want our students to be:

- Capable
- Connected
- Considerate
- Creative

To do this, we:

- engage in community-building as a school
- engage in community-building as a class
Emotional in the Classroom

“Students are ENGAGED when they are attracted to their work, PERSIST despite challenges & obstacles, and take visible DELIGHT in accomplishing their work.”
-Adam Fletcher
Because students succeed when they are mentally engaged, challenged, and supported:

“Challenging and attainable academic goals, teaching strategies that emphasize student collaboration, and subject matter that is meaningful and connected to students’ experiences also contribute to their feelings of academic competence and engagement.”

“Once students are confident of their ability to succeed, they become more engaged and learn more. ...The earlier [we] begin to build students’ confidence in their ability to do well, the better off they will be. Because students’ notions of their capacity to be successful are so important to engagement in school and learning, school contexts should be designed in ways that support feelings of success.” (Akey, 2006)

How do we mentally engage students?

By partnering with students in an empowering learning experience:
- student-led conferences
- student-created portfolios
- goal-setting and reflection as regular part of learning cycle
- growth-oriented classroom climate
- scaffolding to maximize independence

How do we mentally engage students?

By connecting learning to students’ lives and the world around them:
- critical literacy integration
- problem-posing discussions
- taking learning experiences out into the community
- peer-to-peer learning
- building on students’ strengths & interests
People feel engaged when they are mentally stimulated and challenged to push themselves.

At Cloverleaf, we balance challenge with support to keep students mentally engaged and invested in their own school experience.
Mental in the Classroom

How does the mental aspect improve student behavior?

When students are engaged in learning, with the right balance of challenge and support, we see a:
- decrease in negative behaviors due to boredom
- decrease in negative behaviors due to frustration

In closing...

I KNOW WITH MY ENTIRE BODY: WITH FEELINGS, WITH PASSION, AND ALSO WITH REASON."
-Paulo Freire

Sources


Basch, C. E. (2010). Healthier students are better learners: a missing link in school reforms to close the achievement gap. Equity Matters, 6, 4-45.


Thank you for attending our presentation on Whole Body Learning!

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