# Movement in learning transforms classrooms into dynamic, inclusive spaces



In many traditional classrooms, the expectation remains that students will sit still, concentrate quietly, and complete academic tasks with minimal movement. This longstanding model, however, is increasingly being challenged by research demonstrating that integrating physical activity into the learning environment can significantly enhance both cognitive performance and student well-being. Many educators now argue that it is not just beneficial but essential to incorporate movement into daily instruction as part of a modern and inclusive education approach.

The detrimental effects of prolonged periods of sedentary behaviour on students' engagement and learning have been well documented. Students who are unable to sit still, often due to stress, attention issues, or sensory needs, find that a passive learning environment can severely limit their ability to learn effectively. As some may resort to seeking external assistance for academic pressures, it becomes crucial to recognise that the classroom itself may not support their preferred learning styles. Implementing movement-based strategies shows promise in bridging this gap, facilitating improved focus, memory retention, and motivation among students.

Research underscores the neurological benefits of physical activity, revealing that it increases blood circulation to the brain—boosting alertness, mood, and memory. This connection is particularly crucial for younger learners, whose cognitive development is intertwined with their physical activity levels. Short episodes of movement can elevate levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain, which aids in improving attention while simultaneously reducing stress. This suggests that even minor adjustments, such as allowing students to stand while working or using gestures during discussions, can yield significant improvements in classroom engagement and learning outcomes.

Moreover, integrating movement into various subjects rather than limiting it to physical education or sporadic breaks can lead to richer educational experiences. For instance, in mathematics, students could embody geometric shapes, while in language arts, movement might accompany brainstorming sessions. Science lessons could involve physical models to help conceptualise complex systems, and historical studies could be enhanced through role-playing. Even test preparation can benefit from movement-based games, making the learning process more dynamic and enjoyable. The central idea is not to inject random activities into lessons but rather to utilise movement in ways that deepen understanding.

Importantly, diverse learning needs necessitate this reframing of instructional methods. Kinesthetic learners, who thrive on physical engagement, often struggle in conventional desk-bound environments. Incorporating movement ensures these students can access learning equitably while simultaneously benefiting their peers. Movement can also support language acquisition, helping students connect vocabulary with physical context. Additionally, for those with ADHD or executive function challenges, physical activity serves as a constructive outlet for excess energy, enhancing working memory and concentration. In essence, movement emerges as a universal design tool that can dismantle barriers within inclusive classrooms.

Revisiting classroom norms is critical for successfully embedding movement into the educational fabric. Rather than viewing stillness as a default, educators can foster a culture where mobility is an integral component of the learning experience. Utilizing rotating stations, standing desks, or assigning walking discussions as homework can enhance the physical engagement of learners. This cultural shift not only normalises movement but also reframes perceptions of discipline and productivity. When movement is seen as an inherent part of learning, students feel respected as whole individuals rather than mere test-takers.

In practical terms, educators need not overhaul their entire curriculum to embrace this approach. Simple changes can make a profound impact. Identifying passive routines that could incorporate movement—such as vocabulary reviews conducted with a toss of a ball or grammar exercises that involve physical sorting—can breathe new life into lessons. Consistency often outweighs intensity; incorporating brief but structured movement moments can help improve classroom behaviour and focus across the school day. Collaborative efforts among educators to share ideas and reflect on their outcomes can further embed this philosophy school-wide.

In conclusion, learning is inherently active, and educational settings must reflect this truth. Movement should be woven into every subject, not as an auxiliary activity but as a fundamental method for engaging and teaching students effectively. When physical activity is embraced as part of academic life, students flourish both intellectually and physically. The imperative for a shift in educational practices is clear, and its benefits promise to extend well beyond the classroom, fostering a generation of healthier, more engaged learners.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[2]](https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-education/about/index.html)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[4]](https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-02-2021-who-reviews-effect-of-physical-activity-on-enhancing-academic-achievement-at-school/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[5]](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-eight-ways-to-use-movement-in-teaching-learning/2020/07)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[6]](https://www.npcmc.com/2023/07/21/the-benefits-of-physical-education-a-guide-for-parents/), [[7]](https://www.nhaschools.com/en/blog/news/physical-activity-benefits-for-students)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[2]](https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-education/about/index.html), [[3]](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/school_pa_benefits.htm)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[5]](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-eight-ways-to-use-movement-in-teaching-learning/2020/07)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[3]](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/school_pa_benefits.htm), [[6]](https://www.npcmc.com/2023/07/21/the-benefits-of-physical-education-a-guide-for-parents/)
9. Conclusion: [[1]](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/), [[4]](https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-02-2021-who-reviews-effect-of-physical-activity-on-enhancing-academic-achievement-at-school/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.vicksburgpost.com/2025/05/15/movement-in-learning-why-physical-activity-belongs-in-every-subject/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-education/about/index.html> - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes the importance of physical education and activity in schools, stating that children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Schools play a crucial role in promoting these behaviors, which can lead to improved grades, better focus in class, and overall health benefits. Incorporating physical activity into the school day supports lifelong health and well-being, and helps prevent various health conditions.
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/school_pa_benefits.htm> - The CDC provides an infographic detailing the benefits of school-based physical activity. Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence is vital for promoting lifelong health and preventing various health conditions. Schools are uniquely positioned to help students achieve the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) can increase physical activity opportunities before, during, and after school, benefiting students, teachers, and the community.
4. <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-02-2021-who-reviews-effect-of-physical-activity-on-enhancing-academic-achievement-at-school/> - The World Health Organization (WHO) reviewed evidence indicating that physical activity is closely linked to academic performance. Increasing physical activity in schools not only protects children's health but also enhances their academic achievement. The review suggests that incorporating more physical activity into the school day can positively impact students' cognitive, motor, and social skills, leading to better academic outcomes.
5. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-eight-ways-to-use-movement-in-teaching-learning/2020/07> - An article in Education Week discusses eight strategies for integrating movement into teaching and learning. Incorporating movement into lessons can engage students, increase comprehension, provide formative assessment, and decrease unwanted behaviors. The author shares personal experiences of planning lessons that weave in movement and talk, leading to increased student engagement and timely feedback. Despite challenges like curriculum demands and classroom management concerns, the article advocates for the benefits of movement in education.
6. <https://www.npcmc.com/2023/07/21/the-benefits-of-physical-education-a-guide-for-parents/> - A guide for parents highlights the benefits of physical education for children. Physical education involves various exercises, games, and sports that help refine children's motor skills, including both gross and fine motor skills. Improved motor skills allow children to perform better in everyday tasks and physical activities. The article emphasizes the importance of physical education in developing motor skills and its positive impact on children's overall development.
7. <https://www.nhaschools.com/en/blog/news/physical-activity-benefits-for-students> - An article from National Heritage Academies discusses the benefits of physical activity for students. Regular physical activity helps build a healthier and stronger body, improves sleep quality, reduces the risk of anxiety and depression, and develops better social and problem-solving skills. Engaging in physical activities boosts self-confidence and encourages self-esteem by providing a sense of accomplishment. The article emphasizes the importance of physical activity in promoting overall well-being and academic success.