KinLit

ACTIVE LEARNERS

Learning through movement and energy.

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Kinesthetic Literacy Activities

Intuitively, we understand that children want to move and play. As educators, we can learn how to effectively harness the natural energy of children and use it to our advantage and the academic benefit of our students.

Kinesthetic learning activities benefit all children due to:

- Increased and efficient blood flow moving more oxygen and glucose to the brain.
- Activation of the vestibular system which controls our sense of movement and is also the entrance-way to the brain.
- Regulation of emotional state. This is beneficial for allowing information to pass through the reticular activating system which acts as the brain’s filtering system and places a priority on emotional data.
- Development of visual fields including peripheral vision and eye tracking
- Being an enjoyable, engaging way to learn

Increasingly, research informs us that reading readiness is developmental in nature and that children need to pass a number of sensory motor benchmarks before they are ready to read. Students who do not pass certain physical benchmarks related to balance, rotation, laterality and tracking with the eyes may have poorly developed vestibular systems and will likely have difficulty reading. Trying to force reading readiness on these children may be doing more harm than good.

Research also supports the link between movement and physical activity with improved academic performance. Kinesthetic movements involving skipping, running back and forth, hopping, rolling down hills, playing catch with a ball, jumping rope, climbing, crossing the bodies midline and juggling scarves activate the vestibular system. This aids the brain in placing words on a page, reading words from left to right, and writing patterns in sequence.

The learning activities that follow are examples of how teachers might integrate kinesthetic learning activities into their PWIM cycles. Integrating these ideas have the added benefit of increasing student’s physical activity levels (research confirms that fit kids have higher achievement rates) helping student’s refocus, avoiding negative physiological responses to sitting more than 20 minutes at a time and providing opportunities to practice transitions between activities.
Empty the seats and fill their minds!

In sharing these ideas we would like to acknowledge the work of Jean Blaydes, Mike Kuczala, and others who have shared their knowledge at workshops and through the internet.

Blades, J. *Thinking on Your Feet: 200 Activities that Move Kids to Learn*. Action Based Learning


Thank you to Brittany Smith for a significant role in implementing these concepts into her classroom, and her willingness to share her learning with others.
Headbands

Duration: 10 – 15 minutes

Materials:
- Headbands out of construction paper
- Student PWIM word cards
- PWIM picture
- Fun-tak

Instructions:
1. Prepare a headband for each student out of construction paper
2. Explain to students that they will be given a headband with a PWIM word on it. They are not to look at the word.
3. In order to figure out the word, the students have to ask questions to their partner. (ie: Does it start with an ‘a’? Is it a fruit?) Encourage them not to ask if it is a specific PWIM word right away.
4. The teacher should model this learning activity by putting on a headband, putting a word on it and asking questions.
5. Give each student a headband and partner them up.
6. The teacher then sticks the PWIM words on the headbands using fun-tak.
7. In partners, the students take turns asking questions about their word until both of them have figured out their words.
8. The students return to the teacher, tell their word and get a new one. Both students need to know their word before getting a new one.

Assessment:
1. How long does it take the student to figure out the word?
2. What kind of questions is the student asking? (ie: It begins with the letter ‘b’. It’s alive. It’s a fruit. It has two syllables.)
3. Is the student participating?
4. Is the student effectively participating in the group work?

Tips:
- If a student is having difficulty reading their partner’s word, the teacher will tell that prompting student the word so that the learning activity can continue.
- If the teacher has a Smartboard available, he/she should take a photograph of the completed PWIM picture and shake-out, and have it up and available to the students. This gives them two places to look at their PWIM picture and words.
Relay

Duration: 10 – 20 minutes

Materials:
- Each student needs a set of PWIM word cards

Instructions:
1. Explain to the students that we are going to do a relay with our words. Partner the students and one partner gets their words. The students will need only one set of words per pair. Tell the students that one partner will jog, skip, hop – or any movement you choose – get one word and bring it back to their partner. The students then read the word together. If they cannot read the word, they take it to the PWIM picture. Once that word has been read the other partner goes and gets another word and they continue this pattern until all of the words have been read.
2. The set-up for this learning activity depends on space available in your classroom.
3. Line up all of the students along one wall and have one partner put their word cards on the opposite wall.
4. If the teacher is capable, demonstrate the activity with a student partner.
5. Remind students to look up while they are doing their movement, and begin the activity, having the students freeze when necessary to assess how it’s going, and to give reminders.

Assessment:
1. Can the student read the word?
2. Is the student referring to the PWIM photograph to find the word?
3. Is the student attempting to sound the word out?
4. Is the student participating?
5. Is the team cooperating?

Tips:
- Having each set of partners put their cards in a bag or bucket will keep it more organized and recognizable for the students. Just having the words in piles on a table will become messy and chaotic.
- It may be helpful to remind students that telling their partner the word does not help them learn it and put it in their long-term memory. They need to find it on the PWIM picture.
Up Down, Turn Around

Duration: 5 – 10 minutes

Materials:
- PWIM paragraph or sentences
- Projector or Docu-cam would be ideal

Instructions:

1. Each student should have a copy of the PWIM sentences or paragraph, or be able to see them projected on the board.
2. The teacher explains to the students that they are going to read the paragraph or sentences and focus on specific words or sounds. (For example, all the words that start with /b/, or specific high frequency words, or any words that started with a capital, etc.)
3. The teacher explains that every time the students hear that word or sound, the students need to stand up or sit down. Also, while reading, every time you come to punctuation you need to turn around.
4. The teacher reads the paragraph or sentences with the students and does the corresponding actions.
5. In order to work on fluency, the teacher and the students reread the paragraph or sentences several times.

Assessment:

1. Can the student recognize the specified words or sounds by sight and sound?
2. Can the student follow a sequence of directions?
3. Can the student listen and respond?
4. Can the student read along fluently?
Hide and Seek

Duration: 5 – 15 minutes*

Materials:
- PWIM word cards (student or teacher cards)
- PWIM sentence strips
- High-frequency word cards

Instructions:
1. Explain to students that you are going to play hide and seek with their PWIM words and/or sentences. (At the beginning of the cycle you will only have the words to use. As you go through the cycle you can add sentences as well as the high frequency words that students are learning.)
2. Talk about safety. Remind students that we don’t run in the classroom, or take someone else’s word.
3. Send students to the hallway, or hide words during your preparation/collaboration time. Words or sentences are hidden throughout the classroom.
4. Students then walk around the classroom seeking the hidden words or sentences. Students find one word or sentence at a time and must read it to an adult before they can find another one. When the student has read the word or sentence, the teacher collects it.
5. If the student has trouble reading the word the teacher sends him to the PWIM picture or word wall to find it. With sentences, the teacher helps the student sound out the words.

Assessment:
1. Can the student easily read his/her word or sentence?
2. Is the student participating?
3. Is the student only looking for specific words or sentences?
4. Is the student attempting to decode the word?
5. Is the PWIM photograph to help figure out the word?

Tips:
- Colour-code your PWIM words and sentences so that you can use different picture cycles to review.
- You can type up your titles and hide those as well
- This is a way to incorporate a physical activity into a quick PWIM body break – a way to break up two stationary activities such as journals and printing.

*Duration depends the amount of words and/or sentences hidden, student participation.
Walking Story

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials:
- A story or your PWIM paragraph in which you have sequenced the events (ie: the beginning, key events and the end). Each sequence is printed on a separate piece of paper.

Instructions:

1. First, read the story and have the students close their eyes and visualize it with an option to act it out as you read. Don’t show them the pictures.
2. As a class, talk about what actually happened in the story, pointing out the key events. Do not worry about proper order of events during this step.
3. Divide the class into two groups. Give each group the story as sequenced in step two.
4. Students read the pages and put the events in proper order. (Teacher assisting where necessary to read for the students).
5. The students create a story walk, reading and acting out the story events in sequence.

Assessment:

1. The teacher can assess if students can put the story in proper sequence?
2. Can students pick out key events?
3. Can students work cooperatively in groups?

Tips:

- Depending on grade level, this could be modified to pictures for the sequence of events.
- This could be done with your PWIM paragraph, sequencing first and then acting it out.
- You can get more into the elements of the story to extend this activity by asking who the characters are and the problem of the story.
- You could only read and sequence half the story and then get the students to predict. In a future lesson, once the sequencing is finished and predictions have been made, you can reread the story and show the students the pictures. Discuss how and how their visualizations compare to the pictures.
Hide and Seek With Classifying

**Duration:** 5 – 15 minutes

**Materials:**
- PWIM word cards (student or teacher cards)

**Instructions:**

1. Background teaching, brainstorm different categories to use for specific word hunt, according to the words on your PWIM picture. (For example, if you are doing The Market photograph, you may have a fruit category, a people category, a colour category, or an objects category, etc.) Walk through a few of the words with the students and demonstrate which category they would fit in, showing that not all words will fit in a category.
2. Explain to students that you are going to play hide and seek with their PWIM words while making categories from the agreed upon categories.
3. The teacher writes the categories on the board, leaving space for the PWIM words.
4. The teacher hides the PWIM words.
5. The students find the words and decide which category the word goes in and sticks it in the category, explaining why it goes in that category.
6. If the student has trouble reading the word the teacher sends him to the PWIM picture to find it.

**Assessment:**

1. Can the student read the words?
2. Can the student put the words into the correct category?
3. Can the students justify their category choice?
Sentence Walk

**Duration:** 10 – 15 minutes

**Materials:**
- Student PWIM sentences written on sentence strip paper – teacher written

**Instructions:**
1. Split the students into two or three groups. Four students per group is ideal but not necessary. The teacher chooses the PWIM sentences to be used that day.
2. The teacher works with each group to help create actions for each word in the sentence.
3. The teacher and students read the sentence together multiple times to practice the actions and for fluency.
4. The teacher rotates through the groups until all groups have had the opportunity to act out several PWIM sentences.

**Assessment:**
1. Is the student finger-tracking?
2. Is the student reading fluently?
3. Is the student participating?

**Tips:**
- This learning activity could be part of centre time or Daily 5.
- You can also do this with your paragraphs.
Marching Words

**Duration:** 5 - 10 minutes

**Materials:**
- Whiteboards and markers for each student

**Instructions:**
1. Each student is given a whiteboard and marker.
2. There are two ways this could be done:
3. First option: Students follow an action (skip, march, butt-kick, high knees) either moving around the room, or static movement. The teacher says, “Freeze!” then shouts out a PWIM or high frequency word.
4. The student writes the word down on the whiteboard, and then flips the board to show the teacher.
5. Once all of the students have shown the teacher the word, the teacher gives another action request and the activity begins again.
6. Second option: Put on music and allow the students to freely move or dance. Pause the music and shout out a word. Then steps 4 and 5 are the same.

**Assessment:**
1. Can the students write the words from memory?
2. Can the students find the word on the wall or PWIM photograph and write it?
3. Is the student participating?
4. Is the student attempting to sound out the word as he/she spells it?

**Tips:**
- Whiteboards and markers can be carried by the students, or left at their work stations.
See-Say-Spell

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Materials:**

- PWIM picture with words shaken out
- Transparent sheet or firm plastic sheet with the lines for printing visible, long enough and at average height for your PWIM words (see image)

**Instructions:**

1. **Background teaching:** the students need to know that there are basement letters (p, y, g, etc.) main floor letters (a, r, o, etc.) and upstairs letters (t, f, l, etc.) and teach corresponding actions to the letters. (ie: for basement letters the students squat to the floor, for main floor letters the students do a chair-squat, and for upstairs letters students stand tall and raise arms straight over their heads.)
2. **As you do See-say-spell,** students perform the action associated with each letter. (ie: for the word, ‘girl’ squat to the floor, do a chair-squat, another chair-squat and then stand tall with arms raised over their heads as you and the students spell the word)

**Assessment:**

1. Is the student fluently coordinating the actions and the letter?
2. Is the student participating?
3. Is the student spelling the words correctly?
4. Is the student tracking the words as you point?
Fluency Walk

**Duration:** 15 – 20 minutes

**Materials:**
- Student PWIM sentences written on sentence strip paper – teacher written

**Instructions:**
1. Split the students into two or three groups. Four students per group is ideal but not necessary. The teacher chooses the PWIM sentences to be used that day (sentences that the class has practiced together previously).
2. Place each sentence strip on wall at student eye level (could be on the floor if print is large enough). If working on a paragraph place the sentences in correct order and have each group start at the first sentence.
3. Each group starts at a sentence and reads it chorally. They then perform a predetermined movement to move to the next sentence. Continue reading chorally and moving through each of the sentences.
4. The teacher models fluid reading and students repeat the circuit working on fluency.
5. The teacher works with each group to help create actions for each sentence and students repeat the circuit, acting out the sentences as they work on fluency.
6. The groups continue to repeat the circuit 3-5 times.

**Assessment:**
1. Is the student finger-tracking?
2. Is the student reading fluently?
3. Is the student participating?

**Tips:**
- This learning activity could be part of centre time or Daily 5.
- You can also do this with your paragraphs.
- Instead of using PWIM sentence use a short poem or skipping chant that can be analyzed with the class to determine the natural breaks and appropriate chunks.