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Children and Young People

Learning outcomes:

- 1) Explain the benefits of physical activity and movement
- 2) Establish what Physically Active Learning (PAL) means
- 3) Distinguish between indirect and direct PAL
- 4) Explore what this could look like in your classroom/school

Our work in Education:

About Energize

Our core purpose is to...

improve quality of life through
the benefits of physical
activity

Our vision is to...

eliminate inactivity



School Games



Signposting to
resources



Training and CPD



Active Lives Survey



Guidance



Funding
opportunities



Why did we come into the education profession?

- What is the purpose of a school?
- What do we want to see on a daily basis?

Everyone working in schools likely came into education for the same general reasons: that they like working with children and they want to help them to achieve their best, be it academically but also socially and so they experience a high level of wellbeing, smiling and laughing along the way. However, how often do we actually see this on a daily basis? Do we see it enough? If not, what do we see?





If we see more of this in classrooms, why is this? The effects of the Covid pandemic are still yet to be fully known. However, it is clear that it has had a profound impact on children's ability to focus, on learning and behavioural attitudes including their resilience, as well as developing social relationships. This is further being exacerbated by the continual development of technology as a resource of entertainment, information, or form of digital parenting, all of which is reducing ability levels to concentrate for longer durations of time, children's ability to interact socially or becoming an excuse for children (and adults) getting up, going outdoors or moving while spending time together.

Imagine there is an intervention that has the potential to raise the attainment of every child in your school. This approach costs relatively little, but has the power to instantly enhance pupils' focus, memory and problem-solving skills.

As an added bonus, it will boost their emotional regulation and may relieve feelings of anxiety and depression in those suffering from poor mental health. Oh, and it will also help children to live longer.

This sounds like a fantasy, but such an intervention already exists:



[How school became more sedentary – and why it matters | Tes](#)



This is more of what we want to see. The benefits of integrating physical activity to educational settings are tried and tested, supported with evidence by multiple research projects. So why wouldn't we want to see more movement?

International research demonstrates that those children who are **more** physically active and have higher fitness levels **do better** academically, particularly in Maths and Reading



PAL **does not** have a detrimental effect on academic performance

[Physically Active Learning- Improving Performance | Bryn Llewellyn & Andy Daly-Smith | TEDxNorwichED](#)

Likely barriers

- Children up and out of seats would be dangerous and cause chaos!
- They get plenty of time to move during break, lunch and PE
- How will I get them to listen and focus if they are moving?
- Where can I fit this in? There isn't enough time in the day!
- What will OFSTED say?
- UK educational system of competing priorities. Tension between movement and learning rather than symbiotic relationship.

Why is it important?



The crux: why can we not ignore it anymore, despite the barriers in place?

Less than half of all children meet the CMO guidelines (49.1% of children – Active Lives data 2025)

1 in 10 children are living with obesity when they start schools and this rises to nearly 1 in 4 by the time they are in year 6

1 in 6 children aged 5 – 16 are likely to have a mental health problem – that's 5 children in a classroom of 30. In the last 5 years, the likelihood of young people having a mental health problem has increased by 50% - Children's Society Good Childhood report 2022

In addition, the UK is ranked the lowest out of 24 European countries for the proportion of 15-year-olds with high life satisfaction.

Why is it important?



In an average class of 30 children, that means:

Over half of your children are not meeting the CMO guideline of 60 mins of activity every day

7 of your children will leave primary school either overweight or obese

5 of your children are experiencing some form of mental health problem

Over half of the class are affected by issues which can be addressed by Physical activity

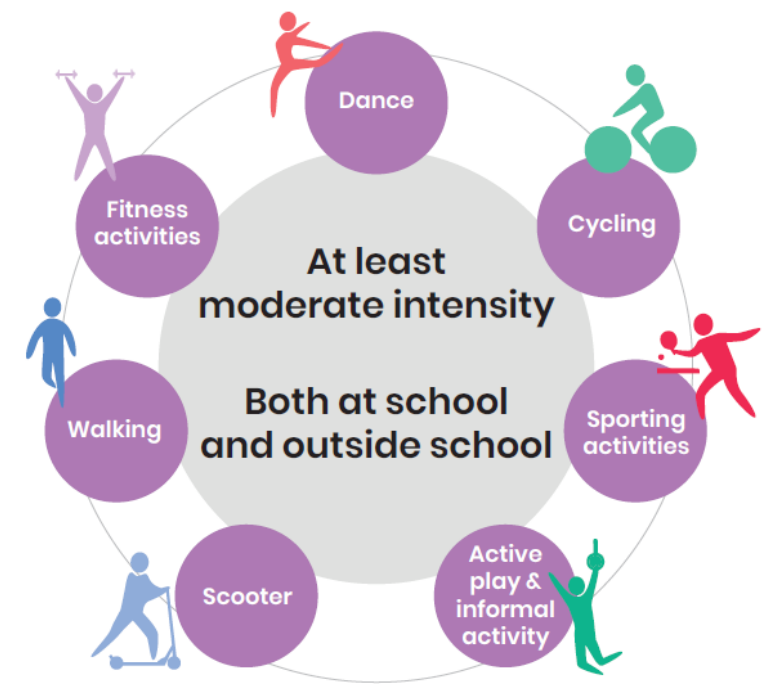
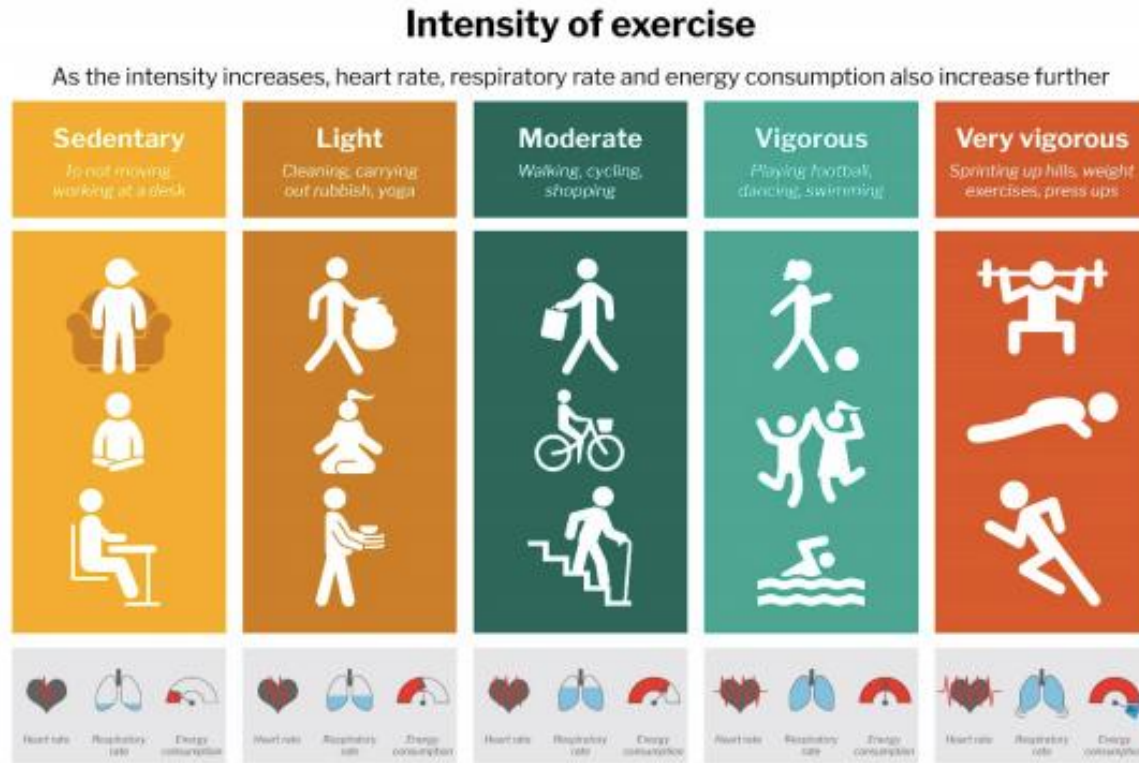
Our chance to
change this
together



It feels like we are at a crossroads, both in schools and in wider society at the moment. The current educational system – in my opinion – is not working for our children any more. They have changed, and we need to follow suit. This is our chance to work together to address this through active learning opportunities.



What do we mean by movement?



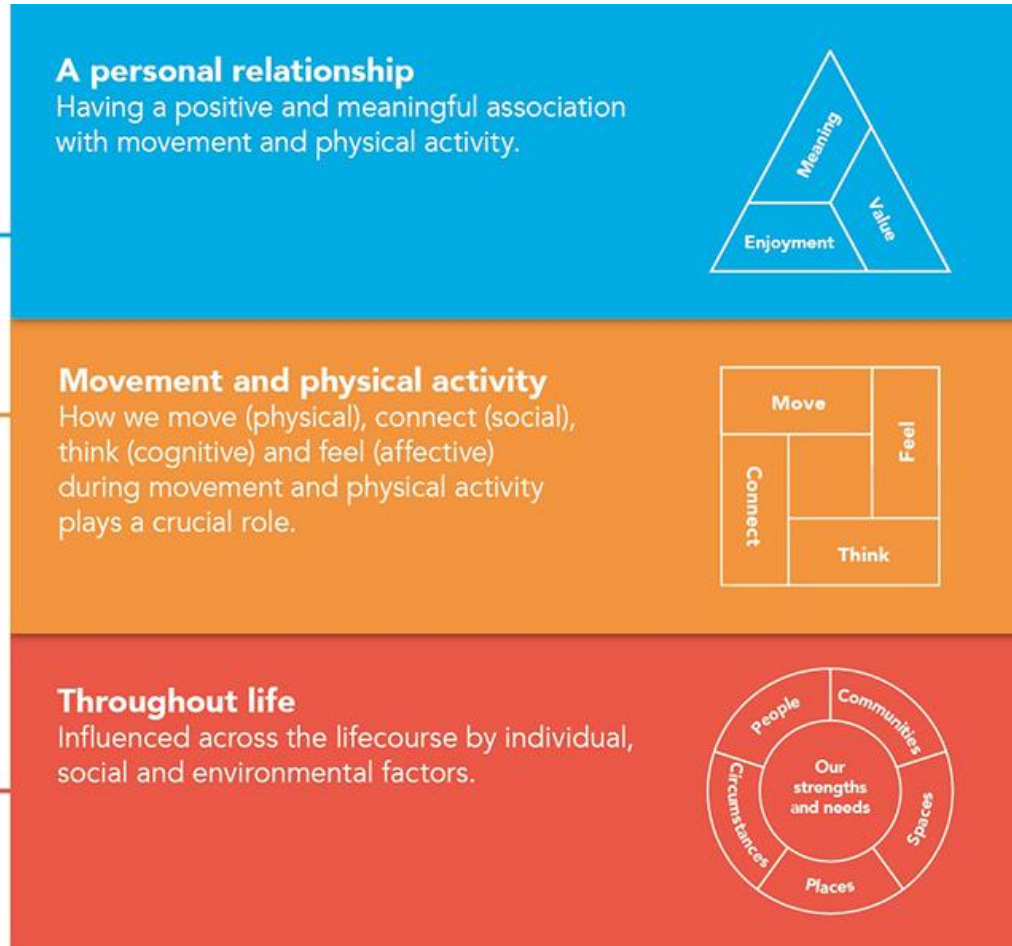
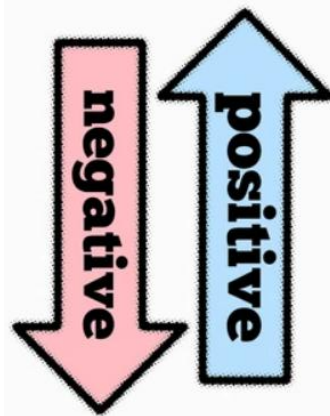
The chief medical officer's recommendation for children is to undertake at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day, with 30 minutes in school and 30 minutes at home. However, the stats show that less than half achieve this.

Therefore, the more we can offer in schools, the better our children can meet or exceed this. It is easy to point to break and lunchtimes being at least an hour; however, we know that not all of our children are running about or engaging in physical activity options during this time.

Consider your school and the opportunities your children have to move at the different levels or in the different ways above. When does this happen in the day? It is important to use the idiom of walk before you can run here. Any movement beyond sedentary is going to be more beneficial than none. Sustained 1% increases are better than aiming for a sudden 25%

Why physical literacy: matters The quality of our relationship with movement and physical activity profoundly influences our choice to be active.

Physical literacy
is our relationship
with movement
and physical activity
throughout life.



Using Physically active learning to provide these positive experiences of movement allows educators to control the learning and influence positively on children's physical literacy. Crucially, this approach also helps children develop positive attitudes towards subjects they may find difficult if they associate learning in this subject with the opportunity to move in a way that they enjoy.

Physically Active Learning (PAL)



‘The integration of physical activity into the delivery of academic subjects in key learning areas other than PE.’ (Watson et al. 2017)

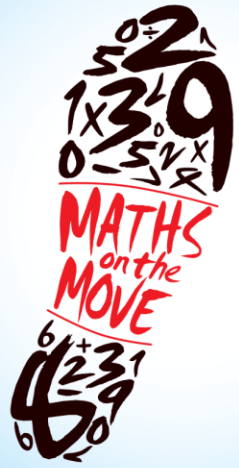
‘The integration of movement into lessons for educational purposes.’
(ACTivate Your Class EU)

A chance to re-vision teaching and learning in an inclusive manner, that brings the fun back, focusing on whole-child development:

Integration: another educational intention than just the learning content itself.

“We’re not adding something extra — we’re reimagining what a healthy, successful school looks like.”

we are not just talking PE or school sport



8 reasons why children benefit from Physically Active Learning (PAL)



Boosts physical activity and reduces sedentary time



Facilitates learning and understanding



Increases concentration and time on task in other lessons



Increases confidence and reduces anxiety



Improves resilience



A more inclusive approach



Allows for collaboration and team work

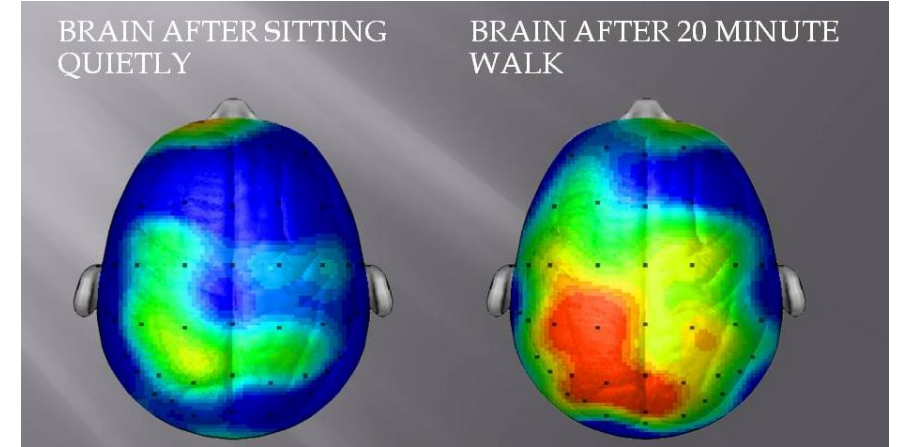
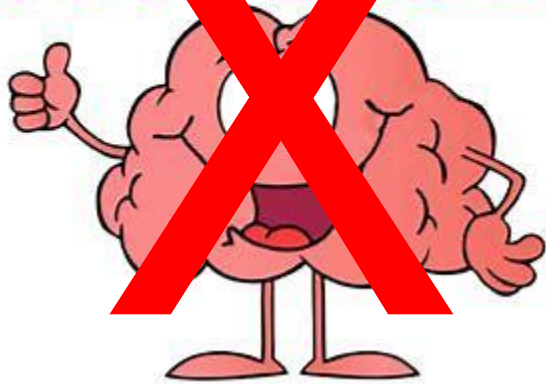


Fun, exciting and enjoyable

If we see our children benefiting in these areas, then this can surely only make our work days easier and more fun for us?

Not the historical 'brain break': brain boost/activate!

BRAIN BREAK!



Historically, teachers have used the terminology 'brain breaks' as a movement opportunity within learning sequences. However, this is not what the science around movement tells us: it **implies the brain is taking a break from learning, when actually they are** activities designed to help children improve focus, regulate behaviour, and balance to enhance integration and processing of their sensory systems. Should not use break but instead, boost or activate.

Direct and Indirect uses of PAL

- Indirect: quick wins, easy to implement
 - BBC supermovers/GoNoodle
 - Movement dice
 - Active registration
 - Brain activates/brain boosts
 - Daily Mile or similar



Appropriacy considerations:

- Physical environment
- Social environment
- Learning sequence

- Direct: embedded and purposeful into lesson structure (caveat: takes time, planning and reflection – long term), e.g.
 - Analysing historical sources in different locations of classroom
 - Timed summarising from facts around the room
 - Physical alternatives to ‘show me boards’.



Integrated direct PAL: a case study

Birkby - A Centre of Excellence for Physical Activity



They want you to be
part of what they're doing.

Direct use of PAL (planned for, integrated, purposeful)

Rock, paper, scissors



- A question that has 3 answers Children stand up, hands behind back. 3,2,1, show me.



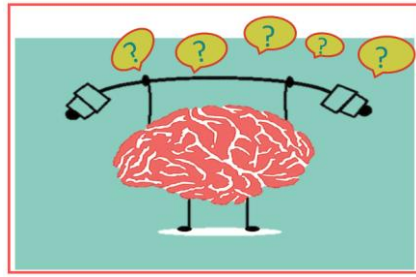
tree pose



flamingo pose



warrior pose



Sticky Knowledge Retrieval Practice!

1. Which word is the correct spelling?

- A - thru
- B - through
- C - though

2. What is the maximum an acute angle can be?

- A - 90°
- B - 89°
- C - 179°

3. Which word means the writing on a tombstone?

- A - epitaph
- B - memory
- C - covenant



A



B



C

The answer is _____ because
I know it is not _____ because
It can't be _____ because

This approach can be adapted for any curricular lesson and just requires a question with 3 answers. It is also really easy to extend responses from children in a targeted way using the provided sentence stems on the screen. This allows for depth to be explained around why a question is correct and why an incorrect answer was not chosen.

Boom, clap, snatch

Boom: tap your knees

Clap: clap hands

Snatch the card which the number is a multiple of...



Your cards

4

5

Hidden cards

8

16

20

Another great way to get children moving is through boom clap snatch, where the children follow the call given by the teacher, before being given the chance to snatch the relevant card in front of them when one of the boxes is revealed. Particularly useful for maths and times table or number sense work, this could be adapted for spelling graphemes e.g. ey or ay,

Again, children can be challenged to explain how they know or why the other card could not be a multiple of the number, e.g. '16 can't be a multiple of 5 because it doesn't end in 5 or 0'.

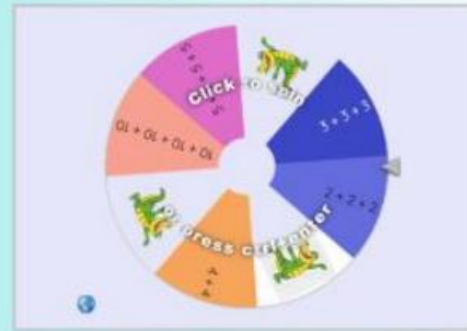
Spin the wheel

Incredibly simple but super effective this is an absolute hit with my class. Create your own spinning wheel on

<https://wheelofnames.com/>


You can make these for any subject, excellent review or plenary tool. Customise it with your own questions then add in a picture (topic related) if the wheel lands on a question the children need to answer it – if it lands on the picture they need to dance! You can share these wheels by copying the link and then linking in your smartboard. Honestly an absolute hit and super simple.

Draw the representation to match the repeated addition!



Input:

Let's spin the wheel!

Let's see what we have learnt.
If you get my question right you win a rainbow ticket.

If we land on the chicken, you know what to do!



Review

Farmed, grown or caught?

If the wheel lands on a farmed, grown or caught action, you need to tell me a plant or an animal from this group. If you land on a course, give me your best chicken, sheep!



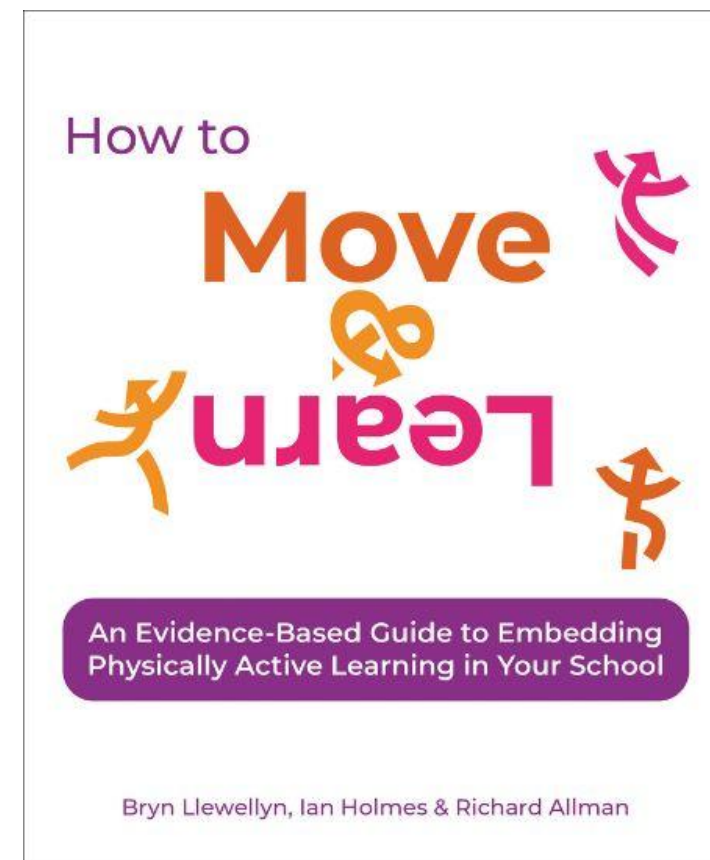
A _____ is _____

I know a _____ is definitely _____

It cannot be _____ so it must be.....

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/r5ir037ci6gb8hmpuprq/PAL-Birkby-ideas-for-whole-curriculum.pdf?rlkey=tow4to3w9bindzf8hmia80dy2&st=xwp2pw92&dl=0>

Worth exploring



In the red box are resources for indirect, brain boot opportunities. Activate your class and Move and Learn are staff development resources which provide the theory and research behind integrating movement into learning.

The Creating Active Schools (CAS) professional development programme supports schools to create happy and healthy environments through physical activity. Using behavioural science, CAS helps schools to :

- create impactful and sustainable change for physical activity.
- build on their strengths while identifying areas of improvement that can be improved step-by-step.
- embed physical activity in policies, systems, behaviours and environments, so that it becomes everyone's responsibility; from pupils, to staff, parents and governor, creating real and sustained cultural change.

How Energize can help:

Schools receive bespoke support from Energize, through a whole-staff CPD meeting and then a planning meeting with SLT and identified CAS champions in school to complete the self-review toolkit. From this, a minimum of 3 actions will be identified to implement over the remaining year ahead.



Please reach out: it's my job and my passion!

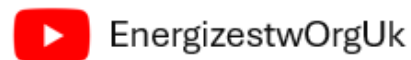
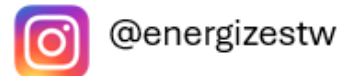
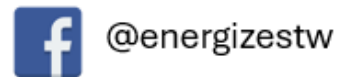
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