

Introduction

Break states and brain gym for managing the energy levels of your class

Brain gym is a quick and effective way of changing the physical and mental state of the learners in your class. It involves physical and mental activity. It connects left and right brain and helps improve motor co-ordination.

It can be used at the beginning or ends of lessons or topics. It is safe, enjoyable and non-threatening. There is a great deal of research into kinesiology which suggests that regular use of the brain-gym activities can alleviate stress, improve hand-eye co-ordination, improve the concentration on focused activities and quicken the response times to visual stimuli. If you have encountered the Alexander Technique you may be familiar with some of these activities.

Running the activity

Explain the purpose to the students in your class. Encourage them to practice at home and perhaps teach their parents, brothers and sisters. Do make sure that some of the more physical co-ordinating activities are within the capability of all those in your class.

Safety

Not applicable.

Lesson outcomes

- Improved concentration

Where the activity fits in

Lesson starters

Acknowledgements

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Brain gym

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Names in the air

With your preferred hand write out your full name in the air. Use large movements. Do it forwards and backwards. Now use your other hand to write your name with both hands simultaneously. If you are right handed, start in the centre and work out. If you are left-handed start at the outside and work in. Try this several times before going on to another name. You can also do this activity in class with keywords that you are about to use, with 'difficult' spellings or with numbers of formulae.

Another left and right brain activity that helps establish directionality and orientation in space. It can be a fun way of practising spelling, previewing or reviewing keywords or team building. As an exercise, 'names in the air' can be used to help make difficult spellings memorable. Have the student practise it with each hand then both hands and then on successful completion place the drawn image in their upper left field of vision. Ask them to write it in the air again but this time with their eyes closed.

Lazy eights

With one arm extended in front of you and your thumb pointing upwards trace the shape of a figure eight in the air. The eight should be on its side and as you trace it out in large, slow movements focus your eyes on your thumb. Without moving your head trace three eights in successively larger movements. Now do it with your other hand and then clasp them together and do both.

Before and after research show that binocular and peripheral vision improve after Lazy eights. The activity connects right and left visual fields and improves balance and co-ordination.

Rub a dubs

Gently rub your hand in a circle on your tummy. Stop, then pat your head with the other hand gently, Now do both at the same time and at a similar pace. You should be rubbing your tummy whilst patting your head. Try to maintain the difference in each movement. Swap around. Pat your tummy whilst rubbing your head. This activity connects left and right brain and is pure fun! It focuses attention and can take your mind 'off' whatever was preoccupying it beforehand.

Cross crawl

While standing begin to 'march' in time. Raise your knees and alternately touch each knee with your opposite hand. Progressively, move your elbows to each knee in sequence. An alternative is to touch each heel behind your back with opposite hands.

Cross crawl activates both halves of the brain together. Research suggests that it improves coordination, visual, auditory and kinesthetic ability and can improve listening, writing and memory.

Alphabet edit

Alphabet edit is a challenge. It is a very useful activity for clearing the mind of any baggage brought to the classroom that may be getting in the way of learning. It involves reading aloud the letters of the alphabet from beginning to end or end to beginning. It can be used for practising spelling and for learning the alphabet.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
L	t	r	r	t	t	l	l	r	t	t	r
M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
L	l	t	t	l	r	t	r	r	t	l	l
Y	Z										
L	r										

Alphabet edit involves reading the letters of the alphabet aloud as a class or small group whilst completing the accompanying action,- l left hand raise and r is a right hand raise and t is both arms together. A further variation (and complication) is to accompany the raise with an opposite leg raise!

Alphabet edit connects left and right brain, helps hand-eye co-ordination and will improve visual, auditory and kinesthetic ability.