

The Walking Classroom

“A bout of exercise is like taking a little bit of Prozac and a little bit of Ritalin.”

—John Ratey, MD

EXPERTS SAY that regular exercise can significantly improve the lives of individuals affected by ADHD, including school-age children. As a result, many schools across the United States are incorporating exercise into a typical school day.

One former fifth grade teacher took this a step further, however. She figured out a way to couple daily physical exercise with a structured school lesson plan,

with students learning new material and getting exercise at the same time. Known as The Walking Classroom, the program is the brainchild of Laura Fenn, MEd, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

How the program works

As part of their school day, students listen to educational podcasts while taking brisk walks around the campus. The podcasts align with state stan-

dards, so the children gain important knowledge related to educational objectives. They are walking, listening, and learning at the same time.

According to Fenn, the program was an instant success on many levels. Student achievement scores, for example, improved by the end of the school year, with struggling students showing the most noticeable gains. Physical exercise was successfully incorporated into a child's school



day without sacrificing instructional time—and the children enjoyed participating in the daily activity. No wonder that since the inception of the program in 2011, thousands of schools across the United States have adopted The Walking Classroom.

Other program features

Students in grades three through eight engage in daily brisk walks roughly twenty minutes in length. The wide-ranging podcast topics include (but are not limited to) English language arts, social studies, and science. All the podcast lessons are child-friendly and come preloaded onto student audio players, referred to as “WalkKits.” The program also offers a mobile app for either Android or Apple devices, where students can listen to the same lessons.

A brief health literacy message accompanies each lesson. Teachers receive their own educator guides with lesson plans

corresponding to each podcast, as well as discussion ideas and quizzes. The WalkKit audio players can be shared with other classes and reused from year to year. The Walking Classroom can also be incorporated into after-school programs, summer programs, and other educational settings.

Program benefits

Research conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill shows the Walking Classroom’s positive impact on student learning, classroom engagement, and overall mood enhancement.

Now a program of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, The Walking Classroom can serve as a universal prevention practice where all children can benefit from participation, not just children with special needs. This eliminates the worry about stigmatizing a child who might be singled out for a particular school-based intervention.

As we learn more about the potential benefits that children with ADHD can derive from daily physical exercise, what this program offers certainly matches up very well with their needs. 🎧



A clinical and consulting psychologist, **Mark Katz, PhD**, is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to Attention magazine, he writes the Promising Practices column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD’s professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.

FOR MORE INFO

Learn more about research on The Walking Classroom: <https://www.thewalkingclassroom.org/research>

For a free informational webinar: <https://www.thewalkingclassroom.org/informational-webinars>

For program costs, required materials, and other features: <https://thewalkingclassroom.org>



DON'T MISS OUT THIS SUMMER

Apply now for Summer 2023 short-term programs that help students who learn differently succeed, academically and socially.

- **High School Summer Program: July 8–29**
For rising juniors and seniors
- **Summer College Readiness Program: July 16–29**
For recent high school graduates
- **Summer Bridge Experience: July 9 – August 12**
For college students enrolled elsewhere
- **5-Day Online Boot Camp: July 17–21**
For new and continuing college students



LANDMARK
COLLEGE

Putney, Vermont

summer@landmark.edu • 802-387-6885
www.landmark.edu/summer

DYSLEXIA • ADHD • AUTISM • EXECUTIVE FUNCTION CHALLENGES