

Classroom Tips from Ron

Give Them Their 80 Tip #3 – Press and Release

When I plan my workshops, I build several ten-minute segments into the lesson plan. That is, I alternate between seated segments and those during which participants are standing and sharing. I always ask my workshop participants if they have ever been in a night class where, after 10 or 15 minutes, they have gone to “a better place in their minds.” Almost every hand goes up, and it tells me that we as adults need to move and change our physical state after a short time.

The same is true of students, and the younger the student the shorter the time span before they get “antsy” or “fidgety,” even if they are NOT diagnosed with ADHD. Adults, adolescents, and children gotta move, and teachers need to build movement into their lesson plans. In one sixth-grade middle school classroom I visited, the students were up and down in roughly eight-minute segments over a 55 –minute language arts class period. Those sixth graders were engaged the whole time, and music accompanied every move and every conversation or visit to a chart on the wall.

Teachers can take their lesson plans—no matter the subject—and decide what can be accomplished with students who are standing and paired or grouped with classmates. The simple act of standing up sends 15% more blood to the brain—blood that carries oxygen and glucose (for energy).

Here is what I have found in four decades in education: Kids who are not given opportunities to move in a structured way will find ways to move on their own (going to the pencil sharpener when the pencil is already sharp, asking to go to the restroom, taking something to the wastebasket, or talking to a neighbor). In classrooms where teachers provide the movement as a matter of course, students don’t generally DO all these other things in an attempt to move—the teacher provides the movement.

Build into your lesson plans opportunities for movement in the name of learning.