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## Get Moving: Inspiring Movement in Alexandria

By Brooke Sydnor Curran

Monday, February 26, 2018

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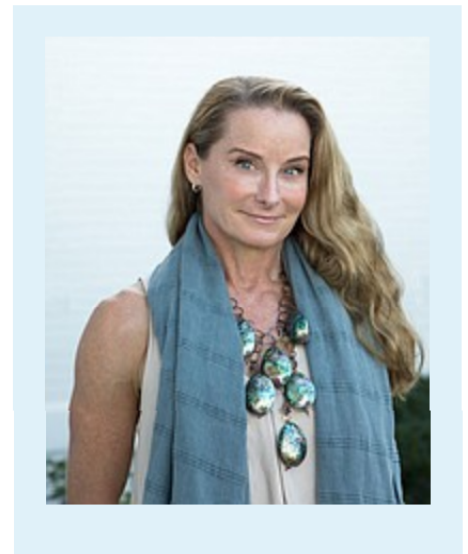
*RunningBrooke offers 5 Best Practices for how to implement effective physical activity into the school day and week. This is the first in a five-part series to explain these practices and show how to find small pockets of time to get Alexandria's youth moving to meet the CDC-recommended 60 minutes of daily activity.*

Best Practice #1: Inspire more students to get involved in physical recreation programs, clubs, and sports, and remove the barriers that prevent them from participating.

Being active literally makes our brains work better. It prepares students to learn and perform at their best, increases their focus and on-task behavior, and builds stronger memory. Straight up, physically active kids academically outperform their less active peers. But despite all of these incredible benefits, many students do not get enough opportunities to be physically active. In fact, nationwide, only 55 percent of all schools offer opportunities for students to participate in physical activity clubs or intramural sports programs. (Source: School Health Policies and Practices Study 2014)

The National Institute for Out-of-School Time reports that students who regularly participate in these programs have: better school attendance and engagement in learning; reduced behavioral issues; improved test scores and grades; and less involvement in risky activities. In one study, after being physically active in an after-school program for 9 months, memory tasks improved by 16 percent.

There are many innovative programs and activities already available to students across Alexandria. One of these programs, Local Motion Project, focuses on dance integration. Dance integration is an approach to teaching that connects dance with another academic content area, mutually reinforcing objectives in both. In this approach, children are introduced to dance as an art form, which is often missing from our schools, and



it energizes the classroom with physically active learning, elevating kids' heart rates and boosting brain power.

According to Sara Lavan, executive director, "Our dance program has a strong emphasis on the creative and collaborative processes, and these skills are what are needed in the 21st century. This is more than getting children up out of their seats — they are learning to work and share ideas with peers, express ideas through movement, and respect each other as they watch final dances performed."

RunningBrooke is honored to partner with Local Motion Project and other great programs throughout Alexandria. Together, and with the support of the greater community, we help make these programs available to all children across Alexandria. We remove some of the barriers, like cost, accessibility, and awareness that prevent some students from participating. This collaboration helps Alexandria's students meet the 60 minutes of recommended activity per day and develop the skills they need to succeed both in school and life.

Please look for next week's piece about Best Practice #2: Making our classrooms more physically active with short "brain" boosts of activity and outdoor learning. See [www.runningbrooke.org](http://www.runningbrooke.org)