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# *Introduction*

*The latest research shows that for your brain to function at its peak,  
your body needs to move.*

—John Joseph Ratey, MD

**T**he state of public education has been the subject of consternation for many decades and the standards-/assessment-driven movement of the current administration is only the most recent of many attempts by officials to try and effect change in a distressed system. However, the question that needs answering is not how to motivate teachers to teach, but how should they teach in order for children to learn? Or, more pointedly, how do children learn and, therefore, making use of the diverse resources at our disposal, how should we teach? In an effort to utilize cutting-edge educational research, this book will apply the latest in brain-based research to show the effectiveness of creating an action-packed classroom for the success of all learners.

## **BENEFITS OF ACTION-PACKED CLASSROOMS**

1. To understand the research behind exercise, movement, and learning
2. To learn strategies to anchor learning in any classroom
3. To gain knowledge of movement-based activities for intrinsic learning
4. To create an action plan to immediately implement in any classroom

Brain-based research has been the subject of scientific study since the mid-1800s, when Hitzig and Fritsch (1870) first discovered that the areas of the brain responsible for movement could be located in the cerebral cortex. However, the results of this fascinating field of research, which have such diverse applications in the field of education, have not found their way into general practice. The

current educational system is not making effective use of the resources available nor putting into practice the volumes of relevant research that could make a difference in what our children learn.

This country has developed a very rich, visual, mobile, multicultural society with readily available access to cutting-edge research in scientific fields. Brain research demonstrates that our bodies and brains are inherently connected and that no single organ has one unilateral purpose. The old vision of a seeing eye and understanding brain are really just an archaic myth that has been replaced by what we now recognize as a perceiving individual (Kindler, 2003). Our culture is cultivating the active-spatial sense of our people, but schools are still failing to make full use of moving mediums in instructional practice.

Most recently, studies of brain-based learning have shown that exercise can increase cognitive ability in children. This has specific applications for the field of education and draws into discussion such questions as how an increasingly sedentary lifestyle in this country is affecting its youth.

Despite the extraordinary quantity and quality of brain-based research that calls for motion activities to be utilized in the instructional setting, these types of activities are not being consistently implemented in classroom practice. The purpose of *Action-Packed Classrooms* is to show that research supports best practices that merge movement into the academic classroom that will employ these methods. The lessons, strategies, ideas, and game plans presented in this book are easy to implement and will help ensure that research finally finds a consistent place in education. In addition, we will explore the overwhelming benefits of aerobic activity on our brains. Ready, set, go!

*Action-Packed Classrooms* is divided into these main sections:

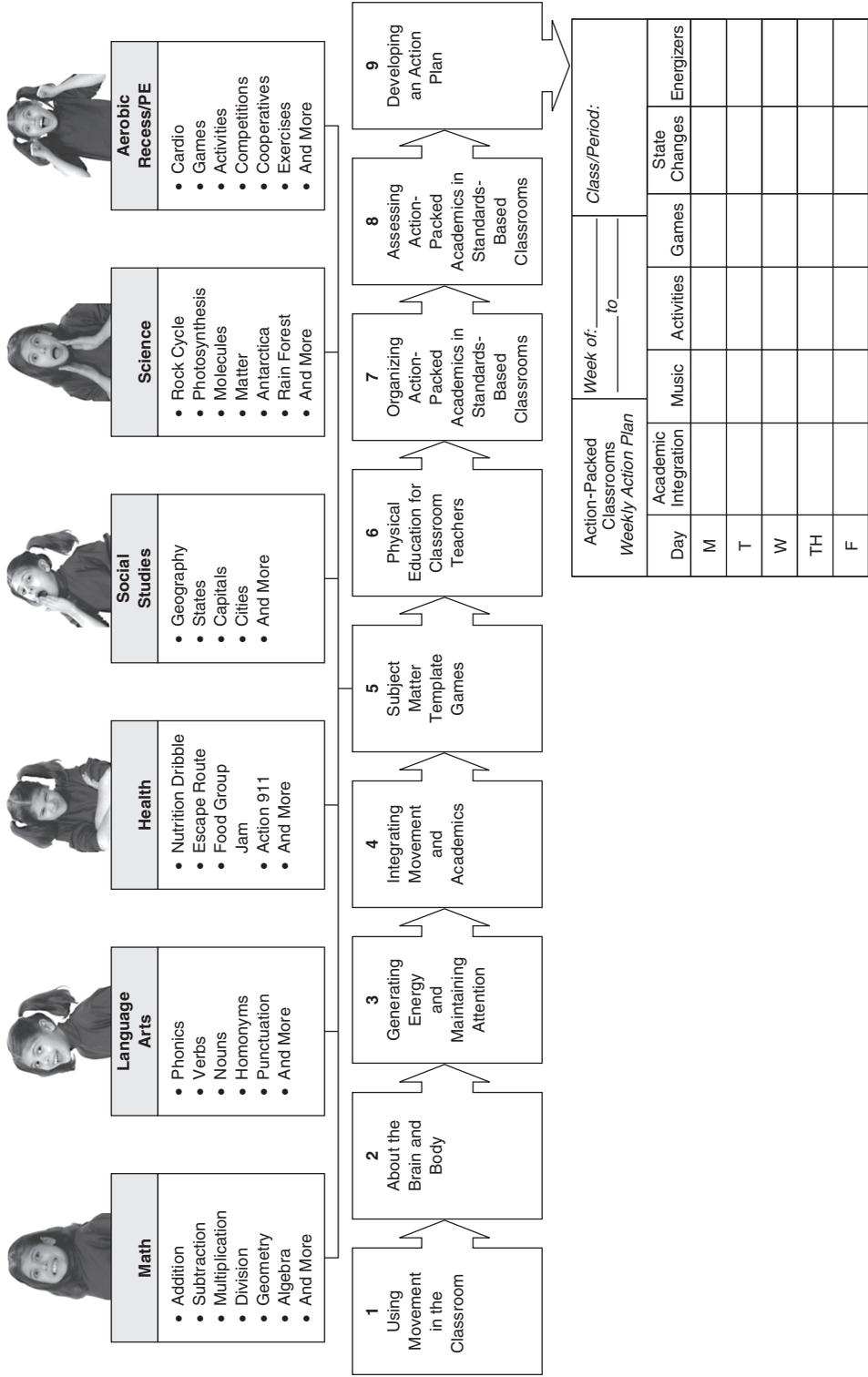
- Understanding the effect of exercise and movement on learning
- Developing kinesthetic teaching strategies linking core content
- Developing an action plan . . . the how-tos

As you travel through the first part of the book, you will learn about incorporating movement into the classroom. Next, you will get a primer on the body and the brain along with an incredible research timeline, which contains information vital to making sense of what research says regarding movement in the classroom.

Continuing along, you will discover incredible strategies for developing kinesthetic lessons for your classroom. Anchoring learning through procedural processes, you will learn how exciting and fun the learning experience can be for your students.

Next, you will learn how to put together an action plan. In our standards-based world, how can we jump-start learning when kids are so burned out on “the testing game?” No problem here! *Action-Packed Classrooms* is taking learning to a new level. This is not your typical classroom teacher book; the energy you will feel from the text will be flying off the pages ready to “make it happen” in your classroom.

## Action-Packed Classrooms Flow Chart



#### 4 Action-Packed Classrooms, K-5

This book is a one-stop resource to enliven learning in any classroom. *Action-Packed Classrooms* will follow the flow of the preceding chart and will travel through the disciplines, focusing on the following:

- Setting goals for more action
- Describing the brain and the body/key research
- Developing kinesthetic teaching strategies
- Developing an action plan
- Organizing standards-based classrooms
- Assessing standards-based classrooms
- Implementing your plan

At the conclusion of this book, you will be filled with a wealth of information and tools to fire up your classroom and to bring learning alive.