

59 - Get Up and Get Movin'

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Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to try.

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I am so excited today. I was actually thinking about getting up and moving for this introduction, but we are thrilled to have Jennifer Hawkins here with us today.

She is the CEO of Starbound Performers, which is a performance arts center located in Central Florida. She is also the seven-time recipient of America's Top Teacher Award, and has traveled around the world teaching educators, as well as dance studios owners, fun ways that they can interact with their students in the classroom. Her dance team members have won several national, international, U.S., and world dance team championships over the past several years, including the national dance team championship in 2021.

So huge congratulations for that, and welcome, Jennifer.

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Thank you so much, ladies. What a privilege it is to be with the two of you on this podcast today.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Jennifer, I'm so excited to get to chat with you a little bit, and I love the title of your session, which is *Get Up and Get Moving*, because this sounds just like me and what I did in my classroom all the time every day. And I just want to know, why is this topic important to you, and what are you going to share with our audience today?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Okay. So as most of you probably know, when you're in dance or physical fitness-type activities, you probably have been doing it for a while.

And so, for me, this is well over 30 years of experience, being out in the community and personally myself, getting up and moving and making sure that physical fitness and dance or gymnastics, or some form of movement is involved in my life. But unfortunately, what I've been starting to see is that children are not moving as much as they used to. And I remember that my parents used to always make sure that our family had extracurricular activities that we could do, either as a family or individually.

And that was something that when I had my family, that I wanted to make sure that my children were actively engaged in as well. And so I just feel it's important for families to make sure that exercise, is incorporated into their schedule throughout the week, but it's also important for us as teachers, in the classroom to be incorporating a little bit of movement as well, because there are a lot of families out there, that might not have the time, to focus on making sure that this is a priority throughout the week for their families.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: And Jennifer, I agree with you 100%.

And this can even go back to play, where we're not seeing children outside playing as much. We're not seeing children even inside, playing as much. They're sitting there on technology.

So, it is a great reminder. And as teachers, we do have to help families out. But families need to realize that there's so much more to the extracurricular building relationships, groups, you know, being a leader.

So, we've got to get kids out doing this. So how many students do you work with?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Well, we've got a very unique situation here. Our studio is located in Lake County in Central Florida, and we have a brick and mortar that we facilitate several classes throughout the week at.

But we also provide a mobile service for on-campus programs, whether they're, you know, elementary, middle or high schools, but also some of the local preschools in town. So, our staff can see well over 500 students throughout the week. So, we're interacting constantly with children ages 2 all the way through, you know, 18, 19 years old.

And so, we have seen that, you know, play is being taken out. Their imaginations aren't being used as often. And it really is definitely a key component to their learning, which we hope to be able to bring to them.

You know, in some of these circumstances, where we're going on school campuses, we may be the only active activity that they get to see or do throughout the week. So that's a benefit of having programs such as ours come into the classroom.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Yeah, you know what, from the lens of an administrator, you know, we have these standards, and we have this learning that we have to do.

But at the same time, this generation is not as active. And we know that being active supports brain development, being active supports the learning process. So, if you were in front of an administrator, and just like you started to talk about, what are you seeing in this generation that's impacting their learning? And why is it important for administrators to realize that, even though they may be moving and stepping away from the standards, it's actually going to benefit them?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Absolutely

So, we're trying to promote the fact with these administrators that we can come in and it can take, in some cases, only five to 10 minutes, to get a child excited about exercise, right? And if we go in with the appropriate activity, or we've created something around a theme, that can be exciting and fun, we can get those kids actively engaged pretty fast. In fact, I'll share with you a quick little experience, that happened on a school campus last Thursday. Actually, I went on to the campus to host what we provide with regards to an after-school dance and acro based program. And I happened to visit with a teacher that oversees their after-school care program, or ELC is what we call it here in Florida.

And she said, oh, my goodness, do you think it would be okay if our students came outside and just played on the playground, by where your class is going to be held under the pavilion today? And I said, Well, absolutely. You know, it's not a problem for the kids to be outside at the same time we are. And then I noticed that these kids were drawn to the activities that we were doing, under the pavilion with the dance and, and the acro skills.

And so, I decided I was just going to invite the kids on over. And before you knew it, all the kids that could have had their free time playing on the jungle gym, or the swings, were actually over engaged in our dance activities. And all it took was just me demonstrating some things, that they could actually get up and moving and doing it with us.

So, it doesn't take long for them to be excited about fitness, it's just got to be placed in front of them.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: I agree with that. I remember, physical education was one of my favorite times of the day, you know, going and getting to do that with your friends and your peers and getting up out of your seat.

And so today, sometimes even physical education is being taken out of the teacher's day, and they're not doing art anymore. They're not doing music. And it's, it's truly it really is sad.

And so, we have these teachers who are trying to implement all of these things into their classroom practice. So, you've got the standards, you've got reading, you've got science, you're trying to do all of these things.

So, if you're not coming in and helping them do this, what are some tips and tricks when their classroom schedule is already full, that they can implement these things into their day? How do they do that? What does it look like?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Okay, so I thought I would share just four quick examples that we have actually used over the past month.

So here we are in the month of January, most of us are looking at our curriculum, and we get excited in the month of January, to set new goals. And we've got all of this great programming that's already placed before us. So how can we actually integrate the dancing or the movement or creative play into the classroom? So, here's a few things we've tried.

It's been a great success. Hopefully these will be things that are quick and easy enough that any teacher out there with any type of skill set, whether you enjoy physical fitness and you're active and engaged or not, you could easily do these activities.

So, the first one would be something that we're all familiar with, red light, green light, right? We understand that concept of that activity or that game.

But instead of having the children actually move towards the teacher and they're running and they're racing, although that's fun, you could do a little bit of a twist on it and just have it be something that they do in place. So, you could have the children stand up if you're doing centers or if they're at a desk or they're at a table, just take even five minutes. Let's say we're going to take a quick little break.

We're going to do a quick little interactive game. Everyone stand up. When I show the green card, here's the activity I want you to do.

And when the red card is flashed up, I want everyone to stop. And those activities could be something as simple as marching in place, balancing on one foot, jumping up and down. So, I think that that's kind of a simple one that anyone could implement very quickly into the classroom.

The second one that we've tried over this past month, is introducing the children to yoga poses. This might be something that you would implement into the classroom when you're having a day when the kids have got so much energy, and you need to just calm them down for a few minutes, so that you can make that transition from one activity to the next in a very calm and peaceful way. And so, we actually have foam puzzle type pieces that have yoga poses that are printed on them.

So, we use those. But you could very easily go online and find some yoga poses, that you could actually print onto a card and then place these in strategic places around your classroom, or on the floor and have the children with a buddy, go around to each of the different pictures or yoga poses, and have them hold that yoga pose, in whatever position they need to be in with their body for 10 counts. Most of the children, I feel, depending on your age bracket that you're working with, could hold that pose that you're sharing with them for 10 counts.

Then the next one that we've been kind of experimenting with, and having a little bit of fun, many of you have themed activities throughout the month that you like to incorporate some of your learning around. I'm going to use winter as kind of the theme that I'm going to base this around. So, let's say it's the month of January.

It's a little bit cold. You might be talking about winter animals or snow or building a snowman. Take those themed activities.

And as part of that, maybe you would have some snowflakes that you have printed. And on the snowflakes, you've got some movement activities, that the children could do. And one at a time, have the child come up, pick one of the snowflakes, and you interact and do that activity that's on the card.

And you can expand that for doing maybe one or two exercises all the way up to maybe six to 10 exercises. So, you could adjust that based off of the theme you're working on. And then the last one, most of us in the classroom, we have a lot of props.

We have a lot of things that we can find. But one of the great things that we have in our studio and classrooms that we like to go into would be those large foam dice that you can use. And some of those actually have the ability for you to draw with like a dry erase marker.

And you could very easily put things on that dice, such as jumping jacks or pushups, or sit-ups, or jog in place, and have the children roll the dice and whatever it lands on. You do that while the music plays and then they can have a seat. So, these are just a few quick examples of something that you could incorporate very quickly.

You probably already have some of these things in the classroom. You can do it for five minutes. You could do it for a half hour, just based off of your planning and preparation prior to doing the activity with the children.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Jennifer, what I love is, like you said, it's quick, it's something that you don't have to do in addition to you could do, you know, right alongside other elements of learning. And that's just so great for our listeners and educators. As we wrap-up and wind down today, are you able to leave us with just three quick takeaways for our listeners?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Absolutely.

OK, so the first tip would be to make sure you're giving them that opportunity to get up and get active, right? If we're not presenting this as part of our game plan, throughout the week, they might not ever see it. And like we mentioned earlier in this broadcast today, a lot of the schools are pulling those physical fitness time slots away from their normal day. And so that's definitely something that I've seen.

So, we've got to give them those extra little tidbits of time where they can get up and be active.

The second would be make it fun, right? Have it be interactive. Maybe it's fast, maybe it's slow, maybe it's quiet time while we do these activities, and definitely make sure that they have a friend, right? If they have a buddy and they're laughing and they're being silly, and having a good time, they're going to be super happy about the next time that you want to do physical fitness with them.

And then just taking a few minutes, this would be the last tip. Taking a few minutes to just have quick little discussions about healthy tips for fitness, but also for eating habits as well. Maybe bring into conversation every once in a while, you know, what are some of the healthy snacks that we are eating today and point out that, you know, so and so in the class is eating an apple today.

That is such a good, healthy snack. We're so proud of you for making sure that you're keeping your body and your muscles healthy and active. So those would be my quick little three tip takeaways from today.

And hopefully we'll see a lot of you implementing these into your classroom.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Yes, if I was in the classroom right now, I would definitely be doing some of those games that you shared because they are so important. So, what is one challenge that you can leave our listeners with?

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: OK, so because I am a dance studio owner and love working with educators, I think my challenge would be that it would be super important for all of us to set aside a time where we could actually create our very own dance party, right? Who doesn't love a dance party? So, turn up the music, have a little bit of fun, grab your students, invite everyone to come on over and have a quick little dance jamming out session with your kiddos.

I think everyone would have a beautiful time with that.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: That is so fun. And I do have to share real quick when I was a principal, every Friday I had everybody get up and I would play music over the loudspeakers, and we would all go out into the hallways and have a dance party before the parents came.

So, I danced for years. I did all types of dancing. Clogging was my favorite.

So that was just one thing that implemented. So, love that idea. Thank you so much for being here with us today.

This was some amazing information, and we hope to talk to you again very soon.

Jennifer Hawkins Speaker: Thank you, ladies. It was a privilege being able to be in your presence today.

Thank you so much.

Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald: Thanks, Jennifer.