

Physical Fitness & Wellness (PFW)  
We're smarter than you think!

This year in PFW, our slogan is Fit Body, Fit Mind. We are thrilled with this slogan because for years we have known that a fit body makes for a fit mind. However, in the recent past, this idea has been getting a fresh look. Therefore, if we combine our knowledge with the newest research, we are certain that being fit can actually make you smarter!

In his book, *Spark*, Dr. John Ratey writes about the connection between body fitness and brain fitness. His research was “sparked” by a school program in Illinois that used fitness to improve the grades of the students. In this program, the students come to school early to exercise before classes, **or exercise has been incorporated into academic classes to keep the students engaged and alert.** Since the program started in 2000, the standardized test scores of Titusville’s students have risen from below the state average to 17 percent above it in reading and 18 percent above it in math.

Research shows that exercise fires the same neural connections the brain uses to read, write and compute. Exercise also feeds the brain glucose and oxygen which builds greater connections between neurons. But perhaps most importantly, exercise activates the release of brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) which enables one neuron to communicate with another. Dr. Ratey calls BDNF “miracle-gro” for the brain. The additional BDNF produced during exercise helps students focus, calms the brain and reduces impulsive behavior. **The bottom line is that exercise puts the brain of the learners in the optimal position for them to learn.**

This Spring PFW is offering a pilot class called “Exercise for Learning Readiness” so students can come to your classes prepared to learn. This class is being offered in the Main Campus Fitness Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 7:30-8:20am. In addition, we are sharing this research with many departments across campus and providing tips so instructors can give “activity breaks” to their students. We hope you will join us in spreading the word that “Exercise can make you smarter!”

If you would like to learn more about how you can use exercise in your classes to prepare your students for optimal learning, please contact the PFW Department at 483-1227.

Additional Resources:

PE4Life.org

<http://www.johnratey.com/newsite/index.html>

<http://johnratey.typepad.com/SattelRatey.pdf>

<http://www.epi.msu.edu/faculty/pivarnik.htm>