



"CORE"tastic Kids Newsletter



Attention and Focus

Individuals with attention deficit disorder (ADD/ ADHD) can focus attentively on certain activities like playing video or computer games or checking and updating a facebook page. But when it comes to schoolwork, or managing day to day responsibilities, some are easily distracted and have a hard time staying on task. ADHD doesn't impair the ability to pay attention, but rather the ability to control what one pays attention to. The focus of your attention determines your life experiences. Where you put your attention, is where you put your energy.

Making simple changes in diet, sleep, exercise, and routines can help in improving attention and focus. Incorporating relaxation techniques and yoga are also beneficial.



Since awareness is considered to be the first step in growth in some models of human development, self awareness can help support growth in individuals with focus and attention deficits. Once we are self aware and become more familiar with our actions, we can take concrete steps to bringing change in our behavior. We can then uncover the potential, creativity, and talent already inside us.

Exercise of the Month

Running is a great exercise to get warmed up for the upcoming spring. Running is defined as leaping from one leg to the other. Each leap raises the center of gravity during takeoff and landing as the knee bends to absorb the shock. At mid arc, both feet are simultaneously off the ground. This rise and fall motion of your bodyweight expends energy opposing gravity and absorbing shock. Running uses more energy than walking to travel the same distance and is good for your cardiovascular system. Have your children run around outside for some great exercise. There are several running games they can play: tag, chase, red light green light, relays, etc. Thirty minutes of exercise a day for a child is a great start. There are several runs coming up in March you and your child can train for together: March 6- March for Meals 5K run or 1 mile walk at Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, March 13-Get to the Green 5K run or 1 mile walk at Five Points in Columbia, and March 27- Cooper River Bridge Run 10K Run/Walk in Charleston. Gear up and "run" into Spring!



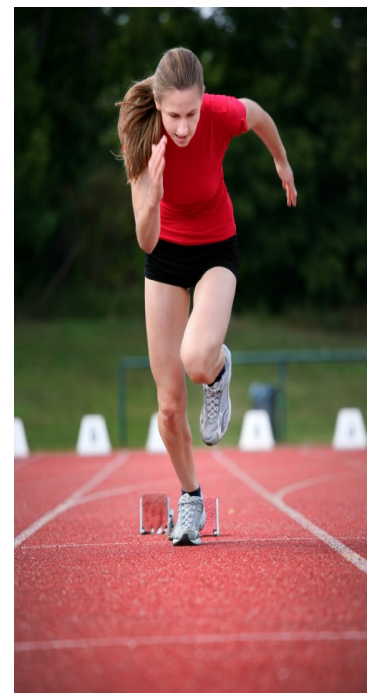
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Calendar of Events:

February 15, 2010
9:00 am—5:30 pm
Winter Olympic Mini Camp

February 27, 2010
9:00 am—4:30 pm
Parent Leadership Workshop



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Body Works — From the Inside Out

I am so impressed with the constant desire for the Core staff to continue their quest for health. Recently Tammi, Jodi, Sheri, and Carter set out on a viscous quest for muscle excellence. They began the grueling P90X workout. This training routine is designed around the concept of muscle confusion. Muscle confusion is a training principle that creates variety in your training. The reason to use this training is because muscle confusion prevents plateaus and keeps your muscles growing. Muscles become used to a training program very quickly. Developing different exercises and performing a variety of sets and repetitions will “keep your muscles guessing”.

By cycling or changing your training program your muscles cannot become used to the exercises. This forces your muscles to grow quicker than with any other training method. An example of Muscle Confusion would be if you were doing a barbell incline chest press, you could use a hammer strength incline machine one week and then the following week you could do a dumbbell incline press. While you're still working the upper chest muscles, you're hitting them from a different angle and this will stimulate new muscle growth. Make sure, as with all exercise routines, you get proper rest, proper nutrition, and make sure you are training safely. Go Core!



Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity.

Henry Van Dyke

Reading and Spelling Tips

Act It Out!- Practice reading comprehension with your child by having them act out scenes from a story they have just read. This fun activity is for children of any age and will help them understand what is really happening in the story.

Alphabet Race- Get the whole family involved in this fun alphabet game! Put the letters of the alphabet into a decorated jar. Each player pulls out a letter and names three things that start with that letter, if they're right, they keep the letter! The player gets 10 seconds to name them before someone else gets to steal the turn. The person who gets the most letters wins!

Consonant Blend Scavenger Hunt- Write the following blends on separate index cards: bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, gr, pl, sc, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw, and tr. Have your child pick one card at a time and go on a scavenger hunt around the house to find items that start with the same blend. Give your child a basket and 5 minutes to find as many items as they can!

Guess My Word- Use vocabulary words your child is learning for this fun guessing game! Give your child three clues to describe the vocabulary word that you are thinking of. Switch roles and let your child give you three clues to describe one of their words!

Sight Word Jenga- Write some of the most common sight words on Jenga pieces or small rectangular blocks using a permanent marker. Stack the blocks into a tower and take turns! Pull one block out at a time and if the tower does not fall, use the word on your block in a sentence. Keep playing until the tower falls!

Brain Based Learning

What Does the Neuroscience Say Are the Factors that Contribute Most to Student Achievement?

Here is the million dollar question: "What is it that contributes most to student learning?" You might be surprised at the answer!

While a HUGE number of variables may influence the brain on the macro level (physical environment, food, emotional safety in the classroom and at home, interest in the content, etc.) it turns out that very few factors influence student learning inside our head at the micro level.

We naturally and accidentally "pick up" millions of bits of information daily, our focused attention is what tells our brain to "log this in and save it." The part of the brain that tells you to "save" the learning, is the nucleus basalis, and the good news is you can improve this area of the brain. Yes that is right -the skill of focused attention can be taught.

Second, our brain has to be able to process what is occurring, making the processing and reasoning pathways highly valuable. This skill can be, and must be, taught.

Processing requires you to juggle more than one item in your working memory. The strength of the working memory is another critical variable in learning. This must also be taught.

Finally, each of these neural events has to occur in a sequence, so it turns out that sequencing - temporal ordering of every step is critical.

Of course, other variables come into play. We know that students need to feel safe to take risks and a host of other variables. But the so-called environmental factors each influence these neural events. For example, unless I feel safe in the classroom, I might not be able to pay attention.

First, the science is solid when you consider each system separately. But they work synergistically. When one of them is off, others falter. That's why kids with serious AD/HD (low executive function) struggle in all areas academically.

There are four things that will make cognitive miracles happen.

To build attention span, give kids behaviorally relevant tasks that absolutely require focused attention, so that their brain must strengthen and lengthen their attention span. This process includes high-interest reading material, reflective writing assignments, learning to play an instrument, painting, graphics work and martial arts.

The next process is processing skills. This can be done by role modeling social skills, skits, teaching models of thinking, writing and editing, giving thinking maps, talking through the process with a partner or lots of trial and error.

You can build working memory, sequencing and processing speed through the use of games like chess, card games, board games like Spoons and Speed, the video game Brickbuster, the board game Blink, and Perfection.

Now comes the hard part: students have to do these activities with focus and vigor. That means kids must get excited about them first, and then play these games for 20 hours total. That's twice a week, 75 minutes at a time for eight weeks. What's the payoff? At the University of California, cognitive neuroscientist Silvia Bunge has been a pioneer in this area for years. When the experiment began, Ms. Mackey, professor Bunge's graduate student who supervised the study, thought she might see gains of 3 to 6 points in IQ, at most. The researchers knew some improvement was possible. But they were shocked. The children's reasoning scores, on average, leapt 32%, or 13 IQ points. What's the relevance of that gain? Some schools have kids for 12 years that don't gain that much! Here, we're talking about just 20 hours of "brain training!"

This is awesome news! Anything is possible! **Stronger, Smarter, Better - GO!**

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Real Math for Real Life:

Even though we don't always stop to realize it, math plays an important part of our every day lives. Our children hear how important math is from us and their teachers all the time. However, how many of them truly understand the value of those math skills and are able to apply them, especially for real life situations? Here are some suggestions of ways to practice real life math at home and help children make those valuable math connections while learning valuable life skills.

Shopping/Money:

- When grocery shopping, have them make estimates, practice rounding prices, price comparisons, make predictions about the total bill, and use a calculator to add prices as items are added to the cart.
- Calculate sales tax or discounts for common markdown amounts (10, 25, 30, or 50%)
- Locate a blank checkbook register and let them practice balancing a bank/allowance account.
- Use a weekly allowance to teach budgeting for saving, spending, and donating. This is a great opportunity to calculate percentages and graph how much of their allowance is allotted for each area.
- Calculate change after a purchase or count the money in their piggy bank

Cooking:

Learn about capacity, recognize fractions, practice measuring, learn about benchmark temperatures (freezing/boiling point for degrees C and F) when following a recipe.

Cars:

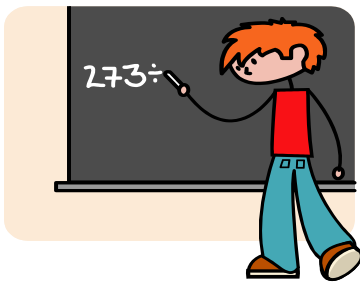
Calculate the miles per gallon when filling up at the gas station

Decorating:

Create scale size drawings of a room and furnishings to decide the best arrangements for furniture.

DIY/Home Improvements:

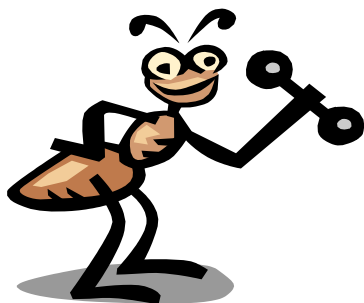
Teach measurement, fractions, and estimation skills through the use of tools for projects around the house.



Plan an Outing:

Research a place you are going to visit or want to visit. Looking at schedules, create an itinerary including times and costs for meals, travel, entrance rates, souvenirs, etc...

Ants and Bumps on a Log



Ingredients:

Peanuts, shelled

Peanut Butter

Raisins

Celery

Preparation:

1. Clean the celery and cut into 4-6 inch sticks.
2. Spread peanut butter on a piece of celery.
3. Stick raisins and peanuts in the peanut butter going along the celery stick alternating each.