

Moving & Learning

Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar urges school board members to promote and encourage healthy, active learning

Keynote sponsor 



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Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar (Dr. Jo) — a nationally renowned physical activity advocate and past president of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance — gave a high-energy address to school board members on the important relationship between movement and learning.

She cited research that found that half of students don't learn in the traditional classroom setting. “Some of us can't do sit-and-get,” she said.

As a student herself, Dr. Jo said she struggled to stay focused in the classroom and was one of those students who couldn't sit still. The good news is that movement and learning go hand in hand. Dr. Jo talked about new research that has found that the pre-frontal cortex, the part of the brain associated with learning, is also tied to movement.

“Physical movement and brain development go together,” Dr. Jo said. “What makes us move also helps us think.”

With this information, Dr. Jo is a big proponent of using brain breaks and other activities in the classroom. She included high-energy breaks in her speech in which she had attendees stand up and talk with others with specific missions such as ‘turn to the person next to you and tell them you're happy they're here.’

“The brain research tells me that after 11 minutes of inactivity, the

brain begins to turn off,” she said.

Dr. Jo pointed to the high rates of childhood obesity and escalating health care costs calling it an “energy crisis.” She urged school board members to support active, healthy lifestyles in their schools, adding that many students need to move.

“Children will move with or without our permission,” she said. “So why wouldn't we have something for them to put that energy into.”

It's not just a crusade for physical fitness either, Dr. Jo said the research is clear that physical activity promotes learning.

“Healthy, active children stand a better chance for school success,” She told school board members. “It's about eating, sleeping and moving. We are making it too complex, it's really simple.” ■



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