

# **Creativity, Character, Respect, and Resilience**

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## Introduction: Thoughts to Ponder

- It's not what happens to us that counts. It is the story we tell ourselves about what happens to us that determines whether we thrive or drown.
- What happens when you practice something? You get better at it. You are always practicing something. You are either practicing being afraid or practicing being courageous.
- There is no neutral. You are either giving support or withholding it.
- We are always teaching something, but we are not always teaching what we think we are teaching.
- No matter what you have done or what anyone has done to you, you can always do a “do over.”
- The antidote to anxiety is intentional action. Do something that moves your life forward. Even if it is a very small action, take it!
- Despair is just fear disguised as truth.
- We can always say to the Dinosaur of Doubt in our head, “Ptooie! I spit on you!” or “You’re not the boss of me!”
- “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Gandhi
- “The world is full of suffering and the overcoming of it.” Helen Keller
- “This time for sure!” Bullwinkle J. Moose

## Creativity Ground Rules

### 1. Say “Yes, and” instead of “Yes, but.”

This means giving a full hearing to an idea before adding any of our own ideas, concerns, or objections. We listen with our ears, heart, and imagination. We let our teammate know we have entered the zone of understanding. We get why they are so excited about this idea.

**Bonus:** If we give a full YES to our team member, then we are more likely to get a full YES in return.

## **Simple, Profound, Transformational**

Ask yourself:

- What would your life be like if you were always listened to with Yes, and?
- What would the lives of your family, students, and coworkers be like if you knew how to give a big YES first and then add your concerns?

### **2. Make Everyone Around You Look Good**

What if our goal were to “make their day” everywhere we went? What if every person we ran into -- grocery clerk, bank teller, dental assistant, secretary -- felt better about being alive after they talked with us? How would this ground rule change our lives?

If your goal were to “make their day:”

- How would we walk down the street?
- How would we enter a room?
- How would we talk?
- How would we listen?
- How would we laugh?

### **3. “I’m not sorry, I’m sexy” (or brilliant, a genius, or adorable).**

So, you are sexy, brilliant, or adorable instead of incompetent. If so,

- How would you react when you had something new and challenging to learn?
- What would you be afraid of?
- Who would you be afraid of?

### **Put “em All Together**

- What would you allow yourself to do that you are not allowing yourself to do now?
- What might you allow a family member, student, coworker to become?
- If you modeled these three guidelines, how would your family be different? Your classroom? Your school? Your community?
- What would happen to your health?

### **Activities: Get These Ground Rules in Your body**

#### **1. Yes, and**

- Yes, and Game in a circle. Get group in a circle. Make eye contact, point to someone. They say, “Yes, and” as they point to someone else. When you hear a “Yes” from the person you have pointed to, you can start moving toward their spot. Everyone keeps changing spots by saying only “Yes, and.” If you make a mistake, you can only say, “I’m sexy!” Or “I’m a genius!”, or “I’m brilliant!”

- Practice in dyads. One person shares an idea, a real one, and the other person stays in YES. “Boy, the idea of having a remodeled kitchen that is black and lavender really thrills you!” You do not have to agree or even think the idea has any merit. Your goal is to shine a full YES on the idea, let some time go by, and then share any concerns or other ideas you have. You do not even need to respond to the content of the idea. Just get in their world for a moment with a full YES. Take turns. Debrief.
- Let Me Be song.

## **2. Make everyone look good.**

- Rock Star game. Get in groups of three or four. What quality do you want reinforced? Or what quality would you like to have? Tell your team members. Then, you are a Rock Star and they are pumping you up for the Big Game. Take turns. Debrief.
- Practice in dyads. Appreciation starts at home. One thing I appreciate about me is.... Take turns. Debrief.
- Well Done song.

## **3. I’m not sorry, I’m Sexy!**

- Practice saying this in all improvisation activities.
- Practice in dyads. Mention a mistake you made, a real one, and then add, “And I’m sexy!” Your partner says, “Yes, you are so right about that!” Take turns. Debrief.
- I Deserve to Be Loved mistake verse.

# Part I. Creating Safety for Learning

## Home Court

“Why is it that teams win more often on Home Court?” I ask any group I work with. The answer is simple: support. Support is free. Support is powerful, yet we don’t often teach children how to support each other. We simply hope they will be supportive. I believe it is important to explicitly teach what you want people to be able to do. Start small, build on accomplishments, make it fun, and you will be amazed at what happens – almost instantaneously.

I also ask groups: “What happens when you practice something?” The answer is: “You get better at it.” We are always practicing something. We practice being afraid or being brave. If we practice being brave, we will get better at it. Our world will get bigger. We will be able to do things we never dreamed we could do. And it all starts right now!

### **Step 1: Home Court Cheer**

This is simple, fun, and immediately engages the entire group. If you can have some older students with you as you teach this, especially if you are doing an assembly, you will increase the buy-in for the rest of the students.

*Smile, Nod, Yes! All Right! Cool! We can do it!*

### **Step 2: Home Court Code**

When I have time, I teach the deeper principles of Home Court. But even when I don’t teach this code explicitly, I weave everything I say and do into these principles. No one is ever forced to take a risk, but all are encouraged to be as courageous as they possibly can. This is important! People will take enormous risks as long as they know they are in charge and can stop anytime they want.

### **The Code**

1. Listen to Yourself and Honor What You Hear (Choose Courage not Fear)
2. Don’t Judge Other People Because You Don’t Know Their Story (Don’t judge – get curious!)
3. Don’t Make it Harder for Other People to Take a Risk – Make it Easier

4. Take a Risk – But You Decide What Risk You Will Take (It's okay to be where you are; it's not life-enhancing to stay where you are)

### **1. Listen to Yourself and Honor What You Hear**

I explain this rule by saying something along the lines of: "I'm going to ask you to do some activities. You will feel comfortable doing some of them, and some of them will feel a little scary. I want you to listen to yourself, to pay attention to your feelings, and to not do anything that will make you terribly uncomfortable. Learning to listen to yourself and to know how you feel is an important life skill." I set the stage for people taking responsibility for their behavior no matter how they feel. No one "makes" anyone do anything.

### **2. Don't Judge Other People Because You Don't Know Their Story**

Educators don't always do a good job of teaching students to respect the rate at which other people learn or the times at which they are willing to take risks. At this point, I talk about how people learn at different rates. "When do babies learn to walk?" or "When do children learn to tie their shoes?" or "How long does it take to learn how to give a car a tune-up?" The answer to all these questions is: It takes a different amount of time for everyone. "Who is the better person," I might ask, "the person who learns to walk sooner or the person who learns to tie his shoe first?" I will usually do a power lineup at this stage.

#### **Power Lineup**

This is a very effective lesson, and it gets people up and moving. I create a line in the front of the room. One end is a ten (I hate it!) and the other end is a one (I love it!). I ask students to take a stand for how they feel about, say, spaghetti. They line up. "Is there a correct place to be on this line?" I ask. No, there isn't. We have all put ourselves on this line because we have a spaghetti story to tell. For some people, this is a positive story, for others a negative one, but there is no right place to be.

Then I have them take a stand for how they feel about writing, or dancing, or singing in a group, or taking a test, or skateboarding.

People move all over, and that is the point. We are all different, and we all have a "back story" that leads us to a certain place on any given power line. Some questions I often ask: "Where is the bravest point to stand on this line?" The answer: the place with the fewest people.

If your classroom or school is to be Home Court, then it needs to be safe for people to be different. Some of our greatest strengths come from our differences, and if we are shamed out of them, we may never know what they are. Here is where I tell the story of Dumbo and put on my fabulous elephant hat. Dumbo was teased for his big ears, but they turned out to be his biggest asset.

I also ask, “When did you lose the sense of yourself as a writer, singer, artist, athlete, etc.?” These stories are powerful, often inducing tears. We have given up sacred parts of ourselves to one person, often a family member or teacher. Someone decided to play God for a moment and tell us our limitations: “You can’t carry a tune in a bucket!” Fact: Everyone can learn to sing if they stick with it. “You aren’t college material.” Fact: In every group of teachers I work with, there is always one who was told she wasn’t college material. These are often the best teachers.

We increase respect for diversity and encourage individual genius when we get out of the business of smashing each other. This is a bad habit, and it infects many of our homes and schools. We call it “teasing,” but I always say: “A joke is not a joke if someone has to pay for it.”

Our ability to respect diversity, to not judge other people, grows when we learn to stop making up stories about people when they do things we don’t understand. This is a bad habit, yet we practice it all the time. “Why didn’t she smile back at me? She must be conceited,” one might think. But the real story might be that the person is blind and didn’t see them. Or maybe she just found out her beloved dog had been run over by a car, and she isn’t thinking straight. Rule 2 involves giving people the benefit of the doubt, assuming positive intentions until proven wrong.

**Back Story Activity:** This could be a fun game to play: Have a student do something, i.e., untie her shoes, burp loudly, and then have the class compete to see who can come up with the “back story” that creates the most compassion for this person.

### **3. Don’t Make it Harder for Other People to Take a Risk – Make it Easier**

This is where I violate my own rule and point to the negative, but I do it for a reason. I want to make explicit the behaviors that make it more difficult for others to learn. Learning does not happen without some kind of risk. At this point I

usually draw a chart on the board: Behaviors That Make It Easier and Safer to Risk and Behaviors That Make It More Dangerous to Risk.

Then I collect examples from the students. If they leave something out, I make sure it gets in. I wouldn't want to leave out rolling the eyes, for example. I ask them in which place they would rather live. Then I ask which place they helped create. Encouragement needs to be taught and reinforced. If they can't bring themselves to make it easier and safer for others to learn and to have fun, at least they can refrain from making it more difficult. I point out that it isn't fair for someone who sits back and plays it safe to make fun of someone who is out there, showing some courage and willing to fail.

#### **4. Take a Risk – But You Decide What Risk You Will Take**

Just sitting in a circle is a big risk for some students – no kidding. Staying that connected feels incredibly vulnerable to some people. For them to stay in circle or even in class, for that matter, is an act of great courage, and they get credit for it. I thank those people in advance. This serves two purposes: First, I acknowledge and respect where they are and how they are feeling. Second, I make it more difficult for them to enjoy acting out. I “steal their thunder.” It is no longer cool to be snide.

After I've explained an activity, I might ask students to tell me what risk they are going to take. Or I might have them write it down in their journals for me to look at later. I want to help them become more aware of their own behavior and of the choices they make, while creating a safe, nourishing environment for learning.

### **The Lion, the Muse, and the Dinosaur**

Home court exists outside of us, but the most powerful Home Court lives inside our heads. It is not what happens to us that matters; it is the way we interpret what happens to us that determines our possibilities and our performance. Unfortunately, most of us are telling ourselves some pretty limiting stories that we chant to ourselves as if they were Truths written on sacred tablets rather than lies we tell ourselves about our powerlessness and our deeply damaging defects.

I introduce this concept with puppets. I have a riveting raptor puppet that speaks those self-limiting stories. “That's a stupid idea!” he mutters when we dare to think outside of his tiny box for us. I teach people to turn to this voice, and in a French accent say, “Ptooie! I spit on you!” I have been told this is the most effective skill I have ever taught, and, amazingly, students don't use it on each other, but save it to use on their own inner voice.



I also use a lion puppet to introduce the quiet call to courage. He says in a soft but compelling voice, “That would be a brave thing to do!” These are our gentle urgings to greatness that our inner dinosaur will drown out if given the chance.

A small wizard-dog puppet tells my students about their muse, that part in them that is always full of more brilliant ideas than we could ever imagine. It is smarter than we are, wild and free. If we learn to trust our muse and to follow its inklings and nudges, we will be able to write better, speak better, and live a more creative, fulfilling life. Go Muse!

Sometimes the dinosaur tries to get us to stop doing something by telling us: “You look like a fool.” I teach my students to grab this voice by the neck and shake it, saying, “You are not the boss of me!” This is very cathartic, believe me.

Once a student said to me, “Gee, all you have to do is throw the Dinosaur out and trust the Muse, and you will live happily ever after!” If only it were so!

I told him that I found myself having to choose whom to listen to all day long. My Dinosaur could get very sneaky, disguising himself as all kinds of “helpful” voices. In order to choose correctly, I have learned to ask myself, “Who would be served if I listened to this voice?” When I shrink to fit the dinosaur’s plan for me, no one is served. When I choose to listen to the magical, if-you-build-it-they-will-come voice in my head, the voice that urges me to continue to step out into the world in ways I have never dreamed, magic things happen. I find myself a featured speaker at an international conference in Berlin, or writing musical comedy, or being on Oprah (This hasn’t happened – yet!).

### **Giving Feedback When it Does Not Feel Like Home Court: Ow!**

This is what we say when it doesn’t feel like Home Court, when someone gives us a put down or makes an unfriendly noise or uses an unfriendly tone. It is simple, easy to remember, and it is feedback. No one necessarily did anything wrong. Ow! just lets people know that a hurt just happened. If you use this one tool, you will find an amazing transformation happens in your classroom (and maybe in your life!

## Practice Being Braver Now!

### Boondoggle

Once you have practiced the Home Court cheer and introduced the puppets, it is time to practice being braver now!

Ask your students to name one of the scariest things they have been asked to do in school. Someone will say, "Get up in front of the group." When they say this, tell them that adults are scared of this, too. In fact, fear of death, fear of blindness, and fear of public speaking are the three top fears of Americans.

Then tell them that you know someone out there is ready to be braver right now. The lion in their head is saying to them, "That would be a brave thing to do." Lots of hands will go up. Lots of hands.

Ask for a volunteer who wants to get braver right now. Tell your class that you will take care of them. They are totally in control; they can stop at any moment. They are on Home Court, and they will succeed. As soon as you pick someone, have the group start cheering for them. They have succeeded just by volunteering. Give them the Home Court cheer!

At each of the next stages, ask the person if they are finished or if they want to continue getting braver. Ask the group if they can see the person getting braver right in front of their very eyes. When the volunteer chooses to stop before you do, congratulate them on respecting themselves enough to stop when they feel finished.

**Important Note:** Do not become a Participation Nazi! Participating is not inherently better than not participating. We all process things differently. We all have issues percolating in us. We need to respect ourselves and each other. Let's celebrate getting braver, and let's also celebrate saying "no" when we are done.

### Be Braver Now!

I say to my volunteer: “Are you ready to give a one-word speech that will be absolutely successful?” When the student agrees, I ask them to say, “boondoggle.” I use this word because it sounds funny to me. I’ve used “popsicle” as well. You, of course, can use any ol’ word you would like.

I get the crowd to cheer uproariously at this marvelous speech.

“Have you had enough or would you like to get even braver?” I ask. Most students want to go on; in fact, most students will go on as long as I keep them up there.

We then do the “Boondoggle Opera.” I sing the word and tell the student to sing the word. “You can’t do this wrong,” I say.

More cheering. Then, “Want to do the Boondoggle Boogie? This is a dance, but just blinking your eyes is a dance. Want to go on?” If the answer is yes, I get the crowd clapping, and then we boogie.

I’ve done the Boondoggle Duet, where we sing back and forth to each other. We’ve done the Boondoggle Drama, where I give an assignment: “Say ‘boondoggle’ as if you were trying to talk your mother into buying one for you because you just have to have it!”

I get the audience to give them an ovation as they sit down. At an assembly, I will only do one or two of these, but in a classroom, I could go on all day. For the practiced shy folks, I say, “I know for some of you just raising your hand is brave. If you never raise your hand, you will never get good at it, so now I want to give those of you who don’t often raise your hands a chance to practice. And I won’t call on you! You get to raise your hands, knowing you are perfectly safe because I will not call on you!” Hands go up, hands that hardly ever go up. You could continue this in the classroom: “Raise your hand if you think you know the answer but don’t want to be called on.”

## **Perseverance!**

### **A Mistake is Just a Story**

“How many experiments did Thomas Edison try before he invented the light bulb?” I ask my students.

“Fifty,” someone says.

“Fifty would be a lot, wouldn’t it? How many times do you try to do something before you give up? Think of a number. Is it larger than ten? When I was a girl, my give-up number would have been about three. Maybe even two. I practiced giving up, and I was really good at it.

“Thomas Edison actually tried over four thousand experiments before he invented the light bulb. People would say to him, ‘So, Tom, how did you deal with all of that failure? How did you handle all of those mistakes?’

“What mistakes,” he would ask them. “I learned 3,999 ways how to NOT make a light bulb.”

Students and adults love this story. It illustrates that it is not what happens to us that counts, but rather the story we tell ourselves about what happens to us that makes all the difference. If mistakes are horrible and to be avoided at all costs, then we will play it safe and boring. Our writing and our learning will be stilted.

Trying to teach writing to discouraged writers is one of the most discouraging enterprises I have ever experienced. This is why I teach perseverance. Without the life skill of perseverance, no one will accomplish anything. Children with learning challenges need to be able to keep at it without telling themselves the story that they are stupid. Perseverance takes courage, and we all get better at it the more we practice.

As with everything I teach, I try to use movement and humor. I use poetry, skits, and a dance I made up to the overture of the opera *Carmen* to involve all the students, have a great time, and learn how to never give up!

## **Perseverance: A Poem**

*(Hold your hands, fingers curved over fingers.)*  
Say, “Ahem.” *(Put fist to mouth and clear throat.)*

Perseverance! *(Point right index finger high in the air.)*  
means never giving up *(Shake head vigorously back and forth)*,  
even when people laugh at you when you make a mistake.  
*(Silently laugh a mean laugh.)*

Perseverance! *(Point finger again.)*  
means never giving up *(Shake head vigorously back and forth)*,

even when the problem seems very, very big (*Lift hand up as if building a mountain.*)  
and you feel very, very small. (*Make a box with your hands that gets smaller and smaller.*)  
(*Cry like a baby: wah, wah, wah.*)

Perseverance! (*Point your finger again.*)  
means never giving up (*Shake head vigorously back and forth*),  
even when you don't know how to do something.  
(*Scratch head and say, "Huh?"*)

Perseverance! (*Point your finger again.*)  
means never giving up (*Shake head vigorously back and forth*),  
even if you are horribly embarrassed.  
(*Put your arms over your head and say, "Don't look at me!"*)

Perseverance! (*Point your finger again.*)  
means getting used to reaching goals.  
(*Jump out with your arms spread and say, "Ta da!"*)

Perseverance! (*Point finger.*)  
means getting used to success.  
(*Shine your fingernails on your shirt.*)

Perseverance! (*Point your finger.*)  
means building muscles for life as big as Arnold Schwarzenegger's!  
(*Assume a body builder pose.*)

Perseverance is fun. Perseverance is cool.  
Perseverance will serve you well  
all your life, as well as in school.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. (*Bow*)

## **Perseverance Skit**

*When I do school assemblies, I ask for a team of fifth graders, eighth graders, or seniors to perform this skit. (It's important to have the oldest students in the school model being brave.)*

*I tell the students I need them to give me 100 percent. "Comedy and life are about commitment," I tell them. If you can't give it your all, you will be teaching*

*the school how to be afraid instead of how to be brave. If this is too scary, that is fine. You can go back to class now with my blessing. But if you stay to help, I need you to do what I tell you to do and give it all you've got. The younger students look up to you and they want to laugh. I promise it will be more fun if you make a fool of yourself. . The harder you fall," I tell them, "the louder the children will laugh."*

*I have never had a student go back to class and I have never had a group that did not step up to the plate and hit a home run*

*Here is how I introduce this skit:*

"I want to tell you about one of my heroes: Bullwinkle J. Moose. He would always say to his friend, Rocket J. Squirrel, "Rocky, watch me pull a rabbit out of a hat!!"

"Rocky would say, 'Bullwinkle, this never works.'

"Bullwinkle would say, 'This time for sure!' (I bend my elbow and form a fist, moving across my body as I say "this time for sure!")

"Practice with me: 'This time for sure!' (the students make the gesture with me. For the rest of the assembly I have the students make this gesture with me whenever it appears in the skit.)

"Okay, here we go! Once there were a bunch of babies who wanted to learn how to walk. (Several students crawl up to the front and sit down in a line.)

"They all said "Goo!" (All the children say, "Goo!") All of the children tried to stand up and walk, but they fell down. They tried again, and again they fell down.

"Then one of the babies said, 'This is too hard! I give up!'

"The rest of the babies, though, said 'This time for sure!'

"They kept trying to learn to walk until they all knew how to walk. Then they learned how to skip, hop, and jump. (Raise arms in the air.) They learned how to run and they ran off the mall to buy cotton candy.

"But the baby who gave up never learned how to walk or skip or run. He had to crawl over rocks, and broken glass, and he could never keep up with the other kids as they ran off to play soccer.

(All of the children in the skit put tissues up to their eyes, sigh, and say, “That is so sad! Tsk, tsk, tsk.”)

“Then there were a bunch of kids who wanted to learn how to tie their shoes. Tying the laces together was very hard. They wished they had two or three more hands. They got so frustrated, they all threw a little temper tantrum. (The students in the skit throw a temper tantrum.)

“Then one kid said, “This is too hard. I give up!” But the rest of the children said, “This time for sure!” They kept trying until they could all tie their shoes. (Raise arms in air.) And they went on to become successful lawyers and argued their cases in the Supreme Court. All except the kid who had given up. He couldn’t buy any shoes except Velcro shoes or slip-on shoes, but lawyers who argue cases in the Supreme Court aren’t allowed to wear Velcro shoes, so the kid who gave up got used to giving up his dreams and led a miserable, small life. (“Sigh. That’s so sad! Tsk, tsk, tsk.”)

“Then there was a group of kids who wanted to learn how to read. They wanted to learn how to read the pledge of our country. They started to read, but they all got stuck on the word ‘allegiance’ so they guessed. (The students all pretend to read and say, “I pledge...spaghetti!”)

“No, no, no! The word begins with an ‘a.’ Try again!”

“I pledge...alligators!”

“No, no, no! That is all wrong, wrong, wrong! Try again!”

“But one of the readers said, ‘This is too hard. I give up!’ The rest of the readers, though, said, just like Bullwinkle J. Moose, ‘This time for sure!’ The rest of the readers kept trying until they could read the Pledge easily. (Students say, “I pledge allegiance to the flag...”)

(Raise arms into the air.) “The students who didn’t give up learning how to read all went on to learn how to read well. They graduated from high school and went on to college if they wanted to and fulfilled their dreams. But the kid who gave up learning how to read started to hate school. She hung out with other kids who hated school and then started getting in trouble. She led a small, miserable life. (“Sigh. That is so sad! Tsk, tsk, tsk.”)

“Then there was a group of kids who wanted to make friends.” (Students get in a line. Each student will ask the “Friend Rejecter” if he wants to be a friend. The

Rejecter will say a snarly, “No!” to all who ask. Each student makes a gesture full of melodrama as he says, “Rejection!” and walks off the stage.)

“So all the people who wanted to be friends were rejected. One child said, ‘This is too hard. I give up!’ But the rest of the children said, ‘This time for sure!’ They decided, that if that one person didn’t want to be friends, they didn’t care. They would be best friends with each other. So they went on to live a happy life full of friendship and barbecues and laughter. The kid who gave up because of a little rejection decided to never take any more risks. He never made any friends and lived a small, miserable life. (“Sigh. That’s so sad. Tsk, tsk, tsk.”)

“Then there were a bunch of kids who were afraid of things. The first kid was afraid of the bogey man.” (Put on a mask and scare the first kid, who runs away screaming.)

“The next kid was afraid of spiders. The next kid was afraid of squeaky toys, and the next kid was afraid of snakes.

“The kid who was afraid of snakes said, ‘This is too hard. I give up!’ But the rest of the kids said, ‘This time for sure!’ One at a time they came and faced their fears. The kid who was afraid of the bogeyman just looked him straight in the face until the bogey man shriveled away into nothing.

“The kid who was afraid of spiders got so interested in spiders that he became a famous spider expert and traveled all over the world teaching everyone about the beauty of spiders. The kid who was afraid of squeaky toys took the toy and smashed it on the ground.

“But the kid who was afraid of snakes stayed afraid of snakes. Everything started looking like a snake. He became afraid of other things. Ties in shoes scared him. Then T-shirts scared him. Then dust scared him until finally he was afraid of everything! He led a small, miserable life. (“Sigh. That’s so sad. Tsk, tsk, tsk.”)

So the word we need to remember if we want to have power and happiness in our lives is, (drum roll) “Perseverance!” (All kids kneel on floor and start pounding on the floor, making a drum roll sound. Then they rise to their feet and yell “Perseverance!”)

“Thank you. Thank you very much!”

## **Perseverance Dance**

(To the overture of *Carmen*)



Listen for music cues. They are pretty obvious after you listen a few times.

March in all four directions. Listen for music cues.

Surf in all four directions.

Climb the learning Mountain.

Stop, look back over shoulder, look afraid and say, "Ooh!"

Look forward with big open mouth.

Repeat.

Get determined and climb for eight beats.

Scan at the top of the mountain, looking at all you can do because you did not give up.

Muscle arms one side, muscle arms the other side, muscle arms overhead.

Start marching:

Chant: "We don't give up. We don't give up."

*(With hand to heart and then up to one side with finger pointing)* "We persevere. We persevere."

*(Scrunch down to floor)* "Even when it's scary and it's hard, we don't give up!" *(Jump to your feet)*

"We don't give up; we don't!" *(Shaking arms to one side)*

"We don't give up!" *(Shaking arms to the other side)*

"We don't give up; we march!"

*(Bigger marching now)* Chant: "We don't give up. We don't give up."

*(With hand to heart and then up to one side with finger pointing)* "We persevere. We persevere."

*(Scrunch down to floor)* "Even when it's scary and it's hard, we don't give up!" *(Jump to your feet)*

"We don't give up; we don't!" *(Shaking arms to one side)*

"We don't give up!" *(Shaking arms to the other side)*

"We don't give up; we march!"

March in four directions. Stay put in the last direction and wait and try to say, "We don't!" at the end of the overture. You will probably miss it; I always do. But I never give up!

## Drama Games

### **Zoom!**

Get students in a circle. Pass a ball of energy around the circle. As you pass from one person to the other, say, “Zoom!” Practice this a few times.

Gradually add complications, i.e. holding up your hands and making a screeching sounds means reverse direction, or holding up your arms and saying, “Snow bank!” means the next two people in line hold up their arms and turn in a circle. Throw up your arms and holler “Parade.” Turn to the right and sing one verse of Zippity Doo Dah.” “Pile up!” means everyone shuffles to the center and makes a crash noise.

**Note:** You will find out a lot about those in your class who want to contribute to everyone having fun and those who want to have a good time regardless of whether anyone else is or not. “Fun for everyone” is a good rule to start with. You can process what this could look like and what it doesn’t look like. Students can set goals. You can have some students only get to say, “Zoom!” or you can limit how many times students can reverse directions. The students who care about the good of all will have the most freedom!

### **Yes!... And...**

This game has two versions, one for young children and one for older students. It is harder than it looks. The object is to fill the space with Yes!, which creates safety and increases flow. Stand in a circle. Point to someone. The unspoken question is: “May I have your place?” The answer is always “Yes!” The person who pointed starts moving to take the place of the person who said, “Yes!” At the same time, the person who said, “Yes!” must find a new place and points to another person. Note: No one can say “I’m sorry” if they make a mistake. They must say, “I’m fabulous!” Listen for the rhythm. You should only hear “Yes!” Then a rhythm will start and you will hear: “Yes! Yes! Yes!” It is pretty groovy.

## **Part II: Teaching through Movement**

The following exercises work because they are based on solid brain research and Howard Gardner’s work on the multiple intelligences. They also build emotional intelligence, which is more highly correlated with academic success than SAT scores. These exercises are fun, too, and you will find you don’t have to spend time correcting the same mistakes over and over again. You won’t get

so frustrated with yourself for not being able to figure out how to teach these kids, and you won't be so frustrated with your students for not caring enough to learn.

## **A Whole Body/Whole Brain Approach to Teaching**

Overwhelmingly, the research shows that children learn best through their bodies. Many of us, though, do not feel free to move our bodies. We are shy. We were laughed at when we were kids or saw other kids being laughed at. We want none of this.

Because of our shyness, we often deprive our students of the experiences they need to learn best. This is harsh talk, but it is true. I say this because I believe we cannot let our own inhibitions keep us from giving children the kinds of experiences they need in order to learn.

Recent brain research indicates that children learn best when we gear lessons toward how the brain retains information. We need to add some emotional content or novelty in order to help our students get information into their long-term memories. We need to teach with pizzazz, as noted educator Roger Taylor says. We need to keep our instruction meaningful because our brains are meaning makers. We need to keep our instruction alive and fresh and relevant. Involve the different intelligences, and you will have a vital program that engages even the most discouraged student.

Drama, music, movement and art help students engage their brains, bodies, and emotions in the learning process. When you have a whole body/whole brain curriculum, you can teach anything, and your students will love it. I am constantly greeted with, "Are you coming to our class today?" Cheers greet me when I enter a classroom—to teach GRAMMAR! If grammar can be fun to learn, anything can be fun to learn.

Keep an open mind as you read this section. If you don't believe me, read some of the books in the bibliography. Go see Roger Taylor or Howard Gardner. You will have a difficult time finding anyone who is concerned about lifelong learning who doesn't advocate the methods used in this handout.

This research has been around for years, but applying research isn't always easy. However, I am good at taking research and applying it to the classroom in a fun, effective manner. I think the reason educators have been reluctant to apply what we know about how children learn to our curriculum is that using the multiple intelligences and moving our bodies to learn is scary.

You have to take risks. You have to step out of your comfort zone. The kids are worth it, and so is your health. You will feel less stressed as you become more successful teaching writing and anything else through movement and play. Try it.

## **Smart Moves** (based on the book *Smart Moves* by Carla Hannaford)

### **Lazy Eights**

These exercises help students with handwriting as well as with getting words out of their brains and onto paper. You draw a figure eight, or an infinity sign on its side, with your finger, watching your fingers as they move slowly to make the design. Start with the left hand, and move up in a counter clockwise motion. Repeat three times. Now start with the right hand and move up in a clockwise direction. Finish by doing a set with the hands together.

You can do this in the air, or on sandpaper. You can use both hands. You can draw your lazy eight flat, upright, or turned toward you. Focus and watch—these are the key concepts.

### **Elephant Lazy Eights**

Stand up. Lean your cheek on your shoulder. Lean over, bend your knees, and move your arm like a trunk, moving your whole body and watching your fingers as they make a lazy eight. Change sides and do it again. You can also make an elephant sound as you do this.

### **Upshifting Position**

This is a position to get into when you need to calm down or get brave. Cross your ankles. Put your hands straight out in front of you with the backs of your hands together. Move one hand up and over until the palms of your hands are touching. Link your fingers and turn your clasped hands back toward your chest. Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth.

Hold this position for two minutes. You can sit, stand, or lie down.

### **Deep Pressure**

In pairs, students decide which parts of their bodies they want to put pressure on: hands to hands, fists to fists, shoulders to shoulders, legs to legs, backs to backs. They can press hard, but they need to be focused. Someone says stop, and then the pair breaks apart gently. Starting and stopping a lot is good. Students can pull as well as press together. This is

not a contest. The pressure needs to be focused, and the “Stop” needs to be honored.

## **Teaching the 3 R’s Through Movement: The Brain Dance**

This is my adaptation of Anne Green Gilbert's Brain Dance. The idea is to use all of the Elements of Movement. I use the first track of the first CD Anne offers on her web site: [creativedance.org](http://creativedance.org).

*Special Note:* I have found students are more willing to do the movements if you turn it into a story. The more you use movement, the more willing and eager students will be. Movement is naturally reinforcing.

Here is the Brain Dance story I tell the children when I use track one on the first movement CD: “Pretend you are a puppet and the puppeteer is pulling on your head, moving it back and forth, up and down. Now you have a string attached to your lower spine. The puppeteer pulls you back and forth and up and down.”

(The music speeds up.) “Now you are riding on a bumping wagon. You see a tree branch coming toward you. Duck! Cross. Lift up your head, look, look. Aaa!! Duck, cross, look, look, Aaa!!

“Now start climbing out. An alligator is chasing you and trying to bite your toes. Climb fast!

“Now you have reached the top. Your legs turn into a tree trunk, but the top of you is like a gummy worm. You have gummy wrist and shoulders and lips and eyebrows.

“Now you have a big, heavy ball to hold in your arms. You are stiff. Now your legs, ankles and hips are gummy.

“Now you are a giant book. Close the book, elbow to elbow and knee to knee. Now open. Close. Open. Now a giant steps on the book and squashes you. Make a big noise! Close. Open. Close. Open.

“Now your elbows are attracted to your knees. First your elbows touch your knees on the same side, then they cross your belly and touch your opposite knee. Make a noise!

“Now you become a gold fish. Swim up. Then dive, dive. A shark chases you. Now swim to one side. Now to the other.

“Now you are a giant ice cream cone. Start to melt. A giant licks you up. Melt to the other side. A giant licks you up.

“Now you are jell-o. You are poured into a pan. Someone takes a bite. Ouch!

“Now you are a balloon. You get blown up. Now you get a big hole in you. Make a big noise. Patch the hole. Blow up again. Now you get a little hole. Make a little noise.

“Now you are a tree, and lightning strikes your head. Your shoulders. Your waist. Your knees. Now you are in a hot frying pan.”

Have the children help you make up things to do in the brain dance. You can eventually assign roles, and the children can lead all the parts.

This is a great exercise to do during testing. This helps revitalize and renew the children and gets them thinking clearly again. Plus, it is fun, and fun is NOT a four-letter word!

*Other ideas from Anne Green Gilbert's book:*

### **Reading Readiness**

Have students pretend to be a sprinkler, a rain bird, and shoot from left to right, across their bodies. Then have them whip back to the left, just as the sprinkler does. I draw three S's on the board and one Z. Ask students to make the shape of the letter that is different.

### **Spelling**

Spell words with your body. Hop out letters as you spell the word. Make a capital letter and then its lower case counterpart with your bodies.

## **Science**

Have students take their pulse and tap it out with their feet. Then have them do jumping jacks, take their pulse and tap it out. Breathe in and clap. Breathe out and clap. Show with your body how you would feel if you were to eat dirt. Now show what an earthworm would look like when it ate dirt.

## **Math**

Make up a march or a dance for all of the multiplication tables. (Try using track five on the first movement CD.)

## Part III. Staying in the Game

### Lifelong Learner Assessment Survey

Assess yourself on the following questions. "1" means you are no good at this. "5" means you are VERY good.

1. I am good at entertaining NEW IDEAS, even if they are scary.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

2. I can LAUGH at my mistakes, and then learn from them

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

3. I stay RESPECTFUL even when I think others are wrong.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

4. I take time to REST, even when I think other people might disapprove.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

5. I use HUMOR to support people, never to ridicule.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

6. If I say I'll do it, I will. My WORD is my deed.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

7. I can ask for HELP and receive it graciously.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

8. I practice being CURIOUS instead of judgmental.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5



9. I assume a POSITIVE INTENT when I am dealing with others.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

10. When I realize I am wrong, I admit my mistake, APOLOGIZE and change my behavior.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

11. I ENCOURAGE people; I do not crush other people's dreams.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

12. I am FLEXIBLE. I don't have to have my own way all of the time.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

13. I am willing to take RISKS in order to be a better teacher and human being.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

14. I bring out the BEST in people.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

15. I want FEEDBACK when I am out of integrity.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

16. I am good at LETTING GO of limiting stories I have told myself. I don't chant "I can't" to myself.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

17. I am good at looking at what is WORKING instead of what is wrong with people or their work.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Building on Strengths

Strengths: What am I already good at?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Areas to Improve: What do I want to take on?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **Action Plan**

What will I do to improve? By when? Who will hold me accountable?

## **Bibliography**

*A Mind at a Time*, Mel Levine

*The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron

*Discipline with Love and Logic*, Jim Fay and foster Cline

*Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman

*Healing the Shame That Binds You*, John Bradshaw

*The Joy of Signing*, Lottie L. Riekehof

*The Man Who Listens to Horses*, Montie Roberts

*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey

*Smart Moves*, Carla Hannaford

*Teaching the Three R's Through Movement*, Anne Green-Gilbert

*Woman with a Voice: Daring to Live Authentically Ever After*, Vicki  
Lein

## **CDs**

*Alive, Alive: Songs to Pick You Up, Dust You Off and Set You Free*,

Vicki Hannah Lein

*Daring to Sing*, Vicki Hannah Lein

### **Web sites**

Cafepress.com, have your own school store for free

Green Gilbert, A. [creativedance.org](http://creativedance.org).

Fay, Jim, [www.loveandlogic.com](http://www.loveandlogic.com)

Taylor, R. [www.rogertaylor.com](http://www.rogertaylor.com) Great for help with talented and gifted students.

[www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) Great for self publishing. Free

### **Audio Tapes**

From the Cline/Fay Institute,  
2207 Jackson Street, Golden, CO 80401  
1-800-338-4065

Setting Limits

The Science of Control

Helicopters, Drill Sergeants, and Consultants

Four Steps to Responsibility

### **Videos**

*How to Win at Parenting Without Beating Your Kids*, Barbara Coloroso,  
Kids Are Worth It!

PO Box 621108,  
Littleton, CO 8016

### **Other Resources**

[epals.com](http://epals.com) - ePALS is the Internet's largest community of collaborative classrooms engaged in cross-cultural exchanges, project sharing and language learning. ePALS is also the leading provider of **school-safe email**™, **eMentoring** and **web-browsing technology** for the global educational market.

outcome.

The following videos express my philosophy of education.

**Music and Life by Alan Watts**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERbvKrH-GC4>

**Benjamin Zander: Classical music with shining eyes**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LCwI5iErE>

**RSA Animate - Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>