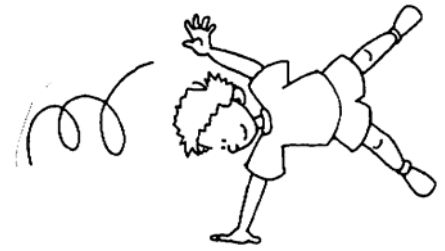


GYMNASTICS ??

WHY GYMNASTICS ??

Adapted from Keith Russel's Article "Gymnastics – Why is it in school curricula"



The most useful aspect of the "Activity of Gymnastics" is the principle that you teach a student to control their own body in a variety of situations; while doing various locomotor activities: swinging, springing off hands and feet, balancing, landing etc and while on the ground, off the ground, right side up, upside down etc. The student is taught via the activity of gymnastics to develop total control of his/her body. They learn to attempt skills, not with implements or projectiles, but with their bodies.

It seems quite reasonable to assume that if students can first control and manoeuvre their own bodies with a fairly high degree of skill then they can subsequently better control and manoeuvre themselves PLUS an implement (bat, stick, racket) or themselves plus a projectile (ball, discus etc). Likewise, they could then better control themselves in various mediums (water, snow, etc), or better handle themselves PLUS an opponent.

One can see that the very nature of the "Activity of Gymnastics" is to enhance our physical abilities (flexibility, strength, muscular endurance) and our basic motor abilities (balance, general coordination, agility, spatial orientation etc). The apparatus have been designed for this purpose over hundreds of years by medical, military and educational experts who were seeking tools by which they could develop their charges into robust and agile beings. Gymnastics equipment was not designed for the competitive sport of gymnastics. Instead, the sport evolved from the competitive usage of educational equipment! The apparatus should be regarded much the same as a room full of weights or a universal gym but with the added advantage of being portable and being designed to also allow you to teach balance, flexibility, rotation skills, landing skills, confidence while off the ground etc.

Did you know:

- Gymnastics at a basic level is meant to develop physical literacy. Like reading and math, physical coordination is a skill that must be practiced to develop proficiency.
- The Provincial Elementary Physical Education curriculum actually plans for 20% of the time spent in physical education to be dedicated to gymnastics.
- Unfortunately due to lack of training and scheduling difficulties, today's elementary students rarely get the recommended amount of P.E let alone time spent on gymnastics.

We have rather a mammoth task of trying to promote more physical education in the hope of better harmonizing it and the intellectual education of our youth. Though gymnastics is by no means a panacea or an all-inclusive instrument for this purpose, it is nevertheless one of the best tools available to physically educate children. It need not be a dangerous, complicated, frustrating, painful, scary activity that you would just as soon avoid. Instead, it can easily be made safe, uncomplicated and rewarding for all, while still maintaining the rigour we need for producing robust students and also still retaining that element of “thrill” – that kinaesthetic stimulation that prompts students to want more!



Gymnastics and Learning...

Adapted from “Does Gymnastics enhance reading – Yes!” by Ralph R. Barrett

Brain research over the past 50 years, particularly during the last 10 years, has demonstrated a direct mind-body connection. Of particular interest is the research by Dr. James Fadigan, who holds a dual doctorate in neuroscience and psychology. Especially noteworthy to those in the gymnastics community is the fact that Dr. Fadigan was a world class trampolinist in his day. During his numerous years of research, he has worked with stroke victims who have lost function of one of the hemispheres of their brain yet have reached 75-80% recovery in as little as one year's time. Fadigan has spent an immeasurable amount of time reviewing the research of such educational, neuroscience, and psychology gurus as Piaget, Gardner, Guilford, Gagne, and Bruner. In a nutshell, Fadigan's research revealed that the brain develops its ability to process information as such:

1. From conception to two years, various sensory motor skills are developed;
2. Thereafter, 26 identifiable cognitive skills (or multiple intelligences) are acquired; and,
3. After further enhancement of these two areas, content assimilation occurs.

The most interesting manifestation regarding this process is that most public and private schools teach exclusively at the third level. Furthermore, when students in schools exhibit problems with assimilating content, remediation is given in the form of additional content: generally either one-on-one tutoring or small group instruction. Thus, America's public education system does not adequately address the need to get to the root of the children's problems by providing sensory motor training. Albeit, millions of dollars are spent annually for occupation therapists, physical therapists, and other specialists who work sporadically with exceptional education students exhibiting underdeveloped sensory motor skills.