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RECENT BRAIN RESEARCH has taught us a great deal about how the brain functions. This research is confirmation for experienced educators who have believed intuitively what they have observed in the classroom for many years. The brain and thus the body require a delicate balance of many different activities for a student to function at optimum level. The academics, arts and athletic programs must work in tandem for students to develop their full potential.

For example, in order for academics to function at the highest possible level, the body needs water to allow the brain to enhance alertness and “connect the dots” in the learning process at a more efficient level. The body needs “brain breaks” to exercise and facilitate the movement of information from short-term memory to long-term memory. The body needs movements in which the arms not only are lifted above the head to get more oxygen in the brain but also are moved across the midline of the body to enhance cross-lateral brain function.

Research shows us that training in music provides the best brain training because it utilizes both hemispheres of the brain in a balanced way. Rhythm develops the left side of the brain and melody develops the right side of the brain, while pitch and harmony use both sides simultaneously. Piano lessons provide excellent training to enhance

brain development by utilizing both sides of the brain at the same time, creating a stronger student in school.

Using certain functions from the arts, such as color and design, enhance

person who communicates well and is word smart. Brain research strongly supports that bodily kinesthetic smart is just as important as the logical math smart. A high percentage of doctors,

nurses and surgeons who are tested display this body smart intelligence which gives them the ability to think on their feet and respond quickly in a crisis. Gifted musicians are often evident at an early age because the music smart surfaces in early childhood which is why music training is so important. Picture smart people often grow up to be artists, architects and designers. In schools, if we operate on the basic premise that everyone is smart and it just manifests in different areas,



Legacy Christian Academy Student, Brian Clark

photo provided by Legacy Christian Academy

Balancing the 3 A's: Academics, Arts, & Athletics

By Jody Capehart

brain development as well. Learning environments that are rich with positive brain colors, green plants which are colorful and affect the ionization level, and creative learning aids on the walls provide periphery learning which enhances brain development.

The concept of Multiple Intelligences, which came out of Harvard University by Dr. Howard Gardner and was furthered developed by Dr. Thomas Armstrong, provides strong research and support that people are “smart” in different ways. The traditional perception of a person as “smart” comes from one of two concepts: the person who works best from the logical mathematical area of the brain, or the

we will help our students to find their gifts and develop them.

A key ingredient in building a positive school community is to recognize that not only does learning occur in the area of academics, it is also involved in the achievement of a balance of the arts and athletics. When we can find the arena in which a student can attain success, we can build upon that student's strengths. For all of us, when we experience success, we feel energized and empowered and this affects other areas of our lives.

On a philosophical level, we can see how the 3 A's of Academics, Arts and Athletics can enhance one another. On a practical level, we may find that



Active students at Legacy Christian Academy



photo provided by Legacy Christian Academy

they create a scheduling conflict. For example, an AP teacher may have scheduled a major exam on a particular day without taking into account the athletic schedule. If there is a district away game the night before a test, many of the students may be playing in the game, cheering for the athletes or attending the game for school support. When the students return late, they may not be as well prepared for the exam the next day. Likewise, there may be a major fine arts competition on a weekend in which many students participate. What if some of them were also involved in a major athletic tournament that same weekend? Further, what if all of them need to complete a paper for Monday morning?

There is only so much time and energy that we can expect from our students. Prioritizing what is important requires a great deal of planning ahead between the departments, faculty and administration. It takes reviewing the master calendar at faculty meetings so everyone can get a sense of the whole picture. It requires publishing the master calendar so each teacher can see both internal and external events and activities that are coming.

At the school where I serve as headmaster, we view the 3 A's as the key area where we must work continually to provide the proper balance. For example, we have a strong academic curriculum, as well as excellent fine arts instruction and a full athletic program with superb athletic facilities.

"A key ingredient in building a positive school community is to recognize that not only does learning occur in the area of academics, but also in the balance of arts and academics."

As do most schools, we appreciate the intrinsic value of each of the 3 A's. We plan ahead and study the master calendar every week, and yet the inevitable collisions still occur, usually in the spring. No one could have guessed when we formalized the master calendar a year ago for the 2004-2005 academic year that in a recent week of competitions our school would place first in nearly every academic area as well as in the different fine arts, and that

the state competitions for all of these would be on the same weekend but in different cities! And, did I mention a district baseball game that weekend also? Many of our students qualified for all three events: academic, arts, and athletic.

For students who placed in multiple areas, we have to carefully weigh the pros and cons of each to determine which competition the students should attend. It is difficult, but the struggle is worth it because in the process we are building up students who are learning to balance the different areas that enhance brain development. The most important goal is to graduate students who are successful, have found their niche and can become contributing members of society. We are shaping and developing the adults who will be running our world in a few years. The time spent is worth the investment, and there are rich dividends to be reaped for years to come.

For more in-depth information on this subject, visit www.capehartconnection.com



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