

Gymnastic Academy of Boston

An Academic Treasure Chest

The following chart can act as a treasure map, illustrating the fundamental relationship between gymnastics and academic goals. The left side of the chart lists activities common to gymnastics, while the right side shows the link to academic skills and school success.

The more a child tumbles, climbs, creeps, and crawls, the more densely wired the brain becomes for academic success. Movement is the architect of a child's brain. The two hemispheres of the brain are designed to constantly communicate with one another. The left side of the brain controls the right side of the body, and vice versa. Bilateral activities, common to all gymnastic programs, require both sides of the body to work together and separately. Coordinated movement patterns create fluent readers who complete reading tasks with ease. For example, during reading, the left hemisphere attends to letters and the sequence of words, while the right side of the brain focuses on comprehending what is read. Reading fluency depends on an intimate conversation between the two hemispheres of the brain—a clear signal.



Bouncing on the trampoline, tumbling down a mat, swinging from the bars—all these activities help wire the brain and integrate the vestibular system. Located in the inner ear, the vestibular system is intricately connected with the brain. Its job is to make sense of all perceived sensory information from the environment and tell us where our bodies are in space. Like the hub of a wheel, the vestibular system integrates vision, hearing, balance, and skin sensations.

Social and Organizational Skills



- Participates in class calmly and controls anger
- Takes risks when learning new movement patterns
- Moves from station to station without getting "lost"
- Tunes into teacher's instructions
- Remains focused while watching others perform
- Completes activities without constant prodding
- Confidently learns new skills.
- Joyful child.



- Self-regulates in the class room
- "I can do it!" attitude when it comes to academic skills
- Easily transitions between academic subjects
- Tunes into teacher
- Cooperates and gets along with others in class
- Completes class assignments without prodding
- Confidently meets new goals
- Joyful child teachers love to have in class!



Sensory Processing

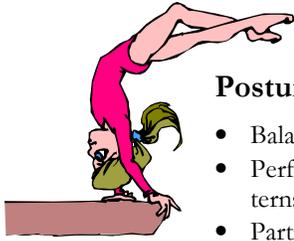
- Participates in activities requiring deep pressure to the joints as in mat work and bar work
- Participates in vestibular and heavy work activities: rolling, climbing, jumping, swinging trampoline activities, jumping into the pit, creeping, crawling, moving at floor level on the stomach, hanging from bars, handstands, headstands, and cart-wheels
- Listens to coach's instructions and processes multi-step directions including sequencing routines and completing complex movement patterns



- Joint sensation adequate for correct pencil grip, forming letters accurately, and appropriate pencil tension
- Vestibular system is working properly so that visual, auditory, and tactile information is integrated leading to reading with ease, sitting upright in the chair, enjoying rich tactile experiences with glue, paint, and other textures
- Listens to teacher's instructions and follows multi-step directions; understands complex math patterns

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An Academic Treasure Chest (continued)



Postural Control

- Balances on a beam
- Performs tucks and extension patterns with ease
- Participates in warm-ups requiring strong abdominal and back muscles
- Participates in warm-ups that strengthen back muscles
- Accomplishes all movements on various equipment requiring core postural strength
- Performs sequential rhythmic activities using full integration of auditory, visual, and tactile systems



- Balances in a chair
- Writes with ease due to good balance and strength
- Has strength and endurance for seat work; legs comfortably on the floor and not wrapped around chair legs for stability
- Sits without rocking the chair, knee sitting, or lying body across desk
- Learns with ease and can process auditory, visual, and tactile information as needed for academics

Bilateral Integration

- Performs movement requiring crossing the midline of the body
- Performs movement requiring using both sides of the body together and separately
- Enjoys activities including ribbons, hoops, balls, and rope
- Understands directional terms including over, under, next to, and between



- Writes while using complete page with print following a left to right sequence
- Full brain integration to decode and comprehend what is read
- Enjoys physical education, games, and recess
- Distinguishes between letters b/d/p/q and writes with no reversals

Body Awareness



- Sits and waits for a turn without bothering other children
- Aware of the body in space and makes adjustments as needed
- Enjoys warm-up routines with music and keeps a steady beat rhythm with ease
- Accurately integrates vision with motor skills and makes adjustments in timing as needed to complete complex skills
- Lines up without pushing and tripping others; honors other's personal space



- Patiently waits turn in class and honors other students' personal space
- Flexible with schedule changes and substitutes
- Understands the rhythmic nature of reading and speech leading to fluency skills
- Good letter spacing while writing; while reading relates story to self and others due to good self awareness
- Lines up without messing around and makes teacher extremely happy



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