



Exercise Proven to Be A Stimulus to Learning

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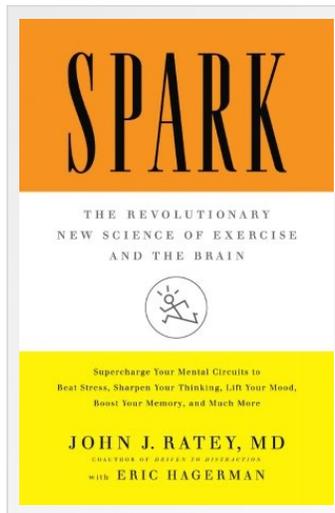
Teaching all kids, not just athletes, the importance of fitness and wellness, was the topic of conversation recently in Pottstown and Boyertown. Dr. John Ratey, author, researcher and Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, traveled to the area recently to talk about the "brain-body connection".

Dr. John Ratey, author of the book *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, began the day speaking to a group of 33 at the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. Representatives from local school districts and organizations attended this small group discussion to learn the importance of incorporating activity and fitness into the daily routines of local school children.

"We were very excited to have Dr. Ratey visit Pottstown," stated Dave Kraybill, Executive Director of the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. "His research is very exciting and supports the Foundation's goal of promoting exercise and active lifestyles."

New brain cells are generated every day. According to Ratey, exercise promotes new brain cell growth and acts as a "brain fertilizer", which optimizes learning. In addition to the increased learning ability, exercise can help control aggression, stress and depression.

Later that day, Dr. Ratey traveled to Boyertown to address a group of more than 150 faculty, staff and



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Board members from the Boyertown School District. Neighboring school districts were also represented, in addition to local organizations.

Those in attendance learned about the relationship of the human brain development and movement, and how it directly relates to our ability to learn and process new information. Questions and answers focused around the connection between student's physical activity, test results, depression and incidences of discipline.

According to Stephanie Petri, K-12 Health and Physical Education Lead Teachers, "The faculty and staff in the Boyertown School District are excited about this information and are planning to incorporate 20 minutes of physical activity prior to the junior's PSSA reading and math exams. Our goal is to increase student focus, decrease test anxiety, and improve student success. We believe the connection between exercise and learning will provide this outcome."