



## Exceptional Students Need Exceptional Physical Activity

Story by Yolanda Gallman

I'm a former Special Education teacher who worked at a residential psychiatric facility for children in Georgia. For many years in that role, the middle and high school students who entered my classroom were severely delayed academically, socially, and emotionally. When I offered remediation to my students, I struggled to effectively engage with them while also trying to help them overcome their low self-esteem and embarrassment. I was stuck, until I received a [National Math Foundation](#) Scholarship to attend the [Math and Movement Summer Institute](#) and saw the power of adding movement to my daily classroom routine.

After attending the Summer Institute, I decided to introduce Math and Movement as a combination of games and crossbody dance movements to hip-hop music. This plan really took off once I got my students to create their own games and movements for concepts like multiplication facts, fractions, geometric shapes, and Cartesian coordinates. All this came together through a Math and Movement Teacher Workshop for my school that was facilitated entirely by students. The most thrilling part of this experience was seeing my students' enthusiasm in sharing what they had learned with the other teachers and their peers.

*Exceptional children need exceptional teachers with exceptional teaching strategies, where differentiated instruction is customized for our visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners in a safe, positive learning environment.*



The benefits of incorporating the lessons I learned from Math and Movement are astounding. I have been able to incorporate art, music, and movement to all concepts taught, which has increased my students' self-confidence. They actively participate in class with less behavioral disruptions and improved test scores.

The most significant improvements I have witnessed specifically are related to my students' math and reading comprehension grade levels. Many of my students were starting the year at third and fifth grade levels for math and second and third grade levels in reading comprehension. After using the training I received from Math and Movement, I saw my students' math and reading comprehension more than double by the end of the first semester and double again by the end of the year.



To learn more about Math and Movement and experience their approach first hand, join us for an [Active Classrooms Month webinar](#) led by Math and Movement founder [Suzy Koontz](#) on Integrating Movement into Your Math Lessons on Wednesday, February 24 from 3:00 -3:00 PM EST. [Save your spot today!](#)

The goal to integrate physical activity aligns perfectly to my teaching philosophy. All students need frequent breaks to move and transition into activities that reinforce concepts. Students with exceptionalities are no different; in fact, they need more frequent physical breaks and transitions. Activities, assignments, and projects that teach math and reading using a holistic approach make learning tangible. As a special education teacher and therapist of fifteen years, I speak candidly: exceptional children need exceptional teachers with exceptional teaching strategies, where differentiated instruction is customized for our visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners in a safe, positive learning environment.

The National Math Foundation and the Math and Movement program and curriculum are truly bridging the educational divide by training teachers how to integrate a holistic teaching philosophy – they are “game changers”. The National Math Foundation’s partnership with Math and Movement creates a platform for helping educators promote retention made simple by investing in teachers who intuitively enjoy making learning both thought provoking and fun.



*Yolanda Gallman, Ed. S. was born in Philadelphia, PA. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Slippery Rock University located in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania, where she majored in Social Work. Yolanda received her Master of Science degree in Information Systems from American Inter-Continental University located in Atlanta, Georgia. She received her Education Specialist degree from Nova Southeastern University located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; where she completed research for Technology in Education. Additionally, Yolanda received her Special Education teaching certification from Georgia State University located in Atlanta, Georgia. She considers her most noteworthy accomplishments to be an author, public speaker and founder of Truth Puzzle, Inc. a non-profit organization whose mission it is to eradicate homelessness in these United States of America with the construction of tiny house communities made from recycled materials and incorporating subsistence practices.*

