



## Fit For Sisters

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Columnist

### Physical activity and IQ

Physical activity has been proven to boost a person's mental capacity. It's been shown to reduce anxiety and mitigate the effects of Alzheimer's risk, bipolarism, and a host of other neurological functions. It is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as effective as drugs such as Zoloft. Another unsurprising but overlooked benefit: direct correlation to IQ and test scores in children.

In a time when schools are strapped for funding and more and more cuts are made, it seems logical to cut out the "extraneous" programs such as music, art, and PE. While it may seem like a good idea to boost our kids' education with more English and math, school curriculum ought to also teach the virtues of health and wellness with PE. This enables students for lifelong health, and secondarily can boost their intelligence.

California looked at 800,000 data points from middle school students and determined that the more physical fitness baselines they met, the higher their test scores. Sweden also found a direct correlation in 15- to 18-year-olds where

a higher cardiovascular fitness resulted in subsequently higher IQ scores.

The reasoning behind all this isn't that intelligent people are more likely to go for runs or to want to exercise. It isn't that a person with "smart genes" also has "athletic genes." It's been found that simply increasing the blood flow into the cranium has an astounding effect.

A sedentary, inactive brain seems to have a disadvantaged circulation of chemicals that stimulate neuroplasticity (brain development) and can lead to later-life problems like dementia, Alzheimer's and depression. Increased blood flow has been shown to boost memory, enhance problem-solving capabilities, and even give adolescents a leg up in decision-making processes.

There is no doubting that our society faces a plague of disease based upon not exercising enough and eating too much. Obesity, heart disease, and diabetes cost our country, and affect the lives of many. Arming youth against these diseases of culture ought to begin in school. A PE program can be useful in many ways; higher test scores, better classroom behavior (less fidgety kids), healthy functional brains and bodies, and better overall attitudes and mental well-being.

Those who might see PE programs in school as a waste of taxpayer dollars should look into the healthcare costs of depression, dementia, and other disorders that are only becoming more and more prevalent. We can't deduce that PE will simply solve the problem. PE, however, can be the beginning of a lifelong attitude and practice of basic fitness hygiene.

## Exhibit features animal navigation

A new exhibit exploring the remarkable ability of animals to navigate over short and long distances opens at the High Desert Museum on September 8.

Animal Journeys: Navigating in Nature, an original High Desert Museum exhibit, looks at the techniques scientists are implementing to unravel the mysterious phenomena that enable different species to find their way in the world. It also investigates the internal mechanisms and biological forms of maps and compasses used by animals, shares insight into the conservation challenges created by human impact, and examines ways humans can read the landscape to navigate solely with natural cues.

Animal navigation piques the interest of scientists across many disciplines, from physics to neuroscience. There have been some major breakthroughs — such as the finding that dung beetles use the Milky Way for orientation in order to move in a straight line — but so much is still unknown about how different species find their way. Donald M. Kerr Curator of Natural History Louise Shirley dedicated the past year to researching the topic, talking to scientists around

the world about their work and developing the interactive exhibit.

"My hope is that visitors come away from this exhibit in awe of the natural world, its intricacies and its mysteries," Shirley said. "It has been an incredible experience exploring the scientific research and findings, from the simple Emlen funnel created in the 1950s to study birds' migratory instincts to today's tiny trackers that are small enough to place on a beetle's back."

The exhibit not only explores the ways different species perceive the world and navigate through it, but also highlights how humans, too, can find their way by paying closer attention to their surroundings. People may not be able to sense the Earth's magnetic field as some animals do, but we can read our environment,

looking to the stars, the sun or landmarks for clues.

"Natural navigation reveals many hidden but vital connections between an animal and its environment," Shirley said. "By learning how animals find their way, we can begin to recognize how we could be impacting those abilities and develop more effective conservation actions."

"Animal Journeys provides a connection between visitors to the high desert landscape and the wildlife that must navigate it for their survival," said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw. "We're excited to expand museum visitors' understanding of how animals are able to navigate using nature and the importance of this research in understanding our own role in the present and responsibility to the future."

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## Thank You, Educators!

As you enter into this next year of devoting your time and energy into class time and countless hours of prep work, I want to thank you for shaping our future generation by educating the children in our community.



### 2018-19 School Year Important Dates at a Glance

- 9-4-2018 First Day of School Grades 1-9
- 9-5-2018 First Day of School Grade 10-12
- 9-10-2018 First Day of School Kindergarten
- 11-19 to 11-23-2018 Thanksgiving Break
- 12-24-2018 to 1-4-2019 Winter Break
- 3-25 to 4-5-2019 Spring Break
- 6-19-2019 Last Day of School



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