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BRAD JOHNSON:

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VICKI DAVIS

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every weekday you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Today we're talking with Dr. Brad Johnson (@[drbradjohnson](https://twitter.com/drbradjohnson)) for Thought Leader Thursday. And we're going to talk about things that harm a student's ability to learn. So Brad, was the first thing that you want to talk about that harms a student's ability to learn?

BRAD: I think the first one really reflects our culture and that is how sedentary our culture has become when you think of technology and everything. We've become very sedentary in nature. And I think over the past 20 years or so, education has become very sedentary as a reflection of culture. The disservice, though, that we've done to our students and the children is by making our learning and our education very sedentary.

If you think about it –I always use examples of how babies learn. From the moment they're born and able to crawl around, they're moving, they're searching, they're grabbing things, they're touching things, they're tasting things. That's how they learn. They're very inquisitive in moving.

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And for children to have to sit in a desk all day long is very counter to their nature and how they learn. If you look at nature every young animal, regardless of the species, learns through movement and play and being active, very little is done sitting still. And yet that's one of the ways we tend to have children spend most of the school day is sitting in the desk.

VICKI: Well, after I read your book (*Learning on Your Feet: Incorporating Physical Activity into the K-8 classroom* <http://amzn.to/2InnyOr>) I actually now set my Apple watch and have little physical fitness breaks where they do pushups and planks and whatever it takes just to move. I mean, there's so many ways we can add movement. So what's out second way that we harm student's ability to learn?

BRAD: We expect students to learn the way adults learn. And unfortunately because most of education is prepared by adults I think we sometimes forget the kids are a little different and that they do need to move and that they need to express themselves, that they need to explore, that they are very curious by nature. And even as adults sometimes, we get bored with sitting and learning. Think of when we got to meetings, when we go to seminars we get bored pretty quick too and I think we forget that children even more so than that. It's like you were just saying with the breaks; we do need to take those breaks and we do need to mix it up and incorporate some activity, even into the classroom. I think sometimes, that academic teachers want to leave the P.E. class but the thing is our bodies are built to move constantly and not just for one 30-minute segment a day or 30 minutes a week, in some cases, unfortunately.

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VICKI: Well, I just set a timer on myself. You know, I have an index card that I say, "Okay, we're going to do this for this amount and that for that amount." Because we time students when they give speeches but we don't time ourselves as teachers sometimes, we need to just keep the pace moving. Okay, so what's next?

BRAD: Okay. Next is again a reflection of our culture. We are about excess and that more is always better. In work, in the business work people work 50, 70 hours a week. So in education we always think that – you know, well, **if more is good then even more must be better. And that's not necessarily the case.** There is that point of what I call diminishing returns where at some point the students are to lose interest. I gave the example; think of student that does poor in math and, unfortunately, sometimes in school they will take that child and they'll take him out of recess or P.E. to give him more time remedial math work or tutoring or something. And so it's just so much on them and we're taking away from, kind of, the pleasure of education. For some students, that is the time to socialize and P.E., to run off the energy and things like that instead of just focused on let's do this work and let's add more work and let's add more work.

We do need those breaks, we do need the recess, we do need playtime. We need unstructured activity. One of the problems today with students that lack creativity is because they have no time to be creative. Unstructured time is when kids are most creative and we give them very little unstructured time.

VICKI: I love that. **When we steal hope from our kids, we can lose the richness of learning.** We just need to give kids who struggle at math hope but also give them that genius hour or that innovation week. Okay, what's next?

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BRAD: Next is again a kind of a reflection of our society and it goes back to more of a focus on physical activity from the standpoint. But only 1 in 12 students today has the core strength and balance of students from the 1980s. And when we think of what core strength does to the body, it affects the executive functioning center of the brain. And this is the part of the brain that affects focus and organization and skills like this. So it actually helps students to pay attention in class, to be on task, to improve their behavior. And ultimately, it helps them improve their achievement because they can retain more information, they can stay focused.

And so it really does help students with ADB and ADHD as well.

VICKI: Okay. And we have time for one more.

BRAD: And this kind of connects the business world. When you hear HR people talk about what they're looking for; they're looking for people that know how to be team players. And I think education, often, is kind of an isolated endeavor and **we don't take the time to do a lot of team-building**. We'll do group work here or there **but we don't really teach students how to work as a team**.

And with team building you're looking at more experiential-type learning, you know, doing activities, in STEM classes, letting them work to create something, letting them work to achieve something together. I often say we try to teach kids how to do things instead of letting them actually experience how to do them. Think of the piano, we can read a book about it all day, we can do workbooks on it but the best way to learn the piano is actually to practice playing the piano.

And so we need a lot more team building and experiential-type learning which again goes back to more of the physical allowing them to move around, do things, go outdoors and work in different types of setting

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VICKI: So educators, for Thought Leader Thursday, Brad has given us five things that can really harm a student's ability to learn. I challenge you to take one of these and improve that aspect in your classroom today. Teachers, go out there and be remarkable. And when we're remarkable, sometimes it's not about the content, it's about these other things that are so important that we have to remember.

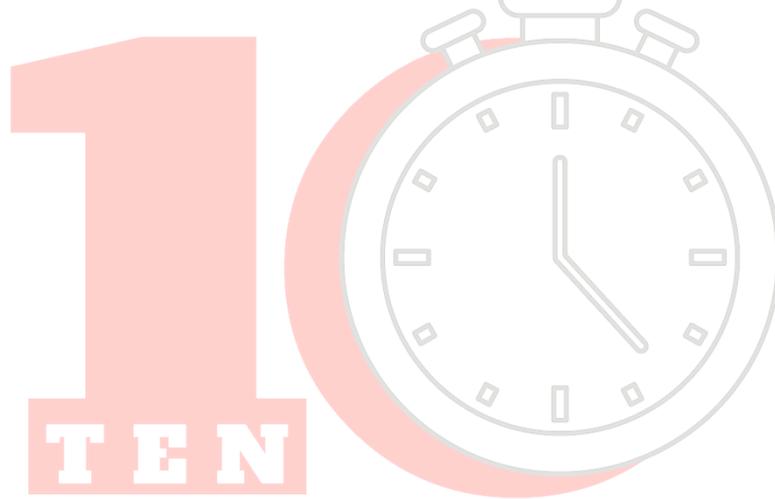
Today's sponsor, Smart Learning Suite, has some fantastic ways to differentiate instruction. Next Thursday, February 9th at 4:00pm Eastern, I'll be sharing my tips for differentiating instruction in the classroom with technology on a free webinar sponsored by Smart Learning Suite. Check the show notes to register for this free webinar. My favorite tool in the Smart Learning Suite is Smart Lab. This is a cool fun game-based learning tool. Download your 45-day free trial today [at cctea.ch/10mt-smartlab](http://cctea.ch/10mt-smartlab) or by clicking the link in the show notes.

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