

## SEL Success Story: Drumming to the Beat in Miamisburg City Schools

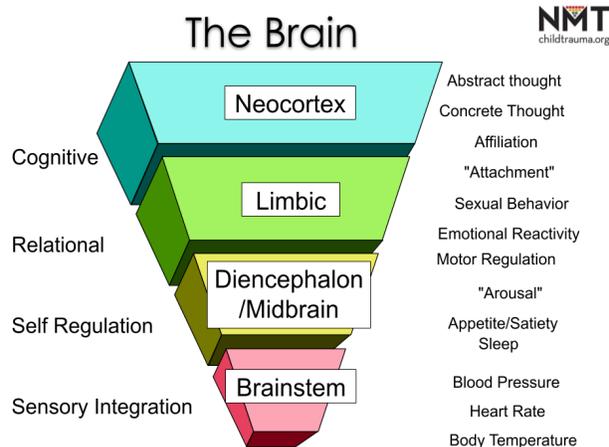
Nothing is older in the culture of any society than drum circles. They were used for communication, entertainment, and as a centerpiece of all activities for the community. Today, drum circles are being revitalized and are being used with students in the classroom. Drumming can cross any barrier and can be played at any time with any type of materials found in a classroom.

In a [2016 study, psychologist Karrie Godwin and a team of researchers](#) measured how attentive elementary students were during class. They discovered the students spent over a quarter of the time distracted, unable to focus on the teacher or the current task. Researcher Dr. Paul Dennessen found that after 17 minutes of sitting, the body switches to rest and digest (sleep mode). Brain breaks, such as drumming, are a learning readiness sequence that prepares students for optimal learning. They wake the brain from sleep mode and can be used to relax and focus students before/during a test, after recess, during a long lesson, or returning from lunch/specials.

*Image courtesy of the Child Trauma Academy*

The MCESC has been working closely with Dr. Bruce Perry and his Neurosequential Model in Education. Dr. Perry and other trauma experts have reported revolutionary success with treatments using yoga, meditation, deep breathing, singing, dancing, drumming and more. “To change any neural network in the brain, we need to provide patterned, repetitive input to reach poorly organized neural networks involved in the stress response. Any neural network that is activated in a repetitive way will change,” Perry explains. “The rhythm of these experiences matter. The brain stem and diencephalon contain powerful associations to rhythmic somatosensory activity created in utero and reinforced in early in life,” he continues.

The brain makes associations between patterns of neural activity that co-occur. “One of the most powerful sets of associations created in utero is the association between patterned repetitive rhythmic activity from maternal heart rate, and all the neural patterns of activity associated with not being hungry, not been thirsty, and feeling ‘safe’ (in the womb),” Perry says. “Patterned, repetitive, rhythmic somatosensory activity...elicits a sensation of safety. Rhythm is regulating. All cultures have some form



of patterned, repetitive rhythmic activity as part of their healing and mourning rituals — dancing, drumming, and swaying." [[Perry: Rhythm Regulates the Brain](#)]



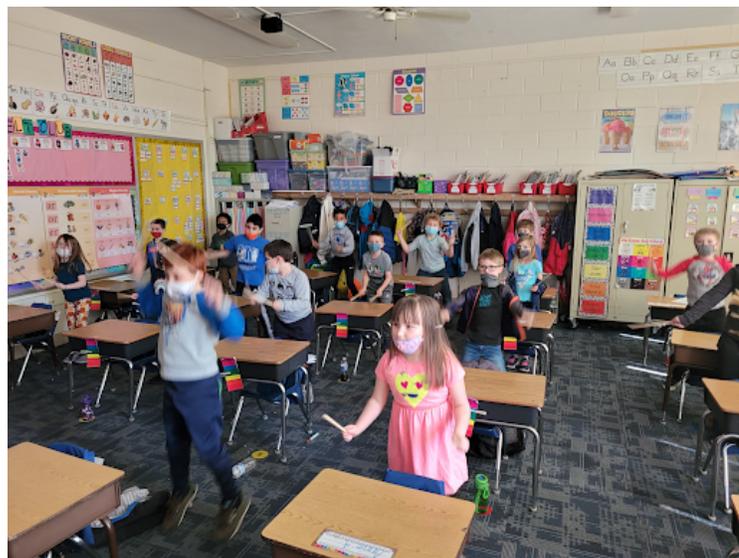
*Bear Elementary staff drumming PD (Miamisburg City Schools)*

With support from MCECSEL Consultant Clarissa Fulkerson, teachers in Miamisburg City Schools are using drumming to get students' attention, reduce anxiety, and get them ready to focus. In a 30 minute professional development training, teachers learned about the benefits of drumming for social-emotional wellness as well as the academic benefits of drumming. Check out

the Mound Elementary Staff rocking out to Uptown Funk [[Mound Staff Video](#)]! After the initial training, teachers could set up an appointment with Ms. Fulkerson who visited classrooms to educate students on how drumming supports the brain and to experience it first-hand. [Click here to see a video of students in Mrs. Supinger's 3rd grade class](#) at Mound Elementary practicing hand-drumming to gain focus before an academic lesson.

*2nd grade students in Mrs. Fries' class learning to drum (Mound Elementary School, Miamisburg City Schools)*

Teachers and students learned that drumming is not only fun, but it lowers both blood pressure and stress hormones which can boost the immune systems. When students have built-up energy from sitting for long periods of time, drumming allows them to express themselves through movement and reduce anxiety and tension. Drumming



emphasizes self-expression and teaches people how to rebuild emotional health, as well as build a positive learning community and connection in the classroom. Studies have found that the two sides of a human brain often work at different levels and at different rates. Drumming activates both sides of the brain and can help the mind achieve hemispheric coordination (both halves of the brain are active and brain waves are synchronized) which enhances a human's ability to possess greater insight, creativity, and a generally calmer mind.

The amount of laughter and engagement was amazing and students and teachers alike remarked immediately afterwards that they felt more energized, happier, and ready to learn. Teachers have begun to incorporate drumming into their everyday routines to help boost students' focus and concentration as well as reduce test anxiety. The bottom line is that drumming is not only beneficial to your brain, but just plain FUN!