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Dr. Julian A. Reed's Groundbreaking Research Links Upper Body Strength to Academic Success in Youth

Findings Reinforce ActivEd's Mission to Transform Learning Through Movement

Greenville, SC – February 10, 2026 – Dr. Julian A. Reed, renowned researcher, professor of Health Sciences at Furman University, and Co-Founder and CEO of ActivEd, Inc., creator of the Walkabouts Platform, continues to lead the charge in demonstrating the powerful connection between physical activity and academic achievement. A [newly published study](#) in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* (January 20, 2026), by lead author, Dr. Reed, highlights how upper body muscular strength and endurance (UMSE) are significantly associated with stronger performance in mathematics and English language arts among elementary and middle school students.

The cross-sectional study analyzed data from 40,000+ South Carolina students in 5th and 8th grades. Key findings show that students meeting the Healthy Fitness Zone standard for UMSE were substantially more likely to meet or exceed academic standards in both subjects compared to peers who did not. Even after adjusting for cardiorespiratory fitness and demographics, the positive association persisted, underscoring the unique role of muscular strength in supporting cognitive health and academic achievement on South Carolina state-based academic assessments.

Dr. Russ Pate, a co-author of the study and leader of the development of the Physical Activity and Public Health recommendations by the CDC and the American College of Sports Medicine said, “Over the past decade, substantial research has shown that resistance exercise, which enhances muscular strength and endurance, provides important health benefits in adults and children. This new study extends this line of research by observing better academic achievement in public school students who meet accepted standards for upper body muscular strength. Furthermore, this finding points to the importance of students participating regularly in strength developing forms for exercise.”

The findings also build on Dr. Reed’s more than 25 years of pioneering research exploring the intersections of physical activity, obesity prevention, cognition, and student success. As a leading national expert, Dr. Reed has consistently shown that integrating movement into learning not only combats sedentary lifestyles but also enhances focus, reduces hyperactivity, improves behavior, and boosts retention and academic achievement.

This latest publication directly aligns with the real-world impact of the Walkabouts Platform from ActivEd. An award-winning, research-based active learning tool, the Walkabouts Platform transforms standards-correlated math, language arts, reading, and life skill lessons into fun, movement-rich online activities for PreK through 5th grade students.

“Active children aren’t just healthier—they learn better,” said Dr. Julian A. Reed. “This new study reinforces what we’ve uncovered through decades of research: physical activity, including building muscular strength, plays a vital role in academic success. At ActivEd, we’re proud to translate that science into practical, joyful tools like the Walkabouts Platform that helps teachers engage every student, sharpen focus, and foster lifelong healthy habits.”

Used by students in 30 states and 11 countries, the Walkabouts Platform empowers educators to address diverse needs—whether supporting kinesthetic learners, reducing behavior issues, or combating childhood obesity—while correlating to educational standards and promoting equity in access to active learning.

For more information about Dr. Reed’s research, ActivEd, or to explore the Walkabouts Platform, visit www.walkabouts.com. [Download the full research study](#).

About ActivEd and the Walkabouts Platform

The Walkabouts Platform, developed by ActivEd, is an online, on-demand system that integrates proven kinesthetic techniques into standards-based math, language arts, reading, science, social studies, financial literacy, test prep and mental health and wellness lessons for PreK through 5th grade students. The flexible online educational supplement delivers fun and engaging lessons that are research-based and proven to enhance cognition, sharpen focus, and improve student behavior. To learn more about the science of movement and learning and the platform, visit www.walkabouts.com. Follow on social media at:

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