

# The Massage Educator

issue 1, 2009

**86%** The percent of massage and bodywork professionals that desire further education, according to a July 2008 survey, commissioned by ABMP.

Created by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals • philosophy for instructors



## MIRROR NEURONS

LEARNING THROUGH  
OBSERVATION

The adage “Do as I say, not as I do” is as ineffective today as ever, and now we may be able to explain why. Research investigating specific brain structures called *mirror neurons* may provide insight into how we learn behaviors and skills.

### WHAT ARE MIRROR NEURONS?

Mirror neurons are specialized nerve cells that are active when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same or similar action performed by another. These specialized brain pathways were discovered and first explored by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team of neuroscientists at the University of Parma, Italy. Their findings, published

in 1996, described the brain activity of macaque monkeys and the relationship to human behavior.

This early research found that brain activity associated with physically performing a specific task was the same when the subject observed another performing the task. Watching an activity and doing an activity are perceived identically in the brain. These pathways were active as new behaviors were learned through observation and mimicking, giving rise to the name mirror neuron.

### WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH PEOPLE?

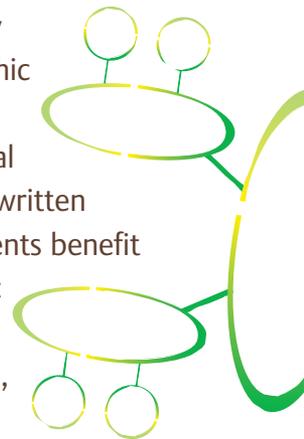
The macaque monkey studies showed that mirror neurons provide an insight into the purpose and intent of behavior. Observing an action activates the mirror neurons, generating a motor response in the brain. Your brain behaves as if you were doing the movement yourself, basing the response on your experience with that movement or similar ones. Activation of this template helps you comprehend the goal of the observed action and why it might be occurring.

Human studies found mirror neurons more complex than those in the monkeys and in several regions of the brain. Besides being able to read intentions and anticipate future actions,

## graphic organizers

Offer your students a unique way to take notes or organize study sessions. Graphic organizers provide a visual alternative to written outlines. Students benefit from a graphic template when studying, planning projects, taking notes, problem solving, or brainstorming. These tools are particularly useful for visual learners and can be modified to suit their individual learning styles.

Direct ABMP Student members to log on to [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com) and find several graphic organizers under General Study Aids in the Student Resources section.



LEGISLATIVE  
REVIEW PAGE 2

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## LEGISLATION REVIEW

ABMP's legislative team has been working hard to represent the needs of members in all states. Recent legislation includes:

**Colorado** became the 39th state to regulate massage therapy when SB 219 was signed into law by Governor Ritter on June 2, 2008. Following a one-year grandfathering period, massage therapists will need a minimum of 500 hours of massage education and a passing score on either the MBLEx or NCE to obtain mandatory registration. All state massage therapists must be registered by April 1, 2009.

In January, **New Jersey** Governor Corzine signed AB 4455/SB 2536 into law. Under the new law, mandatory

licensing replaces the former voluntary certification for massage and bodywork therapists in New Jersey. Licensed massage therapists are required to complete a minimum of 500 hours of massage education or a passing score on an entry-level competence exam. Applications for licensure are not yet available.

In **Massachusetts**, SB 2256, voted into law June 27, 2006, requires massage therapists, massage schools, and massage businesses to be licensed. Therapists must complete 500 hours of massage education and obtain liability insurance prior to becoming licensed. The grandfathering deadline has been extended until December 1, 2009.

In **Pennsylvania**, House Bill 2499, a legislative proposal to license massage therapists, was signed into law by Governor Rendell in October. Once a massage therapist obtains a license through the grandfathering provision, the only requirement for maintenance of his or her license would be to complete 24 hours continuing education for renewal every two years. To qualify for licensure after the grandfathering provision expires, an applicant must have completed a minimum 600-hour massage therapy program and pass an exam approved or administered by the board.

For additional updates on legislative events in your state or contact information for your governing

bodies, click on the interactive massage legislation map in the Legislative Information section of the redesigned [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com).



## ABMP's Resources for Instructors

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is happy to announce the addition of several resources for our school and instructor members. Following are a few of the items available on the redesigned [ABMP.com](http://www.abmp.com):

### CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

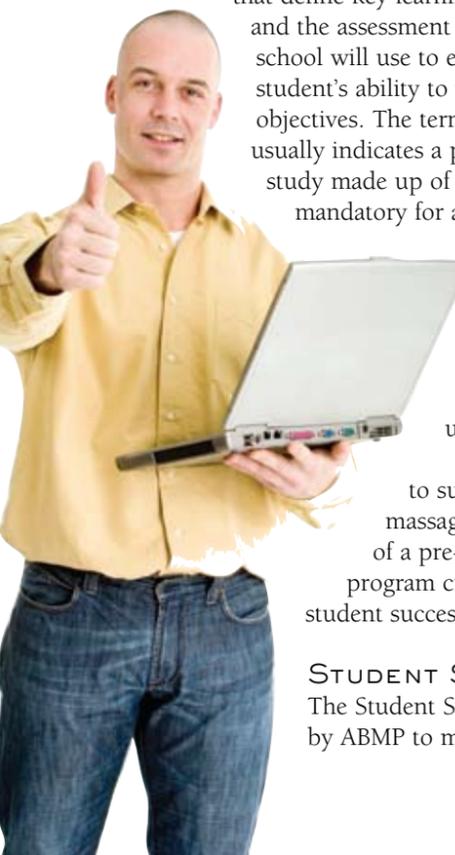
In education, *curriculum* is defined as a program of study, the individual courses that make up that program, the separate classes that make up the courses, the learning objectives of each class that define key learning outcomes, and the assessment methods the school will use to evaluate a student's ability to meet learning objectives. The term *core curriculum* usually indicates a program of study made up of courses that are

mandatory for all participants to meet educational requirements to receive a specific title or credentials. *Continuing education* is a program of study undertaken after completion of a core curriculum that leads to advanced understanding and skill.

This section provides information to support basic curriculum design at massage schools and provides a model of a pre-massage student development program created by ABMP to promote student success.

### STUDENT SUCCESS CURRICULUM

The Student Success Curriculum was developed by ABMP to make it easy for schools to



"CHILDREN HAVE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD AT LISTENING TO THEIR ELDERS, BUT THEY HAVE NEVER FAILED TO IMITATE THEM." —JAMES BALDWIN



mirror neurons in humans prompt specific feelings. Viewing expressions of sadness, joy, or disgust activates areas of the brain responsible for those emotions. This is particularly strong in the uniquely human region called the *insula*, which is responsible for the social emotions of disgust, embarrassment, guilt, lust, pride, and shame. Mirror neurons allow you to feel what another feels—to empathize—based on your observations.

### HOW DOES THIS APPLY IN THE CLASSROOM?

Why should teachers care about mirror neurons? First, this new research highlights the importance of demonstration as a teaching method. Simply explaining or describing a skill is less effective than showing that skill. Next, students will have a stronger connection to movement skills (like massage) if they can observe the skill fully before they try to practice it. Adequate time for observation helps students place future skills and demonstrations into a defined context in their bodies and minds. The more they practice, the stronger their template and the more they will be able to integrate new skills merely by observing.

When your students observe a demonstration, they will anticipate your next move, evaluate your intentions, and mimic your actions. Consider your own intentions and expressions toward your client model as you demonstrate. Are you attentive and caring or distracted? Is this showing in your facial

expressions and body language? Mirror neurons allow observers to integrate cognitive, emotional, and kinesthetic information simultaneously. Keep this in mind and evaluate your own feelings and intentions when you demonstrate skills for your students.

Evidence from mirror neuron studies suggests that the more familiar you are with the person you observe, the stronger the reaction of your mirror neurons. For example, viewing a family member performing a task prompts

a stronger response than viewing a stranger. Forging a strong connection with your students will physically make them better learners and you a stronger role model. You may reconsider bringing in that guest speaker, particularly when it comes to demonstrating skills.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Research on mirror neurons is still in its infancy. Advances in brain mapping technology, biochemistry, and imaging add to our understanding of how we process and integrate new information and skills. Mirror neuron studies have psychological and social implications, and may apply to art, language development, and sport performance. At a fundamental level, we know they affect how we relate to the world and our ability to learn. Understanding more about mirror neurons may make us more effective teachers and role models. 🍎



## Maximize Your Demonstrations

Classroom demonstrations are powerful teaching tools. Make the most of them!

**Frame the experience.** Connect familiar skills and information to the new skills you are presenting. Place what you demonstrate into context to facilitate better understanding.

**Get connected.** A personal connection with your students enhances your power as a role model. Include ice-breakers, personal check-in time, or team-building activities during class to enhance this dynamic.

**Make a plan.** Visually outline what observers will see and should be looking for during the demonstration. A clear format will guide their experience and allow you to remain focused on your task.

**Save questions for the end.** Explain what you will be showing, provide a framework, and then run through the entire skill. Instruct students to save questions until after the demonstration to help you maintain focus and provide a richer demonstration.

**Stay focused.** Observers will assess your emotions and intentions in addition to assimilating physical skills. Avoid becoming distracted by discussion or explanation. 🍏



### RESOURCES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

incorporate a preparatory workshop for students. Massage schools are recognizing that some students lack the basic skills they need to reach their academic and professional goals. Like colleges across the country, many massage schools are requiring students to take a pre-massage school workshop on study skills, goal setting, time management, understanding diversity, practicing sensitivity and tolerance for classmates, learning styles, and test-taking skills. Schools offer these topics in stand-alone workshops or as part of orientation. Such programs have been shown at the first year college level to decrease student attrition and improve overall grade point average.

### TEXTBOOK ADOPTION GUIDELINES

The Good News: the copier in the teachers' room can take a break from massage handouts; massage textbooks have never been better.

The Bad News: choosing and adopting textbooks can be a time-consuming and expensive process for a school. A textbook choice that doesn't align well with the school curriculum can cause confusion for students. An inaccessible textbook may go completely unused despite its price tag, leading to lower student comprehension and achievement.

Furthermore, teachers may dislike the layout and structure of a new textbook and find it difficult to implement. Clearly, finding the right books is important. This section of the website looks at a process for textbook adoption and suggests criteria on which textbooks might be compared.

### LESSON PLANNING

Several unique sections focus on developing and implementing learning objectives and lesson plans for multiple topics. Clear descriptions of what elements are covered in lesson plans are included, along with detailed explanations of Bloom's taxonomy, emotional intelligence skills, and activities to build these skills.

### CLASSROOM TIPS

Looking for innovative ideas or activities for core curriculum topics? This section provides some basic guidance on teaching key topics in a massage curriculum to support massage program instructors in the development of meaningful learning environments. Find best practices and sample lesson plans for teaching anatomy and physiology, business, ethics, kinesiology, massage theory and practice, and student clinic.

To find and use these resources, log on to [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com) and go to the School Instructors section. 🍏

