

ACTIVATE™ Implementation in Howard County Public Schools

BRAIN FUTURES

BrainFutures is collaborating with the Howard County (Maryland) Public School System to implement ACTIVATE™, an evidence-based digital program designed to enhance executive function for students in Title 1 elementary and middle schools during the 2024-2025 school year.

What is ACTIVATE™?



ACTIVATE™ is a cognitive training program that uses computer-based and physical activities to increase focus, memory, and self-control, all critical aspects of what is called “executive function.” In ACTIVATE™, students repeat a carefully designed series of six computer exercises and brief physical activities to intensively practice those skills. The computer exercises automatically calibrate to a student’s skill level, pushing them to practice and improve both their weakest skills and their strengths. ACTIVATE™ also incorporates periodic assessments of executive function to gauge students’ skill development.

Evidence of Impact



Decades of research show that strong executive function skills are necessary for effective learning. They predict math and reading achievement and high school graduation more powerfully than IQ. Compromised executive function is associated with ADHD, substance abuse, depression and suicide attempts; strengthening executive function can help to prevent and address mental health challenges. Numerous published studies show ACTIVATE™’s robust impact on executive function skills, academic achievement, and student behavior. The program’s effects are dose-dependent, with more minutes played corresponding to greater outcomes. In BrainFutures 2019 “[Brain Fitness and Executive Function](#)” report, ACTIVATE™ was identified as a program with exemplary outcomes and a rigorous evidence base.

Implementation in Howard County (Maryland) Public Schools



BrainFutures is partnering with the Howard County Public School System to provide ACTIVATE™ to students in two ways: in person during the district's afterschool program and at home. Through a combination of direct and remote staff support, parent engagement, and incentives, BrainFutures will help over 1,500 students improve their executive function skills. Students who participate in ACTIVATE™ during the afterschool program will use Chromebooks provided by BrainFutures, while students participating at home can use personal laptops, tablets, or smartphones.

After-School Program

- 14 schools, ~560 students
- Goal: 1,200 minutes of computer play through April 2025
- 3 structured sessions per week: 20 minutes of computer + 10 minutes of physical activity
- On-site staff to lead computer sessions and physical activities
- Individual and classroom incentives

ACTIVATE™ At Home

- Up to 16 schools, ~1,000 students
- Goal: 600 minutes of computer play through June 2025
- Self-paced sessions: 60 minutes of computer + 30 minutes of physical activity weekly
- Remote staff to monitor student use and provide support and encouragement to students and parents.
- Incentives for students and families

*Supported by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission.
The views presented here are those of the grantee organization and not necessarily those of the Commission, its Executive Director, or its staff.*