

Physical Education in the Primary Program

Common Understandings

“During the primary years, children’s physical growth tends to slow down as compared to the extremely rapid physical growth that occurred during the first five years of life. Children gain greater control over their bodies and are able to sit and attend for longer periods of time. However, primary age children are far from mature physically and need to be active. Primary grade children are more fatigued by long periods of sitting than by running, jumping, or bicycling. Physical action is essential for these children to refine their developing skills, like batting a ball, skipping rope, or balancing on a beam. Expressing their newly acquired physical power and control also enhances their self-esteem” (Bredekamp, 1991).

Parents and teachers have become increasingly aware of the importance of providing children with meaningful movement experiences. There is a growing realization among educators that the vigorous physical activity engaged in by children plays an important role in their total development. For children, movement is at the very center of their life. It permeates all facets of their development, whether in the psychomotor, cognitive, or affective domains of human behavior.

Gallahue, 1987

Physical Activity and Well-Being

Opportunities for physical activity is integrated throughout each day as relevant to the curriculum and as needed for children to express themselves physically. Specialists work with classroom teachers and children (Bredekamp, 1991).

Participation in appropriate kinds and amounts of physical activity:

- Promote changes in brain structure and function in young children. Sensory stimulation through physical activity is essential for the optimal growth and development of the young nervous system
- Promotes early cognitive function through imitation, symbolic play, the development of language skills, and the use of symbols
- Assists in the development of perceptual abilities involving vision, balance, and tactile sensations
- Enhances the function of the central nervous system through the promotion of a healthier neuronal network
- Assists development of cognition through opportunities to develop learning strategies, decision-making, acquiring, retrieving, and integrating information and solving problems
- Fortifies the mineralization of the skeleton and promotes the maintenance of lean body tissue, while simultaneously reducing the deposition of fat

- Leads to proficiency in the neuromuscular skills that are the foundation for successful participation experiences in games, gymnastics, dance, and other activities
- Enhances self-concept and self-esteem as indicated by increased confidence, assertiveness, emotional stability, independence, and self-control
- Is instrumental in the development and growth of moral reasoning, problem-solving, creativity, and social competence
- Improves the psychosocial and physiological functions of individuals with mental and physical disabilities (Seefeldt, 1986)

The Importance of Physical Education

Physical education is an integral part of the primary program in that it contributes to its five major goals. The goal of physical development is most effectively met through a well-balanced developmental physical education program. Through the content and strategies employed, teachers can enhance and promote intellectual development in their students. Emotional and social growth can be fostered through a variety of individual and cooperative physical activities. A child can also develop artistically and aesthetically when engaged in areas such as creative movement. The physical education program emphasizes fair play, cooperation, and loyalty, which directly relate to the goal of responsible living. The physical education program provides children with experiences that help develop motor skills and problem-solving abilities through play and structured physical activities. It develops a child's level of health and fitness as well as enhances appreciation and enjoyment of human movement. Thus, physical education provides a unique contribution to the total development of the child.

Critical Elements of Physical Education

The primary physical education program helps children reach their highest intellectual, social/emotional, and physical potentials through the medium of physical activity. The program must include a wide selection of dance, gymnastics, games, fitness, and other activities using strategies that emphasize a creative and exploratory approach. The following elements are integral to planning and implementing a quality physical education program.

Quality Physical Education Programs

A quality physical education program designed to meet the needs of all students must include a variety of activities in the areas of dance, gymnastics, games, fitness, and activities in alternate environments. The emphasis is on a sequential, skill-based, cooperative, and process-oriented program. It is recommended that a qualified physical education teacher be available to assist in planning and implementing this program. Further assistance can be provided by other professional, para-professional, and support staff.

Daily Physical Education

Regular vigorous activity is crucial for learning movement skills and ensuring normal growth and development. It also affects fitness and has a marked influence on health attitudes and habits.

Facilities and Supplies

The gymnasium is an ideal learning environment for quality physical education. In most schools, physical education can easily be scheduled in the gymnasium two to three times per week. In order to provide daily physical activities, considerations may include team teaching with two or more groups, and beginning physical education classes promptly throughout the entire day. When there is no room in the gymnasium, alternate spaces can be used. These include the classroom with furniture moved aside, multi-purpose rooms, hallways, cafeterias or lunch rooms, fields, adjacent parks, grassy areas, and open spaces.

To maximize instructional time and to individualize learning experiences, class sets of all supplies must be available, for example, balls, bean bags, cones, hoops, skipping ropes, scoops.

Integration

Organizational, planning, and problem-solving abilities are important intellectual skills. Imaginative and creative thinking is equally important. The development of these skills can be clearly fostered through regular, quality physical education.

Every curriculum area can enrich the physical education program. Equally valuable is the ability for physical education to enhance specific concepts from other subject areas. An integrated approach fostering conceptual development focuses on the whole child as a learner.



Children with Special Needs

All children must be given an equal opportunity to participate in physical education in order to help them develop to their maximum potentials. “Children should not be excluded from a physical education program because of a disability, whether temporary or permanent, mild or severe, single or multiple” (Gallahue, 1987). Inclusionary physical education programs benefit children with and without disabilities, but for inclusion to be successful, support services need to be provided. These may include special personnel, special instruction, adapted materials/equipment, and curricular modifications.

Social/Emotional Safety

Teachers who encourage and appreciate individual differences will foster desirable attitudes toward physical education. A major objective is to develop a positive class environment in which everyone may be prepared to face challenges. Children need to respect their own and others' abilities, limitations, and personal rights.

Physical Safety

The environment of the physical education class affects the physical safety of every child. All children must be supervised during physical education activities. Equipment must be properly maintained. All instructional activities should be structured in accordance with the developmental abilities of each child. Children need to develop a responsible attitude toward their own safety and that of others.

Activities in Alternative Environments

A quality physical education program must provide a wide range of instructional and recreational opportunities. This includes exploring the dimensions of alternate environments which will develop a positive attitude toward potential lifetime activities. Started at an early age, these activities foster positive attitudes toward a healthy, active life-style. The range of lifetime activities will vary from community to community, according to the availability of facilities, resources, and geographic location.



Learning Through Physical Education

Physical Education from Primary to Graduation

National Standards for Physical Education

In 1986, an Outcomes Committee was appointed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) to answer the question, "What should physically educated students know and be able to do?" Five major focus areas were included in the resulting definition specifying that a physically educated person:

1. Has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities
2. Is physically fit
3. Participates regularly in physical activity

4. Knows the implications of and the benefits from involvement in physical activities
5. Values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle

A Standards and Assessment Task Force subsequently established content standards for the physical education school program that clearly identify consensus statements related to what a student should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program. The National Standards for Physical Education indicate that a physically educated student:

1. Demonstrates competency in many movement forms and proficiency in a few movement forms
2. Applies involvement concepts and principles to the learning and development of motor skills
3. Exhibits a physically active lifestyle
4. Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness
5. Demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings
6. Demonstrates understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings
7. Understands that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction (NASPE, 1995)

The Primary Physical Education Program

“Today the focus of contemporary physical education is on health-related fitness and the behavioral competencies and motor skills needed for lifelong engagement in healthy and satisfying physical activity” (Young, 1997). While physical fitness, movement skills, concept and affective development should be emphasized throughout the curriculum; the greatest emphasis during the preschool and early elementary grades should be upon movement acquisition (NASPE, 1992). Play is essential in the lives of children as it helps them master their environment and understand and cope with the world around them. Play is natural and spontaneous and allows children to discover themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and their skills and interests. Play provides opportunities for each child to develop intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally.

- *Enhance physical growth and development.*
Heredity determines certain physical characteristics of the child. Other factors relating to nutrition, health, and environment affect physical growth and development. Scientific evidence indicates that normal healthy growth of bone, muscle, and other tissues of the body depend on adequate and continuous physical activity throughout the developmental years. Appropriate activities should be designed to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs.

- *Develop attitudes, skills, and knowledge in a wide variety of motor skills.*
 Primary children display a range of physical abilities and energy levels. The teacher uses these characteristics to assist children in developing a variety of motor skills for active living. By providing a variety of experiences that include an appropriate range of activities such as playing, moving, and exploring, the teacher can enhance the development of muscle control, coordination, and body awareness within the child. Such a program stresses both functional and expressive movements that include activities from all areas of the physical education curriculum.
- *Promote physical fitness and well-being.*
 Opportunities should be provided for children to participate in activities that promote fitness and increase awareness of the need for fitness and well-being. The teacher fosters a positive attitude toward development of cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance and strength, flexibility, and weight control. Activity, genetic endowment, and nutrition affect fitness levels in children. To maintain or increase fitness levels, provision should be made for children to participate in daily physical activity. The aim is to help children internalize the joy and feeling of well-being that exercise provides. Physical activity may then become a permanent part of their daily lives.
- *Enhance personal and social development.*
 Physical education provides the opportunity for children to learn appropriate behaviors in a variety of social settings. As children progress through a program in which they can test their tolerance, perseverance, and self-direction, they practice and learn the skills of communicating, cooperating, sharing, and trusting.
- *Foster intellectual growth.*
 The intellectual growth of children involves the cognitive skills of acquiring, ordering, and communicating knowledge and ideas. This leads to the ability to express ideas and feelings in a creative way through a variety of modes of expression. Physical education provides an effective medium in which young children exercise their thinking processes in active and inventive ways.



Curriculum Content

Learning Dimensions

Dispositions

Physical education in the primary program provides children with opportunities to develop:

- A. Awareness of physical activity as an enjoyable experience
 - Joy of movement
 - Skill competence and self-confidence
 - Aesthetics of movement
- B. Awareness of physical activity as a social and cooperative experience
 - Cooperation
 - Leadership
 - Followership
 - Contribution to the group and sharing
- C. Appreciation of each person's unique physical abilities
 - Respect for self
 - Respect for others
 - As individuals
 - In groups
- D. Appreciation of quality and effort in the work of others
 - Encouragement
 - Praise
 - Acceptance
- E. Responsibility for own behavior
 - Safety of others
 - Fair play
 - Etiquette
 - Respect for property



Skills

Physical education in the primary program provides children with opportunities to develop skills through participation in games, gymnastics, dance, and activities in alternative environments.

Games

The introduction of locomotor and manipulative skills as they relate to individual and group activities provides the essential motor skill development children will need in later years.

Locomotor Skills

- In general and personal space

Walking and Running

- Stopping and starting
- Dodging and darting
- Chasing and following

Additional Traveling

- Hopping, skipping, running, rolling, leaping, jumping, galloping, side-sliding

Jumping

- For distance
- For height (changing levels)
- With an implement

Manipulative Skills

Carrying (using body parts)

- With control

Sending and Receiving

- Sliding and retrieving
- Rolling and receiving
- Two hands
- One hand (left and right)
- Alternate hands

Ball Bouncing

- Two hands
- One hand (left and right)
- Alternate hands
- Stationary
- Moving
- Avoiding obstacles and others

Throwing (with accuracy)

- Underhand
 - Two hands
 - One hand
- Overhand
 - Two hands
 - One hand
- At a stationary target

- At a moving target
- Using an implement

Catching

- On the bounce and in the air
 - Two hands
 - One hand
 - While stationary
 - While moving

Throwing and Catching

- Passing
 - Two hands
 - One hand
 - Two people stationary
 - One person moving
 - Two or more people moving
- Using implements
 - Underhand
 - Overhand
 - At a target
 - Stationary

Striking (with accuracy)

- Using hand
 - One hand

- Two hands
- Alternate hands
- Underhand
- While stationary
- While moving
- Using feet
 - Inside of foot
 - Outside of foot
 - Instep
 - Striking a stationary ball
 - Striking a moving ball
 - Dribbling
- Passing
 - Two people stationary
 - One person moving
 - Two or more people moving
- Trapping
 - Inside of foot
 - Sole of foot
 - Outside of foot
- Using implements
 - While holding object
 - A moving object
 - Continuous striking
 - Underhand
 - Sidearm

Gymnastics

Gymnastics in the primary program promotes the development of physical fitness and motor skills, while allowing children to participate successfully at their own level of ability.



Traveling

- Responding to stop and go
- Use of personal and general space
- Effort (heavy, light)
- Directions (forward, sideways, backward)
- Speed (fast, slow)
- Levels (high, medium, low)
- Pathways (straight, curved, zigzag, diagonal)
- Locomotor (walking, running, jumping, hopping, sliding)
- Shapes (stretch, curl, wide, narrow, twisted)

Relationships

- Individual sequence
- Partner and small group sequence
 - Following
 - Matching
 - Mirroring
- Small apparatus
- Large apparatus

Jumping and Landing

- Five basic jumps
- Using directions
- Using speeds

Rolling

- Different ways (log, safety)
- Directions
- Speeds
- Shapes

Sequencing

- Jump, land, roll
- Travel, jump, land, roll

Weight Bearing

- Using different body parts
- Levels
- Shapes
- Bridging
 - Individual
 - Partner
 - Small group
- Rolling and balancing
- Inverted balances

Transfer of Weight

- By step-like movements
- Using different body parts
- By rocking
- By rolling
- From feet to hands, hands to feet
- While changing levels
- While changing speeds
- By changing directions
- By changing shape

Dance

Dance in the primary program includes different forms including singing games, mime, rhythmic, creative/traditional folk and creative dance.

Rhythm

- Perceiving steady beat
- Locomotor
- Rhythmic patterns
- Accenting beats
- Perceiving phrases

Locomotor

- Walk, run, jump, hop, leap, side-slide, gallop, skip
- Step-touch
- Bleking (Mexican Hat Dance)

Pathways

- Straight
- Curved
- Zig-zag

Relationships

- Partner
- Small group
- Greeting
- Meeting, parting
- Turning, swinging

Formations

- Lines
- Circles
- Squares

Interpretive Movements

- Body awareness
 - Individual body parts
 - Shape
 - Balance
 - Transfer of weight
 - Gesture
- Space awareness
 - Direction
 - Level
 - Personal and general space
 - Pathways
- Qualities
 - Speed
 - Force (strong, light)
 - Time
 - Flow
- Relationships
 - Individual
 - Partner
 - Group
 - With objects
- Pantomime activities

Activities in Alternate Environments

Participation in a wide range of instructional and recreational activities will foster positive attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary for a healthy, active life-style.

Aquatics

- Instructional swimming
 - Adjustment to water
 - Flotation
 - Propulsion
 - Jumps and dives
- Water safety
- Survival swimming
- Water games
- Cardiovascular endurance
- Muscular endurance
- Muscular strength
- Flexibility
- Nutrition

Outdoor Pursuits

- Camping
- Hiking
- Skiing (cross-country)

Community spaces

- Roller skating
- Ice skating
- Bowling



Knowledge

Physical education in the primary program provides children with opportunities to develop:

Understanding of safety

- Safety of self
- Safety of others
- Safety procedures/rules
- Safety techniques

Understanding of elements of movement

- Body awareness
- Space
- Qualities
- Relationships

Understanding of movement terminology

- Locomotor
- Manipulative
- Dance forms
- Gymnastic movements

Understanding of the creative process

- Perceives stimulus
- Discover/explore
- Select
- Combine
- Refine
- Perform

References

- Bredenkamp, S. and Copple, C. (Eds.). (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs (revised edition)*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Gallahue, David L. (1998). *Developmental physical education for today's elementary school children*. NY: Prentice-Hall.
- National Association for Sport & Physical Education, Outcomes Committee. (1992). *Outcomes of quality physical education programs*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education.
- National Association for Sport & Physical Education. (1995). *Moving into the future-national standards for physical education: A guide to content and assessment*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby.
- Seefeldt, V. (Ed.). (1986). *Physical activity and well-being*. Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.
- Young, J. (1997). National standards for physical education, nutrition, health & safety. *Journal of Early Education and Family Review*, 4(5).

Resources

- Bee, H. (1992). *The developing child (6th ed.)*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Bredenkamp, S. (Ed.). (1991). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth to age 8. Expanded edition*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Center for Recreation and Disability Studies. (1988). *The parent training guide to recreation and disability studies*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina.
- Coleman, M., & Skeen, P. (1985). Play, games and sport: Their use and misuse. *Childhood Education*, 61(3), 192-198.
- Esbensen, S. (1987). *Early childhood playground: An outdoor classroom*. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.
- Frost, J. L., & Klein, B. (1979). *Children's play and playgrounds*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hammett, C. T. (1992). *Movement activities for early childhood*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hinson, C. (1995). *Fitness for children*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hopple, C. J. (1995). *Teaching for outcomes in elementary physical education: A guide for curriculum and assessment*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Ideas That Work With Young Children (1985). Outdoor games. *Young Children*. 30(5), 14.

- Javernick, E. (1988). Johnny's not jumping: Can we help obese children? *Young Children*, 43(2), 18-23.
- Mohnsen, B. S. (Ed.). (1998). *Concepts of physical education: What every student needs to know*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Perlmutter, J. C. (1988). Rough and tumble play on the elementary school playground. *Young Children*, 43(2), 14-17.
- Schiemer, S. (2000). *Assessment strategies for elementary physical education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Weikart, P. (1990). *Movement in steady beat: Activities for children 3-7*. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.
- Weikart, P. (1989). *Teaching movement and dance: A sequential approach to rhythmic movement*. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.
- Weiller, K. H., & Richardson, P. A. (1993). Success oriented physical education. *Childhood Education*, 69(3), 133-137.
- Willis, S. (1992). Physical education: Promoting lifelong fitness for all students. *ASCD Update*, 34(10), 3.

Descriptors of Learning in Physical Education

Early Primary	Late Primary
Dispositions	
<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows joy and excitement for moving ▪ Participates willingly ▪ Enjoys play ▪ Accepts diverse physical abilities of others ▪ Seeks teacher attention ▪ Accepts their own efforts 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows joy and excitement for moving ▪ Participates willingly in all activities ▪ Enjoys interactive play ▪ Cooperates in partner and small group activities ▪ Accepts diverse physical abilities of others ▪ Displays confidence in own ability ▪ Appreciates quality and effort in the works of others
Skills	
<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is developing space awareness ▪ Works individually ▪ Explores partner work and small group work ▪ Is developing large and small muscle control and coordination ▪ Demonstrates various locomotor and non-locomotor movements ▪ Combines movements into simple sequences ▪ Moves to simple rhythms ▪ Explores simple action words through movement ▪ Jumps and lands safely in a variety of ways ▪ Rotates in a variety of ways ▪ Balances using different body parts ▪ Develops individual sequences using gymnastic skills ▪ Explores gymnastics skills with small/large apparatus 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrates space awareness ▪ Works individually and independently ▪ Works effectively in partner and small group activities ▪ Is refining large and small muscle control and coordination ▪ Demonstrates proficiency in locomotor and non-locomotor movements ▪ Combines movements into complex sequences ▪ Applies problem-solving skills with greater frequency ▪ Moves to a variety of rhythms ▪ Expresses ideas and feeling through movement ▪ Incorporates jumps and landings into movement sequences ▪ Incorporates rotations into movement sequences

Descriptors of Learning in Physical Education

Early Primary	Late Primary
Skills (continued)	
<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is developing hand-eye coordination ▪ Creates individual games and play situations ▪ Explores non-traditional activities, such as juggling, rhythmic ▪ Explores activities in alternative environments ▪ Shows awareness of multicultural activities ▪ Recognizes personal space and safety 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balances on different body parts ▪ Incorporates gymnastic skills into movement sequences ▪ Uses gymnastics with small/large apparatus ▪ Slides and rolls objects at a target with accuracy ▪ Demonstrates hand-eye coordination using a variety of materials ▪ Creates partner and small group games and play situations ▪ Continues to explore a wide variety of non-traditional activities ▪ Explores a wider variety of activities in alternative environments ▪ Continues to explore multicultural activities ▪ Recognizes and honors personal space and safety
Knowledge	
<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is aware of the importance of safety for self and others ▪ Engages in appropriate behavior ▪ Is developing an awareness that games have rules ▪ Shows awareness of personal health and fitness ▪ Recognizes basic movement terminology ▪ Is exposed to careers related to physical education, health, and fitness 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrates safety in relation to self and others ▪ Practices appropriate behavior and fair play ▪ Distinguishes between inventive and established rules for games ▪ Is beginning to take responsibility for personal health and fitness ▪ Communicates movement terminology ▪ Identifies and shows interest in careers related to physical education, health, and fitness

