
Learning to Move and Moving to Learn

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Research has found relationships between physical development and other areas of development in children. This article presents an overview of these interactive relationships and answers the following questions: Why is movement important? How does it contribute to learning? What should kindergarten children learn in physical education? Which traditional games and activities are inappropriate and why? How should lesson plans be structured? What teaching strategies are recommended? What are the physical education content standards and corresponding objectives for kindergarten children? Finally, what are the inevitable results of denying a child access to quality, daily physical education in elementary school?

The Physical Education Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, is based on the premise that the quality and productivity of a person's life can be enhanced through participation in a comprehensive, sequential, physical education program that promotes physical, cognitive, emotional and social well-being (California Department of Education, 1994). These learning domains are interactive and affect each other as they contribute to the development of the "whole" child. This article presents an overview of the relationships among physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development and then describes what kindergarten children should learn in a quality physical education program. The discussion also includes an examination of why some physical activities are inappropriate. Teaching strategies are recommended, and the article

concludes with a look at content standards and objectives.

The Relation of Physical Development to Cognitive, Affective, and Social Development

Movement influences all facets of development (Gallahue, 1995). Much of the learning that occurs in early childhood is through movement experiences. In studies where children spent time in daily physical activity, researchers found a higher level of academic success (Hannaford, 1995). Children retained knowledge longer if they connected emotionally and physically to the material. Other studies showed a correlation between body-space awareness and paper-space awareness (Corso, 1993). For example, when Corso asked 3- to 8-year old children to touch their shoulders, some touched only one shoulder.

Similarly, some children, when asked to jump and touch the ceiling, reached only with one hand. After requesting samples of their papers, Corso discovered the quadrant of paper space not used in writing and coloring was the same quadrant of body space not used.

Children who are provided with opportunities to learn basic movement skills and experience the benefits of being physically fit in an emotionally safe environment are more likely to develop and maintain a healthy active lifestyle. Children must derive enjoyment from physical activity if they are to continue participating. To this end, children must eventually become proficient in a variety of movement skills. Kimiecik, Horn and Shurin (1996) determined that the best predictor of exercise behavior in children was perceived competence. Children who felt good about their fitness abilities were more likely to participate in health-enhancing activities. As children get older and more concerned with peer approval, they will participate willingly in recreational, sport or fitness activities only if they have an adequate level of perceived skill competence. Children who do not perceive themselves as skilled will avoid physical activity at all costs, in an effort to preserve their self-esteem. Teachers must take advantage of the "critical periods" when children love to move and love to practice skills, without concern for peer approval (ages 3-8), to engage children in vital programs that promote their health and well being.

In relation to social development, there is no better curricular

area in which to teach courtesy, respect, responsibility, helping, acceptance of differences, encouraging, complimenting, conflict resolution and a myriad of other social skills than in a physical education class. Many classroom teachers implement successful social skills programs in their classrooms, yet are shocked to witness anti-social behavior from their children at lunch or recess. Children often do not make a connection between the behavior they have learned to demonstrate within the safe confines of the classroom and the behavior they see or believe is expected outside.

In quality physical education programs, kindergarten children learn to move through space without bumping into others. They learn to respect the space of others and to demonstrate courtesy by saying "sorry" or "excuse me" when another's space is violated accidentally. Young children soon learn that it is not okay to kick someone else's ball across the playground when it rolls into their space by mistake. Instead, they are taught to stop the rolling ball and roll it back to the owner, who is then expected to say "thank you." In physical education, mistakes can be very obvious and visible for all to see because of the physical nature of a child's response. Children learn that it is not polite or kind to laugh at someone who is experiencing difficulty or who makes a mistake. They learn that put-downs are not acceptable, and they begin to build a positive vocabulary that is full of encouraging words and compliments for their classmates.

Many movement activities for young children involve working

cooperatively with a partner or alongside others in small groups. Children find satisfaction in being a part of a group and experience sadness when others reject them. Thus, children must be encouraged to accept all of their classmates and play willingly with any one of them at any time. Cooperation must be taught prior to competition since competition is impossible if people choose not to cooperate and follow the rules. While children enjoy working and playing with other children, conflicts are bound to arise. Children must learn how to take responsibility for solving their own problems in socially acceptable ways, and they can do so with proper guidance.

Physical Development

Gallahue (1995) suggests that teachers often assume children somehow automatically develop their movement skills as a result of maturation or simply by participating in a variety of activities. This is not true. Teachers must use the early years to help children master basic locomotor, nonlocomotor and manipulative (object handling) skills. In addition, concepts of space awareness, effort, relationships, and body awareness should also be introduced. Time should be set aside each day for children to explore, practice, develop, and refine these concepts and skills.

Practice time for movement concepts and skills could take several different forms, but should be based on developmentally appropriate practices (NASPE, 1992 and 1994). Paramount among these

practices is “maximum participation”—most of the children moving most of the time. Children learn when they are actively engaged in the subject matter, when they are on task, and when they are succeeding at about an 80% success rate (Rink, 1998). Circle games such as “Duck, Duck Goose” that have two children active and the rest inactive do nothing to contribute to learning in the physical domain. Tag games or dodge ball games that eliminate children, as well as relays that involve waiting in line for a turn, highlight the athletically gifted children and prevent those who need the most practice and encouragement from getting these important components of physical education. Relays do nothing to improve basic skill development because of the speed factor, and children who are not innately able to run very fast are often accused of “making their team lose.” This certainly places a young child’s self-esteem in jeopardy and can make him or her dread PE. Such stereotypical and traditional physical education activities must be modified or removed from physical education programs. These activities do not support the principal theme or philosophy of California’s physical education framework. The framework is based on the premise that “all children—regardless of disability, ethnicity, gender, native language, race, religion, or sexual orientation—must be given opportunities not only to succeed in physical education but to develop a lifelong commitment to the pleasure and health benefits of physical activity” (California Department of Education, 1994, p. 2).

Physical Education for Kindergarten Children

A quality physical education program for kindergarten children begins with establishing a positive learning environment. Children need to know what to expect and what is expected from them. Teachers must "set the stage" for proper behavior the way they do in their classroom. Rather than a list of rules, teachers are encouraged to try a "PE Motto" of "Respect and Responsibility." Although the motto may appear to be too abstract, teachers will find that these two words are inclusive of any rules they have ever had. Every single inappropriate behavior one can think of violates respect and/or responsibility. Throughout the course of the school year, the children will clearly come to understand the meaning of these two words if the teacher relates what the children do to respectful and responsible behavior. Children must also be given opportunities to practice routines and protocols for starting and stopping activity, getting and returning equipment, putting equipment down on the stop signal, selecting partners quickly, etc.

Teaching physical education is harder than teaching in the classroom because of the increased space and distractions. Too much space is overwhelming for children, and teachers do not want them roaming so far that they can no longer hear. One of the first things a teacher needs to do, therefore, is to clearly mark the boundaries within which they will move (general space) with paint or playground chalk, or use existing painted lines on the hard surface area

(large circle, volleyball court or half a basketball court). Kindergarten classes often have their own playground, and the hard surface area is perfect for general space. Painting stars in a scattered formation inside general space enables children to find their own personal space or self-space quickly. This area becomes one in which they can move without touching others. Stars are recommended because all of the children should be "stars" in physical education class.

Movement activities at the beginning of the program are focused on moving in self-space, moving through general space while staying inside the boundaries, avoiding collisions, and stopping quickly on an audible stop signal (two beats on a tunable hand drum make an excellent stop signal). On the stop signal students should be expected to stop moving, stop talking and face the teacher. If they are working with equipment, it should be placed on the ground in front of them. If it is a ball, it should be placed securely between their feet. It is not unreasonable to expect the students to stop, look and listen within three seconds. A teacher should only have to give the signal once. Naturally achieving this response will take time, practice and positive reinforcement.

Once a teacher has established a positive, productive environment for physical education, learning can truly begin. One suggested structure for a kindergarten class (Reese, 2000) includes: (1) warm-up activities; (2) less vigorous, nonmanipulative activities, and (3) object handling activities. Begin the class with

a vigorous locomotor/space awareness activity in general space. Have the children walk, jog, jump (land simultaneously on two feet) and hop (transfer weight from one foot to the same foot or from two feet to one foot) while moving forward, backward and sideways without going outside the boundaries of general space or bumping into anyone. Encourage the children to run and leap over hoops or carpet samples, to gallop forward and backward, slide from side to side and eventually skip forward through general space. Kindergarten teachers need not be concerned if children cannot skip. Many five-year-olds are not developmentally ready, but they can learn how to jump individual ropes and long ropes. Recorded songs that reinforce the locomotor skills or simple dances can also be used successfully in this section of the lesson plan.

The locomotor warm-up should be followed by a less vigorous nonmanipulative or imagery activity. This second portion of the lesson might focus on movement concepts:

The Body and Relationships

- Identification of body parts
- Relationship of body parts to others
- Body shapes
- Body leads
- Body relationships to objects
- Body relationships to people

Space Awareness

- Self-space
- General space
- Directions
- Levels
- Pathways

Range or Extensions (distance, size, etc.)

Effort

Time (speed, rhythm, sustained vs. percussive, acceleration vs. deceleration)

Force

Flow

This portion of the lesson might also focus on themes. A teacher could present a theme such as the circus, a day in the park, or visiting the fire station. Exploring movement narratives that reflect well-known themes or the roles and responsibilities of people found in specific environments will enhance a child's movement vocabulary and increase their knowledge of the world in which they live (Clements, 1995).

In addition to movement concepts and themes, this portion of the lesson could also give students an opportunity to explore nonlocomotor skills such as bending, stretching, reaching, turning, dodging, curling, twisting, etc. Or, it might focus on balance and/or tumbling activities.

The third portion of the lesson focuses on manipulative skills (object handling skills). During the first several weeks, students should be allowed to play with the equipment without having to focus on a specific skill or task. When they begin to tire of free exploration, object manipulation can focus on manipulative skills such as ball rolling, underarm throwing/volleying/striking, bouncing, dribbling, overhand throwing/striking, striking objects at low levels with long handled implements (hockey sticks, polo bats, cro-

quet mallets, golf putters), kicking, or sidearm throwing/striking/batting.

Music and rhythm experiences need to be incorporated into at least one component of the lesson each day. Young children learn best when activities presented to them are changed frequently. A key to being successful in teaching movement to young children is to provide a number of activities each day during physical education class and repeat the activities frequently during the year. Doing so is consistent with the philosophy of the physical education framework, which states that every child "can develop appropriate skills, feel good about his or her body and relate to others in positive ways" (California Department of Education, 1994, p. 6).

Teaching Strategies

Another "key to success" for teaching movement to young children is to utilize teaching strategies that promote creativity rather than conformity. For children, creativity means no single right answer. This interpretation translates into feelings of success and mastery that raise self-esteem and allow children to feel they have an effect on their environment. Here, then, teachers must value process over product. A movement program that requires the children merely to imitate the instructor will do nothing to foster creativity. But a program of movement exploration, with emphasis on problem solving, discovery and self-expression, can make a substantial contribution. Also, when a teacher praises and validates their various responses,

children will realize that individual solutions are okay and that they are not competing against one another. Thus, their confidence will grow, and they will continue to take greater creative risks. With the right balance of freedom and structure, a physical education program can nurture creativity and still provide students with the solid foundation needed for a healthy, active life. A sample lesson plan that utilizes the structure recommended in this article follows next.

Sample Physical Education

Lesson Plan for Kindergarten*

GRADE LEVEL: Kindergarten

CLASS SIZE: 20

LESSON FOCUS: Skipping; Body levels; Object levels

FACILITIES: hard surface area with general space boundaries and self-space markers clearly defined with chalk or paint

EQUIPMENT: Portable Tape/CD Player & music; 20 Streamers; 4 Hula Hoops

TEACHING STYLES: Practice and Divergent Production

OBJECTIVES:

Physical

Students will be able to skip through general space in a forward direction individually and while holding hands with a partner to the best of their ability while staying inside the boundaries and avoiding collisions.

Students will be able to make different shapes with their bodies at high levels, medium levels and

*Portions of this lesson are taken from Reese (1992)

low levels, as well as move through general space in different directions with their bodies at each of these levels.

Students will be able to manipulate streamers at high, medium and low levels in self-space and while moving through general space in different directions.

Affective

Students will be able to demonstrate creativity by making a variety of different shapes at high, medium and low levels, moving through general space in different ways at each level and manipulating streamers in various ways at each level.

Cognitive

During closure, students will be able to correctly identify teacher demonstrations of high, medium and low levels with a choral response.

LOCOMOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

(Review walking, jogging, jumping, galloping and sliding through general space. Then introduce skipping.)

- Let me see you skip through general space without bumping into anyone. GO! (*Accompany the skipping with an uneven rhythmical beat on a tunable hand drum*).
- Take someone's hand and skip through general space with a partner. (*Skipping is very rhythmical and children*

need to "feel" the rhythm. Skipping with someone who knows how really helps. Since many of the kindergarten children cannot skip yet, change partners often in hopes that those who do not know how to skip will eventually pair up with someone who does. The teacher should join in, take turns skipping with as many children as possible, and continue to play music to accompany the skipping.)

- (*Stop Signal*) When I say go, find a new partner to skip with. GO! (*Repeat several times.*)

MOVEMENT CONCEPTS

Self-space challenges – body levels

- When I say go, I'd like to see everybody standing on their own star. GO!
- Today we are going to explore the different levels that we can move our bodies at in self-space and while moving through general space. When you are standing on your star in your own self-space, like you are right now, your body is at a high level.
- Let me see you make an interesting shape with your body at a high level.
- Make a new shape with your body at a high level. See if you can make a third shape at a high level that is different from your first two shapes. (*Reinforce those with*

unique shapes and praise their creativity.)

- Let me see you find a way to get your body higher in your self-space. *(Most children will stand on tiptoe and raise their arms above their heads. Reinforce correct responses that you see, but keep encouraging them to get even higher until someone discovers jumping. Reinforce the idea that jumping gets our body to the highest level possible unless we have something to climb on.)*
- Now let me see you get your body as low as possible in your self-space. *(At first, due to the hard surface area, they may hesitate getting really low. Keep encouraging them to get lower until someone lies down on the ground. Immediately begin a stream of positive reinforcement so that more children follow.)* Let me see you make an interesting shape at that low level.
- Let me see you make a wide shape at a low level.
- Try making a twisted shape at a low level.
- Show me a narrow shape at your low level.
- If I asked you to put your body at a level between high and low, what do you think that level would be called? *(medium or middle)* Let me see you put your body at a medium level in self-space. Find a different way to be me-

dium. Find still a third way to be medium. *(Continue to reinforce different responses. You are attempting to reinforce creativity rather than imitation or conformity. Make sure you are NOT demonstrating unless you are working with children who do not understand English. If you do have nonEnglish or limited English speaking children, you will have to demonstrate, which will eliminate creativity but will teach them a movement vocabulary in English.)*

General space challenges – body levels/directions

- Let me see you move through general space with your body at a high level. Find a different way... a different way. *(Reinforce with specific feedback all the acceptable responses you see. It is important that the children begin to think and respond creatively, rather than searching for that "one right answer" for which they believe the teacher is looking.)*
- Let me see you move through general space backward with your body at a high level. Remember to look over your shoulder and watch where you are going so you don't bump into anyone. Find a different way.
- Let me see you slide sideways. See how high you can get in the air as you slide. Try sliding sideways the other way.
- Let me see you move through general space at a low level. Find

a different way to move at a low level...a different way, etc.

- Let me see you move backwards at a low level. Find a different way.
- See if you can roll sideways with your body long and narrow like a pencil and your arms straight up over your head. This is called the "log roll" and it is a great way to move sideways at a low level.
- Let me see you find a way to move through general space with your body at a medium level. Find a different way.
- Try moving backwards with your body at a medium level. Find a different way.
- Try moving sideways with your body at a medium level. Find a different way.

MANIPULATIVE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Self-space challenges – object levels

- When I say go, you may go to the closest hula-hoop, select one streamer, take it back to your self-space and explore with it. GO! (*Play music as the children explore.*)
- Let me see you move your streamer at a high level. Find a different way. Put your streamer in your other hand and try moving it in a way you haven't tried yet. Find another way. (*Continually reinforce unique responses with positive specific feedback*

and continue to play quiet music as long as the children can still hear you.)

- Move your streamer at a low level. Find a different way. Try it with your other hand. Find a different way to move it.
- Try moving your streamer at a medium level. See if you can move it at a medium level behind your body. Move it at a medium level in front of you. Try moving it on one side of your body. Put your streamer in your other hand and try moving it on the other side.

(Note: You may need to instruct the children to perform periodic "knot checks" on their streamers. Make them responsible for removing the knots, as needed.)

General space challenges – object level/directions

- Move through general space with your streamer at a high level. Find a different way. Try moving backward, keeping your streamer at a high level. Try sliding sideways and waving the streamer back and forth above your head as you slide. Find a different way to move sideways with your streamer at a high level while using your other hand.
- Move through general space with your streamer at a low level. Find a different way to move it at a low level. Change hands. Move backward while moving your streamer at a low level. Move sideways with your streamer at a low level. Try

it moving sideways the other way with the streamer at a low level in your other hand.

- Move through general space with your streamer at a medium level. Find a different way to move your streamer at a medium level. Change hands, move backward and move your streamer at a medium level. Find a way to go sideways while moving your streamer at a medium level. Put the streamer in your other hand and go sideways the other way while keeping the streamer moving at a medium level.
- When I say go, roll your streamer up nicely and place it back in the hoop you got it from neater than you found it and then meet me in the listening area. GO!

CLOSURE

- I am going to demonstrate some body movements in self-space or in general space and I want you all to call out what level you see me moving at.

For additional lesson plans and specific activities that are developmentally appropriate and employ many different teaching strategies, the reader is encouraged to utilize the following resources:

Clements, R. L. (1995). *My neighborhood movement challenges*. Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

Hammett, C. T. (1992). *Movement activities for early childhood*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Hughes, H. H. & Alfonso, R. A. (1994). *Meaningful movement lesson plans: A developmental theme approach to physical education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Joyce, M. (1994). *First steps in teaching creative dance to children*. (3rd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Logston, B. J., Alleman, L. M., Straits, S.A., Belka, D. E. & Clark, D. (1997). *Physical education unit plans for preschool-kindergarten: learning experiences in games, gymnastics, and dance*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Pica, R. (1991). *Special themes for moving and learning*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Sanders, S. W. (1992). *Designing preschool movement programs*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Torbert, M. & Schneider, L. B. (1993). *Follow me too: A handbook of movement activities for three-to-five-year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Standards and Objectives

Assessment in physical education across the United States is based on national content standards (NASPE, 1995). Assessments take the form of teacher observations, videotapes, checklists, rating scales, cumulative records of fundamental motor skills, progress reports, anecdotal records, scoring rubrics, questions, self-assessment tasks, event tasks (i.e., students draw a picture of a movement sequence and then perform the sequence), and standardized gross motor development tests. Following is a presentation of the national standards (NASPE, 1995, p. 1) and corresponding benchmarks or objectives for kindergarten children (Chepko & Arnold, 2000, pp. 7-15). The national standards appear in italics and the objectives are listed below each standard.

A physically educated person:

- 1. Demonstrates competency in many movement forms and proficiency in a few movement forms.*

Demonstrates creative body shapes

Demonstrates moving to various rhythms

Demonstrates forward rotational skills (log roll, egg roll, shoulder roll, forward roll)

Attempts climbing, supporting and balancing skills on various apparatus

Demonstrates moving at various levels.

Demonstrates the nonlocomotor skills of stretching,

twisting, curling, bending, holding, lifting and swaying

Integrates turning with locomotor skills

Demonstrates walking, running, jogging, sliding and jumping

Demonstrates nonlocomotor and manipulative skills in combination

Demonstrates locomotor and manipulative skills in combinations

Attempts the locomotor skills of skipping, hopping, leaping, and galloping

Attempts kicking, throwing, catching, striking, swinging, pushing and pulling

- 2. Applies movement concepts and principles to the learning and development of motor skills.*

Demonstrates an understanding of general and personal space (where the body moves)

Demonstrates the concepts of directionality and laterality (relationships)

Demonstrates an awareness of spatial relationships between self, others, and objects

Demonstrates variations in force/effort (how the body moves)

Describes a movement in terms of level and tempo (speed/flow)

Locates the major parts of the body

Solves movement-related problems

3. *Exhibits a physically active lifestyle.*

Participates fully in all class activities

Participates outside of class in self-selected movement experiences

4. *Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.*

Participates in anaerobic activities

Participates in activities requiring appropriate levels of muscular strength/endurance

Demonstrates flexibility

5. *Demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings.*

Starts and stops on command
Maintains his/her personal space

Follows simple directions

Follows a series of instructions for an activity

Participates in activity without arguing

Accepts responsibility when asked by the teacher

Demonstrates cooperative skills

6. *Demonstrates understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings.*

Demonstrates respect for individuals

7. *Understands that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.*

Creates a sequence of non-locomotor movements

Develops self-confidence in a physical activity setting

Explores his/her physical capabilities

Children who are provided with opportunities to learn basic movement skills and experience the benefits of being physically fit in a positive and emotionally safe environment are more likely to develop and maintain a healthy active lifestyle. Learning to move and moving to learn are vital in a child's world. Physical education provides the opportunity to use a child's natural instincts for movement and play to teach anything deemed important in the scope of an appropriate education. Human movement is the essence of childhood, the means of emotional expression and a vehicle for work and play. Movement is also an instrument of discovery – of our environment and of ourselves. A child's perception of self is often based on the ability to accomplish movement tasks and to solve movement problems. As Gallahue (1995) states: "To deny children the opportunity to reap the many benefits of regular vigorous physical activity is to deny them the opportunity to experience the joy of efficient movement, the health benefits of physical activity, and a lifetime as confident, competent movers" (p. 125).

Note: Teachers in California who seek professional growth experiences that might enable them to provide better physical education experiences for the children they teach are encouraged to attend: (1) the annual state conference of the California

Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD), held in March of each year and/or (2) the Cal Poly Elementary Physical Education Workshop, held in August of each year. For information, call CAHPERD at 916-922-3596 or 1-800-499-3596 or e-mail: cahperd@aol.com

childhood curriculum and assessment (pp. 125-144). Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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Rink, J. E. (1998). *Teaching physical education for learning*. (3rd ed.). St. Louis, MO: Mosby.