

**ABC's of Gross Motor Skills**  
**CARRIE FLINT**  
Elementary & Adapted Physical Education Specialist  
[www.musicalpeplus.com](http://www.musicalpeplus.com)  
310.702.5648

The development of gross motor skills does not just magically happen by giving a student a ball and telling them to “go play”. Think for a moment, would you give a young child a book and tell them “go read” without any instruction? No, you wouldn't. Not all children are natural athletes and even those students need instruction. This presentation focuses on the basics, building a strong foundation so children will be successful and enjoy participating in physical activity for a lifetime.

**In California there are mandated physical education minutes for grades 1-6 (200 minutes every 10 days of school). That does not mean that younger children don't need physical education. They do. It is just not mandated but it is recommended.**

It is never too early to get children moving and get them to enjoy physical activity. Becoming a physically educated person does not happen overnight and it is not something that can be put off until later in life. Research has shown that obesity is being identified as young as the preschool age. However, it is very important to do age appropriate activities. Keep in mind as you are building a foundation for academic learning that you are also building the foundation of motor skills that are necessary for success in sports and lifetime activities.

### **WHAT ARE THE FOUNDATIONAL GROSS MOTOR SKILLS?**

**LOCOMOTOR :**

Walking, Running, Sliding, Skipping, Jumping, Galloping, Hopping, Leaping

**NON-LOCOMOTOR :**

Twisting, Turning, Balancing, Swinging, Bending, Stretching

**MANIPULATING OBJECTS:**

Throwing, Catching, Kicking, Rolling, Trapping, Tossing, Striking

**RHYTHM:**

Beats, Cadence, Patterns

**SPACE AWARENESS:**

Personal, General, Directions (Up/Down, Forward/Backward)  
Pathways (Straight/Curved/ZigZag)

**RELATIONSHIPS (SELF & OTHERS):**

Body Parts, Body Shapes (Big/Small/Curved/Straight)  
Roles (Leader/Follower/Mirroring/Solo/Partner/Group)  
Locations (Over/Under, Front/Behind, Together/Apart)

Far too often we put children in activities that require a higher skill level. For example, kickball is a very popular game played in kindergarten. Yes, some students are capable of kicking the ball and may even understand to run around the bases but the majority can't. At this age you should be focusing on balance because you need to balance on one leg in order to kick. The focus at this level should be skill development, not playing a game or keeping score. Instead of a kickball game you do kicking activities.

### **WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES FOR THE LITTLE ONES?**

There are numerous physical education programs available for educators and **NASPE** (National Association of Sport & Physical Education) provides guidelines and appropriate practices for preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students. My activities, strategies, and program recommendations are based on **NASPE's** recommendations for early childhood and elementary children.

#### **DESIGN ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

- \*Consider creating an open space in your classroom that will allow for movement.
- \*Assess your outside environment and maximize your opportunities to move.
  - Utilize the lines painted on the playground to guide locomotor movement.
  - Use the jungle gym to work on upper body strength.

\*Bring your lessons to life.

Have your students practice galloping when talking about farm animals.

Have your students act out what it feels like in winter, summer, or pretend to be falling leaves.

#### **DEVELOP MOVEMENT SKILLS AND CONCEPTS**

\*Focus on a skill and “teach”, not just do. Have students run, skip, and jump but also teach them that these are locomotor skills (how our body travels from one spot to another)

#### **FACILITATE MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION**

\*There needs to enough equipment so students are not waiting for a turn.

\*Plan group activities that all are participating rather than watching others play.

Avoid elimination activities and relays.

#### **PLAN FOR REPETITION AND VARIATION OF PRACTICE**

Even the Olympic athlete needs to practice. Repetition is a must and providing numerous opportunities to practice a skill is key to building a strong foundation. Slightly changing the activity (implement, direction, challenge) will keep the student interested in doing the same skills.

\*Instead of throwing a ball, change to a beanbag.

\*Use a hula-hoop as a target then switch to a smaller Frisbee as a target.

\*Walk heel toe on a line then walk heel toe on a line backwards and/or balancing a beanbag on their head.)

#### **PRACTICE AT A HIGH RATE OF SUCCESS**

It is very important to take in consideration that your students have different skill abilities.

When it comes to gross motor skills it is often assumed that every student knows how to successfully bounce and catch a ball. Yes, you do have athletes in your class as you have math wizards. However, do you teach as if your students are all math wizards? No, you don't.

Success is key for future success. Skills are broken down into sequential steps. Before you can run and dribble a ball (as in basketball) you need to successfully bounce and catch a ball while stationary, dribble a ball while stationary, and walk and dribble. Then you can run and dribble a ball. When children are moved too quickly or given an advanced skill it results in frustration rather than success. Frustration results in a negative experience with a physical activity.

There is research that has shown that if children do not have positive experiences in physical activity (physical education or recess) they are less likely to become healthy active adults.

Always be conscious of creating a positive learning environment for all your students no matter what skill level they may be.

#### **FITNESS AS A BY-PRODUCT OF PLAY**

We are more than aware that fitness is a necessary component of living a healthy life. However, the average person is not excited or motivated to go run a mile or do 50 jumping jacks. Well, the same is true for kids. Fitness does not have to be hard work. It can be fun. When you present exercises in a “fun play activity” students don't even realize they are exercising. My number one recommendation on how to create a fun fitness activity is simply add music. There are great CDs that are age appropriate and focus on movement, but any music will work. Music and movement go hand in hand.

**The ultimate purpose of any physical education program is to help children develop the skills, knowledge and desire to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity.**

Please download the California PE Standards and Physical Education Framework. They are available for free on the CDE website. You can also go to the NASPE website for the appropriate practices for physical education. Visit my website [www.musicalpeplus.com](http://www.musicalpeplus.com) for activity ideas & music recommendations “Carrie's Playlist” which I update monthly.

If you would like my playlist for today's presentation please email me.  
carrie@musicalpeplus.com

## **PLAYLIST FOR PRESENTATION**

There are songs for everything and most can simply be found in your own music library, iTunes, and yes, there are CDs (some better than others) that not only will help set the mood and learning environment but also can actually help you teach skills. I teach with music 100%, my playlists are actually my lesson plans. I constantly search for music when I create lessons. Listed below is my playlist for the presentation. I have indicated the name of the CD and have noted whether I got it off a CD that I use frequently and have it available for purchase off my website ([www.musicalpeplus.com](http://www.musicalpeplus.com)) or I found the song on ITUNES.

I always start my lessons with a warm-up and my favorite song to use is "The Way We Do It" from Greg & Steve's Kids in Action (on my website)

## **ACTION AWARENESS SONGS**

### **TRAVELING**

- "I Like to Move It" ITUNES
- "Run and Walk" Physical Ed (on my website)
- "Skater's Waltz" ITUNES (Kimbo/World of Parachute Play)
- "Side Slide" Physical Ed (on my website)
- "Skip To My Lou" ITUNES
- "Gallop" Physical Ed (on my website)

### **STABILIZING**

- "Can You Keep Your Balance" Physical Ed (on my website)
- "Over The Waves" Christy Lane's Sports & Novelty (on my website)
- "Jump Up, Bend Down" La Di Da La Di Da (on my website)

### **MANIPULATING**

- "Raise the Ceiling" Physical Ed (on my website)
- "Pump Up the Jam" ITUNES (Mickey Sports Songs)
- "I'll Be Your Partner-Play Ball" ITUNES Captain Music
- "U can't Touch This" ITUNES MC Hammer
- "It's a Sunshine Day" ITUNES Drew's Party Music

## **EFFORT AWARENESS**

- "Slow and Fast" ITUNES Hap Palmer Rhythms On Parade

## **SPACE AWARENESS**

- "Place Your Hands" Get Funky and Musical Fun (on my website)
- "Bop 'Til You Drop" Greg & Steve's Kids in Action (on my website)

## **RELATIONAL AWARENESS**

- "Tony Chestnut" Tony Chestnut (on my website)
- "Beanie Bag Dance" Greg & Steve's Kids in Action (on my website)
- "Alphabet Song" Silly Willy Through the ABC's (on my website)
- "Follow Me, I Am the Leader" Get Funky & Musical Fun (on my website)
- "Ba Ba Bones" Physical Ed (on my website)

**Make Fitness Fun...**the students won't even realize that they are actually exercising!

- "Jumpin' Jacks" Physical Ed (on my website)
- "Crab Walking" Get Funky & Musical Fun (on my website)
- "The Ants Go Marching" ITUNES
- "Give Me Ten" Physical Ed (on my website)

**Create a Multi-Sensory Learning Environment: Thematic Songs**

Winter Snow Play

"Winter Wonderland" ITUNES

"Marshmallow World" ITUNES

Colors/Rainbow

"If You Are Wearing Colors" Get Funky & Musical Fun (on my website)

"Over the Rainbow" ITUNES

"Rainbow Connection" ITUNES Kenny Loggins

Sun/Summer/Beach

"Here Comes the Sun" Beatles ITUNES

"Surfin' USA" Beach Boys ITUNES

"Under the Sea" Disney ITUNES

Jungle/Zoo Animals

"The Lion Sleeps Tonight" The Tokens ITUNES

"The Monkey Dance" The Wiggles ITUNES

"Monkey In The Middle" Physical Ed (on my website)

"Can You Leap Like a Frog" Kids in Action (on my website)

"Goin' On A Bear Hunt" Kids in Action (on my website)

"New Chicken Dance" La Di Da La Di Da (on my website)

Parachute Songs

"I Get Around" Beach Boys ITUNES

"Slow and Fast" Hap Palmer Rhythms of Parade ITUNES

"The Grand Duke of York" ITUNES

"Surfin' Safari" Beach Boys ITUNES

"Give Me Ten" Physical Ed (on my website)

"What a Wonderful World" Louis Armstrong ITUNES

RELAXING SONG La Di Da La Di Da (on my website)

Visit my website [www.musicalpeplus.com](http://www.musicalpeplus.com) for more activity ideas and playlists. I post a new "Carrie's Playlist" every month.

## ADDITIONAL HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

1. **Plan & schedule activity time throughout the day and stick to it.**  
Add movement songs that compliment the lesson theme.
2. **Communicate with your parents.** Send a letter home stating that their child will be active. If there is a health concern, the parents need to notify you and the school nurse. This would include asthma. Should the student have medication at school? Also, it is important to request that students wear appropriate clothing and shoes for their safety.
3. **Maximize Activity Time.** Focus on ways to keep your students moving.
  - a. Limit activities that require students to wait in line for a turn.
  - b. Limit relay lines to be only 3 students.
  - c. Provide students with their own equipment when possible.
  - d. Focus on development of skills and exploration with equipment rather than competition.
4. **Avoid "Pick a Friend"** In my years of teaching; I have never NOT seen a student stand alone when they are instructed to "Pick a Friend". I know you believe that you are creating an environment that all your students are friends and you can continue to work on this goal BUT the reality is that you do have that not so popular student and you in fact have created a negative experience for that student by asking the students to "Pick a Friend". Even if you have an even number of students you will have that same student standing alone every time. "Friend" is a very powerful word and it greatly affects a child's self-esteem when no one wants to be there partner. You, the teacher, have complete control to change this experience from negative to positive. Instead of friend, have your students find someone that is the same height, same color hair, wearing similar clothes, etc.
5. **Avoid having students pick teams or another student for the next turn.** This is the same as you asking them to "Pick a Friend". This also is actually a stressful situation you have created for the picker & picked. The student is frustrated in deciding whom to pick & the

rest of the students have anxiety about being picked or not picked. Once again, you have complete control of this situation. **YOU** pick. Not only does this eliminate the stress it also keeps the activity moving rather than waiting for the students to choose.

6. **Avoid keeping score.** Physical activity should focus on the opportunity to be introduced to a variety of activities and skill development. There is a place for competition; but this is not age appropriate at the preschool level. Who won and who lost? No one ever likes to lose and it leaves a negative feeling about the physical activity experience. Your goal is to create a positive experience for all the students to learn and enjoy physical activity so they will be motivated to be active in their lifetime.
7. **Don't be afraid** of doing an activity even if you cannot do it well. I am sure there will be a student that will be able to demonstrate for you. Also utilize videos to help explain and demonstrate. There are great ones out for children that I have used to help me and they are great to use on a rainy days. Visit my website for my recommendations ([www.musicalpeplus.com](http://www.musicalpeplus.com)).
8. **Safety!** Think about the activity before doing it. Accidents will always happen. However, making various modifications to meet the needs of your students will prevent some incidents. Also, pay attention to the shoes your students are wearing. Open toed sandals and high heel shoes may be cute, but they are not safe for the students to run and play in.
9. **Do not combine classes for physical activity time.** Even though they have large PE classes in middle school that does not make it right. Not only have you created more wait time for your students to participate, you have given yourself a larger challenge in class management. Studies also have proven the larger the class size, the less the students move during the lesson. You are not creating the best environment for your students to learn. In a large class, too many students are overlooked and their needs are not met. Everyone has different physical abilities. It is imperative to be aware of the differences and be able to create an environment that all will have a positive experience.
8. **Be a role model.** Wear tennis shoes! Be active with your students. It is okay if you are not an athlete. Your students will respect you for doing the best to your abilities and in turn they will do the same. They will learn that it is a lifetime commitment to be active and healthy.