

MOVING THE MIND, BODY, & SPIRIT

TEACHING THE WHOLE CHILD

Carrie Flint

Elementary & Adapted Physical Education Specialist

Musical PE Plus

www.musicalpeplus.com

310.702.5648

"Teaching the Whole Child" What does this actually mean? I know it is a "Buzz Topic" and educators claim they do this, but do they? A few years back, I presented at the National ASCD Conference and the theme of the conference was actually "Teaching the Whole Child" and yet out of 400 sessions mine was only one of two that addressed physical activity. Interesting, I thought, since there is an abundance of research that has identified how physical activity can positively affect the health, mental and social well being, as well as academic performance of the student in the classroom.

How can anyone claim that they teach the whole child when schools take away physical education, art, music and even recess (40% of the elementary schools in our country have)? Where are the opportunities for children to learn social skills, develop a positive self-esteem, or discover a unique talent or passion that just doesn't show up by taking a math test? We all know that education is more than just learning how to read and write but the pressure to improve test scores has forced educators to only care about the results on tests rather than educating and helping children develop into productive, happy and healthy adults. This presentation IS about the *Teaching the Whole Child* through moving and how the mind, body, and spirit of a child are all connected.

MIND

There is extensive research on the connection of the mind and body. In her book *Action-Packed Classrooms*, Cathie Rutherford states this field of study has noted results starting back in the late 1800's and throughout the years the research continues to identify that there is a connection of mind and body. Movement does have a significant impact on thinking and learning.

In *Action Packed Classrooms*, Cathie summarizes how specific movements directly relate to learning based on the current research.

How Movement Affects Learning

- Balance improves reading capacity
- Exercise reduces stress
- Physical activity improves behavior
- Movement reinforces academic skills
- Cross-lateral movements organize brain functions
- Peptides aid procedural memory
- Eye-tracking skills and peripheral vision aid reading

I know you may be thinking...this is great but how do I fit this in? I have only so much time and I have to use every minute on academics? Well, numerous studies have shown that physical activity does not compromise children's academic performance or standardized test scores. A school district in San Diego actually added physical education and recess minutes lessening academic minutes and their math scores went up. In "The Shape of The Nation 2012" a report conducted by NASPE (The National Association or Sport and Physical Education), referenced a report from the CDC in 2010 which 11 of 14 studies found one or more positive associations between physical education and indicators of cognitive skills and attitudes, academic behavior and/or academic achievement. Overall, the results were profound; test scores improved or stayed the same.

In a nutshell, it is worth taking the time to get your students active. John Ratey, author of *SPARK*, is a leading authority on the value of exercise simply states, "Physical exercise turns our brains on."

(Run, Jump, Learn! How Exercise can Transform our Schools: John J. Ratey MD at TEDxManhattanBeach YouTube Nov. 18, 2012:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBSVZdTQmDs>)

BODY

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. The gross motor skills are the ABC's of moving and it is imperative to focus 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)

What are Appropriate Activities for the Little Ones?

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.

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 be 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.

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.

SPIRIT

A child's self-esteem and emotional well being directly affect their academic performance. As a teacher, it is your responsibility to create a positive learning environment for all your students to feel safe and secure. My mentor taught me that I was the Queen of my kingdom...my classroom. I was the one in charge not the students. I was to set the expectations for good behavior and respect to one self and to others. Good class management is key to a safe positive learning environment. You need to always remember an event or incident carries over from one environment to another good or bad. A student has fun at recess, they return to class happy and ready to learn. A student that couldn't find anyone to play with at recess, returns to class sad and doesn't feel anyone likes them. Pay attention to what is happening with your students and step in rather than "oh well...kids are kids". Also be aware what happens to a child will not only affect their self-esteem that day but for a lifetime. You never do forget that you were picked last.

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.

HERE ARE MY HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT...MANY CAN BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM SETTING NOT JUST FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

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 education 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).
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.
10. **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.

BONUS Information.....Student SENSORY NEEDS

For years, my OT friend and I have seen and heard the frustrations of teachers as they try to deal with "those kids". You know, the ones that can't sit still, stay focused on a task, disrupt the lesson, etc. Well, not all students with sensory needs are in special education classes; yes many are in general education.

To help you better understand and identify the sensory needs of your students, my OT friend, Vivien Sit has provided you with a general overview of the senses and recommendations to address the needs appropriate in the school setting.

So lets begin with what is **OT**?

Occupational Therapy (In School Setting)

Provides assessment and intervention to students with fine motor, gross motor, and sensory skills delays in the classroom environment.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRINCIPLES

• **SENSORY INTERGRATION**

Definition: The organization of sensory input for use. Correctly interpreting everyday sensory information, such as touch, sounds, sights, and movement, from our environment and from our body so that we can participate in daily activities.

- **VESTIBULAR SYSTEM**
- **TACTILE SYSTEM**
- **PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM**
- **MOTOR PLANNING**

VESTIBULAR SYSTEM

Definition: Structures in inner ear detect movement and changes in head position.

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

Over-responsive: (sensory avoiding) Gravitational insecurity (fear of heights), avoid playground equipment, carsick.

Under-responsive: (sensory seeking) Difficulty sitting still, thrill seeker.

VESTIBULAR SYSTEM SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR SCHOOL

- Schedule movement prior to seatwork.
- Incorporate movement in teaching (Yoga).
- Movement breaks.

TACTILE SYSTEM

Definition: Cells in skin send info for light touch, pain, temperature, vibration, and pressure. There are more receptors in mouth and hands.

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

Over-responsive: (sensory avoiding). Tactile defensiveness, sensitivity to finger-paint, glue, tags, haircuts, and nail cutting.

Under-responsive: (sensory seeking). High pain tolerance, excessive touching of people, hands constantly "fidgeting", enjoys highly textured objects.

TACTILE SYSTEM SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR SCHOOL

- **Sensory Seekers:** Hand fidgets, Sensory tubs

- **Tactile Discrimination:** Wikki Stix letters (www.wikkistix.com); sand paper letters.
- **Tactile Defensive:** Mark personal space with carpet squares and seat at edge of circle/ground; approach from front, art media in zip lock bag; Sensory brushing program.

PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM

Definition: Receptors in joints, muscles, and tendons perceive contraction, stretching, and compression.

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

- Fine/gross motor coordination delays.
- Poor articulation
- Difficulty grading amount of pressure, Clumsy, falls out of chair, slumps at desk, poor body awareness in space.
- Likes hugs, tight fitting clothing.
- Kicks heels against chair/desk legs.
- Rubs hands together, bites fingernails.

PROPRIOCEPTION SYSTEM SIMPLE SOLUTIONS SCHOOL

- Weighted Vest (www.OTvest.com) Research: AJOT 2001,55,621-628)
- Heavy "work" activities (e.g. chair, wall push-ups)
- Therapy band/Bungee rope wrapped around chair legs.
- Mechanical pencil/dycem or styro-foam under paper.
- Weighted wristband for fine motor tasks.
- Clay tray.
- Yoga stretching
- Playground: climbing monkey bars
- Swimming
- Weight lifting

MOTOR PLANNING

Definition: What is Motor Planning? Also known as "Praxis". Voluntary coordinated movement dependent upon unconscious body sensations.

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

Dyspraxia: Difficulty executing unfamiliar motor actions, poor articulation, needs excessive practice for new motor tasks. Has to cognitively think about how to perform tasks, slow to learn new motor tasks.

MOTOR PLANNING SIMPLE SOLUTION FOR SCHOOL

- Keep classroom arrangement consistent.
- Break tasks into small steps and practice.
- Use pictures to sequence students through tasks.
- Let other children go first to model action.
- Give child checklist to i.d. tasks/schedule.
- Practice handwriting repeatedly.

A. Intervention Strategies at home:

SUGGESTIONS for Creating a Sensory Diet at Home

- A sensory diet is, simply, regular opportunities for a student to engage in sensory -motor activities that help the nervous system achieve a "just right" level of alertness/attention for being more available for learning. These activities could be a combination of calming, alerting, organizing activities.

Heavy Work Activities:

-Calming activities that encourage deep, resistive, weighted, and slow movement. Weighted vest, weighted lap pillow, weighted pencil, etc....

-**Calming activities will help the over aroused student decrease sensory stimulations (e.g. constantly on the go, jumps, seeks movement, fidgety).**

Calming activities include linear movement, such as rocking, flexion position, deep pressure to joints and muscles.

-**Alerting activities can help child who demonstrate under arousal-slow engine (lethargy, bored, holding head up with hands/arms).** Provide a great deal of proprioceptive inputs (heavy work of the large muscles and joints) to bring up their state of arousal.

Taste/Oral Tactile Strategies:

-Encourage your child to try a variety of food with different taste/textures.

-Vibrating toothbrush

-Suck on thick liquids thru a straw, as sucking is organizing to the nervous system.

-Use whistles, bubbles, and cotton balls.

-Plastic necklace: Inexpensive aquarium tubing from a pet store makes a nice chewable necklace. Try putting some beads in the tube for extra oral input, or putting in the fridge for a cool bite.

-Wipe the face regularly with warm cloths, using deep pressure. This can be calming to an over-reactive child.

Strategies for Auditory Defensiveness

- Headphones/Earplugs
- Seating preference away from doors/windows.
- Incorporate music/environmental sounds/white noise machine (background sounds). www.route2greatness.com (sound-eaze/school Eaze).
- Provide proprioceptive inputs to the whole body prior to expose to noise.

I hope you find this helpful information. I must state however that this is not meant to replace OT services. This information is given to be informative and to provide some suggestions and tools to help "those kids" be successful in the classroom.

EXERCISE CDs & DVDs

There are many resources available that are easy to implement and kids enjoy. The best thing about using songs and exercise/dance routines on DVDs is that they require almost no prep from the teacher and they have a definite start and finish.

Favorite CDs & DVDs

(Songs were used from these CDs for the presentation)

The Learning Station's "Physical Ed" (Elementary)

Side Slide

The Learning Station's "Brain Boogie Boosters" (Elementary)

Move & Freeze

The Learning Station's "Get Funky Musical Fun" (Elementary)

From Your Seat

Greg & Steve's "Kids in Action" (K-2nd)

Can You Leap Like a Frog?

Christy Lane's Sports and Novelty CD

Sweet Georgia Brown

Wacky Workout

Shoulder Roll

Hap Palmer's Can a Cherry Pie Say Goodbye?

Bean Bag Alphabet Rag

I ALSO RECOMMEND

Brenda Colgate's "Silly Willy Through the ABC's" (K-2nd)
The Learning Station's "La Di Da, La Di Di"
Christy Lane's "PE Adventures DVD Lost Jungle" (Elementary)
Christy Lane's "PE Adventures DVD Unknown Planet" (Elementary)
Christy Lane's "Steppin & Stoppin" (Elementary & Middle)

FAVORITE INSTANT ACTIVITIES (available www.musicalpeplus.com)

Great FREE Resource:

This free downloadable book offers many activities and ideas for elementary and various subjects in addition to more helpful resources.

ABC for Fitness by David Katz MD

www.davidkatzmd.com/docs/ABCManual.pdf

References:

National Association for Sport and Physical Education & American Heart Association. (2012). 2012 Shape of the Nation Report: Status of Physical Education in the USA. Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

ABC for Fitness™ Teacher Manual
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