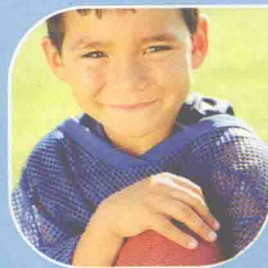


Appropriate Practices in Movement Programs for Children Ages 3 - 5



Developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education
in alignment with the National Standards for Physical Education

Appropriate Practices In Movement Programs For Children Ages 3 – 5



A Position Statement from the
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
(3rd Edition)

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*an association of the American Alliance for Health,
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Preface

The importance of young children's development and education continues to be a major focus of public attention. Growth in the number of preschools, child-development centers and other childcare programs has resulted in an increased interest in the education – including physical education – of this age group.

In addition, research on the physiology of brain development (Jensen, 1998) has focused public and scientific attention on the importance of early experiences to the motor, cognitive, emotional and social development of children ages 2 to 5. The early years of life have been identified as a critical period in which the building blocks for all future development are laid. The appropriateness of practices used in early-childhood education settings becomes even more crucial when we consider the importance of this formative time in the lifespan.

The Goal Is Quality Movement Programs For Young Children

The importance and value of movement across the lifespan is being recognized as never before. Early-childhood educators, in particular, have increasingly grown aware that movement plays an important role in young children's development. During movement activities, children use many of their sensory systems, thereby creating neural connections for future learning. The branching of those connections comprises the first step in wiring the brain for all future learning.

The focus on multiple intelligences also adds to the importance of movement, with kinesthetic intelligence being one of eight intelligences identified by Gardner (2000). A learning environment enriched with movement experiences can lead to enhanced long-term motor, cognitive, emotional and social development.

Childhood is the time to begin ensuring an active, healthy lifestyle, and parents and caregivers must teach and model the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes leading to an active, healthy lifestyle. Placing children on the road to a lifetime of movement should begin early to ensure that they learn – and adopt – healthful practices and behaviors.

Quality Movement Programs

Early childhood (ages 3 through 5) is associated with the fundamental movement phase of motor development (Gabbard, 2007). This is a unique period in the lifespan, due primarily to the emergence of most of the fundamental motor skills that establish the foundation upon which more complex and specialized movement skills are built. It's a crucial time, during which daily learning experiences can exert a significant influence on how well children establish positive attitudes toward and appreciation of a lifetime of participation in regular, healthful physical activity.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), the nation's largest professional organization for children's physical education teachers, recommends that all children have access to quality physical education on a daily basis. NASPE advocates the belief that the most appropriate approach for this age group is to focus holistically on acquiring fundamental motor skills, learning basic movement concepts and instilling the joy of moving to assist children's motor, cognitive, emotional and social development.

Quality programs for young children view movement as an integral part of the overall learning process. Movement experiences take many forms, including structured physical education classes, movement opportunities integrated within other curricular areas and unstructured play during recess. NASPE recommends that preschool-age children engage in a total of 60 minutes of structured physical activity daily, spread throughout the day, as well as 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity.

Developmentally appropriate practices in movement programs are those that recognize children's differing movement capabilities and that promote learning experiences that challenge each child to move to the next level of his/her individual development.

Effective teachers of movement use the National Standards for Physical Education in conjunction with existing curriculum to design appropriate programs for children. They evaluate student progress and are accountable for student learning.

The outcome of a developmentally appropriate program is a physically educated person, one who knows and values physical activity, is physically fit, has the necessary skills for participation and engages regularly in health-enhancing physical activity. Appropriate movement programs for young children provide an important first step toward becoming a physically educated person.

Premises of Quality Movement Programs For Children

When developing a quality movement program for young children, it's important to remember that the ultimate goal is to foster a *feeling of success* within each child. Readers should consider that primary goal, along with the following five premises of quality movement programs for young children.

1. Children should engage in movement programs designed for their individual developmental levels.

Young children need a variety of experiences that will lead to more advanced levels of fundamental motor skills. The development of movement is age-related, not age-determined, meaning that children of the same age likely will move differently from each other. Teachers and caregivers should use chronological age as a general guide, not an absolute standard for what to expect from children's movement. Teachers of children ages 3-5 need to understand how movement changes from infancy through age 5, and how it differs from that of older elementary school-age children.

2. Young children learn through interacting with their environment.

This well-established concept has been stated in many ways: children learn by doing, and they learn through active involvement with people and objects. Developmentally appropriate movement programs for young children are designed so that all become active participants engaged in tasks and environments that meet their individual needs.

3. Young children learn and develop in an integrated fashion.

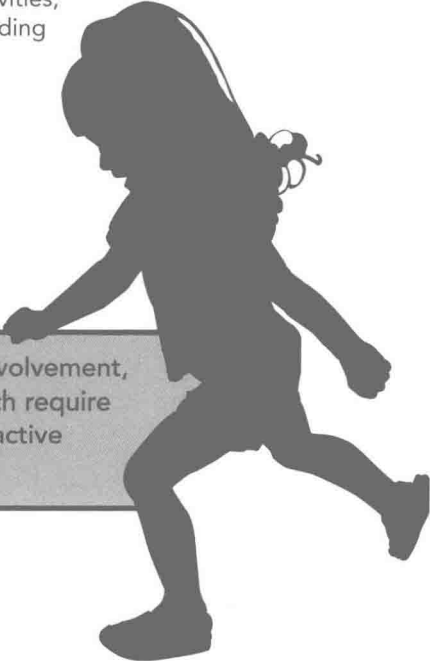
Although movement serves as a primary medium for young children's learning, the motor, cognitive, emotional and social developmental domains are interrelated. Learning experiences in movement should include — and integrate with — other areas of development. Regularly scheduled movement experiences should focus on developing fundamental motor skills while incorporating cognitive, emotional and social development into the movement experiences.

4. Planned movement experiences enhance play experiences.

A combination of unstructured play opportunities — along with planned movement experiences designed specifically to help children develop their fundamental motor skills — assists young children in their development. Regular indoor and outdoor play experiences that afford children opportunities to freely practice and develop skills that match their unique developmental status enhance regularly scheduled and appropriately designed movement experiences.

5. Teachers serve as guides or facilitators for young children.

Young children learn through involvement, observation and modeling, which require teachers to facilitate children's active involvement in learning. Teachers create the environment with specific outcomes in mind, and then guide the children toward those outcomes. By observing children's responses and interests carefully, teachers can adapt learning experiences to best meet each individual child's needs. Children are allowed to make choices and seek creative solutions. They are provided the time and opportunity to explore appropriate responses. Teachers show interest and participate in movement activities, engaging children in the activity, thereby extending the children's learning.

A black silhouette of a young child with pigtails, running towards the left. The child is holding the right side of a light gray rounded rectangular box that contains text.

Young children learn through involvement, observation and modeling, which require teachers to facilitate children's active involvement in learning.

Intended Audience and Purpose

This document is written for teachers, daycare providers, parents, caregivers, school administrators, policymakers and others who are responsible for education programs for children ages 3 through 5. It provides specific guidelines to help recognize and design practices in movement programs that are best for children (appropriate) and recognize and avoid those that are counterproductive or harmful (inappropriate).

The appropriate and inappropriate practices described in this document are interrelated; they're separated here for purposes of clarity and ease of reading. Although these practices are not all-inclusive, they do represent many of the characteristics of developmentally appropriate practice in movement programs for young children.

The document can help those who educate these children:

- ✓ Make developmentally appropriate decisions about curriculum and content.
- ✓ Make informed decisions about how to present content.
- ✓ Evaluate the appropriateness of existing curriculum and teaching methods.
- ✓ Advocate for improving existing programs.
- ✓ Integrate movement activities into existing curricula more fully.

Introduction to the Document

The following document organizes early-childhood movement practices into five separate sections:

1. Learning Environment
2. Instructional Strategies
3. Curriculum
4. Assessment
5. Professionalism

Each section is broken into subsections that focus on areas of concern to early-childhood movement programs.

The practices mentioned do not comprise an exhaustive list, but they do include practices observed recently in early-childhood movement programs that are appropriate, as supported by general research.

1.0 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Appropriate Movement Learning Environments for Young Children

✓ Appropriate Practice

1.1.1 Indoor and outdoor movement space is sufficient for engaging in both large- and fine-motor skills.

1.1.2 Large equipment and movement implements of different sizes, weights and adaptability are provided to accommodate young children's varying skill levels, body sizes and movement needs.

1.1.3 Teachers appreciate that movement can occur in any learning environment.

1.1.4 The movement environment allows and encourages movement skill acquisition in a playful and enjoyable manner.

1.1.5 The movement learning environment is designed to help children be more successful than unsuccessful by providing movement tasks with multiple levels of complexity and difficulty.

1.1.6 The movement learning environment supports and promotes development of competent movement for all students.

1.1.7 Consistent, fair and simple rules encourage students to accept responsibility for their own behavior. Use or restriction of physical activity is prohibited as a strategy for discipline.

1.1.8 Bullying, taunting and inappropriate student remarks and behaviors are never allowed. If they occur, teachers deal with them immediately and firmly.

✗ Inappropriate Practice

1.1.1 Dedicated movement space is not provided, the space available is too small or it's inappropriate for both large- and fine-motor skill practice.

1.1.2 Minimal equipment or implements are available. Those that are available are all one size and aren't adaptable to different skill levels, body sizes and needs.

1.1.3 Teachers act as if movement can occur only in the gymnasium or on the playground.

1.1.4 Teachers stress movement and exercise as structured work and not as something that's fun or enjoyable.

1.1.5 The movement environment is designed from an adult-oriented perspective and offers movement tasks with single levels of difficulty that don't allow children to succeed most of the time.

1.1.6 Highly skilled or physically fit children are viewed as the most successful learners. Students who are not highly skilled or physically fit are overlooked and/or ignored.

1.1.7 Rules are authoritarian or unclear, they vary from day to day and don't foster self-responsibility. Physical activity is used as a punitive tool and/or is restricted due to misbehavior.

1.1.8 Teachers fail to monitor inappropriate verbal or non-verbal child behavior that is hurtful to other children. When it occurs, teachers ignore it and don't provide discipline.

1.2 Promoting Movement and Intrinsic Motivation

✔ Appropriate Practice

1.2.1 Teachers promote movement, exercise and physical activity for the joyfulness they bring, as well as for their contributions to a healthy lifestyle.

1.2.2 Children are encouraged to participate in play, physical activity and exercise outside of the daycare or school setting for enjoyment, skill development and health reasons.

✘ Inappropriate Practice

1.2.1 Teachers use activities/exercises as punishment (e.g. running laps, performing pushups) for misbehavior.

1.2.2 Teachers rarely encourage children to participate in movement or exercise outside of daycare and usually fail to emphasize the inherent joyfulness associated with movement.

1.3 Ensuring Movement Safety

✔ Appropriate Practice

1.3.1 Teachers make every effort possible to create a safe learning environment for students. *Examples:* teaching safety actively; posting and practicing emergency action plans; making appropriate-size equipment available.

1.3.2 Developmentally appropriate activities are safe and allow each child — regardless of skill level — to perform them successfully.

1.3.3 Teachers maintain up-to-date first aid, AED and CPR certifications.

1.3.4 Facilities (e.g., playgrounds) and equipment (e.g., climbing equipment) are inspected regularly for safety hazards, and preventative maintenance is performed whenever hazards are detected or anticipated.

✘ Inappropriate Practice

1.3.1 Teachers allow or ignore unsafe practices that occur in their classes. *Example:* children ignoring others' safety by pushing or shoving, or by using equipment unsafely, including swinging bats too close to others.

1.3.2 Human-target games (dodgeball) and/or drills that allow aggressive behavior toward other students are permitted, and no regard is paid to children's individual skill levels.

1.3.3 Teachers and staff don't maintain up-to-date first aid, AED and CPR certifications.

1.3.4 No regular facility or equipment safety inspections occur. Children are permitted to use dangerous or outdated equipment.

1.4 Addressing Diversity and Equity

✓ Appropriate Practice

1.4.1 Teachers and caregivers select activities (e.g., dances and games from throughout the world) that represent a culturally diverse environment.

1.4.2 Regardless of developmental and skill level, all children are challenged at an appropriate level to allow more success than failure.

1.4.3 Both boys and girls are encouraged, supported and socialized toward success in all content taught in early-childhood movement.

1.4.4 Teachers use gender-neutral language (e.g., "students").

✗ Inappropriate Practice

1.4.1 Teachers teach American games and sports exclusively, without regard for other cultures.

1.4.2 Highly skilled children are permitted to dominate activities.

1.4.3 Activities are identified as more appropriate for girls or boys. *Examples:* dance is for girls, sports and games are for boys.

1.4.4 Teachers refer to all students as "you guys" and/or use "boys and girls" as the most common way to address the class.

Teachers promote movement, exercise and physical activity for the joyfulness they bring, as well as for their contributions to a healthy lifestyle.



1.5 Employing Inclusion as Developmentally Appropriate Practice

☒ Appropriate Practice

1.5.1 Teachers wholeheartedly implement the education process for students with disabilities as outlined in their individualized education programs and/or accommodations.

1.5.2 Movement activities are adapted for overweight children. All students are encouraged to perform at appropriate levels of activity for their own improvement.

☐ Inappropriate Practice

1.5.1 Children with disabilities sit out, keep score or become spectators. Rarely are they encouraged or allowed to participate, and minimal to no accommodations are made.

1.5.2 Teachers make no adaptations for overweight children, who are marginalized as children who "can't do it."

1.6 Exploring Social Movement Relationships

☒ Appropriate Practice

1.6.1 Teachers create a mastery-learning environment that encourages students to perform relative to their own previous personal performances or against a criterion score.

1.6.2 Children are allowed to choose cooperative movement environments, and competition with others is de-emphasized.

☐ Inappropriate Practice

1.6.1 The learning environment emphasizes competition by promoting competitive activities (e.g., relay races, elimination tag), keeping score and identifying winners and losers.

1.6.2 Teachers focus on competitive game situations, which limit opportunities for skill instruction, practice and creativity.



Movement activities are adapted for overweight children. All students are encouraged to perform at appropriate levels of activity for their own improvement.

2.0 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

2.1 Designing Learning Experiences

✓ Appropriate Practice

2.1.1 Teachers employ both direct and indirect teaching methods. Direct methods provide visual and verbal information for students to replicate; indirect teaching methods encourage children to explore and discover a range of movement possibilities.

2.1.2 Teachers provide opportunities for children to make individual choices within and between tasks, while actively exploring their environment.

2.1.3 Teachers understand that young children are inefficient movers who tend to tire quickly. Therefore, they design intermittent activities that allow children to play, rest and play again.

✗ Inappropriate Practice

2.1.1 Teachers implement highly structured, teacher-directed lessons most of the time. Command-style teaching is the predominant instructional method.

2.1.2 Teachers often use whole-group instruction, in which all children are expected to perform the same activities in the same manner.

2.1.3 Teachers expect children to participate continuously without rest or mini-breaks.

2.2 Encouraging Individual and Free Expression

✓ Appropriate Practice

2.2.1 Teachers encourage children to use movement as a form of individual expression. They plan opportunities for children to ask questions and then help them discover various solutions to movement problems. Teachers encourage children to be creative, use their imagination and express themselves freely.

✗ Inappropriate Practice

2.2.1 Teachers require children to move in prescribed ways and meet set standards of performance often associated with adult movement patterns. Only relatively quiet, controlled activity is allowed.

2.3 Facilitating Maximum Participation

Appropriate Practice

2.3.1 Teachers use activities that don't eliminate children, and they structure the class environment to maximize opportunities for all children to learn, be physically active and be successful.

2.3.2 Teachers frequently modify activities, equipment and task structure according to individual student needs to enhance maximum participation and increase student motivation and success.

2.3.3 Teachers provide enough equipment and space so each child can participate maximally. As much as possible, each child is permitted her/his own piece of equipment with which to practice. The equipment includes a variety of shapes, sizes, textures and weights to allow for experimentation and active participation.

2.3.4 Teachers recognize that young children might need brief rest periods when participating in particularly strenuous activities.

Inappropriate Practice

2.3.1 Lessons are organized poorly, so students spend much of the class time waiting in lines and/or waiting for equipment to be distributed. Teachers encourage playing sedentary games or other activities that eliminate children and provide no chance to re-enter the activity.

2.3.2 Students are expected to complete tasks within a very limited, prescribed manner and within a highly structured task setting. Modifications are not considered.

2.3.3 Teachers provide insufficient equipment or offer only regulation or "adult-size" equipment, which can inhibit skill development, and can injure and/or intimidate the children.

2.3.4 Continuous, extended aerobic activity is expected and demanded of all children.

2.4 Allowing for Repetition and Variation

Appropriate Practice

2.4.1 Teachers provide a variety of novel learning experiences that emphasize similar motor skills across different environmental contexts, allowing children to develop movement patterns gradually. Teachers plan for and provide opportunities within instructional sessions for extending and refining these skills.

Inappropriate Practice

2.4.1 Activities are repeated without variation or are introduced and practiced only once a year, providing little opportunity for children to develop a foundation of movement skills.

2.5 Teaching Educational Games

Appropriate Practice

2.5.1 Teachers select, design, sequence and modify games to maximize children's learning and enjoyment. Games are structured simply to foster individual growth and self-challenge. Children are encouraged often to alter the activity to fit their own needs and to meet their strong urge for creative play.

Inappropriate Practice

2.5.1 Games are taught with no obvious purpose other than to keep children "happy, busy and good." Children often are eliminated during game play. Teachers always emphasize the game's structure and adult-oriented rules.

2.6 Showing Enthusiasm

Appropriate Practice

2.6.1 Teachers show enthusiasm for an active, healthy lifestyle and model a love for movement in a creative, enjoyable manner. Teachers show patience, compassion and kindness.

Inappropriate Practice

2.6.1 Teachers participate only rarely in physical activity. They're strict, inflexible and unwilling to engage in a playful, enthusiastic manner.

2.7 Communicating Information

Appropriate Practice

2.7.1 Teachers take advantage of children's rapidly developing language skills by allowing them to share their thoughts using multiple modes of communication (i.e., verbal, physical).

Inappropriate Practice

2.7.1 Teachers do all of the talking and don't allow children to share or respond.

2.7.2 Teachers use appropriate vocabulary and are willing to repeat directions and check for understanding.

2.7.2 Teachers talk to young children as if they're infants and/or adults. Teachers lack patience and expect young children to remember everything they're told.

3.0 CURRICULUM

3.1 Making Curricular Decisions

Appropriate Practice

3.1.1 Teachers plan a movement curriculum that's based on developing fundamental movement skills and basic movement concepts gradually, with a scope and sequence based on appropriate developmental levels.

3.1.2 The curriculum includes a balance of skills and concepts designed to enhance every child's motor, cognitive, emotional and social development.

Inappropriate Practice

3.1.1 Teachers plan the movement curriculum around personal interests, ignoring the continuum of motor development that focuses on standards, outcomes and objectives.

3.1.2 The curriculum consists primarily of large-group games that are activity-based, not child-centered.

3.2 Facilitating Total Development

Appropriate Practice

3.2.1 Teachers design movement activities for children's total development. Movement programs help children become skillful, knowledgeable and expressive movers.

3.2.2 Teachers focus on children's learning fundamental movement skills, keeping in mind that skill learning takes time, practice and repetition. Teachers help children make meaningful connections between movement skills and everyday life skills.

3.2.3 Lessons are centered on developing the total child within a nurturing and accepting environment. Teachers provide motivating reinforcement, while encouraging children to develop positive self-concepts and reducing fear of failure. Instruction and equipment are adapted so that all children feel safe to learn.

Inappropriate Practice

3.2.1 Teachers view movement programs mainly as a way for children to burn off excess energy or to provide a break for students and staff.

3.2.2 Teachers teach activities, not movement skills; they make no connections between skills and children's knowledge base.

3.2.3 Teachers address only the physical realm without including cognitive, emotional and social contexts. They make no adaptations for different levels of learning or for encouraging student success.