HLTH103: Fit for Life
Handout

Welcome to HLTH103

This course provides strategies and methods to improve physical fitness and incorporate movement activities across the early childhood curriculum.

Objectives

Participants who take notes on the handout and successfully answer assessment questions will meet these objectives:

- Identify recommended daily movement and exercise requirements for young children
- Identify the benefits of physical activity in terms of overall health and brain development
- Identify characteristics of effective exercise in the early childhood environment
- Identify strategies for promoting social and emotional development through movement activities
- Define the Five Fitness Factors
- Identify exercise strategies for reducing body fat
- Identify recommended strategies for designing a movement environment
- Identify strategies for incorporating movement across the general curriculum, including language arts, science, math, and art
- Identify strategies for helping parents motivate their children to engage in active play at home

References:

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3. Epstein, A. (2014). *The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children's Learning*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
4. Kinsner, K. (2021). "Top 5: Tips for Active Play, Indoors and Out." Zero to Three. Retrieved from https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2639-top-5-tips-for-active-play-indoors-and-out
5. Lindsay, A. & Byington, T. (2020). "Physical Activity Promotes Brain Development." University of Nevada. Retrieved from https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=2921
6. Pica, R. (2017). *Active Learning Across the Curriculum: Teaching the Way They Learn, 3rd edition*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
7. Pica, R. (2019). *Acting Out!: Avoiding Behavior Challenges with Active Learning Games & Activities*. Redleaf Press.
8. Shape America. (2020). "Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children from Birth to Age 5." https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/guidelines/activestart.aspx
9. Tester, J., et al. (2018). "Characteristics of Children 2 to 5 Years of Age with Severe Obesity." Pediatrics, volume 141 issue 3. Retrieved from https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29487163/

Additional Resources

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2. Carlson, F. (2011). *Big Body Play*. The National Association for the Education of Young Children.
3. Pica, R. (2011). "Why Preschoolers Need Physical Education." Washington DC: Young Children. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930396
4. Van Prag, H. (2009). "Exercise and the brain: something to chew on." Trends in Neuroscience, 32(5), 283-290. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2680508/

Course Notes:

Physical Activity

Physical activity is essential for healthy brain development:

Physical activity helps children develop and improve:

In addition, children that are physically active are more likely to:

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General Guidelines for Various Age Groups

The Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America has issued a position statement that *"All children from birth to age 5 should engage in physical activity that promotes movement skillfulness and foundations of health-related fitness."*

Guidelines for Infants

Guidelines for Toddlers

General Benefits of Good Fitness Habits

Some of the benefits of physical fitness for young children include:

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Physical fitness also:

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Brain Development and Physical Fitness

Cross-lateral movement (right arm/left leg, left arm/right leg):

Regular physical activity is good for brain development:

Effects on Other Developmental Domains

The Physical Domain

When children move or participate in physical activity, they are developing:

Introduce a mixture of _____ (stretching), _____ (sprinting), _____ (sit-ups) and _____ (dance) activities.

Examples of low intensity, sustained activities that are developmentally appropriate for preschoolers:

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The Social/Emotional Domain

Physical skills boost children's _____ and _____ (independence), which are keys to emotional wellbeing. Movement activities can also help build a

sense of _____ and _____,

which in turn boosts the development of both social and emotional skills.

You can incorporate activities that emphasize _____so that each child knows that he or she plays a vital role in the outcome, and each accepts responsibility of fulfilling that role.

Cooperative play can occur through:

The following activities can promote social development:

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These activities help children feel _____—the ability to imagine what it would be like to be someone or something else—which is an essential ingredient in healthy social development.

The Cognitive Domain

Teachers should offer children opportunities to solve problems, invent solutions to challenges, increase spatial awareness, and make the abstract concrete. Here are some ideas to try:

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Structured and Unstructured Play

Participation for Every Child

A child's day should include both _____and _____ active play time.

SHAPE America offers the following specific recommendations regarding teaching and learning in physical movement. Preschool children should:

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-
-
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Structured Play

Unstructured Play

The Five Fitness Factors

Factor 1: Cardiovascular Endurance

Factor 2: Muscular Strength

Factor 3: Muscular Endurance

Factor 4: Flexibility

Factor 5: Body Composition

Designing the Movement Environment

SHAPE America states that the following factors should be considered when developing or evaluating the learning environment:

Scheduled Activities

Class Size

Equipment

Play

Facilities

Opportunities for Repetition and Success

Integration of Movement into All Subject Areas

Physical Fitness across the Curriculum

Creative Arts

Music

Language and Literacy

10 Reasons to Promote Language and Literacy through Movement

1. Children learn best through active involvement.

2. Spatial orientation is necessary for letter identification and the orientation of symbols on a page.

3. Actively experiencing the rhythm of words and sentences helps children find the rhythm necessary for reading and writing.

4. When children demonstrate the meaning of words physically, their understanding of the words is immediate and long-lasting.

5. Adverbs and adjectives become much more than abstract concepts.

6. Playing together provides opportunities for children to speak and listen to one another.

7. Stringing actions together to form sequences is similar to linking words to form sentences (and eventually paragraphs).

8. ***When children act out the words of a poem, the plot of a story, or the lyrics of a song, they must ponder the meanings of the words***.

9. ***Movement activities provide opportunities to cross the body's midline.***

10. ***There's a famous saying:***

Mathematics

Science

Social Studies

Physical Fitness and Family Involvement

What Motivates Children?

There is a lot to gain from physical activity, but how can ECE professionals encourage children to stay active? First, ECE professionals need to understand 3 basic factors:

1. Appropriateness:

2. Opportunity:

3. Fun:

Here are some ideas about how to get children up and moving:

Team Sports and Young Children

Try This!

Cross-Lateral Activities

You can provide the following cross-lateral movements for children to build brainpower:

- Encourage children to twist at the waist with arms stretched to the side and bend at the waist to touch the toes using the left hand to touch the right toe and the right hand to touch the left toe.
- Place babies on their tummies and place toys in front of them to one side or the other. Encourage them to reach for the toys and then switch sides.
- Sing fingerplays like "Itsy Bitsy Spider," encouraging children to crawl the spider up one arm, then the other.
- Makeup hand jives or clapping games to guide children to touch opposing hands, knees, elbows, etc.
- Encourage children to paint with both hands.
- Have children pretend to be animals that crawl, climb, etc.
- Have children hug themselves by placing their arms across the chest and squeezing.

Try This!

Elbow-to-Elbow

Have children work with a partner. Call out one of three phrases: *elbow-to-elbow, knee-to-knee,* or *heel-to-heel.* Partners must touch these body parts together.

This activity requires communication and cooperation, and maintaining various silly positions (and the accompanying laughter) provides good exercise and muscle development.

Try This!

Parachute Games

A parachute can be the basis of a wide variety of activities. A simple Internet search for "parachute games" will reveal many ideas, but the chances are good that children will develop some great ideas of their own if you use a parachute.

Parachutes come in a range of sizes, from 6-foot to 45-foot diameter or more, so it is possible to find one for almost any space or group size. Prices can range from $50 to $500 and up depending on size. If you are not able to purchase a parachute, you can use lightweight, breathable material.

Safety is a concern. Be sure there is enough space for children to wave their arms and move around the parachute.

Children need to follow common-sense rules to avoid collisions. You should also make sure there is ample padding in the play area to protect knees and tailbones from falls.

Try This!

Body Art

When children arrange their bodies into different shapes, they are using artistic as well as physical concepts. Show children straight objects like a yardstick or the edge of a rectangular table and have them create that shape with their bodies. Then show them a round object like a lid from the paint jar or a round table and have them make that shape with their body.

Use a piece of yarn to help children visualize different kinds of lines, for instance, *straight*, *curved*, *crooked*, *vertical*, *horizontal*, and *diagonal*. See if they can use their bodies to create the shapes you made with the yarn.

Try This!

Expressive Movement

Talk about various colors and ask the children what comes to mind when they think of a specific color.

For example, if you mention yellow, they might think about a banana or lemon. Ask them if they can take on that shape with their bodies.

Provide a movement activity like dancing freely or with scarves or streamers, hopping from one place to another, crawling on all fours, etc., and then encourage the children to draw what they experienced through the movement.

A child might have imagined being a bunny or kangaroo when hopping around and draw a picture of one of those animals. A child dancing with streamers might have felt like they were flying like a bird or butterfly and draw a picture of that image.

Try This!

Musical Movements

- To introduce ***tempo***, have children sway gently to slow music or pretend to be a turtle that crawls along slowly. To illustrate fast tempo, play music with a faster beat and encourage children to skip or run pretending to be a race car or a fast-flying bug.
- To illustrate the musical element of ***volume***, play a song that contrasts volumes and have children softly tiptoe or pretend to be floating through the air like a butterfly. When the music gets loud, have the children stomp their feet or march around the room like giant dinosaurs.
- Have children make body sounds by pretending to cough, sneeze, yawn, hiccup, giggle and snore. Ask them how many sounds they can make with their hands, feet, and lips.
- Introduce various instruments and the sounds they make. Ask the children to give you movements that could accompany the sounds.
- Recite fingerplays and sing songs that depict emotions and have the children demonstrate the emotions while saying the words that describe them. For example, shaking their head and finger and looking stern while saying, "no more monkeys jumping on the bed!"

Try This!

Quantitative and Qualitative Reasoning

Introduce basic quantitative (involves measurements and numbers) and qualitative language (observations or comparisons that do not involve numbers or measurements) and concepts into your daily routine with the children.

Qualitative

- Use words such as *big* and *little*, *long* and *short*, *high* and *low*, *first* and *last*, *light* and *heavy*, as well as *middle*, *group*, *pair*, *many*, *more*, *most*, *twice*, *once*, *few*, *together*, and *bunch*. Movement can convey most of these ideas to children.
- Pose questions to children throughout the movement activities. Tell them to show you how they can do a movement twice or once more.
- Props and obstacle courses provide an excellent avenue to introduce positional concepts such as over, under, around, and through.

Quantitative

- Teach children how to count by counting beats clapped.
- Ask children to take a certain number of steps to the lunch table or their cubbies.
- Have children count the number of times they can bounce a ball or hop on one foot.

Try This!

Scientific Exercise

- Perhaps nothing provides both exercise and scientific learning like a good nature walk. There are just as many interesting scientific observations to be made in the sidewalk cracks as there are along a nature trail in the woods, so there is no excuse for not including nature observation and movement in the curriculum.
- Moving like animals can teach a lot about different characteristics like size, shape, and the way they move.

Try This!

Reinforcing Self-Concept through Movement

- Encourage children to express feelings by showing you those feelings with their hands or faces.
- Have children listen and dance to songs from recordings by artists like Hap Palmer (Getting to Know Myself).
- Provide props for dramatic play in which children pretend to be family members or community helpers.
- Explore different cultures through music, movement, and literature.