

MOVEMENT in the Primary Grades

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Encouraging Different Types of Physical Activity

Why Different Types of Physical Activity?

To fully develop the brain and body, students need different types of physical activity. At their desks, playing with small toys, building blocks or crayons develops fine motor skills, which is useful in establishing writing and drawing ability. Students also need vigorous physical activity moving the whole body. This kind of activity strengthens muscles and the heart, and develops balance, coordination and agility. It also helps students to develop lifelong habits of being regularly active and to stay healthier throughout their lives.

Being active in a variety of different ways helps build:

Stronger bones: Students need to support their body weight through running, jumping or hanging from a climbing bar. These types of movements put more calcium into their bones, strengthening them.

Stronger muscles: This comes from making them work – lifting, carrying, jumping, hanging, throwing, pushing and pulling.

Stronger heart: Vigorous activities make the heart beat faster. Doing this makes the heart stronger and gives a student more stamina. It is also expected to help make a student sleep better.

Stronger mind: Being active stimulates the hippocampus and this releases endorphins leading to stress reduction and feelings of happiness. Activity has also been shown to improve learning, problem solving abilities, memory, attention and focus, and new brain tissue growth.

Being active in a variety of different ways helps develop fundamental movement skills.

Being skillful makes it more likely that students will become and remain active. Skills should include:



Non-locomotor skills: Having body control while the body is stationary works to strengthen the brain-body link and the body should be used in many different ways- including squatting, being upside down, and spinning around.



Locomotor skills: Having body control while the body is stationary works to strengthen the brain-body link and the body should be used in many different ways- including squatting, being upside down, and spinning around. Ideally, activities that are culturally relevant like hiking and snowshoeing are also developed. These strengthen the muscles of the body and help develop balance and agility.



Manipulative skills: Learning to catch and throw, strike or kick requires coordination and the ability of the eyes to follow a moving object. This takes a long time to develop. Practice helps, especially with large, soft balls that do not hurt the student if they miss the catch.