Meeting the Standards of Physical Literacy—Part II

The childcare community has expressed a desire for information regarding how to exceed the standards of accreditation. This monthly bulletin will outline areas within the Accreditation Standards that may allow programs to enhance their practice. The purpose of this bulletin is to assist programs in understanding reflective practice and how to incorporate it into daily procedure.

2.2 Child care programs promote physical wellness in all children and incorporate physical literacy in everyday programming.

The Aligned Standards, launched in December 2013, has a new emphasis on Physical Literacy. While the previous Standards showcased the importance of physical activity; current research and new provincial initiatives has focused on the importance of physical activity for children’s brain development and their overall wellness.

So What is Physical Literacy?

“Physical Literacy is about mastering fundamental movement skills that permit a child to read their environment and make appropriate decisions while moving confidently and within control in a wide range of physical activities in both indoor and outdoor environments.” (Canadian Sport for Life)

In our last newsletter, we addressed the Accreditation Standard for 2.2a, 2.2b, and 2.2d on Physical Literacy.

In this newsletter, we will address the Accreditation Standard for 2.2f, 2.2g, 2.2h, and 2.2i.

Body and Movement:

2.2 f. Provide diverse physical experiences that are based on the skills and interests of each child.

“Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that expends energy beyond resting levels” (Dr. Valerie Carson, University of Alberta, http://www.ualberta.ca/~vicarson)

Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Children and Healthy Families, BC tell us that three different types of activities promote healthy growth and development:

- Endurance activities can be lots of fun and they don’t have to be competitive. Which of these activities are children interested in? What activities and sports can you think of that involve these fundamental movement skills?
  - Kicking
  - Throwing
  - Balancing
  - Hitting
  - Running
  - Climbing

- Flexibility
  - Activities that encourage children to bend, stretch and reach promote flexibility. Having flexibility allows children to participate in daily activities without pain or restriction from their muscles or joints.
  - Being flexible promotes good posture, reduces muscle stiffness and soreness, increases relaxation and minimizes risk of injury. Which of the following would help a child to move their body with more fluidity?
    - Digging
    - Raking
    - Hanging
    - Dancing
    - Climbing
    - Skipping

Endurance

Activities that build endurance involve continuous movement of large muscles. They increase heart rate, cause breathing to quicken, and make you work up a sweat. They are important for development of a healthy heart and lungs.

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Children learn by doing. Each experience builds the brain. Each positive experience increases the chance that a child wants to participate. The more positive experiences, the more the brain is built up and the stronger the skills become. It’s a wonderful learning circle. Each time an experience is repeated the connections become stronger and more permanent. As they become more competent and confident their skills get better. As their skills get better they enjoy the activity more. Sounds like joyful learning.

It is important for children to develop the motivation, confidence and competence to keep moving for life. Children should have many positive experiences. When experiences are positive and fun, they want to do them over and over (motivation), begin to challenge themselves (confidence) and become better so they want to participate (competence). Negative experiences teach children they aren’t good at physical activities then they stop doing them (motivation) become less confident and less competent. It’s a downward spiral.

It is up to adults to encourage and make physical activities accessible to all children and to have fun along the way.

By applying our knowledge of play, we can encourage all children to explore, be curious, practice, and become confident, healthy and engaged citizens. Our knowledge of play informs all. We can do this!

As caregivers, we are mentoring and coaching children into healthy adults. What kind of healthy adults do you want in your future?

Note:
Lets Play BC is a resource for skills adaptation for children with disabilities and mobility impairments. They focus on core abilities like strength, balance, coordination and flexibility and movement skills like wheeling, changing direction and stationary movements.

**Reflective Questions**

Have you ever caught yourself thinking or saying, “Well, they can’t do it anyways, so why try?” How can you encourage all children to participate to the best of their ability? What modifications can you make? Can you stand closer when throwing? Can you provide a larger softer ball? Can the child use a tee or a shorter implement? How can all children be included to have fun?

**Active movement indoors and out:**

2.2 h. Intentionally plan for a variety of indoor and outdoor physical experiences each day.
Becoming a competent and confident adult means that fundamental skills must be in place from childhood. Much like learning language a child must practice sounds and words in order to talk and read; they also need to explore movement over time to be able to be active. They need Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS). These can be practiced both indoors and outdoors and can be integrated into daily routines. FMS skills can be built into your routine and give children confidence to participate when they play an activity that is more structured.

**Reflective Questions**
How do you intentionally plan for activity? How do you make sure children have a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences to build their confidence and competence? Can movement be as simple as pushing a ball back and forth on the floor? Think about all the muscles involved! Pushing, stretching and bending. It’s that easy!

Have you hopped to the snack table? Have you walked backwards to the bathroom? Have you taken itty-bitty, tippy-toe walking to the circle rug? Have you crawled up the hill then rolled down it just for fun?

**2.2 i. Ensure use of technology that promotes sedentary behaviour (computers, television) is limited and focused on intended developmental outcomes.**

Dr. Valerie Carson, from the University of Alberta, explains that sedentary behaviours are those activities that involve very little movement and very little energy expenditure. Napping is not considered sedentary behaviour, but sedentary behaviour is when children are in a sitting or reclining position, such as: sitting in a stroller, in a high chair, or in a car seat—anytime they are restrained. Another big aspect of sedendentary behaviour is ‘screen time,’ which is typically watching TV, using computers, or iPads. The key is that children are not to be sitting for prolonged periods of time.

The use of technology has changed significantly over the past few years. When the original ACCAP and AOSCAP Accreditation Standards were introduced, it was recommended that technology be limited. Technology is here to stay. How can it be used intentionally and meet developmental outcomes? Can skills development be recorded and shown to parents to demonstrate their child’s growth over time? Seeing a child at the beginning of Kindergarten trying the monkey bars then gradually improve their strength and endurance over time is exciting for child, parent and caregiver. Seeing the big smile on an infant learning to walk is fascinating as they explore and eventually master the skill.

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend that children under 2 years have no screen time. “Recent research suggests that too much ‘screen time’ promotes lower language and cognitive development particularly for children between the ages of 0 and 2 as
Infants

Babies might not be able to run and play like the "big kids" just yet, but there’s lots they can do to keep their little arms and legs moving throughout the day.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology suggests that infants engage in physical activity several times a day particularly with interactive floor-based play.

Getting down on the floor with infants helps them to explore their environment, develop motor skills, build strength and coordination, increase body awareness, and learn valuable social skills with their peers.

Give babies “tummy time” throughout the day. Infants can explore their world and build their strength and skills through safe “tummy time”. This encourages babies to see, touch, and feel what’s around them. Letting infants spend time on their stomachs helps them:

- strengthen their neck and shoulder muscles
- reach movement milestones like rolling over, sitting up, and crawling

To encourage movement, try putting favorite toys just out of reach. Always make sure infants have tummy time when they’re awake and alert (never asleep) — and placed on a solid surface on the floor.

School Age Children

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology suggests school age children should be getting 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day.

Older children (ages 6 to 12) can benefit from direct instruction in sport or other activities. At this age, children are ready to learn ball-handling skills in soccer, or develop their skating skills for hockey. This is the time to put children in more structured programs. They can handle the instruction.

Structured activity isn’t the only way to develop fundamental movement skills. Older children still benefit strongly from having the opportunity to simply explore and challenge themselves, learning about what their bodies can do.

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do. This is the kind of learning that happens when children gather on their own to play without adults organizing, refereeing, or coaching.

Children need hours of play to build their muscles, endurance, flexibility and strength. Moving is important! Playing outside is key to learning and becoming a healthy child and a healthy adult.

“There is strong evidence-based research to show that children are more active in outdoor environments than indoors. Children are most active within the first 10 minutes of outdoor time.” (Valerie Carson, University of Alberta)

Summary

We know that the behaviours that children develop at a young age can set habits that tend to track over time. The physical activity habits and sedentary behaviour habits of children in the early years tend to be moderately similar over time as they grow into childhood and adulthood. Behaviours in the early years can predict some of the health outcomes later in life. We need to give children the best start possible to help them maintain a healthy active lifestyle. (Dr. Valerie Carson, University of Alberta)

A pilot study, called Supporting Healthy Active Living Behaviours in Licensed Approved Child Care Settings, evaluated the impact of the new Accreditation Standards on physical activity and sedentary behaviours. This study was spearheaded by the Behavioural Epidemiology Lab at the University of Alberta (Dr. Valerie Carson) and funded by the Alberta Centre for Child Family and Community Research. Please see http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/news/2014/12/physical-activity-sedentary-behaviour-childcare/ for a summary of the results.

How Can Your Program Focus on Physical Literacy?

Physical Literacy is a broad topic. There is a lot of information available on the Internet, but the first step is to make it a priority. To begin, you may want to research topics within physical literacy and choose to focus on a specific area that you can easily incorporate within your programming.

You may want to form a Physical Literacy team that is solely responsible for initiating physical literacy activities within your program. For example, the YMCA in Edmonton began by forming a team “...of child care directors and managers who became certified trainers in Move ‘n Play and the National Coaching Certification Program with a focus on Fundamental Movement Skills. This allowed our leadership staff to create and implement workshops for our Educators around Physical Literacy.” (Candace Stecyk, YMCA)

Since 2012, they have made it a priority to ensure the children in all YMCA programs learn to make healthy and active choices by altering their programming sheets to include a section on Physical Literacy that identified what Physical Literacy skills were being used in each game or sport.

Team members “...consistently provide information to parents and staff about Physical Literacy learning opportunities, conferences and other educational pieces so all of our program participants stay well informed of the importance of ensuring our children are physically literate.” (Candace Stecyk, YMCA)

They will begin piloting physical literacy assessments in 2015 for children ages 7-8 in their school aged programs. Their team will visit their child care programs to complete audits and ensure physical literacy programming is standard across their centres. This will be a learning partnership between their Educators, children and their parents.

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Resources!

http://www.physicalactivityplan.org/resources/CPAG.pdf

https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/importance-physical-activity-children

http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org/home/activities.html

http://activeforlife.com/learning-through-experiences


http://www.letsplaybc.ca/

http://www.cich.ca/Publications_childdevelopment.html#movinggrowing1


http://www.cich.ca/Publications_childdevelopment.html#movinggrowing1


http://www.provincialfitnessunit.ca

http://www.coach.ca/fundamental-movement-skills-s16736.