

# Physical Literacy in the Early Years

## Unpicking the challenges

# *Leap*



# ACTIVITY:

I am..

I have...



# Physical Literacy Definitions

“Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”

(Whitehead, 2010)

“The motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”( IPLA, 2023)

“Physical literacy is our relationship with movement and physical activity throughout life.” (Sport England, 2023)



# Let's Explore Our Relationship with Movement

## **Our relationship:**

- Is complex and evolving, shaped by our thoughts, feelings, engagement, and experiences
- Significantly influences our likelihood to choose and sustain physical activity, with profound impacts on health, wellbeing, and quality of life
- Is developed through how we move, connect, think, and feel during physical activity and grows when activities are meaningful, enjoyable, and valued
  - Is shaped by our social, cultural, and environmental contexts, which can support or hinder our engagement
  - Is uniquely personal, evolving across life based on individual strengths, circumstances, experiences, and identity



# **ACTIVITY:**

**Walk around the room**



# What is Early Years Physical Literacy?

**EY Physical Literacy** can be defined using four holistic elements:

- ✓ Move
  - ✓ Think
  - ✓ Feel
  - ✓ Connect
- (Weir, 2024)



**What is the recommended amount of physical activity a child aged 2-5 should have every day?**

20 mins

30 mins

60 mins

90 mins

180 mins



The recommended amount of PA a young child should have each day is **180 minutes**, **60 minutes** of that time should be high impact, cardio exercise.

Opportunities for children to explore movement should be available both inside and outside.



## Lifestyle advice for kids

Recommendations by the World Health Organization

| Activity / Age                                                    | Less than 1 year                                                             | Between 1 and 2 years                                                                                               | Between 3 and 4 years                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interactive floor-based play                                      | ✓                                                                            |                                                                                                                     |                                                                            |
| Tummy time (lying on stomach)                                     | ✓                                                                            | <i>Physical activity is associated with better cognitive and motor development, psychosocial and cardiac health</i> |                                                                            |
| Physical activity                                                 | ✓ Several times a day                                                        | ✓ 3 hours or more                                                                                                   | ✓ 3 hours or more                                                          |
| Including moderate-vigorous physical activity                     |                                                                              | ✓                                                                                                                   | ✓ 60 minutes or more                                                       |
| Sedentary time (in prams, highchair, strapped to one's back, etc) | ✓ Not more than 1 hour at a time                                             | ✓ Not more than 1 hour at a time                                                                                    | ✓ Not more than 1 hour at a time                                           |
| <i>Engaging in reading and storytelling is encouraged</i>         |                                                                              |                                                                                                                     |                                                                            |
| Screen time                                                       | ✗                                                                            | ✗ (2 years: -1h/day)                                                                                                | ✓ Not more than an hour                                                    |
| Sleep time                                                        | ✓<br>0-3 months<br>Between 14-17 hours<br>4-11 months<br>Between 12-16 hours | ✓ Between 11-14 hours including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times                                          | ✓ Between 10-13 hours including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times |

© AFP Source: WHO



# Salutogenic Profiling

In early years practice, salutogenic profiling can guide educators, parents, and health professionals to design interventions and play environments that build on children's existing capabilities, foster resilience, and embed movement as a meaningful, enjoyable, and health-promoting part of everyday life. (Antonovsky, 1987)



# Salutogenic Profiling

When applied to early childhood movement behaviours, salutogenic profiling helps us to:

- Understand strengths and resources: It identifies what supports children's engagement in movement (access to safe play spaces, supportive adults, playful environments).
- Explore contexts of physical activity: Profiling looks at how social, cultural, and environmental factors influence children's opportunities for active play.
- Highlight meaning-making: Children's movement behaviours are not only physical but also tied to joy, curiosity, and social connection.** Profiling considers how movement contributes to their sense of meaning and wellbeing.
- Promote equity and inclusion: By focusing on assets rather than deficits, this approach recognises diverse abilities and backgrounds, ensuring movement opportunities are accessible to all. (Battelley, 2021)





# Three Characteristics for Optimal Learning Experiences in Early Childhood

1. The adult providing guidance should have a clear learning goal in mind when setting up an activity.
2. The activity or interaction should allow children some degree of choice and agency
3. The adult should be flexible in their use of guidance techniques (eg by using open-ended questions, hints, prompts, modelling) (Skene, 2022)

(NUDGE THEORY)





# **ACTIVITY – Keep it Simple**

**Make it bigger**



## Development Milestones

Most children will follow a pattern of developmental milestones however, we should not expect children to crawl, climb, walk, run, jump automatically when their physical development reaches a certain level of maturity.

Each individual child is unique in their embodiment of movement (the physical reality of being, thinking and doing within one's own body) and their journey must be a personal one.

Yet, studies suggest that children who are physically stimulated reach developmental milestones and become independent earlier. They have keener senses, better muscle coordination and have a more secure self-image. On the other hand, children who are not physically stimulated are found to grow up at a distinct disadvantage, this disadvantage may linger for years.



# PD MILESTONES FROM BIRTH

Survival (primitive) reflexes, Head control, Awareness of senses

Reaching while focusing, Awareness of sounds coming from their mouth, Rolling over, Tummy Time – Pushing up, Keen observation, Grasping with control, Mouthing, All fours and rocking, Pushing away, Letting go, Transfer of hands, Sitting Crawling, Pincer grip, Pulling up to stand, Shuffling with support

Standing, Climbing, Eye/hand coordination, Toddling, Squatting

Copying movement, Running, Bopping, Jumping, Hanging, Balance, Dexterity, Marching, Hopping, Galloping, Leaping, Skipping



# WHO IS BEST PLACED TO DELIVER EY PA/PE?

Teaching should commence with the history, present and unwritten future of each pupil (Freire 1972).



# Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

..is an approach to early childhood education that promotes optimal learning and development by aligning teaching with:

Child development knowledge – understanding typical patterns of growth in children across ages and stages.

Individual appropriateness – recognising each child's unique strengths, interests, needs, and pace of development.

Cultural and social context – respecting the social, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds in which children live and learn.

The goal of DAP is to create learning experiences that are stage-appropriate, individually responsive, and culturally relevant, supporting children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth in ways that are meaningful and engaging. **E.G Physical Literacy**



# Reflections!

- ✓ Meet them where they are!
- ✓ Do you have knowledge of PD and Developmental milestones?
- ✓ We must know about PD before progressing to PE and sports
- ✓ How do you manage behaviours?
- ✓ Can you identify specific needs and requirements?

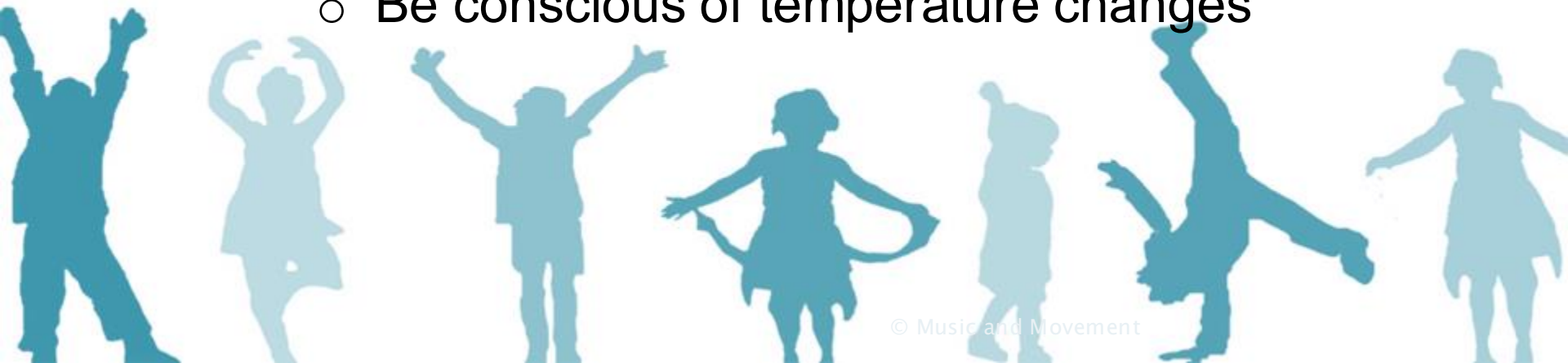


# Movement makes us smile!



# Technical Aspects and Safety

- Give clear guidance
  - Demonstrate safe behaviours
  - Use language children will understand
- Explain and demonstrate activities for those who cannot understand
  - Know when and when not to step in!
- Be vigilant when using challenging apparatus
  - Use a rainstick/tambourine for attention
    - Speak in a hushed tone
  - Be conscious of temperature changes



# **ACTIVITY:**

**Aim, Strike, Retrieve**

**(temporal awareness)**





# Stimuli

In early years equipment should be as open-ended and diverse as possible. Try using these objects to enhance your lessons:

- ✓ Bubble Wrap
- ✓ Scarves
- ✓ Paper Bags
- ✓ Ping Pong Balls
- ✓ Old carpet tubes
- ✓ Tarpaulin
- ✓ Pillow cases
- ✓ Tights and socks
- ✓ Foil Blankets
- ✓ Bamboo canes
- ✓ Chalks
- ✓ Loose parts

Use the resource list to create your own collection of open-ended equipment



# The construct of a lesson/workshop

When creating a lesson, keep it simple.

This is a formula I recommend:

- Warm-up (3-5 mins)
- Introduction/explanation (1 minute)
- Activity Topic /learning outcome (10-15mins)
- Equipment/apparatus (15-20 mins)
- Relaxation/cool down (3-5 mins)
- Reflection (1 minute)



# Child Centred Learning

- ☐ Adapt the lesson to meet the needs, abilities and interests of the child
  - ☐ Involve the child in the learning process
    - ☐ Clear outcomes and how to progress
      - ☐ Find out what they can do
      - ☐ Stage of development not AGE
    - ☐ Be creative to meet individual needs
- ☐ Engage in conversation teaching and allow children to develop agency over their learning



# ACTIVITY:

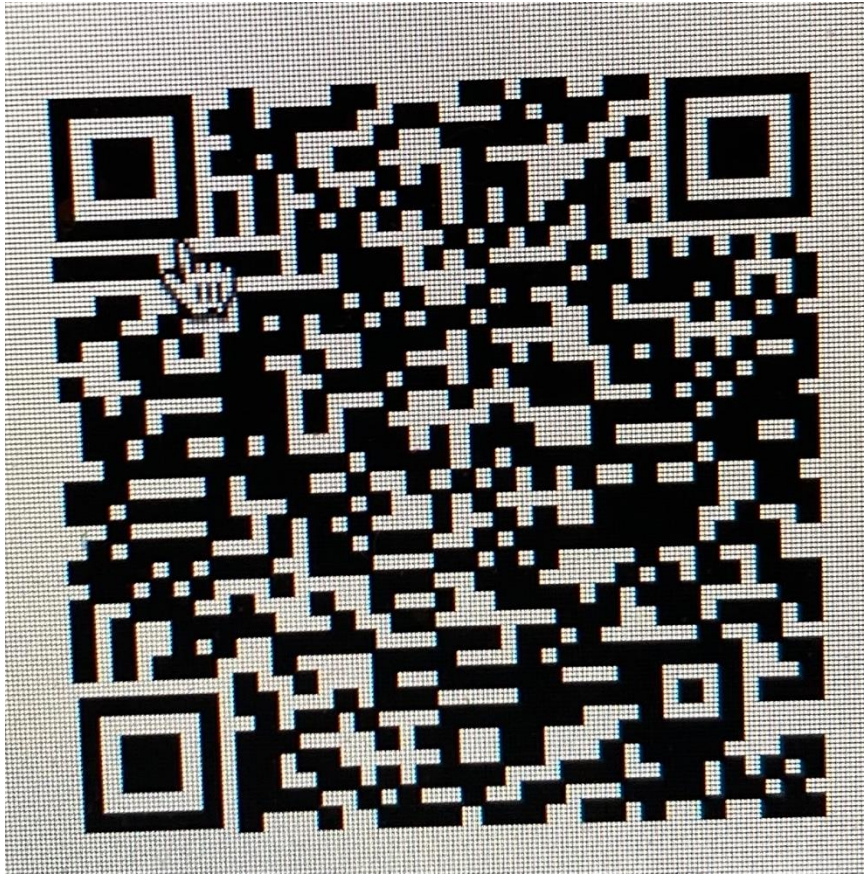
## Ribbons



Are you worthy of imitation?

**Rudolph Steiner**





FREE  
Music  
Activities  
Download  
Resource  
Link





**Elevate Physical  
Education and Sport in  
your school with an all-  
in-one Continuous  
Professional  
Development solution**

**A flexible, expert-led  
platform designed for  
busy educators.**



## Testimonial



FIRST IMPRESSIONS WERE REALLY POSITIVE, THE KIDS LOVED THE GAMES AND WANTED TO HAVE LOTS OF GAMES AT CERTAIN ROLES. THE CARDS WERE SUPER EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND PUT INTO ACTION AND I SHARED IT WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT TO LOOK AT AND THEY WERE BLOWN AWAY BY IT.



*Ellis Dinger - Head of PE & Sport at Kumbala International School, Sabah*





Early Years PD

A YEAR OF  
PLANNING  
SCHEME OF  
WORK.

We have done  
the hard work  
so you don't  
have to!





@musicandmove  
@HBattelley



@musicandmovementdance



@HelenBattelley

[www.musicandmovement.org.uk](http://www.musicandmovement.org.uk)  
[Helen@musicandmovement.org.uk](mailto:Helen@musicandmovement.org.uk)

