

## Section 3: The Learning Environment

### The Learner

While general characteristics for each level of schooling have been identified, there is a need to recognize that changing characteristics are on a continuum with many variations within each group. The continuum is even greater in a multigrade situation. Each child is a unique individual and any attempt to “classify” must be avoided.

The astute teacher, through experience, careful observation and on-going evaluation will recognize patterns of growth and development within each class and will adapt, modify or individualize learning experiences accordingly. If sufficient attention is given to the nature of the learner, and if learning activities are carefully planned and sequenced, physical education will be a positive, joyful experience for all students.

## Primary Children – Growth and Development

### Physical

Characteristics	Implications
<p>Structural growth moderate and steady.</p> <p>Children mature at different rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lose body fat;</li> <li>• muscles increase in size and strength as a result of repeated exercise;</li> <li>• postural difficulties become more noticeable by age 8;</li> <li>• heart and lungs small in proportion to body size;</li> <li>• tires easily;</li> <li>• coordination improving;</li> <li>• gross motor skills more developed than fine motor skills;</li> <li>• reaction time slow but it improves with age.</li> </ul> <p>Children far-sighted; quick or accurate focusing difficult; spatial judgement difficult. Improves with age.</p> <p>Physical capabilities unaffected by gender differences.</p> <p>Have varying motor abilities.</p> <p>Has an inherent need to move.</p> <p>Enjoy new experiences and learn by doing.</p> <p>Increasing development in manipulative skills.</p>	<p>Need activities which allow for free body movement and practice of good posture.</p> <p>Need for vigorous activities appropriate to each child's readiness level.</p> <p>Need for activities of short duration, frequent changes.</p> <p>Need to provide mainly large muscle activities with a variety of equipment (varying size, shape).</p> <p>Need for self-testing and agility activities.</p> <p>Need for suitable equipment appropriate in size and weight for activities such as throwing and catching.</p> <p>Need for non-gender based activities.</p> <p>Need to provide activities for further development of motor skills.</p> <p>Need to provide activities that allow maximum movement opportunities.</p> <p>Need opportunities to interact physically</p> <p>Need for large variety of small equipment.</p>

## Primary Children – Growth and Development

### Intellectual

Characteristics	Implications
<p>Learns by doing, imitating, exploring-</p> <p>Short attention span.</p> <p>Needs to feel successful.</p> <p>Memory is improving, but may lapse.</p> <p>Ability to concentrate varies, may be prone to accidents.</p> <p>Has greater purpose in life.</p> <p>Repetition is enjoyed.</p> <p>Wants to always be involved</p> <p>Concepts of time, weight, and space are in development.</p> <p>Eager to learn.</p> <p>Enjoy music and rhythmic activities.</p> <p>Imaginative and love dramatics.</p> <p>General lack of fear.</p> <p>Ability to reason is improving.</p> <p>Is easily discouraged.</p> <p>"Why?" is often asked.</p> <p>Enjoys new vocabulary and big words.</p>	<p>Need for variety of teacher-led and self-directed activities.</p> <p>Need to change activities often.</p> <p>Need for selection of activities which assure success.</p> <p>Need for activities of a repetitive and sequential nature.</p> <p>Need for constant monitoring.</p> <p>New skills and mastery should be encouraged.</p> <p>Need for routine and repetitious activity.</p> <p>Need for wide variety of individual equipment.</p> <p>Opportunity for discovery and exploration of space, effort, and relationships.</p> <p>Need for wide range of stimulating learning experiences.</p> <p>Need to provide rhythmic activities such as singing, games, and dancing.</p> <p>Creative movement should be promoted.</p> <p>Need challenging activities within own capabilities.</p> <p>Need for clear, concise directions.</p> <p>Need for frequent praise, encouragement and understanding.</p> <p>Program should encourage group discussion.</p> <p>Opportunity exists for increased knowledge base.</p>

## Primary Children – Growth and Development

### Emotional

Characteristics	Implications
<p>Play is serious business.</p> <p>Demonstrates varying degree of control over emotions.</p> <p>Becoming less egocentric, not ready for true teamwork.</p> <p>Have varying attitudes toward fair play and sportsmanship.</p> <p>Gradually become more independent.</p> <p>Enjoy success.</p> <p>Are very creative, curious, imitative, and like rhythm.</p> <p>Enjoy risk, but may not recognize danger.</p> <p>Enjoy physical activity in their leisure time.</p> <p>Needs recognition for accomplishment, eager to please.</p>	<p>Need for challenging activities. Need for sensitivity regarding the importance of play to the child.</p> <p>Need for progressive activities appropriate to ability levels.</p> <p>Important to encourage consideration for others.</p> <p>Need to encourage positive attitude toward fair play and sportsmanship.</p> <p>Need for activities which encourage independence and decision making.</p> <p>Need for activities that are progressive and appropriate to individual ability levels.</p> <p>Need for many rhythmic and creative movement experiences.</p> <p>Need for challenging experiences.</p> <p>Need for a repertoire of activities suitable for leisure time.</p> <p>Need for frequent praise and acknowledgment.</p>

## Primary Children – Growth and Development

### Social

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Enjoying approval of peers and adults.</p> <p>Social awareness is developing.</p> <p>Enjoy fun.</p> <p>The ability to cooperate is developing.</p> <p>Willing and eager to help.</p>	<p>Need to provide activities which will encourage peer approval.</p> <p>Need for observation and feedback. Need to use partner and small group activities to teach cooperation and responsibility.</p> <p>Need to provide activities offering immediate success.</p> <p>Need for emphasis on cooperative activities.</p> <p>Need for individual responsibility and for leadership development in student-centered activity.</p>

## Primary Children – Growth and Development

### Moral

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Tend to conform in order to avoid disapproval.</p> <p>May begin to experience guilt feelings for wrongdoing.</p> <p>Concern for others is developing.</p>	<p>Need to promote understanding of the reasons for appropriate behaviours and actions as opposed to external approval and disapproval.</p> <p>Need to recognize guilt as one of four basic emotions: love, anger, fear, guilt, to deal appropriately with the feelings and to understand what evokes the feelings. Need to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate guilt feelings.</p> <p>Need to create an awareness of the effects of their actions on others feelings.</p>

## Elementary Children - Growth and Development

### Physical

Characteristics	Implications
<p>Growth patterns may be different from girls and boys.</p> <p>May exhibit awkwardness.</p> <p>Greater endurance due to increased heart and lung size.</p> <p>Posture problems may become evident</p> <p>The need to move is inherent.</p> <p>Wide variations in body size.</p>	<p>Need to allow for individual differences.</p> <p>Need to provide progression appropriate to ability levels.</p> <p>Need to provide more vigorous activities.</p> <p>Need for observation and consultation, and referral if necessary.</p> <p>Need to provide maximum participation.</p> <p>Need for sensitivity to individual differences, needs, and concern for safety.</p>

## Elementary Children - Growth and Development

### Intellectual

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Increasing attention span.</p> <p>Tend to be very curious and ask many questions.</p> <p>Capable of more intellectual discussions.</p> <p>Increasing interest in adolescent changes.</p> <p>Can understand increasingly difficult concepts.</p>	<p>Need to introduce interesting sequences and more complex tasks.</p> <p>Need for teaching background information. Learning stations are important.</p> <p>Need opportunity for verbal participation.</p> <p>Need for guidance and knowledge to understand growth and development.</p> <p>Need for introduction of conceptual aspects of physical activity.</p>

## Elementary Children – Growth and Development

### Emotional

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Less egocentric.</p> <p>Becoming more independent.</p> <p>Need to feel successful.</p> <p>Becomes discouraged easily.</p> <p>Some tend to be aggressive, show off and bossy.</p> <p>Enjoy repetition of favourite activities.</p> <p>Behaviour may be affected by puberty.</p>	<p>Need to develop cooperation through group experiences.</p> <p>Need to increase individual responsibilities and opportunities for leadership.</p> <p>Need to offer activities which provide opportunities for success.</p> <p>Need to teach awareness of individual differences in growth, development and performance.</p> <p>Need to encourage cooperative skills.</p> <p>Need to provide for student selected activities.</p> <p>Need for recognition of differences in growth and development patterns.</p>

## Elementary Children – Growth and Development

### Social

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Enjoys competitive and cooperative activities.</p> <p>May show preference for peer-selected single-sex or co-ed grouping.</p> <p>Seek attention and approval.</p>	<p>Need to provide a variety of challenging activities and lead-up games.</p> <p>Need to provide options for individual and group interests.</p> <p>Need for recognition and positive feedback.</p>

## Elementary Children – Growth and Development

### Moral

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p>Children tend to conform in order to avoid disapproval.</p> <p>Beginning to develop internal standards of right and wrong.</p> <p>Group consciousness is emerging.</p>	<p>Need to improve life training such as decision making, problem solving and coping.</p> <p>Need to understand that the emergence of conscience is an important step toward mature growth and development.</p> <p>Need for continued emphasis on the effect of individual action on group climate.</p>

## Program Dimensions and Application

The three major dimensions upon which the Primary/Elementary Physical Education Program is based are *In Movement*, *About Movement*, and *Through Movement*.

Outcomes are presented in all three dimensions for each theme and grade level. Through the outcomes of the “*In Movement*” dimension, students actively participate in activity and the emphasis is on the learner as a mover. The student will gain knowledge about how to move and will be able to demonstrate correct movement techniques specific to the theme being implemented.

With respect to outcomes presented in the “*About Movement*”, students need to be concerned with more cognitive processes: learning rules, procedures, and concepts specific to a particular theme. This dimension deals with critical and creative thinking skills used to pose and solve movement problems, also with the ability to assess attitudes and behaviors during participation in activity. Movement skills and concepts may be introduced, practiced, observed, analyzed and researched for origin and for use in other cultures and games.

In “*Through Movement*” the primary/elementary physical education student is able to develop in areas related to the affective domain. These areas include social, moral and personal development. The outcomes are presented to help the student learn socially responsive behaviors, develop personal responsibility for the social, physical and natural environment and show personal development in self-esteem, leadership, decision making, cooperation and respect for others.

These three dimensions, along with the themes and outcomes for each grade level, promote “Active Living” through physical education.

## The Personal Meaning Model

The Personal Meaning Model is the basis for the primary/elementary physical education program and movement education. The themes for each grade level stem from three fundamental areas: games, rhythmic activities and gymnastics. These areas provide a variety of ways for students to gain personal meaning through participation in physical activity. The following, taken from “*A Curriculum Framework for Physical Education: Adjusting the Focus*”, shows how the Personal Meaning Model is used to develop the outcomes for primary/elementary physical education.

### Individual Development

Students will be involved in a variety of activities that provide personal meaning for them. This range of activities may mean moving away from games-related activities into outdoor, dance/rhythmics and individual activities. In the earlier grade levels, students will be given less choice about the range of activities, with the teacher making more decisions.

The student may develop personal meaning in many ways. Some areas which may be used to design specific themes are:

- enhancing self-esteem
- feeling good, stress release, catharsis
- joy of movement, joy of effort
- excitement
- coping with risk
- adaptability
- perseverance

The Personal Meaning Model emphasizes connections between individuals and groups to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of a group or community. Cooperating and competing in physical activities are important concepts.

Individual aspects of cooperative activities include:

- taking risks
- compromising
- contributing

Individual aspects of competitive activities include.

- respecting rules
- respecting boundaries
- spatial awareness

**Social Interaction**

The Personal Meaning Model will provide the opportunity for the development of group skills. Competition and cooperation require both individual and group abilities. The group skills may involve playing alongside others, playing against others in different sized groups, and working with teammates against opponents. The program provides for deliberate teaching of such relationships between the individual and others, using movement as the medium.

Themes may be organized around:

- playing together in cooperative activities
- cooperating with a partner against another pair

Communication and listening skills are critical and include:

- giving and accepting feedback and constructive criticism
- giving and accepting responses to winning and losing
- willingness to share ideas
- care about ideas of others

Students will gain an appreciation of the differing abilities of others within society. The following activities may help students to recognize and develop acceptance of differing abilities:

- working with students of differing abilities
- adapting activities to include all students
- mixed grade activities
- participating with community members

## Addressing the Needs of All Learners

Physical education is developed to address the needs of all learners. Children with special needs are required to be a part of the physical education program, making the program inclusive. This inclusion of students with special needs is based on the abilities of the student. Programs may have to be adjusted, modified, or changed significantly to meet the needs of all learners.

The teacher must be aware of the needs of all students and consideration must be given to the age, experience, special talents, support, health and social maturity of the student when developing a program to include everyone.

Safety is a major concern when considering the inclusion of students with special needs and knowing the limits of the students' abilities will help ensure safety.

The adaptability of a program is key to ensuring the outcomes of the program are met by all students. Sometimes adjustments need to be made to instructional practices, the learning environment, equipment and resources or evaluation strategies so that outcomes are met. In some cases, modified or alternate programs may have to be developed with input from the ISSP team which includes the physical education teacher.

The basic needs of all students in a physical education program are similar. These needs include: to feel important, to receive attention, to feel confident and to improve movement skills. All students learn from experience, respond to activity and need reassurance and encouragement no matter what their skill and ability level.<sup>1</sup> Further information is provided in “*A Curriculum Framework for Physical Education: Adjusting the Focus*”.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Physical Education Guide - Primary/Elementary (Draft)

## Curricular Connections

The Personal-Global orientation attempts to make connections between local, regional and global communities. Relating the local community to the world opens the gymnasium doors for cross-curricular connections between subjects/topics. Multi-cultural activities, such as games and dances from around the world, can be used to make global connections. Cultural activities closer to home should also be explored, such as the Labrador Winter Games and Inuit games, to make connections between local communities. Themes on multi-cultural physical activities lend themselves to connections with other subject areas.

Connections can also be made between physical activities and the natural environment through incorporating environmental curriculum materials such as Project Wild, participating in outdoor activities, and creating an awareness of environmental opportunities and concerns.

Many opportunities exist for integrating physical education into other areas of curriculum at the primary and elementary levels. Utilizing physical activity as the learning medium, the following suggestions for curriculum integration may provide additional ideas for promoting quality, daily physical education and active living.

- **Health:** discussion and planning for fitness, nutrition, hygiene, well-being, active living.
- **Music:** background music for activity, rhythmic activity, action games, dance.
- **Science:** discussions and personal records of effects of exercise: heartbeat, pulse, perspiration, fatigue, body temperature.
- **Mathematics:** graphs and personal records of scores, class achievements, personal achievements.
- **Social Studies:** folk dance, native games, jog across Canada (North American, Asia, etc...), interviews of sports figures, history of games, Olympic movement.
- **Guidance:** peer acceptance, career opportunities, ethical behavior, leadership.
- **Language Arts:** terminology, vocabulary, concepts, student production of flip charts, flash cards, posters for physical education.
- **French:** folk dance, vocabulary.

## Instructional Approaches

A spectrum of teaching styles, which prescribes the varying relationships between teacher and learner, has been proposed by Muska Mosston and generally accepted by the physical education profession. It is based on a series of decisions - pre-impact (before class), impact (during class), and post-impact (after class). Seven styles of teaching have been identified:

- **Command** - the teacher makes all decisions and students respond to the instruction.
- **Task** - the teacher makes most decisions but students determine the details of how they achieve the task.
- **Reciprocal** - the teacher identifies the subject matter and evaluation criteria and students work with a selected peer and receive immediate and private evaluation from that person.
- **Individual Program**

*Teacher design:* the teacher offers differentiated levels of subject matter and students have options of self-assessment, level of task, and mobility within levels.

*Student design:* the teacher decides only the general parameters of the intended experience and students identify and design problems, seek and evaluate solutions and select materials, mode of communication and presentation.

- **Guided Discovery** - the teacher provides a series of sequential questions or clues and students work through inquiry and discovery to reach a pre-determined target.
- **Problem Solving** - the teacher presents a problem and students work creatively to provide a variety of solutions to the problem.

Movement education for primary grades is particularly suited to the last three teaching styles:

- guided discovery
- problem solving
- individual program: student design.

These provide a great deal of freedom for students and encourage creativity and innovation.

As elementary students move towards more specific skills in sports, dance, games and gymnastics the first four teaching styles become more prominent:

- command
- task
- reciprocal
- individual program: teacher design.

However, care must be taken not to become entrenched in a particular mode of teaching physical education. The many activities within physical education provide opportunities for various teaching styles to be included in the program. Students respond to various stimuli in their classes. In order to address the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic-tactile preferences of students', explanation demonstration and practice are valuable teaching methods to be used throughout the program. Also see Person Meaning Model in this section.

## Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation in physical education serves purposes of diagnosis, motivation, progress reporting, and program improvement. A comprehensive assessment and evaluation system is strengthened by use of a wide variety of assessment techniques. In the Personal-Global curriculum orientation, assessment of progress is viewed as a cooperative and collaborative venture, and done for and with learners as they make meaning of the curriculum (“*A Curriculum Framework for Physical Education: Adjusting the Focus*”). Both self-referenced and criterion-referenced methods of assessment should be used in assessing student progress, participation, involvement, responsibility and caring. Criterion-referenced assessment should be based on the specific curriculum outcomes which are the targets for the class being assessed. When the assessor begins with the intended outcome in mind, achievement of that outcome is more readily recognized. It is recommended that evaluation in physical education be a continuous, on-going process based on the following:

1. evaluation assesses the process as well as the product;
2. evaluation involves feedback for active participation as well as performance;
3. evaluation involves self-management, self-assessment, and peer assessment of attitude and behaviour toward physical activity and lifelong learning; and
4. self-reflection and collective-reflection about learning and the learning environment are integral components of the evaluation process.

Since the personal-global curriculum orientation to physical education seeks to develop self-managing students who have the knowledge and critical thinking skills to maintain the kind of lifestyle which promotes personal well-being, a strong element of self-reflection as individuals and in groups is an integral component of the evaluation process. Such reflection serves the purpose of having students analyse their participation, attitudes and behaviour, and deciding for themselves whether their participation and reactions are effective or appropriate.

A comprehensive assessment and evaluation system is continuous and should employ a wide range of information collecting methods. Any one method of collecting data on which to make judgements about student performance or accomplishment of intended learning outcomes cannot possibly account for the broad diversity of individual approaches and learning styles. Many sources of information should be used in making judgements about student performance.

The following represents a list of possible methods of gathering useful evaluative information:

1. careful observation using appropriate recording devices;
2. learning journals kept by students and updated at the completion of each class;
3. individual and group projects;
4. self-evaluation reports;
5. teacher-student conferences;
6. peer evaluation reports; and
7. portfolios of student accomplishments maintained during the course of study.

It must be recognized that some methods of collecting data are more effective and appropriate at some age groups than at others. In the primary grades teacher observations may occupy a more prominent position in the evaluation scheme than self and peer assessments. The goal is to help students move toward more independent assessment and as they progress through the program these methods of gathering information should increase.

Authentic assessment, in which students demonstrate their understanding and skills by applying them in situations which simulate their use in the “real world,” should be used whenever appropriate. This kind of evaluation lends itself well to student performance assessment on projects that students undertake as individuals or in small groups. Such projects may take the form of planning activity opportunities for others and actually carrying out the activity with a portion of the class or with another class in the school (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991, in Perrone, Ed.).

Another component of a comprehensive evaluation system is that of reflection on the effectiveness of the program and the delivery of program components. The teacher should engage in ongoing reflection on the program and his/her delivery in an effort to identify areas which could be strengthened. Student reactions and observations should also be sought in this process since the viewpoint of the participant is unique and comes from a different perspective than that of the teacher. This process can also include other professionals, such as other teachers or administrators, who can make recommendations to strengthen the program. As in assessment and evaluation of students, evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the program benefits from use of a broad variety of assessment techniques.