



# Physical Development:

## Exploring the Impact of Family and Community on Children's Physical Development

### Focus Statement

Students identify and consider a variety of family beliefs, values, practices, and circumstances that relate to children's physical development and physical activity by brainstorming and discussing opportunities, supports, and challenges for children to participate in or observe different kinds of physical activity.

### Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide learning experience. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Child Growth and Development
- Child, Family and Community
- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Practicum-Field Experience

### Instructional Methodologies

- Brainstorming—individual or small group
- Class discussion
- Pairs or small group work
- Personal reflection
- Reflection—individual or large group

### California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

The Faculty Initiative Project will be undertaking a comprehensive process in



the future to map the content of the instructional guides to the California Department of Education, Child Development Division's California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. "The Competency Areas to Consider" below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these learning experiences.

- Child Development and Learning
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Family and Community Engagement
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professionalism



## Physical Development: Exploring the Impact of Family and Community on Children's Physical Development

### Before You Start

Students may not always consider children's physical development as an area in which much instruction is needed. The following statement from the introduction to the physical development domain describes this belief: "Physical development is often thought of as something that happens naturally when children receive adequate nutrition and the opportunity for active physical play" (*California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2*, p. 37). The introduction further states, ". . . many children may never fully develop their physical skills without adult encouragement and instruction" (*California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2*, p. 37). Thus, opportunities for children to engage in active physical play are not in themselves always enough.

Also, opportunities for physical play may be limited for some children because of unsafe outdoor environments, limited access to indoor recreational facilities such as gyms and recreation centers, limited time allotted for play at school and/or home, and parents' own interests and background in physical activity. Parents' beliefs and values around physical play may also impact how much children are encouraged and allowed to engage in physical activity. For example, some families may see activities such as looking at books or learning to use a computer or other electronic device as more important and valuable.

However, physical development and activity are an important part of young children's development. "Physical development and physical activity play an important role in health through a child's life span. In particular, being physically active protects against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. It also contributes to mental health and psychological well-being" (*California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2*, p. 37).

Understanding how family, community, and cultural factors impact children's attitudes about physical activity as well as their opportunities for physical play will help students support children's physical development in the preschool setting.

### Information Delivery

Have the students review the foundations either at the beginning of the session or prior to class. Make sure they note the differences in each foundation for children at around 48 months of age and at around 60 months of age.



## Active Learning

### Getting it started

Ask students to brainstorm a list of ways children can learn and develop balance, locomotor skills, manipulative skills, body awareness, spatial awareness, directional awareness, cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Students can create their lists individually or in pairs or small groups.

### Keeping it going

Then develop a class list by having each student, pair, or small group share one idea. Chart these ideas so that all students can easily see the list. Continue to have students take turns contributing a new idea to the list until all their ideas are shared.

#### Online Options

If you have document-sharing capability, you could have students add their brainstorming ideas to an online list and highlight those that can be done at home or in the community.

### Putting it together

Next read each idea on the list and put a symbol, such as an asterisk or star, by each activity idea that could be done in the children's homes or communities.

### Taking it further

Review the things that can be done at home or in the community and ask students to think of things that support each activity. It would be helpful to also chart these supports. The following are some examples that students may share:



Slides 2-3

- Parents value physical activity.
- Parents enjoy and engage in and model physical activity.
- Parents have time to take children to parks/playgrounds where they can engage in physical play and try out new skills and equipment.
- Parents have the financial resources to take children to sporting events.
- There are safe areas for children to play outside every day.
- Family events include physical activities.
- The family's culture includes activities that involve physical skill and activity.
- Parents provide simple age-appropriate equipment for



children to use.

Next ask students to think of things that may be barriers. Examples might include the opposite of some of the supports as well as others:

### Online Options

Then have students create another shared document in which they list supports and barriers.



Slides 4-5

- Parents don't place a priority on physical activity.
- Children do not see family members and friends engaging in physical activities.
- Parents/caregivers do not take children to parks/playgrounds/other places to engage in physical play.
- Safe outdoor play areas are not easily accessible to families.
- Children have few opportunities to play outside every day because of school, child care, and/or transportation schedules.
- Children are encouraged to do more sedentary activities.
- Children have limited access to age-appropriate equipment such as balls, swings, climbing equipment, riding toys, and so on.
- The costs of taking children to sporting events are prohibitive.
- The costs associated with children participating in physical activities or taking sports or dance lessons are prohibitive.

### Another approach/way

You may choose to have students reflect on their own experiences with physical activity when they were children or, if they are currently working with young children, physical activities they have observed young children engaged in. They can use these examples to generate the lists described in "Getting it started." Ask students to try to think of a wide range of activities that support the development of balance, locomotor skills, manipulative skills, body awareness, spatial awareness, directional awareness, cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility.

### Reflection

Have the class reflect on this learning experience by responding to the following questions:

- What activities on the list surprised you?



Slide 6

- Which activities do you think are easiest for children and families in your community to do? Which ones are more difficult for them to do?
- Why is it important to consider family and community beliefs, values, practices, and circumstances when thinking about children’s physical development and activity?
- What is a key message from this learning experience that you will remember when using the physical development foundations in your teaching?