

Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Education Practices

Component: Curriculum

Appropriate Practice

- The physical education curriculum has an obvious scope and sequence based on goals and objectives that are appropriate for all children. It includes a balance of skills, concepts, games, educational gymnastics, rhythms and dance experiences designed to enhance the cognitive, motor, affective, and physical fitness development of every child.

Inappropriate Practice

- The physical education curriculum lacks developed goals and objectives and is based primarily upon the teacher's interests, preferences, and background rather than those of the children. For example, the curriculum consists primarily of large group games.

Component: Development of movement concepts and motor skills

Appropriate Practice

- Children are provided with frequent and meaningful age-appropriate practice opportunities, which enable individuals to develop a functional understanding of movement concepts (body awareness, space awareness, effort, and relationships) and build competence and confidence in their ability to perform a variety of motor skills (locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative).

Inappropriate Practice

- Children participate in a limited number of games and activities in which the opportunity for individual children to develop basic concepts and motor skills is restricted.

Component: Cognitive development

Appropriate Practice

- Physical education activities are designed with both the physical and cognitive development of children in mind.
- Experiences which encourage children to question, integrate, analyze, communicate, and apply cognitive concepts, as well as gain a multi-cultural

Inappropriate Practice

- The unique role of physical education, which allows children to learn to move while also moving to learn, is not explored and recognized by instructors.
- Children do not receive opportunities to integrate their physical education experience with art, music, and other classroom experiences.

Component: Affective development

Appropriate Practice

- Teachers intentionally design and teach activities throughout the year, which allow children the opportunity to work together for the purpose of improving their emerging social and cooperation skills. These activities also help children develop a positive self-concept.
- Teachers help all children experience and feel the satisfaction and joy, which results from regular participation in physical activity.

Inappropriate Practice

- Teachers fail to intentionally enhance the affective development of children when activities are excluded which foster the development of cooperation and social skills.
- Teachers ignore opportunities to help children understand the emotions they feel as a result of participation in physical activity.

Component: Concepts of fitness

Appropriate Practice

- Children participate in activities that are designed to help them understand and value the important concepts of physical fitness and the contribution they make to a healthy lifestyle.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children are required to participate in fitness activities, but are not helped to understand the reasons why.

Component: Physical fitness tests

Appropriate Practice

- Ongoing fitness assessment is used as part of the ongoing process of helping children understand, enjoy, improve, and/or maintain their physical health and well-being.
- Test results are shared privately with children and their parents as a tool for developing their physical fitness knowledge, understanding, and competence.
- As part of an ongoing program of physical education, children are physically prepared so they can safely complete each component of a physical test battery.

Inappropriate Practice

- Physical fitness tests are given once or twice a year solely for the purpose of qualifying children for awards or because they are required by a school district or state department.
- Children are required to complete a physical fitness test battery without understanding why they are performing the tests or the implications of their individual results as they apply to their future health and well-being.
- Children are required to take physical fitness tests without adequate conditioning (e.g., students are made to run a mile after practicing it only one day the week before).

Component: Exercise

Appropriate Practice

- Appropriate exercises are taught for the specific purpose of improving the skill, coordination, and/or fitness levels of children.
- Children are taught exercises that keep the body in proper alignment, thereby allowing the muscles to lengthen without placing stress and strain on the surrounding joints, ligaments, and tendons (e.g., the sitting toe touch).
- Fitness activities are used to help children increase personal physical fitness levels in a supportive, motivating, and progressive manner, thereby promoting positive lifetime fitness attitudes.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children perform standardized calisthenics with no specific purpose in mind (e.g., jumping jacks, windmills, toe touches).
- Exercises are taught which compromise body alignment and place unnecessary stress on the joints and muscles (e.g., deep-knee bends, ballistic (bouncing) stretches, and standing straight-legged toe touches).
- Physical fitness activities are used by teachers as punishment for children's misbehavior (e.g., students running laps, or doing push-ups, because they are off-task or slow to respond to teacher's instructions).

Component: Assessment

Appropriate Practice

Teacher decisions are based primarily on ongoing individual assessments of children as they participate in physical education class activities (formative evaluation), and not on the basis of a single test score (summative evaluation). Assessment of children's physical progress and achievement is used to individualize instruction, plan yearly curriculum and weekly lessons, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Inappropriate Practice

Children are evaluated on the basis of fitness test scores or on a single physical skill test. For example, children receive a grade in physical education based on their scores on a standardized fitness test or on the number of times they can continuously jump rope.

Component: Regular involvement for every child

Appropriate Practice

- Children participate in their regularly scheduled physical education class because it is recognized as an important part of their overall education.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children are removed from physical education classes to participate in classroom activities and/or as a punishment for not completing assignments, or for misbehavior in the classroom.

Component: Active participation for every child

Appropriate Practice

- All children are involved in activities, which allow them to remain continuously active.
- Classes are designed to meet a child's need for active participation in all learning experiences.

Inappropriate Practice

- Activity time is limited because children are waiting in lines for turns in relay races, to be chosen for a team, or due to limited equipment.
- Children are organized into large groups where getting a turn is based on individual competitiveness or aggressive behavior.
- Children are eliminated with no chance to re-enter the activity, or they must sit for long periods of time.

Component: Dance/rhythmical experiences (predominately elementary)

Appropriate Practice

- The physical education curriculum includes a variety of rhythmical, expressive, and dance experiences designed with the physical, cultural, emotional, and social abilities of the children in mind.

Inappropriate Practice

- The physical education curriculum includes no rhythmical, expressive, or cultural dance experiences for children.
- Folk and square dances (designed for adults) are taught too early or to the exclusion of other forms in the curriculum or are not modified to meet the developmental needs of the children.

Component: Gymnastics (predominately elementary)

Appropriate Practice

- Children are encouraged to sequentially develop skills appropriate to their ability and confidence levels in non-competitive situations centering around the broad skill areas of balancing, rolling, jumping and landing, and weight transfer.
- Children are able to practice on apparatus designed for their confidence and skill level, and can design sequences, which allow for success at their personal skill level.

Inappropriate Practice

- All students are expected to perform the same pre-determined stunts and routines on and off apparatus, regardless of their skill level, body composition, and level of confidence.
- Routines are competitive, are the sole basis for a grade, and /or must be performed solo while the remainder of the class sits and watches.

Component: Games

Appropriate Practice

- Games are selected, designed, sequenced, and modified by teachers and/or children to maximize the learning and enjoyment of children.

Inappropriate Practice

- Games are taught with no obvious purpose or goal, other than to keep children “busy, happy, and good.”

Component: Rules governing game play

Appropriate Practice

- Teachers and/or children modify official rules, regulations, equipment, and playing space of adult sports to match the varying abilities of the children.

Inappropriate Practice

- Official, adult rules of team sports govern the activities in physical education classes, resulting in low rates of success and lack of enjoyment of many children.

Component: Forming teams

Appropriate Practice

- Teams are formed in ways that preserve the dignity and self-respect of every child. For example, a teacher privately forms teams by using a knowledge of children’s skill abilities or the children form teams cooperatively or randomly.

Inappropriate Practice

- Teams are formed by “captains” publicly selecting one child at a time, thereby exposing the lower-skilled children to peer ridicule.
- Teams are formed by pitting “boys against the girls,” thereby emphasizing gender differences rather than cooperation and working together.

Component: Gender directed activities

Appropriate Practice

- Girls and boys are provided equal access to participation in individual, partner, small group, and team activities. Both girls and boys are equally encouraged, supported, and socialized towards successful achievement in all realms of physical activities.
- Statements by physical education teachers support leadership opportunities and provide positive reinforcement in a variety of activities.

Inappropriate Practice

- Girls are encouraged to participate in activities, which stress traditionally feminine roles, whereas boys are encouraged to participate in more aggressive activities.
- Boys are more often provided with leadership roles in physical education class. Statements by physical education teachers reinforce traditional socialization patterns, which provide for greater and more aggressive participation by boys and lesser and more passive participation by girls.

Component: Competition

Appropriate Practice

- Activities emphasize self-improvement, participation, and cooperation as well as winning and losing.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children are required to participate in activities that label children as winners and loser.

Component: Success rate

Appropriate Practice

- Children are given the opportunity of success adjusted for their individual skill levels.

Inappropriate Practice

- All children are expected to perform to the same standards without allowing for individual abilities and interests.

Component: Class size

Appropriate Practice

- Physical education classes contain the same number of children as the classrooms.
- Class size should afford students maximize opportunity to participants.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children participate in a physical education class which includes more children than the classroom. (For example, two or more classrooms are placed with one certified teacher and one or more teacher aides.

Component: Days per week/length of class time

Appropriate Practice

- Children are given the opportunity to participate daily in scheduled, instructional physical education throughout the year, exclusive of recess.
- Length of class is appropriate for the developmental level of the children.

Inappropriate Practice

- Children do not receive daily, instructional physical education.
- Children's age and maturational levels are not taken into account when physical education schedules are developed.

Component: Facilities

Appropriate Practice

- Children are provided an environment in which they have adequate space to move freely and safely. Both inside and outside areas are provided so that classes need not be cancelled, or movement severely limited, because of inclement weather.

Inappropriate Practice

- Physical education classes are regularly held in a school hallway or in a classroom, thereby restricting opportunities to move freely and without obstructions.

Component: Equipment

Appropriate Practice

- Enough equipment is available so that each child benefits from maximum participation. For example, every child in a class has a ball.
- Equipment is matched to the size, confidence and skill level of the children so that they are motivated to actively participate in physical education classes.

Inappropriate Practice

- An insufficient amount of equipment is available for the number of children in a class, (e.g., one ball for every four children).
- Regulation or “adult size” equipment is used which may inhibit skill development, cause injury, or intimidate the children.

Component: Physical education and recess (elementary)

Appropriate Practice

- Physical education classes are planned and organized to provide children with opportunities to acquire the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social benefits of physical education.

Inappropriate Practice

- “Free-play,” or recess, is used as a substitute for daily, organized physical education lessons. Free-play, in this case, is characterized by a lack of goals, organization, planning, and instruction.

Component: Field days (elementary)

Appropriate Practice

- The field day, if offered, is designed so that every child is a full participant and derives a feeling of satisfaction and joy from a festival of physical activity.
- Opportunities are provided for children to voluntarily choose from a variety of activities that are intended purely for enjoyment.

Inappropriate Practice

- Field days, if offered, are designed so that there is intense team, group, or individual competition with winners and losers clearly identified.
- One or two children are picked to represent an entire class, thereby reducing others to the role of spectator.

