

Physical Activity Opportunities for Quality Improvements in Early Learning: Preschool

The following illustrates connections between ECERS-3 and CLASS Pre-K quality measures and ways to promote physical activity in early learning settings.

Preschool (3-5 years)		
Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Space and Furnishings		
CLASS Pre-K: Instructional learning formats ECERS-3 Item 3: Room arrangement for play and learning ECERS-3 Item 6: Space for gross motor play ECERS-3 Item 7: Gross motor equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use physical activity as one of a variety of modalities to effectively interest students and gain their participation in activities and lessons e.g. jump on the spot, now “freeze.” • Add a physical activity center for one or two children to use independently e.g. suspend a covered balloon in a corner for striking or place rolled socks in a basket and a target on the wall for throwing or on the floor for tossing. • Place low bookshelves and heavy tables on locking rollers so they can be repositioned to alternately discourage rough play in the classroom but then moved to create an open space for safe indoor physical activities. • Provide gross motor equipment that may include floor spots; ribbon wands; scarves; 6’ parachute; bowling set; targets; riding toys; yoga mats; 24” hula hoops; and soft, light weight balls such as yarn balls, beach balls, and light plastic balls. For larger spaces equipment might include mats for climbing, rolling, and bouncing. In addition, offer physical activity equipment options such as yoga mats, foam bats for striking, and chalk for drawing lines to jump over. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children respond well to being physically active as they are learning a variety of concepts. When given the opportunity to be physically active, children tend to bring their best work to the task because the physical activity can help with their focus, attention, and retention of information. • Some young children need much more physical activity than others. Providing safe, developmentally appropriate physical activity choices within the classroom meets the need of these very active children. • Preschool child benefit from exposure to a variety of age and stage appropriate equipment to promote the development of large muscle movements and activities.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Personal Care Routines		
ECERS-3 Item 10: Health practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written policies promoting physical activity and include the expectation that children will go outdoors daily in all but extreme weather conditions (see accompanying Weather Watch chart). • Define the specific weather conditions in which children are to be outdoors within the written policies. • Have extra clothing available so each child can be appropriately dressed for a variety of weather conditions. • Expect staff members to participate in and promote physical activities daily with the children. Staff members have appropriate clothing with them for a safe and comfortable experience while outside with the children. • Give children practice putting on and taking off outdoor clothing before and after playing outdoors multiple times daily. Place outdoor clothing in the dress-up area to enable children to practice putting on and taking off winter and other outdoor clothing. • Lead physical activities with themes that teach good health practices. One example is a tag game in which children posing as teeth keep away other children posing as germs. This activity reinforces the importance of tooth brushing to prevent germs from attacking teeth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written physical activity policies that are shared with all staff and families may potentially be helpful in maintaining consistency across time and personnel changes. • The availability of extra clothing (supplied by families or other sources) enables children who lack appropriate clothing for the weather conditions to still go outside with the rest of the group. • Staff members who are physically active with the children are modeling regular exercise as a good health practice. It is acknowledged that a few staff members may have physical conditions that limit participation in specific physical activities. Expect staff to participate to the maximum extent possible. • Parents who are educated on the benefits of physical activity and ways to promote it have the potential to become valuable partners in ensuring that physical activities can also happen at home. • Children learn to manage health practices independently when they learn to put on and take off their own outdoor clothes. Children can learn to conduct their own safety checks related to physical activity such as checking that shoes are tied or fastened and there is nothing in the mouth. • Games are enjoyable ways to reinforce health practices.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Personal Care Routines (page 2)		
ECERS-3 Item 11: Safety practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously supervise children engaged in physical activities. • Use only safe, age-appropriate equipment, e.g. no trampolines, choking hazards, sharp edges that can cut. • Have all children run in the same direction in tag games (e.g. What Time is It, Mr. Fox?). • Provide clear boundaries to indicate where children may and may not go during a physical activity. Teach children to adhere to these boundaries. • Have children practice cues for starting and stopping through leading physical activities such as <i>Red Light Green Light</i> and <i>All Stop and Go to Music</i>. • Inspect the play area and equipment for cleanliness and safety prior to the start of the day. • Wipe down outdoor play equipment at the beginning of the day to remove excess water and moisture. • Establish routines for staff and children to place equipment away after use, e.g. yarn balls are placed into a basket, scarves in a bag. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can be quick and clever in the way they place themselves in danger. Close supervision is essential. • Play areas are arranged to avoid safety problems. Preschool children may not be skilled in dodging. They may have difficulty judging speed and distance so they may unintentionally collide with others. Reduce the need for dodging others by having all children run in the same direction, e.g. clockwise in a large circle around an object in the middle. • Safety is enhanced through teaching children to respond to cues for starting and stopping. • Staff inspects the play area to remove any toys or equipment that are broken or pose a safety issue and report any areas that may be deemed unsafe to the director. • Removing excess water on outdoor play equipment avoids slippery sneaker bottoms, improves hand gripping, and prevents wet clothing on riding toys. • Placing toys in their “home” ensures the space is uncluttered and equipment can be found for the next users.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Language and Literacy		
<p>CLASS Pre-K: Language modeling</p> <p>ECERS-3 Item 12: Helping children expand vocabulary</p>	<p>Teach and encourage children to expand vocabulary through using the following movement concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With body parts (and name body part) - round/narrow/wide/twisted ○ With objects and/or people - over/under, on/off, near/far, meeting/parting ○ With people - leading/following, mirroring/matching, partners/solo • Spatial awareness - developing the concept of general space and self-space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positions - up, down, forward, backward, left, right ○ Levels - high middle, low ○ Pathways - curve, straight, zigzag ○ Extensions – near/far; make your body large/small • Effort <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Move quickly/slowly ○ Use a lot of force/use little force ○ Move in a free, flowing way or in a jerky, bound way • Use descriptive vocabulary during adult-led physical activities to explain how to play activities. Use movement concepts to give verbal prompts and feedback throughout adult-led physical activities, e.g. stand <i>behind</i> the barrier, step <i>forward</i> as you throw, throw <i>hard</i> with a lot of <i>force</i>, stand <i>behind</i> your partner, bend your knees then jump <i>forward</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is key to explaining how to play an adult-led physical activity and to give verbal prompts and feedback throughout the activity. Consider these examples: People can move alone (spatial relationship) in general space (spatial awareness) as they run fast and lightly (effort) on a straight pathway at a high level (spatial awareness) with their arms overhead. Or people can move with a partner (spatial relationship) taking slow, strong steps (effort) as they crouch at a low level on a curved pathway (spatial awareness). • Adult-led physical activity provides an especially rich environment for promoting language around movement concepts including spatial relationships, spatial awareness, and effort. The movement concepts listed in the center column are from Graham, et al., 2020. These concepts take on meaning when linked to children’s movements. • Physical activity provides the opportunity to model and strengthen language because of the chance to observe a person’s actions and pair it with the descriptive language.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Language and Literacy (page 2)		
<p>CLASS Pre-K: Concept development</p> <p>ECERS-3 Item 13: Encouraging children to use language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use obstacle courses to practice sequencing. • Use carry games to practice matching same/different objects. • Use carry games to identify and categorize objects by size or shape. The concepts of color, size, or shapes can be practiced using a carry game in which children run from one end of an open space to the other end. Each child carries an item and looks for its exact match at the other end. • Ask the children questions about their movements during adult-led physical activities, e.g. Are you going to run in a <i>straight</i> or <i>zigzag</i> pathway across the playground? • Use language to explain how to play adult-led physical activities, e.g. <i>Throw hard</i> and <i>low</i> to knock over the cans. • Promote staff-child conversations during free play. What is your favorite physical activity to play? Why do you like it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept development can be promoted while children are enjoyably engaged in a variety of adult-led physical activities. These activities provide the opportunity for the staff to have conversations with children regarding their analysis and reasoning when matching/categorizing objects. Further explanations of examples follow. • Obstacle courses are based on children moving from one obstacle to another in a defined sequence. Obstacle courses make it easy for the staff to observe children who may have difficulty sequencing movements and give them corrective feedback. • Carry games involve children picking up an object at one end of the open space to then run, walk, run, jump, hop, slide, log roll, and so forth to the other end of the open space where they look for the object’s match, or to place the object in its category. • Carry games provide opportunities for the staff to help children identify or categorize objects/pictures/ numbers/letters that are the same or different with regard to color, size, shape, etc. • Physical activities lend themselves to frequent opportunities to ask children what they plan to do or describe what they did before or after observing their movements. • Open-ended movement questions provide children with opportunities to develop their language skills. Physical activities also provide the opportunity to ask children <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> questions about their movements.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Language and Literacy (page 3)		
<p><i>CLASS Pre-K: Concept development</i></p> <p><i>ECERS-3 Item 13: Encouraging children to use language</i></p> <p><i>(Continued)</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is natural and easy to have staff-child conversations while engaged in playful physical activities together. • Engaging in adult-led physical activities as well as free active play typically prompt children’s oral communication. The excitement and fun of the activity as well as the large muscle movements may be particularly useful in prompting children, especially reticent children, to use expressive language. When engaged in imaginative and physically active play children often are able to communicate and perform at a higher level than otherwise evident. • Playing physical activities together also provide opportunities for staff to model language skills and introduce new vocabulary through naming and describing children’s action as they occur. The staff can also ask questions that prompt the children to use the same language and vocabulary that was just modeled.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Language and Literacy (page 4)		
ECERS-3 Item 14: Staff use of books with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt children to act out the actions occurring in a story. • Encourage children to form shapes (e.g., round, wide, narrow, long, straight), express emotion, and point to and move body parts when mentioned in the story. • Read both cognitively and physically engaging books such as <i>Going on a Bear Hunt</i> and <i>The Hungry Caterpillar</i>. Another reference is Story Walk (www.lets-go.org). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s interest in books can potentially be encouraged through children acting out the stories. This technique can help promote children’s comprehension and expand their movement vocabulary while also providing the opportunity to be physically active during an otherwise sedentary story time. • Acting out stories provides an opportunity for staff to explicitly model and prompt language through encouraging children to act out and repeat certain words or phrases in conjunction with the movements. • An important aspect of children’s development is the ability to express emotion both verbally and physically.
Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Learning Activities		
ECERS-3 Item 19: Music and movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play music with lyrics that dictate a range of movements for children to do. • Play music and the adults/children add movements to do to the music. • Prompt children to respond to music cues through dancing then abruptly stop (freeze) in response to music that starts and stops. • Add rhythmic equipment such as ribbon wands, scarves, or crepe paper streamers for children to explore movements with music. • Ask children to clap/stomp as they imitate and follow the lead of an adult in repeating simple rhythmic beats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to music can help children develop rhythm and express the feelings that the music evokes. Developing a sense of rhythm is foundational to moving with coordination and fluidity. Rhythmically tapping on children’s bodies in time with the music can help children develop their internal sense of rhythm. The importance of rhythm extends beyond movement. A sense of rhythm is also integral to understanding speech. • Rhythmic activities combined with movement may help with self-regulation among preschool children.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Learning Activities (page 2)		
ECERS-3 Item 21: Dramatic play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use dramatic play to promote and enrich physical activities. • Use physical activities to promote and enrich dramatic play. • Provide children with opportunities for dramatic play outdoors as well as indoors. • Add props such as a scarf, sports jersey, and tutu to promote play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many adult-led physical activities can be designed to incorporate dramatic play in them. Both dramatic play and physical activity tend to be especially engaging for young children. Combining physical activity with dramatic play can enrich both aspects of the activity. • Providing opportunities for dramatic play while outdoors enables children to engage in vigorous physical activity as part of their play.
ECERS-3 Item 22: Nature/science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design physical activities to also teach nature/science concepts. An example is an activity in which children imitate the movements of animals that eat other animals, e.g. birds fly around catching mosquitoes. • Use throwing activities to discuss basic physics concepts such as force and speed. • Imitate the movements and behaviors of a variety of animals, e.g. turtles, dogs, elephants, and monkeys. • Identify and point to the body part used in varying physical activities, e.g. the upper arm (bicep muscle) during a pulling activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging children in an imaginative physical activity provides fertile opportunities to incorporate nature/science concepts. • The ability to experience movements can help make somewhat complex concepts more understandable. Discuss how the varying animals' bodies influence how the animals move, e.g. as children crawl on their bellies imitating turtles then creep on all fours imitating dogs, they may better comprehend why turtles move more slowly than dogs on land. • As children's hearts are pounding after playing a vigorous running game, they may be receptive to a simple explanation of how their hearts beat faster when they are moving fast to more quickly pump energy to the muscles used in running. • Children are often fascinated to learn the name and location of the most prominent muscles and bones of their own bodies.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Learning Activities (page 3)		
<p>ECERS-3 Item 23: Math materials and activities</p> <p>ECERS-3 Item 24: Math in daily events</p> <p>ECERS-3 Item 25: Understanding written numbers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infuse physical activity into math/number activities. One example is a carry game in which children carry cards with numbers on them across an open space to place the numbered cards in packets labeled with the same numbers. Vary the locomotor skills practiced by asking children to run, walk, bear crawl, hop, or gallop as they carry the numbered cards across the open space. • Ask children to count aloud the number of times the group performs a movement. Alternatively, ask a child volunteer to select how many times the group will do the movement. • Incorporate throwing into number identity by asking children to name the numbers on the paper targets that they try to hit with rolled socks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity can be helpful in promoting children’s focus, attention, and memory. Infusing physical activities into the practice of math/number learning can enhance children’s engagement with the concepts. • Carry games in which children carry something from one end of the open space to the other and back are a way to practice their locomotor skills while also rehearsing math/number concepts.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Learning Activities (page 4)		
ECERS-3 Item 26: Promoting acceptance of diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote acceptance of children with varying skill levels and modes of moving during physical activity. • Be flexible with rules and expectations, e.g. some children may need consistent reinforcement of the instructions. • Modify the environment and task as needed to enable children with disabilities to participate in physical activities with their typical peers. • Lead minimally competitive, open-ended adult-led physical activities, modified as needed. • Keep the focus on cooperative, non-elimination physical activities. No child should be eliminated from an activity. Lead cooperative activities such as <i>Musical Hoops</i> in which children cooperate and share the hoops rather than compete against each other in <i>Musical Chairs</i>. • Play simple games that reflect the specific cultures of those in the class. Infuse preschool games that originated from other countries and cultures. • Display posters of both male and female athletes with disabilities excelling in their sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During physical activities children’s (and adults) varying skill levels are on full display for others to observe. This provides a rich opportunity to discuss individual differences and promote acceptance of people with varying skill levels and modes of moving. • It is important to be flexible with rules and expectations to be truly inclusive of children with widely varying abilities. • Most minimally competitive, open-ended adult-led physical activities can be modified to enable children with disabilities to participate with their typical peers. • Including children with disabilities in physical activities with their typical peers sends the important message that children of differing abilities are similar enough that they can all enjoy playing together. • Introducing physical activities that are inherent in diverse cultures expands the program offerings while simultaneously providing recognition, appreciation, and validation for diverse cultures and the children who are part of them.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Activities (page 5)		
ECERS-3 Item 27: Appropriate use of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only occasionally use TV, video, music video and/or computer programming in which the children are active along with the characters/children/adults displayed on the screen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise videos in which children and staff are actively involved are ways to further promote physical activity. • The American Academy of Pediatrics <i>New Recommendations for Media Use</i> recommends the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than video chatting. Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high quality programming and watch it with their children to help them understand what they're seeing. ○ For children ages 2 to 5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs.* Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them. • Problems begin when media use displaces physical activity, hands-on exploration and face-to-face social interaction in the real world, which is critical to learning. Too much screen time can also harm the amount and quality of sleep. Organizations like Common Sense Media can help parents evaluate media content and make decisions about what is appropriate for their family. <p><i>*1 hour per day of high-quality programs includes time spent watching at home and in early care and education settings. It is important to talk with parents about screen time limits.</i></p>

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Interaction		
ECERS-3 Item 28: Supervision of gross motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Caring for Our Children, Fourth Edition</i>, recommends the following best practices regarding free play and whole-group adult-led physical activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide at least 60-90 minutes of physical activity daily for toddlers • Provide at least 90-120 minutes of physical activity daily for preschoolers. • Include at least two bouts of adult-led physical activities daily. • To achieve the recommended minutes of daily physical activity it may be most practical to intersperse short periods (5-15 minutes) of physical activity throughout the day. This could include multiple brief active transitions, three or more bouts of 10-minute adult-led whole group physical activities, and an hour or more of outdoor free play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision is essential while engaging with children in active play. • Staff need to anticipate and act to avoid problems to promote and sustain children’s active play. • <i>Caring for Our Children, Fourth Edition</i>, Best Practice recommends that staff members participate, to the extent that they are physically able, in active play with the children. While doing so, the staff need to maintain their balance to avoid falling onto any children. They also need to maintain supervision of all children while participating in the physical activity. • Physical activity needs to be the default activity throughout the child care day in order for young children to master the movement skills that lay the foundation for a lifetime of gross and fine motor skill development and the accompanying enjoyment of being physically active.
ECERS-3 Item 29: Individualized teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use open-ended adult-led physical activities to individualize teaching and learning. A sample activity is <i>Movement Follow the Leader</i> led by the staff using a variety of locomotor skills presented to the whole class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult-led physical activities provide ample opportunities to individualize teaching and learning. • At this young age, the use of imitation as in “copy me, follow me, my turn and your turn” is appropriate for children to practice familiar and newly introduced physical skills. • Free play also provides the opportunity for staff to give individualized feedback and enhance children’s physical activity. Staff can help children think through solutions to conflicts, encourage children to talk about activities, and introduce concepts in relation to the play.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Interaction (page 2)		
CLASS Pre-K: Positive climate ECERS-3- Item 30: Staff-child interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use non-competitive, inclusive, cooperative physical activities, whether adult-led or free play, to support a positive climate. • Play developmentally appropriate, inclusive physical activities together with the children. The physical activities mentioned as examples elsewhere in this document meet this criterion. • Lead physical activities that promote a positive climate. Developmentally appropriate, non-competitive, non-elimination, inclusive, and cooperative physical activities may be good choices for achieving a positive climate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the aspects of a positive climate can be supported through adults and children playing adult-led physical activities together. Playing and laughing together involves physical proximity while enjoying a shared activity. Adult and children playing together toward a common goal can involve peer assistance, provide opportunities for matching affect by adopting facial expressions, tone of voice and body language that match the child’s emotional state, and can spark social conversations. Active play has the potential to be a powerful way to build positive relationships. Additionally, children who are learning to move are increasing their sense of competence. If children are given choices (color of ball to throw) within the adult-led physical activity they are also developing their autonomy. • Further, a positive affect can be strengthened through playing developmentally appropriate, non-elimination, inclusive physical activities together. These activities involve all children participating and no elimination. Adults and children naturally smile, laugh, and show enthusiasm when playing fun adult-led physical activities together. • Having fun while playing physical activities together can be an especially powerful way for staff to show they enjoy being with children. It also provides fertile opportunities to develop and maintain mutual respect.

Physical Activity Opportunities for Quality Improvements in Early Learning: Preschool

Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Interaction (page 3)		
CLASS Pre-K: Negative climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead well-organized developmentally appropriate physical activities to avoid a negative climate. • Active play should never be withheld from children who misbehave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the aspects of a negative climate can be present during a poorly selected and conducted adult-led physical activity. Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Highly competitive physical activities that are beyond the children’s level of understanding and physical skills and pit children against each other to determine winners and losers can prompt negative affect. o An adult who is attempting to lead poorly organized, developmentally inappropriate, unsafe physical activities can become overwhelmed and resort to punitive control, sarcasm/disrespectful comments, and severe negativity in a frustrated attempt to establish control. • In contrast, a well-organized developmentally appropriate physical activity has the potential to prompt a positive climate.

Physical Activity Opportunities for Quality Improvements in Early Learning: Preschool

Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Interaction (page 4)		
ECERS-3 Item 31: Peer interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During free play the children direct their own physical activities whether it be playfully chasing each other around the playground, acting out a real or imagined scenario, or exploring their physical capabilities on playground equipment. • Take action to be sure children are not consistently marginalized by their peers during free play. • Engage children in physical activities that promote positive peer interaction. Developmentally appropriate, non-competitive, inclusive, and cooperative physical activities may be good choices for achieving positive peer interactions. • Give children practice moving with control and without bumping into others through playing activities such as <i>Red Light, Green Light</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play “is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated (Leichter-Saxby & Law, 2015, p. 97).” During free play children direct their play (with adult supervision to assure all children’s physical and emotionally safety). While they are doing so, they are developing executive functions, using creativity, and honing their social skills. • All of the aspects of positive peer interactions can be supported through children playing adult-led physical activities together. Playing and laughing together involves physical proximity while enjoying a shared activity. Adult and children playing together toward a common goal can involve peer assistance; provide opportunities for matching affect by adopting facial expressions, tone of voice and body language that match the child’s emotional state; and can spark social conversations. Active play has the potential to be a powerful way to build positive interactions among children. • Developing children’s spatial awareness, including the ability to move with control and avoid collisions with others, is foundational to positive peer interactions.

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Interaction (page 5)		
CLASS Pre-K: Behavior management ECERS-3 Item 32: Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent opportunities for children to be physically active. • Provide a physical activity center in the room. Include picture cards with various physical activities that children can do. • Use physical activities to teach social skills, e.g. turn taking, sharing equipment, working together toward a common goal, and negotiating conflicts. • Use yoga, breathing star, and other breathing techniques to help children calm themselves. One example is the <i>breathing star</i> prop, a star cut out of construction paper that children open and close with each inhalation and exhalation, according to teacher modeling. Another example is the adult narrating a story about a journey to a garden. The children reach down, pick a few beautiful flowers, then blow the pedals a few times. The adult emphasizes slow breaths to help children become calm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young children are designed to be physically active. Often potentially disruptive behavior can be averted through providing frequent opportunities for children to be physically active throughout the day. • Providing a physical activity center in the room gives individual children the additional choice to be physically active when they need it. • The off-task, disruptive, and at times aggressive behaviors children exhibit often stem from traumatic events in their lives. These behaviors represent biological dysregulation. Movement activities are being increasingly shown to help children regulate themselves biologically when they are upset. The staff may find using movement may help children calm down and regulate the biological effects of trauma. • Social skills are strong predictors of success as older children and adults. Young children need much assistance and practice in learning these social skills. Playing physical activities together, whether adult-led or free active play, provide ample opportunities for staff to help children understand and develop social skills such as turn taking, sharing equipment, working together toward a common goal, negotiating conflicts that may arise, etc.

Physical Activity Opportunities for Quality Improvements in Early Learning: Preschool

Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Program Structure		
ECERS-3 Item 34: Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise and interact with children who are engaged in both indoor and outdoor free play. Offer a commentary on the children’s activities and acknowledge their efforts. Imitate what the children are doing or play along with the children but without taking control of their play. Allow the children to take the lead while asking questions to enhance and extend the children’s experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historically the nature of young children’s free play is to be physically active with bursts of moderate to vigorous physical activity interspersed with brief periods of rest. This free play provides a rich opportunity for adults to supervise children in a way that encourages educational interaction. Free play provides opportunities for staff to help children think through solutions to conflicts, encourage children to communicate about activities, and introduce concepts in relation to play. • <i>Caring for Our Children, Fourth Edition</i>, Best Practice recommends daily opportunities for both adult-led physical activities and child-initiated free play because these two types of activities offer complementary benefits for children. • Adult-led physical activities that accommodate children with wide-ranging skill levels and conducted in a welcoming, inclusive manner increase the likelihood that most if not all children will participate. The adult can plan activities that provide practice in a wide variety of motor skills. • Child-initiated free play gives children practice in planning and conducting their own creative physical activities, important executive functions. It also places upon the children the responsibility for setting and following the rules as well as determining how to handle the situation when a child breaks the mutually agreed upon rules. <p><i>Note: While the adult is not leading the activity during free play, adult supervision is still essential to assure the physical and emotional safety of all children and to help guide children in developing healthy skills for resolving conflict.</i></p>

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Quality Category	Example of Physical Activity	Rationale
SUBSCALE: Program Structure (page 2)		
ECERS-3 Item 35: Whole-group activities for play and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Item 34 above for the <i>Caring for Our Children, Fourth Edition</i>, best practices regarding whole-group adult-led physical activity. • Intersperse short periods (5-15 minutes) of whole-group adult-led physical activities throughout the day to promote children’s fundamental movement skill development. • Use two or more stations to allow children to engage in adult-led physical activities in self-selected small groups. • Provide a physical activity center in the room. Include picture cards with various physical activities that children can do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental movement skills are basic movements such as run, jump, hop, (locomotor skills), throw, catch, kick (object control skills), and bend, stretch, and balance (stability skills). Preschoolers need many, many opportunities to practice these skills in order to become skillful movers who seek to be physically active now and across their lifespan. Offering multiple adult-led whole-group physical activities daily provides children with the needed practice to develop these fundamental movement skills that are the foundation of children’s skillful movement. • Observe the children closely in order to end the whole-group physical activity before children begin to lose interest. This will serve to maintain the children’s interest in playing the activity again another time and help keep children enthusiastically participating in whole-group physical activities.

Physical Activity Opportunities for Quality Improvements in Early Learning: Preschool

Citations:

ECERS-3 : Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., Cryer, D. (2015). *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Third Edition*. New York: Teachers College Press

CLASS Pre-K: Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., Hamre, B.K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Manual Pre-K*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes

This ECERS-3 and CLASS Pre-K Crosswalk with Physical Activity was created by:

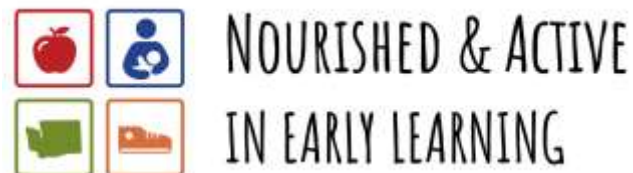
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