

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY IN GROUP SETTINGS

Seven guiding principles support each child's active physical play in group settings.

**Principle 1: Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.**

Children learn well by playing, making almost any environment their playground. They will play with a tin can in a mud puddle, if that is what is available to them. Those who work in early childhood settings have a mandate as professionals to support children in the safest environments possible. Professional ethics require that those working with young children provide developmentally appropriate activities for children. Active physical play environments, then, must be both safe and appropriate for age and stage.

**Principle 2: Children engage in active physical play both to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment.**

When young children master physical skills, they feel a sense of well-being physically, and the emotional sense of achievement and accomplishment. Staff see these reactions when children in their care take their first steps or go down a slide for the first time. The enthusiasm showing in a child's eyes and squeals of delight are unmistakable. A common phrase that young children use as they move up a level in physical skills is "I did it!"

**Principle 3: Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.**

In a busy and sometimes unsafe world, children may not have space, time, or supervision for frequent and vigorous active physical play. A quality early childhood setting has outdoor and inside areas that are safe from physical and social hazards, and that are stocked with age-appropriate challenges. Each day, every day of the week, teacher-directed activities and child-chosen play are available several times a day to support running, jumping, climbing, hopping, throwing, pedaling, pushing/pulling, and other vigorous activities.

**Principle 4: Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.**

Each child in an early childhood program deserves to develop the highest level of physical skills possible. When adults pay attention to each child's level of physical ability, and each child's need to practice a skill, they will know when to offer assistance. They will also know when to simply step back and give a child uninterrupted space and time to reach potential. Lack of time and opportunity for practice can interrupt children's attempts at advancing their skills.

Principle 5: Each child has access to many and varied active physical play options.

Running, jumping, kicking, pivoting, climbing, throwing, squatting, hopping, pushing, lifting, balancing, and pedaling...all of these skills are targets of a young child's physical development. As young children master skills, play becomes richer, creativity emerges, and children have a repertoire of basic skills to help them live healthy lives. When children can practice skills in many different ways in many different settings, the skills become enduring.

Principle 6: Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.

"Teacher, teacher, look how high I climbed." "When I'm five, I'm going to get a basketball hoop at my house like this one." "Mannie and I are both soccer players, aren't we, Mannie?" "No, teacher, I don't want to ride. I can't ride a tricycle, teacher." "Benni took my ball. Benni, that's my ball. You can play with it when I'm done." "Charlize, stop running into me. I can't walk on this if you run into me." "Come on. Go down the slide. Go with me." "My dad plays golf. Me, too. I play like this." "Let's climb up this ladder. Pretend it is a mountain and there's a volcano coming. Climb faster. Hurry or we'll get burned!" Relationships influence initiation of active physical play, types of play, and the culture of dramatic play themes that arise from active physical play.

Principle 7: Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

Good health and optimal physical development are foundations for a satisfying childhood for young children. Children have small voices when it comes to designing buildings and playgrounds, purchasing equipment, and setting schedules, routines and plans. Staff who work with young children can speak up on behalf of young children. They are obvious advocates for supporting young children's active physical play.



<http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding>

University of Idaho Feeding in Group Settings Website: Handouts!

<http://www.eatright.org/Public/>

American Dietetic Association

<http://www.usda.gov>

Many, many feeding resources including handbook on feeding infants

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>

Team Nutrition materials

<http://www.mealsmatter.org>

Menu planning and Recipes

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

Developmental materials for parents and professionals

<http://actionforhealthykids.org>

Information on physical activity

<http://www.new-vis.com/>

Materials on maturation of eating skills

<http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyEating/529.htm>

Canadian guide to feeding young children

<http://cyfernet.ces.ncsu.edu/nbcc>

National Network for Child Care resources and articles on development and feeding

<http://www.mypyramid.gov>

Food Guide Pyramid

<http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/cnrc>

Baylor College of Medicine research and reports

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/>

Statistics on obesity

<http://www.parenting.com>

Newsletter

<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/>

Food Reflections, on-line, newsletter from Nebraska Cooperative Extension

<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalGuidelines/ActiveStart.cfm>

National Association for Sports and Physical Education recommendations for infant/toddler activity



## Talking with Families about Their Child's Active Play and What It Means

Janice Fletcher, EdD and Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

Active play is foundational to physical and mental health for children. Healthy weight and healthy growth and development are by-products of active play.

Active play happens when children run, jump, bounce, leap, skip, gallop, throw and catch, climb, dance, and use wheel toys.

Communicate often with families about characteristics and benefits of active play in your program for young children.

1. Frequently and intentionally remind yourself that you are in a *partnership* with parents.
2. Empower parents to *recognize* the skills their children display when they play.
3. Ask about parent's dreams for their child's physical well-being and health. Draw a parallel to those dreams and the child's active play.
4. Know what is developmentally appropriate for a child so you can give parents valid information about active play.
5. Talk with parents about the uniqueness of early childhood relationships. This matters when you explain how valuable play is to help children develop social and emotional competence and their physical growth and development.
6. Tell parents *why* you set out specific equipment or choose active play activities in your schedule/curriculum. Explain what you *expect* to happen.
7. Explain to parents how you will *intentionally* choose opportunities for active play that lead to skills attainment.
8. Explain how early childhood skills *look* when children are playing.
9. Talk with parents about how *their child's play demonstrates that the child has attained a skill*.
10. Take careful notes to document active play. Show progress over time. (Share with parents daily, and in portfolios.)



11. Recognize your biases about weight. Deal with those prior to trying to explain your strategies to parents.

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY (TAPP)

### A Self-Reflection Inventory for Supporting Young Children's Active Physical Play in Group Settings

**Janice Fletcher, EdD**  
**Laurel Branen, PhD., R.D., L.D.**  
**Samantha Ramsay, Ph.D. R.D., L.D.**

*The TAPP is a self-reflective inventory for staff in early childhood settings. Use the reflection to think about supporting active physical play for children, ages 24 months through five years old.*

#### Introduction

Young children in early childhood settings encounter active physical play environments that include facilities, equipment, routines, and schedules. They develop relationships with peers and staff. The quality of environments and relationships influence a child's opportunity to develop optimum physical precision, strength, flexibility, and endurance.

Achieving good health and enjoying physical activities that help them develop physical competence are among the most important rights of children.

#### What Is Active Physical Play?

Active physical play includes two parts:

Children develop basic techniques using repetitive play to master physical skills. The result is precision, strength, flexibility, and endurance. These skills include balancing, running, walking, jumping, pushing, pulling, lifting, hopping, climbing, throwing, and pedaling.

Children initially work to master basic physical skills. Then, they use that foundation of skills to create play themes that helps them maintain, strengthen, and extend those skills.

#### Seven Guiding Principles for Active Physical Play

1. Adults set safe, appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.
2. Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies, and for fun and enjoyment.
3. Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.
4. Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.
5. Each child has access to many and varied active physical play opportunities.
6. Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.
7. Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

### **Who Should Use the TAPP Self- Reflection Inventory?**

This self-reflection is for those who want to address development of competence in physical skills and healthy weight for young children in group settings. Managers and supervisors, teachers, and classroom aides are appropriate users of the TAPP.

### **Why Should I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?**

The TAPP helps you think about environments and relationships that support children's active physical play. Results of the TAPP confirm current practices and inform discussions of changes or improvements in active play environments and relationships. These results can inform decisions about your program's professional development.

### **How Do I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?**

The TAPP is best carried out as a cooperative activity among staff rather than by an outside reviewer.

The TAPP includes self-reflections about active physical play for young children. Note that a "*reasons*" section follows each reflection statement and response. To enhance a meaningful report of the responses, users should write their reasons for choosing each response.

Each statement offers five response choices:

*Already doing; Making progress; Considering; Unable to do; and Not planning to do.*

Choose *already doing* if you consistently use this practice.

Choose *making progress* if you use the concept on some level. (For example, choose this rating if you have ordered materials for the environment, or some staff, but not all, use the practice.)

Choose *considering* if you want to use the practice, but have taken no steps toward implementation.

Choose *unable to do* if you would like to follow the practice, but you believe there are factors that prevent you from using the practice.

Choose *not planning to do* if you do not agree with the concept, or if the concept is not applicable in your program.

An important part of your self-reflection is an explanation of your choice of response for each statement.

## What Form of the TAPP Should I Use?

There are three ways to use the TAPP. You may use the comprehensive TAPP Inventory to reflect on all of the Seven Principles, or you may choose to reflect on only one principle from the TAPP, or you may use the quick reflection using the TAPP Short Form that offers brief items from all of the Seven Principles.

### ***Use the Comprehensive Form of the Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory (TAPP)***

The comprehensive TAPP includes items based on Seven Principles for Active Physical Play. Users may reflect on all Seven Principles and the ratings in each area for a comprehensive review of practices. For this comprehensive review, use the complete Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory

### ***Use the Individual TAPP Principles***

Users can choose to reflect on just one Active Physical Play Principle and the items in that Principle. Click on a principle below to go directly to the TAPP items for that principle.

1. Adults set safe, appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.
2. Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies, and for fun and enjoyment.
3. Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.
4. Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.
5. Each child has access to many and varied active physical play options.
6. Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.
7. Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

### ***Use the TAPP Short Form***

Users may want to use the TAPP Short Form for a brief reflection on the Seven Principles and self-reflection items. [Click here for the Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory: Short Form.](#)



Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

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Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle I

#### Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play

- I.1 A variety of permanent play equipment is accessible (such as platforms, climbers, tunnels, or stairs).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.2 A variety of portable play equipment is accessible (such as hoops, balls, large cubes and blocks, baskets, parachutes, walking cups, rebound toys, and pouring and digging tools).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.3 Equipment is available that is adaptable across skill levels for each child in your group.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.4 Children have access to drinking water during periods of active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.5 To insure safe play, there are well-defined boundaries between high intensity play areas (i.e. running, jumping, and wheel toys) and lower intensity play areas (sidewalk chalk play, hopscotch, climbing platforms).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle I

#### Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play

- I.6 Age-appropriate social rules are established, and practiced by children to protect and support play in high intensity and lower intensity play areas.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.7 Natural environmental features (grassy hills, tunnels, smooth tree stumps, gardens) are available for climbing up and over, crawling through, digging and filling, and jumping to and from heights.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.8 Age appropriate games are available (such as aiming and throwing at targets, nets for soccer, low basketball hoops, simple hopscotch, balance beams, balance games).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.9 There is enough equipment so that children do not wait longer for a turn than is appropriate for age and level of skill. (Note: For toddlers, multiple sets of popular or new equipment are available).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.10 When a child is initiating or practicing new skills, that child is protected from unwanted interference from other children.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle I

#### **Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play**

I.11 A wide variety of props is available for children to create play themes (such as water and sand toys, balls, chalk, blocks, cars, wagons, streamers, costumes).

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

I.11 Easily accessible storage is nearby so staff can quickly and safely access equipment and props to support both emerging skills and creative play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle II

#### **Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment**

II.1 Staff are aware of each child's physical skills.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.2 Staff intentionally plan environments that consider each child's level of skill.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.3 As staff plan active play schedules and activities, they consider each child's nourishment and hydration, so that vigorous physical play is possible and enjoyable.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.4 Staff model basic physical skills to help children learn or expand skills (For example, walking on a balance beam, jumping to a height, bouncing a ball.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.5 Each child has staff support to play in small groups and in larger groups where peer modeling and imitation of basic physical skills occur.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle II

#### **Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment**

- II.6 As a child works on a physical skill, the *process* the child uses is described and reinforced by staff.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.7 Each child receives frequent encouragement for *effort* as she/he works toward a new skill.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.8 When children master physical skills, their achievements are described and reinforced.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.9 When children use physical skills to create dramatic play, staff reinforce their accomplishments by describing the child's skill.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle III

#### **Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play**

- III.1 Staff regularly observe and evaluate each child's frequency, endurance, and intensity of active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.2 When a child does not participate in vigorous active physical play over time, staff document and intervene with lesson plans and strategies to encourage that child's active play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.3 Schedules for active physical play are coordinated with arrival, departure, snack times and mealtimes.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.4 Indoor and outdoor schedules for active physical play include sustained periods for high intensity activity. (For example, running, dancing, leaping, chasing games, that require lots of energy)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.5 Schedules for active physical play are coordinated with opportunities for rest and relaxation.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:



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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle III

#### **Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play**

III.6 Lesson plans include well-defined goals and objectives for daily active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.7 Appropriate attire is available for each child to play comfortably outside MOST days.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.8 The program closet includes extra gloves, mittens, and coats for children who forget (or do not own) appropriate clothing for comfortable outdoor play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.9 Staff have appropriate clothing so they can supervise outdoor play comfortably MOST days.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.10 Outdoor facilities are designed for active physical play MOST days of the year. (For example, shady spots, roof design to keep snow from being a falling hazard, access to drinking water, covered play areas for rainy or very hot weather, equipment that does not retain heat.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle III

#### **Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play**

III.12 Indoor facilities are designed for active physical play MOST days of the year.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

III.13 Outdoor facilities are maintained for active physical play MOST days of the year. (For example, snow removal is effective, landscaping is maintained all seasons, and standing water is monitored and evaluated.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

III.14 Indoor facilities are maintained for active physical play MOST days of the year.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

III.15 Staff are vigilant in supervising playground activities to protect and support all levels of physical play. (Fast movers, beginning movers, fast tricycle riders, single-hop hoppers, multiple-hop hoppers)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

III.16 Staff provide interventions as needed to support each child's physical play activities and environments.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:



## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle IV

#### **Children have time and support for uninterrupted, sustained play**

IV.1 Daily schedules offer scheduled time for both active and quiet play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.2 Staff use naturally occurring opportunities to support active physical play (Examples: adding movements to songs and poems; encouraging active movement such as marching or tiptoeing to music during work time; marching with gusto to and from activities; kicking small pine cones that fall after a big wind; incorporating stretching and relaxation activities after active play).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.3 Each day, children have opportunity to play in structured outdoor physical activity (teacher-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.4 Each day, children have opportunity to play in unstructured physical activities (child-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.5 Each day, children have opportunity to play in structured indoor physical activity (teacher-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.6 Each day, children have opportunity to play in un-structured indoor physical activity. (child-chosen)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle IV

#### **Children have time and support for uninterrupted, sustained play**

- IV.7 Staff support children in naturally occurring opportunities for active physical play throughout the day. (Offer props, suggest other children as playmates, or suggest expansion of a theme that uses a newly mastered physical skill.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.8 Children are allowed to play with an item or on equipment until they decide they are finished with that item. (For example, staff help children learn to wait while assuring that each child gets a turn. Staff keep a running wait list for popular activities or equipment. Staff help children develop skills for first taking turns, and later sharing items for active physical play.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.9 Staff help children plan time for play, prompting children with time concepts that are age appropriate. (The staff say, "You have lots of time, some time, just a little time left, or now is the time to clean up.")

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.10 Time to recover and a place to rest from high intensity play are freely available.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle V

#### Children have access to many and varied active physical play options

V.1 The daily curriculum includes scheduled active physical play indoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.2 The daily curriculum includes scheduled active physical play outdoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.3 The curriculum includes opportunities for spontaneous, child-initiated active physical play indoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.4 The curriculum has opportunities for spontaneous, child-initiated active physical play outdoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.5 Materials and equipment for active physical play are rotated frequently in response to children's developmental progress and needs.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle V

#### **Children have access to many and varied active physical play options**

V.6 Storage for physical play equipment and materials is easily accessible to staff.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

V.7 Equipment is available for vigorous play, including pedaling; climbing; running; lifting; carrying; pushing and pulling; digging; crawling; hanging using upper body; jumping to a distance, from a height, to a height ; balancing; projectile play (aiming, throwing, kicking, bouncing, striking, pitching); rolling; hopping; and sliding.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

V.8 Activities include dancing, marching, chanting, and active singing games.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

V.9 Active play environments include space for children to engage in active play without interrupting or interfering with play of others.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VI

#### **Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions**

VI.1 Adults are within sight and sound of each child's physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.2 Adults quickly respond to protect children's from unsafe physical play situations.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.3 Routines for taking turns with equipment are established and supported by adult supervision.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.4 For children younger than 36 months, environments for physical activity have multiples of popular or new materials and structures.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.5 Adults intentionally observe children's physical skills, and then offer support for a child's attempts at advancing to the next skill level.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

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## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VI

#### **Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions**

- VI.6 Adults are aware of when to offer supportive assists as a child learns a new skill. (Assists might include a full physical assist, or a partial physical assist, then on to just a verbal assist, and finally just a gestural assist.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.7 Adults use the least intrusive support when they help a child learn a new skill, or expand an old skill. (Staff give gestural or verbal support before offering partial physical or full physical support.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.8 Adults know when to assist a child to move from being an observer to participating in physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.9 Adults offer strategies to encourage a child to extend an active dramatic play. (For example, teacher offers props or helps the child engage other children for active play.)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.10 Adults have quick access to equipment so they can respond to children's displays of readiness either to try a new skill, or to expand a previously learned skill.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VI

#### **Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions**

VI.11 Environments offer a variety of activities and equipment where two or more children can work together in vigorous play (i.e., parachute play; balls for throwing and catching; wheel toy paths with direction signs; double seated tricycles; wagons)

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.12 Adults support children as they learn to wait for a turn.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.13 Adults trust children's cues that indicate when they need activity and rest.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.14 Adults provide easy access to drinking water, and guide children to drink throughout play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.15 Adults adapt environments so each child has opportunity to try challenging active play comfortably.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.16 Each child's skills are acknowledged and celebrated.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VI

#### **Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions**

VI.17 When two or more children play together, staff suggest strategies where each child's skill levels and opportunities are respected by the other children.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.18 Games and activities that include child-to-child competition in physical play are discouraged, and are replaced by celebrating each child's progress.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

**Relationships**

Advocacy



## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VII

#### **Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play**

VII.1 Program and classroom policies for active physical play are written and available to staff and parents.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.2 Administrators take active steps for advancing policies, grants, and practices that support children's active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.3 Staff input is given, and used by administrators for planning schedules for active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.4 Budgets include resources and funds for active physical play materials, equipment, and staff training.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.5 Staff have opportunity for input about purchasing materials and equipment for active physical play environments.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.6 Parents and staff communicate about children's active physical play at school.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VII

#### **Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play**

VII.7 Parents and staff communicate about children's outside of school active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.8 Parents and staff communicate about appropriate clothing for active physical play outdoors.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.9 Time for planning active physical play is set aside for staff, and for administrators.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.10 Staff frequently (daily) discuss curriculum needs for children's active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.11 Lesson plans are expected to include active physical play goals and objectives.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.12 Daily plans routinely include both structured and unstructured active physical play, and both indoors and outdoors active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

### Guiding Principle VII

#### **Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play**

VII.13 Staff orientation includes training about program policies and activities that support children's physical development and active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.14 Staff attend trainings that include information about children's physical development.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.15 Staff receive on-going training about strategies for supporting teacher and child-to-child relationships that influence active physical play.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.16 Staff attend trainings about setting environments that support children's physical development.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.17 Staff receive training on selecting age appropriate materials and equipment for young children's physical development.

Already doing   Making progress   Considering   Unable to do   Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### **A Self-Reflection Inventory for Supporting Young Children's Active Physical Play in Early Childhood Program Settings**

Janice Fletcher, EdD  
Laurel Branen, PhD., R.D., L.D.  
Samantha Ramsay, Ph.D. R.D., L.D.

*The TAPP is a self-reflective inventory for staff in early childhood settings. Use the reflection to think about supporting active physical play for children, ages 24 months through five years old.*

#### **Introduction**

Young children in early childhood settings encounter active physical play environments that include facilities, equipment, routines, and schedules. They develop relationships with peers and staff. The quality of environments and relationships influence a child's opportunity to develop optimum physical strength, flexibility, and endurance.

Achieving good health and enjoying physical activities that support development of physical competence are among the most important rights of children.

#### **What Is Active Physical Play?**

Active physical play includes two parts:

1. Children initiate and practice basic movements, using repetitive physical play. The result is development of physical skills with increased precision, strength, and endurance. These skills include skills such as balancing, crawling, creeping, walking, running, galloping, skipping, hopping, pushing, pulling, lifting, climbing, throwing, and catching.
2. Children initially work to master basic physical skills. Then, they use that foundation to create play themes that helps them maintain, strengthen, and extend those skills.

#### **Seven Guiding Principles for Active Physical Play**

1. Adults set safe, appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.
2. Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies, and for fun and enjoyment.
3. Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.
4. Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.
5. Each child has access to many and varied active physical play opportunities.
6. Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.
7. Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

## Who Should Use the TAPP Self- Reflection Inventory-Short Form?

This self-reflection is for those who want to address development of competence in physical skills and healthy weight for young children in group settings. Managers and supervisors, teachers, and classroom aides are appropriate users of the TAPP. The TAPP Short Form is for those who want to do a *quick screening* of active play practices.

## Why Should I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?

The TAPP-SF can jumpstart your thinking about environments and relationships that support children's active physical play. This quick review of practices can stimulate discussions and focus attention physical activity in your program. If you prefer a more comprehensive reflection tool, use the full TAPP.

## How Do I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?

The TAPP-SF includes self-reflections about active physical play for young children. Note that a "*reasons*" section follows each reflection statement and response. To enhance a meaningful report of the responses, users can write explanations of why they chose a response.

Each statement offers four response choices:

*already doing; making progress; considering; and not planning to do.*

- Choose *already doing* if you consistently use this practice.
- Choose *making progress* if you use the concept on some level. For example, you might choose this response if you have ordered materials for the environment, or some of the staff use the practice, but not all.
- Choose *considering* if you want to use the practice, but have taken no steps toward implementation.
- Choose *unable to do* if you would like to follow the practice, but you believe there are factors which prevent you from using the practice.
- Choose *not planning to do* if the concept simply does not work for your program, you do not agree with the concept, or if the concept is not applicable in your program.

**Safe & Challenging**

**Fun & Enjoyment**

**Frequent & Vigorous**

**Time & Support**

**Varied Play Options**

**Relationships**

**Advocacy**

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle I

*Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play*

I.1 A variety of play equipment is available (permanent and portable).

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.2 Equipment is available for many levels of ability.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.3 Age appropriate games are available.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.4 Equipment is in excellent condition for safe use by children.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.5 A wide variety of props and equipment is available for children to create play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.6 There is enough equipment so children do not wait longer for a turn than is appropriate for age and ability of each child.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

I.7 Storage is nearby for staff to quickly and safely access equipment or props as children create play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle II

*Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment*

II.1 Staff are aware of each child's physical skills.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.2 Staff plan environments that consider each child's level of skill.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.3 Staff model basic physical skills to help children try out new skills, or to expand skills.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.4 Each child receives frequent encouragement for effort and achievement of new skills.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.5 Children freely choose from an array of structured and unstructured play opportunities.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.6 Sounds of children's voices from the play areas are mostly relaxed and agreeable.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

II.7 Children create play themes that include active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle III

*Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play*

- III.1 Staff regularly observe and evaluate each child's frequency, endurance, and intensity of active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

- III.2 When a child does not participate in vigorous active physical play over time, staff document and intervene with lesson plans and strategies to encourage active play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

- III.3 Schedules for physical play are coordinated with times for arrival, departure, snack, and mealtimes.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

- III.4 Indoor and outdoor schedules for active physical play offer time for sustained periods of high intensity activity. (For example, running, dancing, leaping)

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

- III.5 Lesson plans include well-defined goals and objectives for daily active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

- III.6 Appropriate attire is available for staff and for each child to play comfortably outside MOST days.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*  
Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy



## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle IV

*Children have time and support for uninterrupted, sustained play*

- IV.1 Daily schedules offer time for both active and quiet play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- IV.2 Staff use naturally occurring opportunities to support active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- IV.3 Each day, children have opportunity to play in both structured outdoor and indoor physical activity (teacher-directed) and unstructured play (child-chosen).

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- IV.4 Staff offer props and play ideas active physical play throughout the day.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle V

*Children have access to many and varied active physical play options*

- V.1 The daily curriculum includes scheduled active physical play indoors and outdoors.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- V.2 Materials and equipment for active physical play are rotated frequently in response to children's developmental progress and needs.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- V.3 Storage for physical play equipment and materials is easily accessible to staff.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- V.4 Equipment is available for vigorous play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- V.5 Most of the time, active play environments are set up for each child or groups of children to engage in active play without interrupting play of others.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle VI

*Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions*

VI.1 Adults are within sight and sound of children's physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VI.2 Adults quickly respond to protect children's from unsafe physical play situations.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VI.3 Adults are intentional in observing children's physical skills, and support a child's attempts at advancing to the next skill levels.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VI.4 Adults offer strategies to encourage a child to extend an active dramatic play. (For example, teacher offers props or helps the child engage other children for active play.)

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VI.5 Toddler physical play environments offer multiples of popular or new materials and structures.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle VI (continued)

*Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions*

- VI.6 Routines for taking turns with equipment are established and supported by adult supervision.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- VI.7 Adults support children as they learn to wait for a turn.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

- VI.8 Adults adapt environments so that each child has opportunity to try challenging physical play activities comfortably.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle VII

*Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play*

VII.1 Policies are written and available to staff and parents for active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.2 Administrators take active steps for advancing policies, grants, and practices that support children's active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.3 Staff input is used by administrators for planning schedules for active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.4 Budgets include resources and funds for active physical play materials, equipment, and staff training.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.5 Parents and staff communicate about children's active physical play at school.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
Support

Varied Play  
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

## THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY: SHORT FORM

### Guiding Principle VII (continued)

*Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play*

VII.6 Time for planning active physical play is set aside for staff and administrators.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.7 Staff frequently (daily) discuss curriculum needs for children's active physical play

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

VII.8 Staff attend training about active physical play.

*Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do*

Reason:

Safe &  
Challenging

Fun &  
Enjoyment

Frequent &  
Vigorous

Time &  
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Relationships

Advocacy