

## **Fundamental Motor Skills (FMS)**

**Fundamental motor skills** is one of the most essential assessment in the physical education setting that provide a wide base of movement abilities from which more advanced skills can be developed. A child whose fundamental motor skills are not amply developed will not have a foundation upon which to build proficient movement forms. In this paper I will address the importance of fundamental motor skills within physical education program.

The standard says that "physically educated person can apply movement concepts and principles to the development of additional motor skills". (Williams, p. 4, 2003) This implies that the principles of movement obtained when developing fundamental motor skills continue to be useful and demonstrates the critical need for elementary school physical educators to teach the fundamental motor skills. Helping students master these skills in their early years will help ensure that they learn to enjoy and appreciate a lifetime of movement.

Colvin, Markos, and Walker (2003) point out that a physical educator must do more than just provide enjoyable activity for the elementary student. The activity must be purposeful. In order to achieve this at the elementary school level, the physical educator's program must center around mastering fundamental movement skills and learning developmentally appropriate fitness concepts. As Colvin et al. further stress, children are able to master the fundamentals with greater ease during their elementary years than at any other point in their life. If children miss this opportunity to develop motor skill proficiency, they will likely be hampered from enjoying recreational and sport activities later in their life (Williams, 2003).

We have a tendency to assume that by the age of eight or nine years these basic movement patterns will simply be acquired and mastered through the normal developmental process. While it is true that some fundamental motor skills (such as walking) will naturally develop to an acceptable level of proficiency for most children through the development process, the majority of fundamental motor skills must be taught, reinforced, and assessed to ensure that all children have the skills needed for later movement success.

Assessment is a critical aspect of ensuring that children progress through the developmental process effectively. Assessment of fundamental motor skills in the elementary school program is especially important. Children must master these skills before being sent on to more advanced movement in a middle school program. As mentioned before, it is wrong to assume that these skills have been mastered because the physical educator provided movement experiences that involved the fundamental motor skills. The only way to ensure that the skills have been mastered is to assess them. This will also provide the physical educator with crucial information regarding program effectiveness.

If assessment is so critical, why is it not being performed more often? First, the most pressing issue facing most physical educators is that of time constraints. In many states, elementary school physical educators are limited to seeing a student once per week, often for as little as 20 minutes per session. The first order of business in this situation should be to educate school board members on the importance of quality daily physical education in the elementary school curriculum. Of course, curricular changes of that magnitude require extreme time and effort, and are beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, the immediate focus will be to suggest practical solutions that can be implemented when the physical educator faces extreme restrictions on available class time.

Assessment traditionally has been conceptualized as individual, summative testing. In this scenario, at the end of a two- or three-week unit, the physical educator must attempt to test an individual, have the next student or two "on deck" and ready for testing, teach the rest of the class a separate activity to keep everyone moving, and also supervise. Obviously, to successfully conduct testing in such a fashion would require two teaching professionals and an excellent coordination of personnel, students, and activities--not a realistic scenario for most elementary school physical educators.

So, in what other ways may assessment be conceptualized? First, it can occur during the time period traditionally known as the formative period, when students are involved in large group movement activities. This is an excellent opportunity for the physical educator to engage in assessment. One example would be to conduct assessment during a game of fundamental motor skill tag. The instructor would ask the entire class to engage in a particular fundamental motor skill while playing a game of tag. During this time, the instructor could perform assessment rapidly on several students. Integrating assessment into the activity portion of class results in a number of benefits:

- The instructor takes greater advantage of limited time. As stated earlier, many, if not most, physical educators face extreme time pressures. When students are seen only once a week for 20 to 30 minutes, teaching content while assessing quality movement experiences becomes a paramount concern. The instructor must restructure the manner in which assessment occurs. It must be integrated through the entire physical education program.
- All students remain active during assessment. The unfortunate reality of many assessment periods in physical education is that most students stand waiting in line for assessment or are engaged in less than meaningful activity. By conducting assessment during the activity time, all students benefit by participating in meaningful activity during the limited and precious time that is available.
- The instructor actively supervises student behavior while performing assessment. When assessment occurs on an individual basis, the instructor is often forced to divert his or her attention away from the

- rest of the class. Inadequate supervision can easily lead to disruptive student behavior and, at worst, may result in negligent instructor behavior if a student mishap occurs. By conducting assessment during large group activity time, the instructor may peripherally monitor student behavior while conducting assessment. Therefore, student behavior can be kept under control and on task.
- Students who may normally become anxious and perform poorly during individual assessment may now perform in a more relaxed cognitive state. Many students experience test-taking anxiety. This is true in the gymnasium as well as in the classroom. Physical educators must always look for ways to reduce this anxiety.
  - The instructor performs assessment in a more naturalistic situation. One of the difficulties of assessment is structuring the testing situation so that it mimics "real-life" situations. Although not all activities easily lend themselves to naturalistic settings and assessment, most of the fundamental motor skills do.

In this paper I have attempted to take a realistic look at some of the primary barriers keeping the elementary physical educator from conducting effective assessment. The crucial issue addressed was that of extreme time pressures. By implementing one or more of the solutions provided, it is likely that quality assessment can begin to occur. Conducting assessment during the formative period, utilizing peer assessment, distributing assessment across the curriculum, and integrating technology into assessment is realistic solution to the issue of time pressure. Ultimately, implementation should lead to the strengthening of the elementary school program, which is the primary structure upon which the entire K-12 curriculum is built.

Through this process, the student becomes the primary beneficiary. Providing quality assessment of the fundamental motor skills ensures that students have the foundation to enjoy a lifetime of rewarding movement experiences. Will implementing quality assessment require the physical educator to think innovatively? Yes. Will it require the physical educator to try new teaching strategies? Yes. Will it take time and effort? Yes. But in view of the benefits afforded to students, the result will be well worth that time and effort.

## **Bibliography**

1. Williams, e. W. (2003). Using your personal digital assistant to store lesson plans. *Journal of Physical education, Recreation & Dance*, 73(3), 1-18.

[www.supremeessays.com/fundamental-motor-skills.html](http://www.supremeessays.com/fundamental-motor-skills.html)