

SHAPE America Sets the Standard®

MOVING

With Words & Actions



Physical Literacy for
Preschool and Primary Children

Rhonda L. Clements
Sharon L. Schneider

 **SHAPE** SOCIETY
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Moving With Words & Actions

Physical Literacy for Preschool and Primary Children

Meeting the National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes

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*“Movement, imagination and play are keys to
a happy childhood.”*

Sharon Schneider

“To be someone, you must become someone.”

Rhonda Clements

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Preface

With the rate of childhood obesity increasing and beginning at an earlier age in many parts of the world, opportunities for planned physical activity and unstructured physical play are needed now more than ever. This book's content supports SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education (published in 2013), which stress that the goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. This goal is also critical for teachers of young children who are searching for age-appropriate content, for a better understanding of how to plan and implement comprehensive lessons, and for suggestions of ways to assess a lesson's success. *Moving With Words & Actions* addresses the teacher's desire to implement activities that can awaken children's love for lifelong physical activity. It also confronts the problem of childhood obesity by providing the tools needed to increase the young child's level of physical activity and movement competency.

We selected the title *Moving With Words & Actions: Physical Literacy for Preschool and Primary Children* for this book because words are the key stimuli for engaging children in active movement. The use of words to entice children to move is presented according to topics that the child can relate to readily, such as those found in his or her immediate environment and those that reflect the body's parts and capabilities as well as the child's academic learning. With the great emphasis on language arts and literacy skills, as seen in the areas of math literacy, English literacy, computer literacy, and science literacy, it seems most appropriate that the title of this book reinforce the fact that words and actions work together in lesson plans that enrich children's knowledge of their expanding world, their understanding of themselves and others, and their ability to move competently and confidently within it. The title *Moving With Words & Actions* makes this point clear as you select from a variety of lesson plans that contain as many as 30 action words.

Literacy development in children is directly related to language development. Physical literacy is directly related to children's ability to move efficiently and effectively to complete age-appropriate movement tasks. Just as young children use words to become more language-literate, their understanding and demonstration of action words can help them become more physically literate. This is seen as the young child begins to learn that every movement that he or she performs has a word to describe that action. The term "physically literate" makes use of children's fascination with new words, their delight in moving actively with peers, and their strong urge to participate cooperatively in learning tasks made up of group physical activities that emphasize action words. The outcome is a solid first step toward the child's becoming a physically literate learner who later will move with a high level of competence and confidence in multiple environments throughout an active life. This book links physical literacy with words so that you will have ample activities to foster and enhance this concept.

Organization and Content

Whether employed in childcare centers or programs or in public or private elementary schools, teachers of preschool and primary children have a responsibility to promote children's physical literacy development based on the most

current theories, professional knowledge, and research. This book is organized so that its lesson plans are associated with National Standards and respected guidelines. In addition, all lesson plans were field-tested according to best practices. It also is organized with the understanding that readers' professional training and their levels of experience with young children might vary. Therefore, the book is divided into two distinct parts.

Part I emphasizes *setting the standard* with age-appropriate content, instruction, and assessment. Chapter 1 begins by offering strong evidence of the importance that words play in the lives of young children. SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education are identified, along with a discussion of how physical literacy applies to the young child. The chapter continues with a comprehensive listing of more than 90 locomotor and nonlocomotor skills. Because not all young children are able to understand the meaning of some action words immediately, each skill is defined and placed in a sentence structure that you can use when introducing or reinforcing new physical skills to your students. This invaluable content is followed by a listing of movement concepts and an explanation of their importance in expanding the young child's knowledge of the body. The chapter ends with information related to key manipulative skills and several learning tasks that do not require advanced training to teach.

Chapter 2 provides great insight into creating and implementing lessons plans. Concrete information that reaffirms the importance of behavioral objectives and what constitutes an appropriate learning task, that uses knowledge about students to inform teaching, that highlights the two primary instructional strategies for this age group, and that simplifies one's understanding of academic language is especially meaningful. Chapter 3 identifies five additional teaching practices that are certain to interest student teachers when creating preservice lessons or demonstration lessons for employment opportunities. The goal of this chapter is to make the most of every lesson. Part I is completed by chapter 4, in which we identify three assessment techniques that coincide with contemporary practices in physical education and in the early childhood setting.

Part II of *Moving With Words & Actions* presents more than 70 lessons that address the content areas associated most closely with the young child's body, home, community, language, and knowledge of the world. Chapter 5 provides content knowledge for enhanced physical literacy regarding the body's physical nature. All lesson plans examine different body parts and the ways in which they move. The chapter also emphasizes the child's awareness of healthy foods and their benefits. Chapter 6 addresses children's understanding of their local communities through learning tasks that highlight the roles of community helpers and settings that are familiar to most young children. Chapter 7 draws on the fact that children are fascinated by the movement of living creatures in their home environments and other parts of the world. The lesson plans in this chapter help children gain an appreciation of these creatures as they imitate their movements, behaviors, and characteristics. Chapter 8 fills a large void in the use of movement to reinforce math and science content for young children. Action rhymes, riddles, and a variety of games serve as innovative learning tasks for teaching this environmental and numerical content. Chapter 9 elaborates and expands on children's language arts and movement vocabulary, beginning with alphabet challenges, action poems, movement riddles, and more than 15 movement narratives that are certain to stimulate children's love for moderate to vigorous movement.

Audience

Moving With Words & Actions provides more than 70 lesson plans that can satisfy young children's urge for movement and increase their physical literacy while also expanding their understanding of words, movements, and academic concepts. The book represents an indispensable resource for anyone responsible for teaching children ages 3 through 8: physical educators, classroom teachers, daycare and preschool specialists, movement specialists, community group leaders, home school groups, afterschool specialists, and special education teachers.

Teacher trainers in physical education will find original movement content presented in a manner that they can modify easily to fit lesson plan formats for teacher certification such as the nationally recognized Educational Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). All content is designed to meet SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education (2013). Also, teacher trainers in early childhood and elementary school education will be able to adapt the activities to fit their profession's basic lesson plans as they discover two instructional strategies used commonly by physical education teachers in schoolyards or limited spaces. Teachers working within an inclusive setting or in a self-contained classroom can adapt the learning tasks easily to meet the requirements found in individualized education programs and 504 accommodation plans. Also, recess, lunchtime, and afterschool specialists will find the contents of this book dynamic and appropriate because of the noncompetitive nature of the activities. Most important, the majority of the learning tasks in this book do not require equipment or a specialized setting, and they complement existing curricula. The contents of this book serve as an excellent resource for practitioners in search of innovative activities that blend physical activity with academic concepts for developing physically literate children.

Unique Features and Benefits

Each lesson plan provides children with new understandings about how the body functions, moves, and grows in healthy ways. The child's movement vocabulary is guaranteed to be enhanced after participating in just a few of the lessons. This emphasis on words and their impact on learning enrich children's physical literacy greatly. This is possible also because, unlike most resources that focus on only one movement activity per lesson, each lesson in this book contains no fewer than three learning tasks that involve moderate to vigorous activity. These lessons are aimed at the needs and interests of the individual child, partners, and the whole class. You can use the lessons immediately because they require little, if any, equipment. Most important, each lesson has been field-tested with young children for its appropriateness, and each addresses one or more of the National Standards through one or more of SHAPE America's Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education, which were published in 2013 and describe what children should know and be able to do in each grade. These features in each of the more than 70 lesson plans offer a positive first step in providing teachers of young children the ability to plan, practice instructional strategies, and employ suggested means to assess learning.

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PART I

Setting the Standard With Age-Appropriate Content, Instruction, and Assessment

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CHAPTER 1

Selecting Age-Appropriate Content

This chapter introduces the relationship between word knowledge and movement in a young child's learning process, as well as addressing the need to select age-appropriate content. This content focuses on the power of words in a young child's life, the importance of physical literacy, and SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education. It also identifies the use of SHAPE America's *Active Start* physical activity guidelines for young children and Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework as a foundation for selecting the correct content. Laban's four movement concepts and the young child's physical locomotor, nonlocomotor, and manipulative skills are of key importance. The chapter also contains guidelines to help you select the most appropriate content for a particular child's age and maturation level.

The Power of Words

Most educators agree that words play a powerful role in a young child's learning. One of the most impressive examples of such learning comes from the life story of Helen Keller, who could neither see nor hear yet learned from her American teacher, Anne Sullivan, that all objects and living things have names that identify them, and that these names consist of different letters. Sullivan repeatedly used her finger to spell the word "doll" into Helen's palm after having Helen feel the shape and texture of her doll. After several trials in which Sullivan used familiar objects such as a coffee mug and then brushing water onto Helen's hand and spelling the word "water" into her other hand, Helen's learning took a wondrous leap forward. With repeated trials and exposure to different items in her immediate environment, Helen recognized the words for what they represent. From

then on, she used words to communicate her needs, thoughts, and actions to the many people whose lives she enhanced over her lifetime.

In a similar way, words are the key that young children use to open the door to language, communication, and the understanding of concepts. Words are the means by which children process information through the cognitive domain. Not only do children learn that words are used to represent names of objects and living things, but they also learn that words help them to describe situations and events and to talk about their feelings. As children get older, they realize that words create the lyrics to their favorite songs and describe the actions in their favorite storybooks.

In this book's lesson plans, *action words* describe how we can move our body in different ways. In the simplest sense, these words expose children to ways in which they can move from one space to another space beyond simply walking or running. Action words also can encourage children to stay in a limited space and move individual body parts beyond basic bending and stretching actions. With this emphasis on moving in a variety of creative and skillful ways, the action words take on an educative purpose and are referred to as the child's **movement vocabulary**. The teaching process results in children increasing their ability to move more effectively while also becoming more knowledgeable about words and their meaning. This body–mind connection is the basis of *physical literacy* and you can expand it even more when you introduce learning tasks based on topics that reflect the child's interests, environment, and physical capabilities.

Moving With Words & Actions uses carefully designed lesson plans that incorporate age-appropriate words grouped into five distinctive topics to expand children's physical abilities. Beginning in chapter 5, lesson plans introduce words that spark children's interest in their body parts and systems, muscle actions, and body expressions, as well as in healthy foods. Lesson plans in chapter 6 introduce words that expand children's awareness of the environment beyond that of their home settings, including words that challenge children to copy the actions common to people who work and help in their community. Lesson plans in chapter 7 focus on living creatures, using words associated with the movements and behaviors of animals living on the ground and in the water and air. The lesson plans in chapter 8 introduce words found in the realm of science and math. This includes science movements reflecting substances, surfaces and textures, power sources, wave actions, and wind patterns among others. Chapter 8 also introduces movements that coincide with words related to basic math concepts; children move according to words and numbers that rhyme, form geometric shapes with their bodies, and perform movements that require a simple understanding of words related to measurement.

Chapter 9 aims to improve young children's literacy and language arts skills through *movement narratives* as they become enchanted with words. The narratives are unique fairytale-like stories designed to capture children's interest while enlarging their movement vocabulary. These learning tasks foster a new awareness of how the child can demonstrate words physically so that they come to life. This use of words is critical to developing a physically literate learner. It also is one way that young children can experience the joy of words and movement together and discover, as Helen Keller did, that words can be part of a powerful learning experience.

Physical Literacy and National Standards

From birth, children have a natural desire to explore and experience new challenges. For the youngest child, learning occurs through play as parents introduce

the child to the immediate environment. As children reach age 3, their yearning to explore and experience new things still exists, and parents and other adults must guide their exploration of the world beyond the home. This includes teaching basic concepts reflecting the child's body, physical development, word usage or vocabulary, community setting, and expanded environment.

When discussed as a whole, teachers of physical education and early childhood specialists use the term “physical literacy,” which takes into account the child's total learning process (Roetert & Jeffries, 2014). SHAPE America incorporates the term physical literacy as part of the goal of physical education (2014, p. 4) and cites its definition as “the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments” (Mandigo, Francis, Lodewyk & Lopez, 2012, p. 28; Whitehead, 2001). Each of the lesson plans in this book address one or more of SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education, which are as follows:

- **Standard 1.** The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- **Standard 2.** The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- **Standard 3.** The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
- **Standard 4.** The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
- **Standard 5.** The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

Guidelines and Frameworks

Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children From Birth to Age 5 (NASPE, now known as SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2009) has been instrumental in providing teachers who work with young children with a clearer understanding of the importance of daily physical activity. The following identifies *Active Start's* five guidelines for preschool-age children:

- **Guideline 1.** Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity each day.
- **Guideline 2.** Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes—and up to several hours—of unstructured physical activity each day, and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time, except when sleeping.
- **Guideline 3.** Preschoolers should be encouraged to develop competence in fundamental motor skills that will serve as the building blocks for future motor skillfulness and physical activity.
- **Guideline 4.** Preschoolers should have access to indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large-muscle activities.
- **Guideline 5.** Caregivers and parents in charge of preschoolers' health and well-being are responsible for understanding the importance of physical activity and for promoting movement skills by providing opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activity.

Moving With Words & Actions complements *Active Start's* Guideline 5 by providing caregivers and teachers with many structured physical activity lessons. The lesson plans are especially helpful for new teachers and caregivers who have limited or no experience in teaching fundamental motor skills. It is critical that these skills be taught correctly so that they serve as the foundation for motor skillfulness. Furthermore, the task of engaging children actively in structured games and movement experiences for 60 minutes each day can be challenging unless you have ample content from which to draw. Many of the learning tasks in *Moving With Words & Actions* also can follow children onto the playground, where they can explore several of the movement activities in a fun and unstructured way without unnecessary fear about safety.

Another important guideline in the form of a national framework is *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* (2015). This information was first introduced in 2000 as a guide to curriculum planning and assessing the progress of developing children ages 3 through 5. Its new design is to provide a direction in preparing children to enter kindergarten in five domains categorized by (1) approaches to learning, (2) social and emotional development, (3) language and literacy, (4) cognition, and (5) perceptual, motor, and physical development.

The learning tasks contained in *Moving With Words & Actions* can help Head Start coordinators as they strive to prepare lessons that meet each domain. For example, when preparing a lesson within the domain of language and literacy, the narratives included in this resource, such as Fairy Tale Actions (see chapter 9), coincide directly with the outcomes in that domain. In the domain perceptual, motor, and physical development, the focus is on increasing the child's locomotor and nonlocomotor skills, specifically his or her proficiency of control and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, and galloping. Because all of the learning tasks in *Moving With Words & Actions* include many of these locomotor skills, Head Start coordinators will find the tasks appealing.

Movement Concepts as Age-Appropriate Content

Cultivating an understanding of SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education as well as NASPE's Active Start guidelines (2009), and Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (2015) is the first step in selecting content that coincides with the young child's age and stage of development. The content used most often for this age group is attributed to Laban's four *movement concepts*. Over the years, Laban's theories have been translated into a user-friendly resource that is respected by professionals in dance and gymnastics, a variety of sport experts, and physical education teachers working with young children and children in early-elementary school.

Laban was born in 1879 in Austria at a time when theorists were applying mathematical principles to movement involving physics. After many years, Laban's fascination with movement enabled him to develop a comprehensive system of dance notation that allowed him to record movement in written form. In the early 1950s, progressive leaders in physical education translated Laban's theories into four questions that focused on "basic movement" in the areas of dance, mime, theatre, and physical education. In the early 1980s, those four questions and the concepts that emerged became the primary basis for lessons in the early-elementary grades in physical education. Soon after, they also became the foundation for early childhood physical education lessons along with the child's first introduction to basic motor skill activities (Clements, 1988; Clements, 2016).

Each lesson plan in *Moving With Words & Actions* contains at least one movement concept aimed at increasing children's physical skills and their understand-