Chapter 3

The Thinking, Feeling, and Socializing Child

# Summary

In order to effectively design and implement developmentally appropriate physical education experiences for children in pre-K through grade 5, physical educators must understand the whole child—that is, the thinking, feeling, and socializing child. Teaching the whole child requires us to apply knowledge about children’s cognitive, social and emotional, and motor development when designing and implementing physical education lessons. Therefore, using the same lesson for children across grade levels is not a best practice because it does not consider the unique characteristics of children in different stages of development. Even so, this is a common practice in some physical education programs. In order to equip you with the ability to consider the unique features of children in pre-K through grade 5, we first examine each domain of learning, then provide instructional guidelines based on children’s development across the domains. These guidelines will help you address the whole child as you design and implement standards-based learning experiences in pre-K, K-2, and grade 3-5 physical education.

# Key Objectives

* Describing developmental characteristics—and their implications for teaching children—in each stage of cognitive development
* Explaining the characteristics of children’s social and emotional development from pre-K through grade 5
* Defining self-concept and describing how teachers can foster development of a positive self-concept
* Describing strategies for developing children’s motivation and perceived competence in physical education settings
* Explaining strategies for developing children’s prosocial behaviors
* Discussing Hellison’s levels of teaching personal and social responsibility and strategies that teachers can use to reinforce the levels

# Big Ideas

* Pre-K children are in the preoperational stage of cognitive development and are often egocentric yet have very vivid imaginations. Children in the preoperational stage of cognitive development learn through play and should be provided with multiple opportunities to explore.
* Primary-grade children are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, during which their thinking is logical but still depends on events that are personally experienced, seen, or heard. They should be provided with choices of instructional tasks and opportunities to explore movement possibilities.
* Intermediate-grade children (in grades 3 through 5) are transitioning from the concrete operational stage of cognitive development into the formal operational stage. In the formal operational stage, children can look systematically at possible solutions to a problem and use rational and abstract reasoning to choose the best option. They also have longer attention spans and can work productively in small groups, solve problems, and carry out a series of instructional tasks.
* The pre-K child’s sense of self develops during the “initiative versus guilt” stage of Erikson’s model of psychosocial development. During this stage, if children have experiences in taking initiative, they can gain a sense of self-confidence. Once they reach the three- to six-year age range, children have a strong desire to move and explore, and if they have opportunities to take risks and succeed, they become more confident movers as they grow and mature (Midura & Glover, 1999). Children aged six to twelve years are in the “industry versus inferiority” stage of Erikson’s model. In this stage, teachers can facilitate industry by helping children set and attain realistic, criterion-referenced goals using evidence from personal data; they can also help children refrain from exclusively using social comparisons that could lead to feelings of inferiority.
* Self-concept has been defined as the “accumulation of knowledge about one’s self, such as beliefs regarding personality traits, physical characteristics, abilities, values, goals, and roles” (Alvarez, 2012).
* Physical educators can foster the development of a positive self-concept by providing age-appropriate class rules and consistent consequences, designing inclusive environments, and providing adequate practice time for children to gain a sense of competence.
* Teachers can enhance children’s motivation by encouraging them to set criterion-referenced, task-oriented goals that focus on personal improvement and mastery of skills.
* Prosocial behaviors can be learned when teachers model and reinforce social skills, offer children opportunities to practice prosocial behaviors, engage students in partner and small-group activities, and provide opportunities for children to reflect on the social skills they exhibit.
* Levels of personal and social responsibility can be understood in terms of Hellison's (2011) TPSR model, in which level 0 is characterized by irresponsibility, level 1 by respecting the rights and feelings of others, level 2 by effort and cooperation, level 3 by self-direction, level 4 by helping others and exhibiting leadership, and level 5 by transferring behaviors outside of the physical education setting.
* Physical educators must employ specific teaching strategies to develop children’s personal and social behaviors. For example, when teachers provide instructional tasks of varying levels of difficulty, children can be successful, in which case they are more likely to exhibit on-task behavior and self-control. Other examples include designing instructional tasks in which children work with a partner (thus promoting their respect for others); help with equipment (thus promoting individual responsibility); work independently at stations (thus reinforcing self-direction); lead instant activities, design games, or make up dances (thus reinforcing leadership); and engage in peer teaching (thus promoting care for others).

# Part 1: Identifying Stages of Cognitive Development

Ask students to identify the correct grade range (pre-K, K-2, or grade 3-5) for the level of cognition represented in the following statements.

1. Students use a task card listing three criteria to guide them in observing and giving feedback to a peer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Each station has task cards containing only pictures. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Five stations have task cards with three activities to be performed in pairs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. The teacher reads each skill word on an assessment card and asks students to draw an arrow to the correct picture of the skill. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Part 2: National Content Standard 4

The purpose of the following activities is for students to examine the prosocial behavior fostered by the indicated movement tasks for the pre-K, K-2, and grade 3-5 levels.

## Pre-K Movement Task

**Directions:** Read each of the three activity descriptions and use the appropriate item from the word bank to identify the prosocial behavior fostered by each activity.

**Prosocial Behavior Word Bank**

* Cooperation with others
* Trying one’s best
* Being self-directed

**Tasks:**

1. Inform students that at any time during the lesson you might beat the drum a specific numbers of times. If you beat the drum two times, they are to find a nearby classmate and stand side by side to form a pair; they could then be asked to move alongside, to lead, or to follow their partner. Similarly, if you beat the drum three times, students form groups of three and hold hands to form a circle. Because of preK children’s stage of social and emotional development groups of two or three are most appropriate.
2. During circle-time activities or at movement stations, students are encouraged to “keep trying.” This goal can be pursued by using musical selections of increasing length. After children have made a choice to play at a specific station, the teacher starts up a musical selection and encourages the children to keep practicing until the music ends.
3. Four apple tokens are attached with hook-and-loop fasteners to a laminated tree (or taped to a cone). When children choose to play at this station, they pick an apple off of the tree and put the apple in a basket. When they are finished playing at the station, they put the apple back on the tree. If a child comes to play at a station that does not have an apple on the tree, then the child must choose a different station.

## K-2 Movement Task

**Directions:** After examining each of the following tasks, students complete a “Looks and Sounds Like” T-chart by identifying behaviors that children might display during the task that are either congruent or incongruent with the prosocial theme.

**Task:** Children are spread out in general space. In response to a music cue, they are asked to travel through general space. At some point while they are traveling, the teacher beats a drum a specific number of times to represent the number of students per group. Because of their stage of social and emotional development, K-2 children must be attentive and quickly form groups of the proper size (no more than six children in a group).

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| --- | --- |
| Being attentive looks and sounds like . . . | |
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|  |  |

## Grade 3-5 Movement Task

**Directions:** After examining each of the following movement tasks, complete a “Looks and Sounds Like” T-chart by identifying behaviors that children might display during the task that are either congruent or incongruent with the prosocial theme.

**Equipment:** hoops and junior volleyballs or beach balls

**Directions:** One pair of partners holds a hoop while another pair (with one player on each side of the hoop) tries to volley a ball back and forth through the hoop. The hoop holders move as needed to help the ball travel through the hoop. In order to gradually add an element of challenge, players can be permitted to hit the ball three times before getting it through the hoop, then only two times, and then only once. For a second challenge, players can try to change roles (from hoop holder to volleyer and vice versa) without letting the ball touch the ground (Hastie, 2010, p. 153).

Adapted, by permission, from P. Hastie, 2010, *Student-designed games: Strategies for promoting creativity, cooperation, and skill development* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), 153.

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| Cooperative interdependence looks and sounds like . . . | |
| ::::Library:Application Support:Microsoft:Office:Clipart:Personal:j0424466.wmf | ::::Library:Application Support:Microsoft:Office:Clipart:Personal:j0424468.wmf |
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# Part 3: Intentional Inclusion of Prosocial Behavior in a Lesson

Read the following lesson scenarios and answer the reflection question.

**Reflection Question:** In which scenario is a prosocial behavior promoted? What is that behavior?

**Scenario 1a:** Five jump-rope stations are set up. The teacher assigns partner groups at the beginning of the lesson. On a musical cue, the partner groups rotate to the next station.

**Scenario 1b:** Five jump-rope stations are set up. The teacher has children find a partner by matching puzzle pieces that they are given as they enter the gymnasium. On a musical cue, the partner groups rotate to the next station, whereupon each student finds a new partner.

Scenario 1a\_\_\_ Scenario 1b\_\_\_ Prosocial behavior: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario 2a:** The teacher gives each student a card listing eight tasks. The directions state that students can complete the tasks in any order and should make a check mark next to each task after completing 10 repetitions of it. When all eight tasks have been check-marked, the student gives the task card back to the teacher.

**Scenario 2b:** The teacher has students find a personal space, then leads them in completing 10 repetitions each of eight tasks.

Scenario 2a\_\_\_ Scenario 2b\_\_\_ Prosocial behavior: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Part 4: Online Activity

Have students use the following link to read about prosocial behaviors in elementary children. Students should then be prepared to discuss at least two ways in which the information could be used to promote prosocial behavior in a physical education class. Here is the link: <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/prosocial-behavior-elementary-children-5031.html>.

# Review Questions

1. Describe the developmental characteristics for each stage of cognitive development.
2. Discuss the implications for teaching children at different stages of cognitive development.
3. Explain the characteristics of social and emotional development in children from pre-K through grade 5.
4. What is self-concept, and how can teachers foster children’s development of a positive self-concept?
5. Describe strategies for helping children develop motivation and perceived competence in the physical education setting.
6. Describe strategies for helping children develop prosocial behaviors.
7. Discuss the levels of personal and social responsibility, as well as strategies that teachers can use to reinforce them.