INTRODUCTION
As we enter the 21st century, the importance and value of regular physical activity has been recognized as never before. Accompanying this recognition is the awareness that childhood is the time to begin the development of active and healthy lifestyles. Children do not automatically develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that lead to regular and enjoyable participation in physical activity. They must be taught. The responsibility for this instruction is vested primarily in physical education programs in our schools. In recent years, a growing body of research, theory and practical experience has sharpened our understanding about the beneficial aspects of physical education programs for children and those that are counterproductive. The purpose of this document is to describe, in a very straightforward way, practices that are both developmentally and instructionally appropriate and inappropriate for children in pre-school and elementary physical education programs.

PREMISES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN
In any discussion of physical education programs for children, there are three major premises that need to be understood.

1. Physical education and athletic programs have different purposes.
   Athletic programs are essentially designed for youngsters who are eager to specialize in one or more sports and refine their talents in order to compete with others of similar interests and abilities. Developmentally appropriate physical education programs, in contrast, are designed for every child from the physically gifted to the physically challenged. The intent is to provide children of all abilities and interests with a foundation of movement experiences that will eventually lead to active and healthy lifestyles. Athletic competition may be one part of this lifestyle, but it is not the only part.

2. Children are not miniature adults.
   Children have very different abilities, needs and interests than adults. It is inadequate simply to "water down" adult sport or activity programs and assume that they will be beneficial. Children need, and learn from, programs that are designed specifically with their needs and differences in mind.

3. Children in school today will not be adults in today's world.
   More than ever before, we are in a time of rapid change. Consequently, educators have the challenge of preparing children to live as adults in a world that has yet to be clearly defined and understood. The only certainty is that they will have different opportunities and interests than currently exist. Contemporary programs introduce children to the world of today, while also preparing them to live in the uncertain world of tomorrow. In brief, they help them learn how to learn and to enjoy the process of discovering and exploring new and different challenges in the physical domain. Tomorrow's physical activities may look quite different from today's. Present programs need to prepare children with basic movement skills that can be used in any activity, whether it be popular today or yet to be invented. Mastery of basic skills encourages the development and refinement of more complex skills leading to the ultimate enjoyment of physical activity for its own sake.

APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

Component: Curriculum
The physical education curriculum has an obvious scope and sequence based on goals and objectives that are appropriate for all children. It includes a balance of skills, concepts, games, educational gymnastics, rhythms and dance experiences designed to enhance the cognitive, motor, affective and physical fitness development of every child.

Component: Development of movement concepts and motor skills
Children are provided with frequent and meaningful age appropriate practice opportunities that enable individuals to develop a functional understanding of movement concepts (body awareness, space awareness, effort and relationships) and build competence and confidence in their ability to perform a variety of motor skills (locomotor, non-locomotor and non-motor skills).

INAPPROPRIATE PRACTICES

Component: Curriculum
The physical education curriculum lacks developed goals and objectives and is based primarily on the teacher's interests, preferences and background rather than those of the children. For example, the curriculum consists primarily of large group games.

Component: Development of movement concepts and motor skills
Children participate in a limited number of games and activities where the opportunity for children to develop basic concepts and motor skills is restricted.
Component: Cognitive development

Physical education activities are designed with both the physical and the cognitive development of children in mind. Teachers provide experiences that encourage children to question, integrate, analyze, communicate, apply cognitive concepts and gain a wide multi-cultural view of the world, thus making physical education a part of the total educational experience.

Instructors fail to recognize and explore the unique role of physical education, which allows children to learn to move while also moving to learn. Children do not receive opportunities to integrate their physical education experiences with art, music, language arts, mathematics, etc..

Component: Affective development

Teachers intentionally design and teach activities throughout the year that allow children the opportunity to work together to improve their emerging social and cooperation skills. These activities also help children develop a positive self-concept. Teachers help all children experience and feel the satisfaction and joy that results from regular participation in physical activity.

Teachers fail to intentionally enhance the affective development of children when activities are excluded which foster the development of cooperation and social skills. Teachers ignore opportunities to help children understand the emotions they feel as a result of participation in physical activity.

Component: Concepts of fitness

Children participate in activities that are designed to help them understand and value the important concepts of physical fitness and the contribution they make to a healthy lifestyle.

Children are required to participate in fitness activities, but are not assisted to understand the reason why.

Component: Physical fitness tests

Ongoing fitness assessment is used as part of the ongoing process of helping children understand, enjoy, improve and/or maintain their physical health and well-being. Test results are shared privately with children and their parents as a tool for developing their physical fitness knowledge, understanding and competence. As part of an ongoing program of physical education, children are physically prepared so they can safely complete each component of a physical test battery.

Physical fitness tests are given once or twice a year solely for the purpose of qualifying children for awards or because they are required by a school district or state department. Children are required to complete a physical fitness test battery without understanding why they are performing the tests or the implications of their individual results as they apply to their future health and well-being. Children are required to take physical fitness tests without adequate conditioning (e.g., students are made to run a mile after "practicing" it only one day the week before).

Component: Calisthenics

Appropriate exercises are taught for the specific purpose of improving the skill, coordination and/or fitness levels of children. Children are taught exercises that keep the body in proper alignment, thereby allowing the muscles to lengthen without placing stress and strain on the surrounding joints, ligaments and tendons (e.g., the sitting toe touch).

Children perform standardized calisthenics with no specific purpose in mind (e.g., jumping jacks, windmills, toe touches). Exercises are taught which compromise body alignment and place unnecessary stress on the joints and muscles (e.g., deep-knee bends, ballistic (bouncing) stretches and standing straight-legged toe touches).

Component: Fitness as punishment

Fitness activities are used to help children increase personal physical fitness levels in a supportive, motivating and progressive manner, thereby promoting positive lifetime fitness attitudes.

Physical fitness activities are used by teachers as punishment for children's misbehavior (e.g., students running laps or doing push-ups because they are off-task or slow to respond to teacher instruction).
### Component: Assessment

Teacher decisions are based primarily on ongoing individual assessments of children as they participate in physical education class activities (formative evaluation), and not on the basis of a single test score (summative evaluation). Assessment of children's physical progress and achievement is used to individualize instruction, plan yearly curriculum and weekly lessons, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents and evaluate the program's effectiveness.

### Component: Assessment

Children are evaluated on the basis of fitness test scores or on a single physical skill test. For example, children receive a grade in physical education based on their scores on a standardized fitness test or on the number of times they can continuously jump rope.

### Component: Regular involvement for every child

Children participate in their regularly scheduled physical education class because it is recognized as an important part of their overall education.

### Component: Regular involvement for every child

Children are removed from physical education classes to participate in classroom activities and/or as a punishment for not completing assignments, or for misbehavior in the classroom.

### Component: Active participation for every child

All children are involved in activities that allow them to remain continuously active. Classes are designed to meet a child's need for active participation in all learning experiences.

### Component: Active participation for every child

Activity time is limited because children are waiting in lines for a turn in relay races, to be chosen for a team or because of limited equipment. Children are organized into large groups where getting a turn is based on individual competitiveness or aggressive behavior. Children are eliminated with no chance to re-enter the activity, or they must sit for long periods of time. For example, activities such as musical chairs, dodgeball and elimination tag provide limited opportunities for many children, especially the slower, less agile ones who actually need activity the most.

### Component: Dance/Rhythmical experiences

The physical education curriculum includes a variety of rhythmical, expressive and dance experiences designed with the physical, cultural, emotional and social abilities of the children in mind.

### Component: Dance/Rhythmical experiences

The physical education curriculum includes no rhythmical, expressive or cultural dance experiences for children. Folk and square dances (designed for adults) are taught too early or to the exclusion of other dance forms in the curriculum or are not modified to meet the developmental needs of the children.

### Component: Gymnastics

Children are encouraged to sequentially develop skills appropriate to their ability and confidence levels in non-competitive situations centering around the broad skill areas of balancing, rolling, jumping, landing and weight transfer. Children are able to practice on apparatus designed for their confidence and skill level and can design sequences, which allow for success at their personal skill level.

### Component: Gymnastics

All students are expected to perform the same pre-determined stunts and routines on and off apparatus, regardless of their skill level, body composition and level of confidence. Routines are competitive, are the sole basis for a grade and/or must be performed solo while the remainder of the class sits and watches.

### Component: Games

Games are selected, designed, sequenced and modified by teachers and/or children to maximize the learning and enjoyment of children.

### Component: Games

Games are taught with no obvious purpose or goal, other than to keep children "busy, happy and good."

### Component: Rules governing game play

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Teachers and/or children modify official rules, regulations, equipment and playing space of adult sports to match the varying abilities of the children.

Component: Forming teams

Teams are formed in ways that preserve the dignity and self-respect of every child. For example, a teacher privately forms teams by using knowledge of children's skill abilities or the children form teams cooperatively or randomly.

Component: Gender directed activities

Girls and boys have equal access to individual, partner, small group, and team activities. Both girls and boys are equally encouraged, supported and socialized towards successful achievement in all realms of physical activities. Statements by physical education teachers support leadership opportunities and provide positive reinforcement in a variety of activities that may be considered gender-neutral.

Component: Number of children on a team

Children participate in team games (e.g. 2-3 per team), that allow for numerous practice opportunities while also allowing them to learn about the various aspects of the game being taught.

Component: Competition

Activities emphasize self-improvement, participation and cooperation instead of winning and losing. Teachers are aware of the nature of competition and do not require higher levels of competition from children before they are ready. For example, children are allowed to choose between a game in which score is kept and one that is just for practice.

Component: Success rate

Children are given the opportunity to practice skills at high rates of success adjusted for their individual skill levels.

Component: Class size

Physical education classes contain the same number of children as the classroom (e.g., 25 children per class).

Component: Days per week/length of class time

Children are given the opportunity to participate daily in scheduled, instructional physical education throughout the year, exclusive of recess. Length of class is appropriate for the activity.

Official, adult rules of team sports govern the activities in physical education classes, resulting in low rates of success and lack of enjoyment for many children.

Component: Forming teams

Teams are formed by "captains" publicly selecting one child at a time, thereby exposing the lower-skilled children to peer ridicule. Teams are formed by pitting "boys against the girls," thereby emphasizing gender differences rather than cooperation and working together.

Component: Gender directed activities

Girls are encouraged to participate in activities that stress traditionally feminine roles, whereas boys are encouraged to participate in more aggressive activities. Boys are more often provided with leadership roles in physical education class. Statements by physical education teachers reinforce traditional socialization patterns that provide for greater and more aggressive participation by boys and lesser and more passive participation by girls.

Component: Number of children on a team

Children participate in full sided games (e.g., the class of 30 is split into two teams of 15 and these two teams play each other) thereby leading to a few practice opportunities.

Component: Competition

Children are required to participate in activities that label children as "winners" and "losers." Children are required to participate in activities that compare one child or team's performance against others (e.g., a race in which the winning child or team is clearly identified).

Component: Success rate

Children are asked to perform activities that are too easy or too hard, causing frustration, boredom and/or misbehavior. All children are expected to perform to the same standards with no allowance for individual abilities and interests.

Component: Class size

Children participate in a physical education class that includes more children than the classroom. For example, two or more classrooms are placed with one certified teacher.

Component: Days per week/length of class time

Children do not receive daily, instructional physical education. Children's age and maturational levels are not taken into account when physical education schedules are developed.
developmental level of the children.

**Component: Facilities**

Children are provided an environment in which they have adequate space to move freely and safely. Both inside and outside areas are provided so that classes need not be canceled, or movement severely limited, because of inclement weather.

**Component: Facilities**

Physical education classes are regularly held in a school hallway or in a classroom thereby restricting opportunities to move freely and without obstructions.

**Component: Equipment**

Enough equipment is available so that each child benefits from maximum participation. For example, every child in a class would have a ball. Equipment is matched to the size, confidence and skill level of the children so that they are motivated to actively participate in physical education classes.

**Component: Equipment**

An insufficient amount of equipment is available for the number of children in a class, (e.g., one ball for every four children). Regulation or “adult size” equipment is used which may inhibit skill development, injure, and/or intimidate the children.

**Component: Physical education and recess**

Physical education classes are planned and organized to provide children with opportunities to acquire the physical, cognitive, emotional and social benefits of physical education.

**Component: Physical education and recess**

"Free-play," or recess, is used as a substitute for daily-organized physical education lessons. Free-play, in this case, is characterized by a lack of goals, organization, planning and instruction.

**Component: Field days**

The field day, if offered, is designed so that every child is a full participant and derives a feeling of satisfaction and joy from a festival of physical activity. Opportunities are provided for children to voluntarily choose from a variety of activities that are intended purely for enjoyment.

**Component: Field days**

Field days, if offered, are designed so that there is intense team, group or individual competition with winners and losers clearly identified. One or two children are picked to represent an entire class, thereby reducing others to the role of spectator.