

Moving with Words & Actions: physical literacy for preschool and primary children

Liqiong Duan, Miluše Rašková, Dominika Provázková Stolinská

Katedra primární a preprimární pedagogiky, Pedagogická fakulta,
Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

CLEMENTS, R.L. SCHNEIDER, S.L. (2017). *Moving with Words & Actions: A physical literacy for preschool and primary children*. Reston, VA. ISBN: 7981492547907

(Book review)

Physical literacy is now being embracing around the world. Ten countries have engaged in deep research and practice in physical literacy, especially in Great Britain, Canada, Wales and the United States (Aspen Institute, 2015a). In United States, SHAPE America use physical literacy as the central purpose of physical education. Roetert and MacDonald suggested that: “Taking together the goal of physical literacy, the five national standards, and the grade-level outcomes are intended to operationalize the concept of physical literacy and to provide a framework for teachers to use in developing curricula and lesson plans” (Roetert & MacDonald, 2015). Clements and Schneider make the suggestion come true.

In May, 2017, Clements and Schneider wrote the book “Moving with Words & Actions: physical literacy for preschool and primary

children” which was published in Reston in United States. Clements is a professor and the director of the masters of arts and teaching (MAT) program in physical education and sport pedagogy at Manhattanville College. She is past president of the American Association for the Child’s right to play, a united Nations-recognized association composed of experts in play, games, and sports from 49 countries. She has written ten books on movement, play, and games and numerous articles related to physical education. Schneider is an early childhood adjunct assistant professor at Hofstra University in Long Island, New York. She has served as a national physical activity consultant for Head Start Body Start and the National center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play etc. Both of them engaged in research and practice on physical education for many years. This book was their research and practice achievement on physical literacy.

This book offers theory foundation and specific tested program plans on how to implement age-appropriate physical activities to foster children’s physical literacy. It highlights the use of words and actions to stimulate children for engaging in active movement. It says that: “words and actions work together in lesson plan that enrich children’s knowledge of their expanding world, their understanding of themselves and others, their ability to move competently and confidently within it.” It contains two parts.

Part one has four chapters which emphasize setting the standard with age-appropriate content, instruction and assessment. The age-appropriate contents are selected based on the power of words, the

importance of physical literacy, the SHAPE America's National Standards for K-12 Physical Education and *Active Start* physical activity guideline for young children and Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Laban's four movement concepts and the development of young child's fundamental movement skills.

Chapter one offer strong evidence to show the importance of words in children's life. More than 90 locomotor and nonlocomotory skill concepts which are defined and placed in a sentence respectively, can be used to introduce and reinforce new physical skills to children to expand their knowledge of the body by teachers. Chapter two provides great insight into creating and implementing lesson plans. It reaffirms the importance of behavioral objective and the constitutes of appropriate learning tasks. Chapter three identifies five additional teaching practices for teacher to organize demonstrating lessons. Chapter four identifies three assessment techniques that coincide the contemporary practice in physical education and early childhood setting.

Part two 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 world from chapter five to chapter nine. All the lesson plans can be used immediately for "been field-tested with young children for its appropriateness." Each lesson plan is structured in an effective way, including preparing instructional materials/ props, determining the lesson's central focus, selecting behavioral objectives, planning different types of learning

task (individual, partner and whole group), and offering assessment questions. All the lesson plans take into account the children with special needs.

This book makes it clear that action and word working together can improve the quality of physical education and develop physically literate individuals. It put great effort on deepening our knowledge about movement learning and teaching, successfully expanding our view of organizing physical activity in more open space-time. The body-mind connection is the basis of physical literacy. So it chooses all kinds of learning tasks based on topics that reflect children's interests, environment and physical capabilities. It describes large number of imaginary scenes about children's home and community, to awake children's experience about movement in everyday life, to encourage them to practice variety of movement skills in a meaningful way. Children can understand movement clearly by listening to the described concept of different movements, then imitate verbal and physical behavior creatively. The teaching process is more smoothly by using words to show clear transition between learning tasks.

This book makes it easy for new teachers to organize physical activities effectively and open mind. All the 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." It offers activities about body movement, activities at home and in community. It also offers activities to learn the knowledge of Language, Math, Science. It reveals that movement skill

is not only connected with physical education. It can be used as a way of learning in different domains. From this perspective, movement skill can be learned as a teaching content and also can be used as a teaching method in wide domains.

This book introduces three forms of evidence collected by teachers to consider when determining if specific content is age - appropriate for their students and whether learning has taken place. The first two are children's perspectives about lesson and their performance, children's response to high-order questions. When children are too young, it is difficult to use the first two ways effectively because of lacking cognition and social engagement. The third one is teachers' written summaries and progress reports about children's strengths, progress, and needs. Though teachers prefer this kind of assessment in preschool years, it is a pity that no specific examples are presented at the end of each lesson plan in this book. It is still difficult for new teachers to assess children's learning effectively.

The lesson plans in the book emphasis on encouraging children to do all kinds of movements in make-believe scenes. It is its priority to organize physical activity in very simple environment. Teachers do not need to worry about the deficiency of equipment. But there may be some problems. Children cannot develop their real movement ability by moving in make-believe scene sometimes, like pretending to climb a monkey bar, throw a beanbag etc. Furthermore, when children are too young, they do not have much life experience. It may be difficult for them to imagine things out of their experience. They

rely on the real equipment to do physical activity. Thus, structured physical activity with real equipment should be offered while using the lesson plans in this book.

Though this book advocates it represents an indispensable resource for any one responsible for teaching children ages 3 through 8. It is written based on the American culture. Teachers should pay much attention to the cultural difference when use this book as reference. Because physical literacy in different culture may be varied. Children in different culture may experience different life experience. All the content should be selected according to children's ability of understanding and their life experience.

Generally speaking, this book is a special gift for any one responsible for teaching children ages 3 through 8: physical educators, classroom teachers, day care and preschool specialists, movement specialists, community group leaders, home school groups, afterschool specialists and special education teachers, especially the new one. You can get ideas on how to choose age-appropriate physical activities to foster children's physical literacy reasonably and easily. You can create wonderful lesson plans inspired by the authors' ideas on your own culture.

Reference

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