

Physical Education for Preschoolers  
A Collaborative Approach  
Dr. Michele Smith Physical Therapist  
Donald J. Levine Health and Physical Education  
Kelly McAlpine Health and Physical Education  
Colchester Elementary School

Why is it important to begin PE in Preschool?

Less physical activity in today's society

Studies show that physical activity improves learning

Costa, Hélder José Teixeira, et al. "Influence of a Physical Education Plan on Psychomotor Development Profiles of Preschool Children." *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, vol. 10, no. 1, Sept. 2015, pp. 126–140., doi:10.14198/jhse.2015.101.11.

This study concluded "structured PE is important for preschool children's psychomotor development because it increases their overall development."

Kirk, Stacie M., and Erik P. Kirk. "Sixty Minutes of Physical Activity per Day Included Within Preschool Academic Lessons Improves Early Literacy." *Journal of School Health*, vol. 86, no. 3, 2016, pp. 155–163., doi:10.1111/josh.12363.

Things to consider when developing a PE program for preschoolers

Short attention span

The need to move

Developmental level of your class of 3 & 4 year olds

Students with special needs within your class

Typical Motor skills of a 3 year old

Walks on a line

Up stairs reciprocally with railing

Runs smoothly with changes in speed

Pedals trike

Single limb balance 1-4 seconds

Jumps down two feet together

Hops 3 x each foot

2-3 steps on a balance beam

Kicks large moving ball

Catches a bounced ball  
Catches a 9 inch ball with arms and body

Typical motor skills of a 4 year old

Walks forward heel to toe  
Walks part way on a balance beam  
Gallops  
Single limb balance 4-8 seconds  
Hops 5-8 times  
Up stairs reciprocally no railing  
Down reciprocally with railing  
Standing broad jump forward 8-10 inches  
Advances one leg forward with overhand throw

How can a Physical Therapist benefit your program?

Assist in adapting/modifying activities for any children with special needs  
Knowledge of therapy type equipment that may be of use to adapt positioning within the PE environment  
Screening for children that may require gross motor evaluations  
Formal gross motor evaluations once recommended through the PPT or 504 process

Colchester's Preschool Physical Education is structured like:

5 centers for specific gross motor skills  
The skills are usually all part of a larger theme ie eye hand coordination  
Class is broken up into 5 small groups and is lead by an adult for each group  
Physical Educator gives directions to the class for each center at the beginning of the class mostly so that the adults leading each group know the activities  
Some units are done with the whole class instead of in centers  
Preschool PE classes are shorter than a typical class period  
Physical Educator plans the PE units and the centers within each unit with input from the PT as needed



