

Health and Physical Education (1999)

Years 1 to 10 Sourcebook Guidelines (Part 3 of 9)

Note: The PDF version of this document has been split into sections for easier download. This file is Part 3 of 9.

Learners and learning in health and physical education

The key learning area recognises that students bring to the learning environment a range of experiences, languages, beliefs, customs, communication styles, heritages, values and attitudes which are a part of their sociocultural backgrounds. These sociocultural attributes are acquired and shared through their affiliation with and participation in different groups — for example, family, ethnic, sporting, community, religious or gender groups.

The similarities and differences in students' physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual growth and development have implications for planning and assessment in the key learning area.

Each individual grows and develops in a way and at a rate that is unique. Because students differ in their rates of learning and learning styles, it is possible only to make broad generalisations about student development.

Developmental characteristics

The general physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual characteristics described below are included to assist teachers to enhance their understandings of learners during the different bands of schooling. There is an overlap of characteristics between the bands which emphasises the need to strive for continuity in learning as students progress through year levels and move between preschool and the primary and secondary years of schooling.

Lower primary students

These students appear to have an abundance of energy and are beginning to develop their gross motor skills. They display a sense of challenge and adventure in a world that is becoming increasingly interesting to them. Students are generally individualistic and egocentric although gradually becoming more eager to please and care for others. They tend to use themselves as a point of reference in trying to understand their world. Play is an important vehicle for learning. Students at this age are starting to work and play in small groups and are beginning to develop some of the skills required for such situations. They are dependent on adults for guidance and support, and are quite emotional and impulsive in the nature of their responses. They are also developing an understanding of right and wrong, good and bad, and punishment and reward.

Middle primary students

These students are growing steadily and continuing to develop their gross motor skills. They have increased voluntary muscle control and coordination, and there are minimal differences between boys' and girls' growth rate, speed and strength. Learning is still occurring predominantly by direct experience,

with thinking processes dependent upon sensory input. There is a gradual increase in attention span and intellectual curiosity. Students are starting to become less egocentric and can see other perspectives. They are learning to work cooperatively and are increasingly motivated by their desire to collaborate and belong. Students are developing greater control over their emotions and becoming increasingly responsible and dependable. They have a strong need for success and accomplishment and are increasingly able to deal with success, failure and challenge. Students are developing a respect for other people's belongings and have a grasp of the rules within their immediate environment.

Upper primary students

These students typically have improved gross motor skills and their fine motor skills are continuing to develop. Growth rates start to differ between boys and girls as students enter puberty. Different parts of the body also start to grow at different rates, with growth in the heart and lungs allowing for increased participation in physical activity. Students are beginning to solve problems by thinking rather than doing and can engage in increasingly complex and challenging tasks. They are less egocentric and turn their attention to the outside world. Peer-group acceptance is important with students also taking more notice of peers of the opposite sex. Their curiosity about sexuality is increasing. Students are seeking increased independence and have considerable control over their emotions. They continue to want support and encouragement as they strive for success but are gaining skills in coping with lack of success. Students have a strong sense of right and wrong and start to show an interest in issues beyond their local community.

Lower secondary students

These students are aware of their developing sexuality and growth as they move toward adulthood. There is a sharp increase in the growth of muscle tissue and strength, with boys tending to be faster and stronger. They enjoy an increasing ability to deal with abstract concepts, challenges and tasks. Students are able to see others' points of view and are beginning to question rules imposed by authority figures. They enjoy being with their peers and are often influenced by peer behaviours, expectations and standards although individual friendships are also of high importance. Students display an increasing desire for personal autonomy but often have mood changes. They recognise the value of other people having rights and opinions and have a growing sense of moral awareness and beliefs about social justice. Many students at this stage begin to challenge social control and values.

The sourcebook modules have been written with the developmental needs of students in the lower primary, middle primary, upper primary and lower secondary years of schooling in mind. They have been written broadly to allow teachers to adapt the modules to suit the needs, interests and abilities of students, and local contexts.

Inclusiveness

Diversity in students' ethnic, cultural and family backgrounds and individual interests and values should be considered and respected when planning, implementing and assessing activities. These differences of background, while requiring students to be accepting and sensitive about individual differences, can stimulate important and varied discussion on a wide range of issues.

Health issues and physical activities should be structured so that all students feel comfortable participating. All students should have appropriate opportunities for demonstrating core learning outcomes. Students' prior learnings should be recognised and valued and students should be encouraged to strive for personal excellence.

Opportunities should be provided for all learners to become skilled participants in physical activity, to make informed decisions and take action in relation to their own and others' health, and to develop skills and understandings which enhance their personal and social development. Learners need to be engaged in authentic, creative, experiential, challenging, interactive and achievable experiences. There should be adequate time allocated for practice and consolidation of activities during the teaching and acquisition of skills and processes.

Students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties have the right to access and participate, take risks, make choices, be independent and benefit from physical activity similar to other students. In some situations a number of factors may influence the participation of students with disabilities and learning difficulties. These factors include:

- the nature of the disability or learning difficulty;
- the student's self-esteem and confidence;
- access to facilities;
- physical skill levels.

For advice on the needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, see Appendix 3.

Using a learner-centred approach

A learner-centred approach to learning and teaching views learning as the active construction of meaning, and teaching as the act of guiding and facilitating learning. This approach sees knowledge as being ever-changing and built on prior experience.

The key learning area emphasises the use of learner-centred approaches to assist students to develop critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving and decision-making strategies. Ideally, learner-centred approaches engage students in the planning of their learning experiences. Students should be made aware of the phases of the relevant approach and be encouraged to consciously use them. The approach used in a particular module is outlined in the 'Overview of activities' section of the module.

The inquiry-based approach to learning and teaching is recommended and used frequently in the modules; however, this approach is only one of many which teachers could apply to develop activities, units and programs for students. When different approaches, with which teachers may be unfamiliar, are used in modules they are explained in the Resource Sheets for those modules.

Several strategies support learner-centred approaches to learning and teaching. The initial in-service materials explain the following strategies:

- active construction of meaning;
- metacognition;
- making the curriculum relevant to students;
- cooperative learning.

Learning through the medium of physical activity

Physical activity serves as a source of content and data, and as a medium for acquiring knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes.

Students can experience the challenge and fun of physical activity while developing the skills necessary for lifelong participation. Activities based on physical activity allow students the opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills, enabling them to understand and use their capacities for learning and functioning in varied situations. These activities should encourage them to appreciate and value their involvement and to continue their active participation in personal and community activities in their adult life.

Engagement in physical activity is possible in each of the three strands of the key learning area. Many of the modules drawing on the Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities and Enhancing Personal Development strands use physical activity as a medium for conceptual development associated with those strands. Although physical activity cannot always be used as a medium for learning, efforts should be made to include significant physical activity whenever possible.