Supporting Children’s Physical Activity in ECE Settings
Learning Objectives

• By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:
  – List factors that influence children’s physical activity (PA)
  – Describe why PA in early care and education (ECE) settings is important
  – Describe how ECE can support children’s PA
  – Identify strategies to improve the PA environment in your classroom
What is physical activity?

- Any movement that causes our heart rates or breathing to go above resting
  - Includes ALL activities in a person’s day, not just exercise
Benefits of physical activity

Physical
- Weight
- Gross motor development
- Sleep habits
- Decreased risk of
  - Diabetes
  - Heart disease
  - Cancer

Social/Emotional
- Self-esteem
- Emotion regulation
- Stress management
- Peer and role modeling

Academic
- School readiness
- Attention to task
- Executive function

PA benefits the whole child!
PA for young children

- Young children are naturally active
  - Short spurts of high energy throughout the day

- Children get activity in 2 main forms:
  - Structured PA: Caregiver directed
  - Unstructured PA: Child directed
Time in PA in Child Care

Minutes of activity at child care

- Sedentary: 279 minutes
- Light: 50 minutes
- Moderate + Vigorous: 55 minutes

Tandon 2015 Pediatrics
• NC recommends 1 hour outside time/day
• National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends daily at ECE:
  – 2 hours of total PA
  – 1 hour of structured PA
  – Daily outdoor time
  – <1 hour of screen time
How does the ECE setting influence child PA?

**Provisions**
- Time allotted for physical activity
- Indoor and outdoor spaces for activity
- Fixed and portable play equipment

**Practices**
- Verbal encouragement
- Prompting children to be more active
- Joining in PA with children

**Policies**
- Amount of time scheduled for outdoor time
- Appropriate clothing for active play
- Limits on amount of screen time
How do teachers influence children’s PA?

• Teachers are the gatekeepers to children’s PA
  – Not just through time and lesson planning, but through your attitude and the way you interact with children

• Some behaviors encourage PA
  – Engaging in co-activity, verbal praise, prompting children to use active play equipment, suggesting that children to be more active

• Others may result in children being less active
  – Withholding activity for punishment, asking children to decrease their activity
Structured PA in Child Care

• http://www.healthypreschoolers.com/?page_id=1648
PA happens across the day in child care!

Morning
- Indoor free play
- AM snack
- Circle time
- Center time
- Outside time

Afternoon
- Lunch
- Nap
- PM snack
- Center time
- Outside time

Transition
- 10 min.
- 5 min.
- 20 min.
- 30 min.

120 min!
Supporting PA isn’t always easy

- Physical activity is one of many demands in ECE
- Space and equipment limitations
- Overall classroom management challenges
- It’s sometimes hard to make this a priority with everything else going on in the child care day.

- Small steps can help to integrate PA across the day
Break Time!

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZzCTVnPDIx
CHALLENGES TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Child preference

- Ask the children what kids of things they like to do at home
- Try different activities multiple times before you “rule it out”

“I just can’t find something that my kids like to do”
Having the resources

• PA doesn’t necessarily require fancy equipment!

“\"I don’t have the right materials to do physical activity\"”

• Try to imagine the things you have in your classroom in a different light, use those things for PA
Classroom Management

“If I do an active game with children, they’ll get all riled up, and I won’t be able to get them to calm down and listen afterwards.”

• Physical activity will help kids get out their energy to help them focus on tasks later!

• It will take time for them to get used to transitioning between activities – be patient!
"I don’t have time in my schedule to lead physical activity"

- Integrate PA into activities you’ve already planned
- Try for shorter PA breaks, about 10 minutes each
Space for Physical Activity

“There’s not enough room in our classroom for kids to be active.”

- Try breaking up the activity into smaller groups so it takes up less space
- See if you can move the furniture in the classroom to create more open space
THANK YOU!