

SHAPE 2015  
MINDS IN MOTION: A LITERACY APPROACH TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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- “The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity physical” (NASPE, 2014).
- What is physical literacy? According to the Pacific Institute for Sport Excellence it is “the mastering of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that permit a child to read their environment and make appropriate decisions, allowing them to move confidently and with control in a wide range of physical activity situations. It supports long-term participation and performance to the best of one’s ability” (2015).
- Teaching literacy in physical education is not about using the little time we have ‘talking’, but rather to exemplify how aspects of literacy can be addressed in physical education through the teaching of fundamental movement and sport skills.

### **Listening & Speaking – Elements of Literacy**

Listening is the ability “to pay attention; to hear something with thoughtful attention; to be alert to catch an expected sound” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). It is key in physical education:

- to ensure safety
- to understand & follow instructions (to respond to instruction & interpret task specific terminology)
- to improve performance (being able to act on instruction; translate words into a physical movement pattern)
- to learn from others (exchange ideas, work as a team, provide & receive peer instruction)
- for the development self-esteem, confidence & fun!

Speaking is defined as the ability “to say words to express your thoughts, feelings, opinions, etc.; to talk about a particular subject or person; to say words to express yourself in a particular way” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). It is key in physical education:

- for students to understand & state key points of a task &/or instruction
- for using subject-specific vocabulary appropriately (makes the talk clearer, more focused) & efficiently (one word can take the place of a phrase & ensure common understanding)

Speaking in physical education includes various “types” of talk:

- explaining (why, how, or what to do)
- instructing (how to do)
- questioning (checking for understanding)
- describing (what is going on or should go on)
- analyzing (detailed examination of how an activity works)
- evaluating (describing strengths & weaknesses)
- hypothesizing (possible ways to solve a problem suggestions to be tested during an activity)

### **Literacy in Motion Activities**

The activities below focus on the critical literacy skills of listening & speaking.

**Ago/Amee – Attention Getter:** Ago/Amee is an African attention getter that requires the students to pay attention, listen & respond quickly to the instructions. Many storytellers in Ghana begin their stories with the call “Ago” (are you listening?) & response “Amee” (I am or I promise). The response is always given with the same inflection/cadence/pattern as the call.

**Equipment:** None

**Set-up:** Begin by having students find their own space in a scatter formation. On the call “Ago” (from the teacher) the students respond with “Amee” & listen for the directions. Use cones/lines to establish boundaries. The goal of the activity is for students to be able to move through general space without contacting other students. Students are also expected to stop immediately when they hear the word “Ago” & respond with “Amee”.

**Directions:** Using the call & response “Ago” & “Amee” students will travel through general space using various locomotor skills as designated from the teacher. As soon as students respond with “Amee” the teacher will call out a locomotor skill/movement pattern & students will perform the skill. Encourage the students to listen for the call “Ago” & too quickly stop & respond with “Amee”. After the response students need to be very quiet so they can hear the next set of directions.

Round #1 – Travel with different locomotor patterns

Round #2 – Travel in different ways (e.g., travel on 2 feet, travel on two feet & two hands, travel forward, travel backward, travel sideways, travel using a body part other than your feet).

Round #3 – Travel with Imagery (travel like a frog, travel as if you are walking in sticky mud, travel like a robot, travel like an elephant, slither like a snake, travel like your favorite animal)

**Variations:**

Travel variations are endless & can be used for a variety of grade levels/age groups. Be creative & challenge older students with more difficult sequences of patterns (e.g. travel to & travel away from a partner, travel using locomotor sequences)

This is also a great transition activity (e.g. the last instruction could be “form a group of 3 in scatter space”).

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**Switch, Change, Rotate:** Switch, Change, Rotate is a listening & cooperative activity designed to challenge students to listen, think & communicate with their partners.

**Equipment:** None

**Set-up:** Begin with groups of three scattered about the gym. Each group of three will form a line facing the same direction.

**Directions:** There are three commands in this activity.

The first is **SWITCH** – means that the lead player & back player “switch” places.

The second is **CHANGE** – which means that the entire group simply turns in the opposite direction.

The third is **ROTATE** – which means the lead player goes to the back of the line & the center player is the new leader.

As the activity begins, have each group march in place & execute the commands the teacher calls out. Once they have a grasp of the patterns challenge the groups to walk & do the commands; progress to power walking or jogging. The groups can travel anywhere in the area as long as they watch out for other groups.

**Variation:** Have one group of three join another so you now have groups of six. Line up as described above except that the front two players, the middle two players & the end two players act as one player (e.g., on the command ROTATE both of the front players move to the rear of the line. Front, middle & end pairs always move together so this makes the group communicate more.

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### **ROPE RHYMES**

Emerging readers spend a large amount of time learning letter sounds & rhymes, & rope rhymes allow students the opportunity to learn through play. Rope jumping is one of the most rewarding forms of play; especially for young girls. It allows the opportunity for creativity, self-expression, memorization, speaking & listening. It is a life skill that serves as the foundation of many sport & dance skills, & is also an incredible aerobic fitness activity.

**Equipment:** Long ropes. I suggest no more than 4-6 in a group per rope to ensure large amounts of activity & opportunities for students to jump.

**Set-up:** Begin by grouping students randomly. Each group should have two designated "turners" with the remainder being the "jumpers". Make sure you have ample space between groups for turning a long rope. You can use any number of jump rope rhymes <http://www.buyjumpropes.net/resources/jump-rope-rhymes-songs-buyjumpropesnet/> but here are two rope rhymes (from Julie Williams & posted on [http://www.education.com/activity/article/jumprope\\_days\\_of\\_week\\_first/](http://www.education.com/activity/article/jumprope_days_of_week_first/)) created to teach the days of the week.

**Directions:** Review the rhyme with the whole class & practice the cadence of the rhyme. Write out the rhyme on a large poster or display it so the class can see the words while repeating the rhyme. Explain to the group that the rope-turners job is to sing the rhymes aloud while the jumper's job is to try to complete the entire rhyme without missing a jump.

**Rhyme #1** – Teaches the days of the week and matches them to their initial letters and to movement:

**M for Monday, turn around, T for Tuesday, touch the ground, W for Wednesday, jump so high, T for Thursday, touch the sky, F for Friday, say hooray! S for Saturday, time to play, S for Sunday, clap your hands, It's time to start all over again!** (on again, the jumper jumps out & a new jumper comes in)

**Rhyme #2** – Teaches days of the week...and fun foods to go with each one:

**Monday, mango, start the week. Tuesday, tunafish, what a treat. Wednesday, watermelon, red and cool, Thursday, turkey, that's the rule, Friday, fresh bread, eat it hot, Saturday, slurpees, thanks a lot, Sunday, spaghetti, sun or rain, Then start the week all over again!**

**Challenge:** For older students you can challenge them to create their own rhyme/rap. You will need to review what a "rhyme" is, & provide some guidelines for creating a rhyme/rap. Students enjoy the challenge & opportunity show off their skills while practicing the critical skills of listening & speaking in a group setting.