

# Gross motor skills in middle childhood



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Gross motor skills are very important for young children. These motor skills give children independence, and allow children to interact comfortably with others on the playground, or classroom. They also promote feeling confident when they engage in physical activities and organized sports. Gross motor skills are those required to move the large muscles of the body, including the arms, legs, feet, and torso. When a child is comfortable with his or her gross motor skills, he or she can move with ease. Gross motor awareness skills also relate to maintaining balance, being aware of the space the body occupies and having an understanding of the left side and right side of one's body. This report, we will review at gross motor skills in toddlers and middle childhood children (two to six years old).

Developing Gross Motor Skills in Middle Childhood:

### Literature Review

Toddler and middle childhood is a critical time for physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. It is at the age of middle childhood that children become more skilled at gross motor skills. Gross motor development skills are associated with brain development (Woolfolk, 2012). As Woolfolk (2012) states, " brain development is associated with enhanced myelination neuron connections in areas of the brain that are responsible for balance and coordination." Changes in the children's body size can contribute to advances in gross motor skills (Woolfolk, 2012). During the third year of life children learn to run, walk, throw, and jump, but these activities are not well controlled until they are older around five years old (Woolfolk, 2012). Motor development skills are cumulative and consecutive. There are many factors

associated with children's gross motor development such as practice, temperament, genes, parenting behavior, cultural norms, and children's sex (Woolfolk, 2012). Young children typically spend more time practicing gross motor movements as they have high energy and activity levels (Woolfolk, 2012). Parental and cultural norms also are associated with gross motor development as they are related to how much and what kinds of physical activities are appropriate for the children (Woolfolk 2012).

Piaget thought that new learning took place as the child interacted with the environment and with other people. He thought that children will learn individually and they don't need much guidance from adults. For Piaget, cognitive development is the process of rearranging knowledge (Bartolotta, 2000). The process begins with a particular way of thinking, this way of thinking is based on what the child currently knows or has experienced (Bartolotta, 2000). Woolfolk (2012) stated that, " motor development skills occur as a consequence of children bootstrapping previously learned skills into increasingly complex and dynamic systems." Piaget divided the sensorimotor period into six stages, and within these stages we can see the close relations of motor development (Bartolotta, 2012). In the reflexive stage, Piaget said that a child interacts with the environment through reflexes like sucking, looking or grasping (Bartolotta, 2012). At the coordination of reactions stage, a child will identify that objects have particular assets (e. g., a ball is thrown or kicked) (Bartolotta, 2012). When the child gets to the tertiary circular reactions stage, he or she will discover new ways to achieve purposes (Bartolotta, 2012). Piaget then thinks that

sensory and motor experiences are crucial for development in children (Henniger, 2008).

According to Erikson, at each stage of development there are certain tasks that a child must accomplish to experience normal psychological development. Erikson believes that if children receive proper physical activities during the stages, then they will have a better chance to accomplish developmental tasks of motor skills (Ionascu, 2010). Erikson feels that children involved in team sports will benefit the child, as they will have a better understanding with success within a group (Ionascu, 2010). Team sports like soccer or football also emphasize on improving gross motor skills, which began to develop during the preschool years, as the sports are getting the children to run, jump, and walk (Ionascu, 2010).

Brambling conducted a study on the different influences of motor skills on the development of blind and sighted children. The achievement of gross-motor skills is considered as a systemic process in which visual perception and the performance of movements influence each other mutually (Brambling, 2006). From three different theoretical perspectives, delays in development were interpreted (Brambling, 2006). The first approach traces delays right back to the blindness-related constraints, this is the comparative deficit approach (Brambling, 2006). This approach showed that visual information prevents the ability to engage in tolerable learning experiences while acquiring motor skills (Brambling, 2006). The social interaction approach, explains such delays indirectly through negative developmental conditions that are due to low expectations in the social environment of kids who are blind (Brambling, 2006). The adaptive compensation approach

stresses the analysis of the alternative strategies that allow children who are blind to acquire several motor skills by compensatory means (Brambring, 2006). The age, which the children who were blind acquired gross motor skills were compared with age, norms for sighted children. The tests revealed that there were significant developmental delays in the children who were blind compared with the sighted children. The delays were in the areas of comparison, dynamic balance, attainment of movement, and refinement of movement (Brambring, 2006). The present findings confirm the importance of vision for the acquisition of gross motor skills in early childhood. It confirms that children who are congenitally blind have major delays; this emphasizes the advantage for sighted children of being able to use visual information to control and gain feedback on gross motor activities. Therefore, the central hypothesis of this study was that even in this strongly visually dominated domain of development, no consistently standardized development delay can be ascertained compared with the development of sighted children (Brambring, 2006).

There are many different types of development delays in children and movement or motor skills is one of them. These problems could be related problems with gross motor skills like playing ball. The possible causes of motor skill delays in children could include children who have been institutionalized, lack stimulation, or have autism. The children with these possible causes could have something that's called "sensory integration dysfunction" (Beard, 2012). These disorders can cause a variety of problems with the senses including, problems planning and coordinating movement.

With discovering all the research about gross motor skills it will be useful in my career for becoming a teacher, as it is hard to imagine any functional routine that does not involve some motor activity. We as teachers might get put in a classroom where we have a blind student and how we work with this student will affect us. I'm sure we will also have another adult to help us with that student, but it's important that we know what to do as well. An important thing that I can do to help my students with their gross motor skills development, is to help a child reach his or her full potential by making sure the tasks and the learning environment is right for the child. Children learn best when an activity is fun, so maybe incorporating games would be helpful for the kids to learn and practice their gross motor skills.

## Conclusion

Gross motor skills in children are important and shouldn't be overlooked. Gross motor skills are essential because a child's body develops from large movements of the hands and fingers. As children continue to mature, their dependence on physical interactions with people and objects remains strong (Henniger, 2008). Gross motor control enables children to develop the fine motor movement that are essential for success in children's lives (Clement, 2010).