

THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY (TAPP)

A Self-Reflection Inventory for Supporting Young Children's Active Physical Play in Group Settings

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The TAPP is a self-reflective inventory for staff in early childhood settings. Use the reflection to think about supporting active physical play for children, ages 24 months through five years old.

Introduction

Young children in early childhood settings encounter active physical play environments that include facilities, equipment, routines, and schedules. They develop relationships with peers and staff. The quality of environments and relationships influence a child's opportunity to develop optimum physical precision, strength, flexibility, and endurance.

Achieving good health and enjoying physical activities that help them develop physical competence are among the most important rights of children.

What Is Active Physical Play?

Active physical play includes two parts:

Children develop basic techniques using repetitive play to master physical skills. The result is precision, strength, flexibility, and endurance. These skills include balancing, running, walking, jumping, pushing, pulling, lifting, hopping, climbing, throwing, and pedaling.

Children initially work to master basic physical skills. Then, they use that foundation of skills to create play themes that helps them maintain, strengthen, and extend those skills.

Seven Guiding Principles for Active Physical Play

1. Adults set safe, appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.
2. Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies, and for fun and enjoyment.
3. Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.
4. Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.
5. Each child has access to many and varied active physical play opportunities.
6. Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.
7. Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

Who Should Use the TAPP Self- Reflection Inventory?

This self-reflection is for those who want to address development of competence in physical skills and healthy weight for young children in group settings. Managers and supervisors, teachers, and classroom aides are appropriate users of the TAPP.

Why Should I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?

The TAPP helps you think about environments and relationships that support children's active physical play. Results of the TAPP confirm current practices and inform discussions of changes or improvements in active play environments and relationships. These results can inform decisions about your program's professional development.

How Do I Use the TAPP Self-Reflection Inventory?

The TAPP is best carried out as a cooperative activity among staff rather than by an outside reviewer.

The TAPP includes self-reflections about active physical play for young children. Note that a "*reasons*" section follows each reflection statement and response. To enhance a meaningful report of the responses, users should write their reasons for choosing each response.

Each statement offers five response choices:

Already doing; Making progress; Considering; Unable to do; and Not planning to do.

Choose *already doing* if you consistently use this practice.

Choose *making progress* if you use the concept on some level. (For example, choose this rating if you have ordered materials for the environment, or some staff, but not all, use the practice.

Choose *considering* if you want to use the practice, but have taken no steps toward implementation.

Choose *unable to do* if you would like to follow the practice, but you believe there are factors that prevent you from using the practice.

Choose *not planning to do* if you do not agree with the concept, or if the concept is not applicable in your program.

An important part of your self-reflection is an explanation of your choice of response for each statement.

What Form of the TAPP Should I Use?

There are three ways to use the TAPP. You may use the comprehensive TAPP Inventory to reflect on all of the Seven Principles, or you may choose to reflect on only one principle from the TAPP, or you may use the quick reflection using the TAPP Short Form that offers brief items from all of the Seven Principles.

Use the Comprehensive Form of the Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory (TAPP)

The comprehensive TAPP includes items based on Seven Principles for Active Physical Play. Users may reflect on all Seven Principles and the ratings in each area for a comprehensive review of practices. For this comprehensive review, use the complete Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory

Use the Individual TAPP Principles

Users can choose to reflect on just one Active Physical Play Principle and the items in that Principle. Click on a principle below to go directly to the TAPP items for that principle.

1. Adults set safe, appropriately challenging environments for daily active physical play.
2. Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies, and for fun and enjoyment.
3. Each child has opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play.
4. Each child has time for and support for uninterrupted, sustained play.
5. Each child has access to many and varied active physical play options.
6. Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and child-to-child interactions.
7. Adults advocate for children to have opportunities and environments that support active physical play.

Use the TAPP Short Form

Users may want to use the TAPP Short Form for a brief reflection on the Seven Principles and self-reflection items. [Click here for the Thinking Active Physical Play Reflection Inventory: Short Form.](#)

Safe &
Challenging

Fun &
Enjoyment

Frequent &
Vigorous

Time &
Support

Varied Play
Options

Relationships

Advocacy

THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle I

Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play

- I.1 A variety of permanent play equipment is accessible (such as platforms, climbers, tunnels, or stairs).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.2 A variety of portable play equipment is accessible (such as hoops, balls, large cubes and blocks, baskets, parachutes, walking cups, rebound toys, and pouring and digging tools).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.3 Equipment is available that is adaptable across skill levels for each child in your group.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.4 Children have access to drinking water during periods of active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.5 To insure safe play, there are well-defined boundaries between high intensity play areas (i.e. running, jumping, and wheel toys) and lower intensity play areas (sidewalk chalk play, hopscotch, climbing platforms).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle I

Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play

- I.6 Age-appropriate social rules are established, and practiced by children to protect and support play in high intensity and lower intensity play areas.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.7 Natural environmental features (grassy hills, tunnels, smooth tree stumps, gardens) are available for climbing up and over, crawling through, digging and filling, and jumping to and from heights.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.8 Age appropriate games are available (such as aiming and throwing at targets, nets for soccer, low basketball hoops, simple hopscotch, balance beams, balance games).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.9 There is enough equipment so that children do not wait longer for a turn than is appropriate for age and level of skill. (Note: For toddlers, multiple sets of popular or new equipment are available).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- I.10 When a child is initiating or practicing new skills, that child is protected from unwanted interference from other children.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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Guiding Principle I

Adults set safe and appropriately challenging environments for active physical play

I.11 A wide variety of props is available for children to create play themes (such as water and sand toys, balls, chalk, blocks, cars, wagons, streamers, costumes).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

I.11 Easily accessible storage is nearby so staff can quickly and safely access equipment and props to support both emerging skills and creative play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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Guiding Principle II

Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment

II.1 Staff are aware of each child's physical skills.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.2 Staff intentionally plan environments that consider each child's level of skill.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.3 As staff plan active play schedules and activities, they consider each child's nourishment and hydration, so that vigorous physical play is possible and enjoyable.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.4 Staff model basic physical skills to help children learn or expand skills (For example, walking on a balance beam, jumping to a height, bouncing a ball.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

II.5 Each child has staff support to play in small groups and in larger groups where peer modeling and imitation of basic physical skills occur.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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Guiding Principle II

Children engage in active physical play to develop their bodies and for fun and enjoyment

- II.6 As a child works on a physical skill, the *process* the child uses is described and reinforced by staff.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.7 Each child receives frequent encouragement for *effort* as she/he works toward a new skill.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.8 When children master physical skills, their achievements are described and reinforced.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- II.9 When children use physical skills to create dramatic play, staff reinforce their accomplishments by describing the child's skill.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle III

Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play

- III.1 Staff regularly observe and evaluate each child's frequency, endurance, and intensity of active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.2 When a child does not participate in vigorous active physical play over time, staff document and intervene with lesson plans and strategies to encourage that child's active play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.3 Schedules for active physical play are coordinated with arrival, departure, snack times and mealtimes.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.4 Indoor and outdoor schedules for active physical play include sustained periods for high intensity activity. (For example, running, dancing, leaping, chasing games, that require lots of energy)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- III.5 Schedules for active physical play are coordinated with opportunities for rest and relaxation.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

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Guiding Principle III

Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play

III.6 Lesson plans include well-defined goals and objectives for daily active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.7 Appropriate attire is available for each child to play comfortably outside MOST days.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.8 The program closet includes extra gloves, mittens, and coats for children who forget (or do not own) appropriate clothing for comfortable outdoor play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.9 Staff have appropriate clothing so they can supervise outdoor play comfortably MOST days.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.10 Outdoor facilities are designed for active physical play MOST days of the year. (For example, shady spots, roof design to keep snow from being a falling hazard, access to drinking water, covered play areas for rainy or very hot weather, equipment that does not retain heat.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle III

Children have opportunity for frequent and vigorous active physical play

III.12 Indoor facilities are designed for active physical play MOST days of the year.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.13 Outdoor facilities are maintained for active physical play MOST days of the year. (For example, snow removal is effective, landscaping is maintained all seasons, and standing water is monitored and evaluated.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.14 Indoor facilities are maintained for active physical play MOST days of the year.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.15 Staff are vigilant in supervising playground activities to protect and support all levels of physical play. (Fast movers, beginning movers, fast tricycle riders, single-hop hoppers, multiple-hop hoppers)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

III.16 Staff provide interventions as needed to support each child's physical play activities and environments.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle IV

Children have time and support for uninterrupted, sustained play

IV.1 Daily schedules offer scheduled time for both active and quiet play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.2 Staff use naturally occurring opportunities to support active physical play (Examples: adding movements to songs and poems; encouraging active movement such as marching or tiptoeing to music during work time; marching with gusto to and from activities; kicking small pine cones that fall after a big wind; incorporating stretching and relaxation activities after active play).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.3 Each day, children have opportunity to play in structured outdoor physical activity (teacher-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.4 Each day, children have opportunity to play in unstructured physical activities (child-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.5 Each day, children have opportunity to play in structured indoor physical activity (teacher-directed).

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

IV.6 Each day, children have opportunity to play in un-structured indoor physical activity. (child-chosen)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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Guiding Principle IV

Children have time and support for uninterrupted, sustained play

- IV.7 Staff support children in naturally occurring opportunities for active physical play throughout the day. (Offer props, suggest other children as playmates, or suggest expansion of a theme that uses a newly mastered physical skill.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.8 Children are allowed to play with an item or on equipment until they decide they are finished with that item. (For example, staff help children learn to wait while assuring that each child gets a turn. Staff keep a running wait list for popular activities or equipment. Staff help children develop skills for first taking turns, and later sharing items for active physical play.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.9 Staff help children plan time for play, prompting children with time concepts that are age appropriate. (The staff say, "You have lots of time, some time, just a little time left, or now is the time to clean up.")

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- IV.10 Time to recover and a place to rest from high intensity play are freely available.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

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Guiding Principle V

Children have access to many and varied active physical play options

V.1 The daily curriculum includes scheduled active physical play indoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.2 The daily curriculum includes scheduled active physical play outdoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.3 The curriculum includes opportunities for spontaneous, child-initiated active physical play indoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.4 The curriculum has opportunities for spontaneous, child-initiated active physical play outdoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.5 Materials and equipment for active physical play are rotated frequently in response to children's developmental progress and needs.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &
Challenging

Fun &
Enjoyment

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle V

Children have access to many and varied active physical play options

V.6 Storage for physical play equipment and materials is easily accessible to staff.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.7 Equipment is available for vigorous play, including pedaling; climbing; running; lifting; carrying; pushing and pulling; digging; crawling; hanging using upper body; jumping to a distance, from a height, to a height ; balancing; projectile play (aiming, throwing, kicking, bouncing, striking, pitching); rolling; hopping; and sliding.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.8 Activities include dancing, marching, chanting, and active singing games.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

V.9 Active play environments include space for children to engage in active play without interrupting or interfering with play of others.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

Safe &
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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle VI

Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions

VI.1 Adults are within sight and sound of each child's physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.2 Adults quickly respond to protect children's from unsafe physical play situations.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.3 Routines for taking turns with equipment are established and supported by adult supervision.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.4 For children younger than 36 months, environments for physical activity have multiples of popular or new materials and structures.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.5 Adults intentionally observe children's physical skills, and then offer support for a child's attempts at advancing to the next skill level.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

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Challenging

Fun &
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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle VI

Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions

- VI.6 Adults are aware of when to offer supportive assists as a child learns a new skill. (Assists might include a full physical assist, or a partial physical assist, then on to just a verbal assist, and finally just a gestural assist.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.7 Adults use the least intrusive support when they help a child learn a new skill, or expand an old skill. (Staff give gestural or verbal support before offering partial physical or full physical support.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.8 Adults know when to assist a child to move from being an observer to participating in physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.9 Adults offer strategies to encourage a child to extend an active dramatic play. (For example, teacher offers props or helps the child engage other children for active play.)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

- VI.10 Adults have quick access to equipment so they can respond to children's displays of readiness either to try a new skill, or to expand a previously learned skill.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

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Challenging

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Guiding Principle VI

Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions

VI.11 Environments offer a variety of activities and equipment where two or more children can work together in vigorous play (i.e., parachute play; balls for throwing and catching; wheel toy paths with direction signs; double seated tricycles; wagons)

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.12 Adults support children as they learn to wait for a turn.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.13 Adults trust children's cues that indicate when they need activity and rest.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.14 Adults provide easy access to drinking water, and guide children to drink throughout play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.15 Adults adapt environments so each child has opportunity to try challenging active play comfortably.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.16 Each child's skills are acknowledged and celebrated.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle VI

Active physical play is supported by adult-child relationships and peer interactions

VI.17 When two or more children play together, staff suggest strategies where each child's skill levels and opportunities are respected by the other children.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VI.18 Games and activities that include child-to-child competition in physical play are discouraged, and are replaced by celebrating each child's progress.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle VII

Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play

VII.1 Program and classroom policies for active physical play are written and available to staff and parents.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.2 Administrators take active steps for advancing policies, grants, and practices that support children's active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.3 Staff input is given, and used by administrators for planning schedules for active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.4 Budgets include resources and funds for active physical play materials, equipment, and staff training.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.5 Staff have opportunity for input about purchasing materials and equipment for active physical play environments.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.6 Parents and staff communicate about children's active physical play at school.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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THINKING ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY SELF-REFLECTION INVENTORY

Guiding Principle VII

Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play

VII.7 Parents and staff communicate about children's outside of school active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.8 Parents and staff communicate about appropriate clothing for active physical play outdoors.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.9 Time for planning active physical play is set aside for staff, and for administrators.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.10 Staff frequently (daily) discuss curriculum needs for children's active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.11 Lesson plans are expected to include active physical play goals and objectives.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.12 Daily plans routinely include both structured and unstructured active physical play, and both indoors and outdoors active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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Guiding Principle VII

Adults advocate for children to have opportunity to engage in active physical play

VII.13 Staff orientation includes training about program policies and activities that support children's physical development and active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.14 Staff attend trainings that include information about children's physical development.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.15 Staff receive on-going training about strategies for supporting teacher and child-to-child relationships that influence active physical play.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.16 Staff attend trainings about setting environments that support children's physical development.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

Reason:

VII.17 Staff receive training on selecting age appropriate materials and equipment for young children's physical development.

Already doing Making progress Considering Unable to do Not planning to do

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