

Overview:

The Youth Movement Skills (YouMove) program has been designed for children who identify as girls who may not see themselves as “sporty”. It’s a way for them to gain movement proficiency in a fun, non-threatening environment. The program promotes a body-positive atmosphere, focusing on things we can do with our bodies rather than what our bodies look like.

Throughout the YouMove program, children are introduced to different methods of physical activity led by trained professionals. Each week, children practice safe warm-up and cool-down practices that target movement proficiency and reduce the risk of injury. After the term is complete, children will have been exposed to a range of exercise modes, using a range of equipment that is not generally available in a school setting. This includes weight and martial arts training, and functional movement skills. To determine any changes in children’s abilities and perceptions throughout the period, physical and self-assessment tasks will be given on week 1 and week 10. Each week we will cover a range of social change topics during our training sessions, including consent and gendered language.

Brief information:

- Two training sessions per week
- With the year 5/6 class
- Conducted in the school during school hours
- All equipment supplied, such as barbells, bumper plates, kettlebells, dumbbells, resistance bands, portable racks and boxes
- No cost to the school or parents due to funding collaboration with University of Canberra
- Children wear comfortable clothes that they can move in

Benefits of training throughout childhood and into adolescence:

The benefits of physical training show through many different facets of a young person’s life. Some benefits include:

- Higher grades – sport and physical education have positive and lasting influences on academic achievement ^{1, 2, 3}
- Two minutes of vigorous activity can improve cognitive function and memory for up to two hours ⁴
- Positive effects on concentration and classroom behaviour ¹⁻⁵
- Builds self-discipline, self-esteem and self-worth ⁶
- Builds a base level of fitness and strength for later life – Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) ⁵
- The hormones produced during puberty can accelerate physical gains, therefore children respond better to training than adults ⁵
- Provided there is adequate supervision, children can benefit from lifting weights from a young age ⁷

Specific benefits of the YouMove program:

- Non-competitive atmosphere – children focus on improving themselves, working at their own pace
- No audience – children work on their own exercises
- Some activities covered in the program are not traditional to the elements of the National Curriculum, so students get to try new things
- Similar programs incorporating circus, lifting weights and martial arts disciplines are already having positive impacts in other schools ^{9, 10}
- There are mental health and self-discipline benefits associated with practicing self-defence ⁶
- Improved confidence that comes with being physically strong, especially for girls
- Movement deficiencies can be addressed early in the series and a plan put in place for the warm-up/cool-down to address these deficiencies (building FMS)
- Students can express themselves through their movement (Rhythmic and Expressive movement activities [RE])

Why should we care about physical activity?

Last year, the World Health Organisation estimated that over 41 million children are already overweight or obese.¹¹ A recent report by the same organisation found that Australian adolescents are inactive compared with the majority of adolescents across the world. Overweight or obese children entering high school already have physical and social barriers to participation in the traditional physical education curriculum. Combine this with lower physical activity levels and the result is students who will struggle with lifestyle related disease and the associated poor mental health. Australia was ranked 140 of the 146 countries surveyed in relation to the amount of daily physical activity of adolescents.¹² There will be a likely increase in the number of overweight or obese children entering high school over the next decade, and these children will not get the help they need under the current curriculum. By providing a comprehensive program with a core focus on building physical and mental strength, we can begin to address these issues and set children up for high academic achievement and healthy lives.

References:

- ¹ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/social/physed/hpeimprovsport.pdf>
- ² <http://theconversation.com/look-up-north-heres-how-aussie-kids-can-move-more-at-school-nordic-style-112957>
- ³ https://youtu.be/hmFQqjMF_fo
- ⁴ https://www.ted.com/talks/wendy_suzuki_the_brain_changing_benefits_of_exercise?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare
- ⁵ http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/145971/Article_weight_training_preadolescent_strength_training_Narelle_Sibte.pdf
- ⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B16IwE7B4PC/?igshid=1rhkgdc7wdgnp>
- ⁷ <https://thewest.com.au/news/7-news-perth/perth-child-weightlifter-go-kotani-proving-lifting-weights-can-be-beneficial-for-kids-ng-b881219635z>
- ⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwgywNZzEi4&feature=youtu.be&t=3954>
- ⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-21/mac-program-helps-gifted-and-talented-students-reach-potential/10382822>
- ¹⁰ https://www.smh.com.au/education/the-schoolboys-learning-life-lessons-at-the-bench-press-20190102-p50p8b.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1546754663
- ¹¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6457213163124322304/>
- ¹² https://www.essa.org.au/Public/News_Room/Media_Releases1/2019/Damning_new_report_fails_Aussie_children_s_physical_activity_levels_and_change_must_start_now.aspx?fbclid=IwAR3h_JUDttKN09gYyuU110KELJYxCDqj8Xa5HrI8J-XgaCSsPMG8G1WfxPM

Week 1: Basic bodyweight strength, warm-ups and cool-downs

In week one, children meet the instructor Dr Sal Bromley, who presents the content of the entire series. Children will learn and be assessed on a range of bodyweight exercises and complete their initial Self and Peer Assessment.

Learning outcomes:

1. Design and perform an effective warm-up and cool-down that is carried throughout the series
2. Learn basic bodyweight exercises which target each area of the body
3. Perform basic tumbling skills
4. Complete initial Self and Peer Assessment (baseline)

Week 2: Basic barbell lifts – initial benchmarks

In week two, children are introduced to barbell training and learn two basic strength exercises: deadlift and floor press. They will set benchmarks for these exercises so we can utilise them throughout the program.

Learning outcomes:

1. Perform effective warm-up
2. Safely execute the basic barbell lifts
3. Set strength baselines across the two barbell lifts
4. Perform effective cool-down

Week 3: Introduction to strength circuits

In week three, children are introduced to strength training principles. They build and complete their own individual strength circuits in small groups, utilising both the barbell lifts and a range of bodyweight exercises.

Learning outcomes:

1. Perform effective warm-up
2. Learn the basics of strength programs, including sets, reps, rest, and intensity
3. Build an effective, individualised strength circuit
4. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
5. Perform effective cool-down

Week 4: Introduction to jumping and landing

In week four, children learn safe jumping and landing practices on soft and hard surfaces and jumping to and from different heights. Children incorporate a range of jumping and landing exercises into the individual strength circuits they built the week before.

Learning outcomes:

1. Learn safe jumping and landing practices
2. Build jumping and landing exercises into strength circuits
3. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
4. Perform effective cool-down

Week 5: Basic self-defence – striking, kicking and safe spaces

In week five, children are introduced to basic self-defence training. Topics such as striking and kicking technique as well as recognising and moving into safe spaces will be covered. These techniques will be folded into the warm-up portion of their strength circuits.

Learning outcomes:

1. Learn effective striking and kicking techniques
2. Learn to move into safe spaces around an attacker
3. Build striking and kicking into strength circuit warm-ups
4. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
5. Perform effective cool-down

Week 6: Full strength circuits

In week six, children work on their full strength circuits, including a martial arts warm-up, and jumping and landing tasks throughout.

Learning outcomes:

1. Complete effective warm-up, including bodyweight, kicking and striking exercises
2. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
3. Perform effective cool-down

Week 7: Introduction to grappling for self defence

In week seven, children are introduced to grappling. Topics such as when to use this form of self-defence, how to fall safely, how to roll safely, and how to get out of bad situations on the ground are covered. These techniques will be folded into the warm-up portion of their strength circuits.

Learning outcomes:

1. Learn when to use or not use grappling for self-defence
2. Learn how to fall, roll and get out from underneath someone safely
3. Become aware of body contact and start to desensitise to some types of contact
4. Build striking and kicking into strength circuit warm-ups
5. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
6. Perform effective cool-down

Week 8: Full strength circuits

In week eight, children work on their full strength circuits, including a martial arts warm-up, and jumping and landing tasks throughout.

Learning outcomes:

1. Complete effective warm-up, including bodyweight, kicking, striking and grappling exercises
2. Complete individual circuits, spotting each other in small teams throughout
3. Perform effective cool-down

Week 9: Full strength circuits – new benchmarks

In week nine, children set new benchmarks on their barbell lifts. Students will also prepare for week 10, where they will take a training buddy through their circuit.

Learning outcomes:

1. Perform effective warm-up
2. Safely execute the basic strength lifts
3. Set new strength baselines across the three basic lifts
4. Perform effective cool-down

Week 10: Mentoring session for boys and parent invitation

In week 10, children will take their peers through their strength circuits and teach them how to do each exercise. The 5/6 boys class will likely be the invited training buddies, however, parents, teachers, and family members are also invited to train alongside the girls. Children will complete their final Self and Peer Assessment.

Learning outcomes:

1. Complete effective bodyweight warm-up with their training buddy (no martial arts components)
2. Complete individual circuits with their training buddy, spotting each other throughout and providing cues where needed
3. Perform effective cool-down with their training buddy
4. Complete initial Self and Peer Assessment (final)

The above plan is in draft form only and may be changed to suit the school's needs. This program is being sponsored by University of Canberra, therefore there is no cost to the school or the students. This program will be fully documented (photos, videos etc.) so it can be presented to gain future funding. Children interested in participating, and their parent, must give consent for their image and personal data to be collected for grant applications and media purposes.

For any questions relating to this series, please contact Dr Sal Bromley

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