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## Read About It



### **Making the Right Moves with Adaptations**

*Grace is a happy, healthy 3-year-old with Down syndrome. Like her younger brother Jack, Grace benefits from plenty of opportunities to be physically active.*

When teachers integrate physical activities into classroom routines there are many benefits for the whole class. Research shows that motor development and cognitive development are closely related. For example, a child who holds a friend's hand while walking across a swinging bridge is working on tactile input, balance and foot placement, and planning skills. All of these skills are related to cognitive development. How can families and teachers provide activities for children with disabilities that allow them to be safe, successful, and challenged?

Simple ideas can help all the children in your classroom participate in activities. See [Adapting Physical Activities to Promote Overall Health and Development: Suggestions for Interventionists and Families](#) from Young Exceptional Children. You'll find ways to integrate more early learning goals, like social development and language skills, into motor activities (more bang for your buck!). There's also a list of fun activities that children can do anywhere. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and Sage Publications have enabled free access to this article through March 31, 2015.

## Take a Look

### **Online Learning Promotes Healthy Active Living**

The [National Center on Health](#) offers an online, interactive self-study course called [Strategies to Support and Encourage Healthy Active Living](#). Head Start and Early Head Start teachers and staff can learn to effectively communicate and engage with families to help them create and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle.

## Try It Out!



### **Three Great Ideas**

This month we looked to [I Am Moving I Am Learning \(IMIL\)](#), at the [National Center on Health](#) for ways to individualize physical activities for children with disabilities. IMIL is a practical approach that addresses the issue of obesity in Head Start children. Here are three tips for adapting movement activities to include all children:

1. **Pair verbal directions with a visual cue and a peer model.** This helps clarify your expectations for children who have speech and language delays. For example, when you say "stop," hold up a stop sign

toy or a picture of a red traffic light. When you say "jump two times," model what it looks like. Physical prompts are also helpful for children with motor planning and speech and language delays.

2. **Allow children to repeat actions or movements multiple times.** Children who have cognitive delays often need lots of repetition to experience success with a new activity. Use peer models to show children how an activity should be done.
3. **Create an alternate way for a child to participate if necessary.** Sometimes children who are on the autism spectrum are sensitive to noise or physical touch. If a child becomes distressed or dis-regulated during an activity, talk to the child's occupational or physical therapist to find a time for her to practice the activity alone, in a smaller group, or without noise.

Note: Before you make individualized plans for children refer to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). These plans offer guidance about which instructional strategy is recommended.

## Improve Your Practice

### **Check out a 15-minute In-service Suite from the NCQTL**

#### **Highly Individualized Teaching: An Overview**

For a broad look at all the concepts discussed in the Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning training suites, visit [Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning: An Overview](#). This suite offers resources, videos, tips, and tools you can use to enrich and adapt curricular and physical activities for children with specific learning needs. You'll find it on the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL) portal on the [Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#).

## Families Too!

### **Healthy Habits with First Lady Michelle Obama**

Big Bird's dancing in the White House, and Elmo's got the moves! Children with disabilities need to have good models of physical activity and healthy eating in their lives. Parents, family, and caregivers can find fun ways to encourage their children's healthy habits with [Sesame Street Healthy Habits for Life](#). There are read-along songs and poems, recipe cards, and quick, easy activities that will get everyone moving.

## Special Events

The [42<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Head Start Association \(NHSA\) Conference and Expo](#) takes place in Washington, DC, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, March 29–April 2.

The [12<sup>th</sup> Annual National Training Institute on Effective Practices](#) takes place in St. Petersburg, FL, at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club, April 22–24.

## We Want to Hear from You!

The Head Start Disabilities Services Newsletter is produced monthly by NCQTL. Email Kristin Ainslie at [ncqtl@uw.edu](mailto:ncqtl@uw.edu) to submit questions or suggestions for future newsletter topics.

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Office of Head Start (OHS) | 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW | 8th Floor Portals Building | Washington, DC 20024  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov> | 1-866-763-6481 | [Contact Us](#)

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