



JABADAO

Developmental Movement Play

Final Report and Recommendations
from a 10-year action research project investigating the way the early years
sector supports the youngest children to be fully physical

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Developmental Movement Play (DMP) is the name of a particular approach developed by JABADAO

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All quotes in this report come from early years practitioners who have implemented the DMP approach in their setting.

About JABADAO

FULL-BODIED ... WHOLEHEARTED



JABADAO is a national charity which aims to make it possible for people of all ages to live full-bodied, wholehearted lives that make them feel good.

We are dancers and movement specialists, teachers and film makers, writers and group workers - enthusiastic players all. We bring a different perspective to familiar issues. In a culture that is used to solving problems by starting with the intellect, we start from the body and the 'feeling of life itself'.

We begin by highlighting the subtle and unconscious ways that our culture stops us from becoming embodied (able to learn and respond as much in our bodies as in our heads). Then we work with partners in education, health and community development settings to do something about it.

We campaign for change through:

- Projects that model playful ways to be fully physical as a routine part of life
- Performance events, community events and play times
- New support for families
- New strategies to support physically frail older people's full-bodied involvement
- New teaching strategies and curriculum development
- The development of the built environment with the body in mind

Developing the research

Developmental Movement Play

INITIAL CONSULTATION: 1998 - 2000



In 1998, JABADAO began an independent research project within the early years sector. It set out to address a perceived lack of confidence in running movement activities amongst early years practitioners; and the knock-on effects this had on opportunities for our youngest children to be as fully physical as they need to be. This ten-year action research project represents our commitment to revealing and articulating the contribution that specialist dancers - working within a social policy framework - can make to 'change for children'.

Between 1998 and 2000, in over one thousand workshops across the country, JABADAO consulted with early years practitioners to build an understanding about existing practice in the sector - and to establish how practitioners felt about it.

The consultation revealed some key themes. Although it was carried out several years ago, ongoing anecdotal and case study evidence suggests that these themes are still entirely relevant.

In a prevailing culture that militates against free and enthusiastic involvement in spontaneous movement activity, practitioners' attitudes to children's movement were heavily influenced by their own, often unspoken, discomfort with spontaneous, expressive movement.

Practitioners lacked a coherent theoretical understanding about links between movement and learning.

Practitioners felt little ownership over the methods they used to develop movement work. This limited their creativity and enthusiasm.

Practitioners often felt anxious about children's movement on safety and safeguarding grounds, and because they felt it to be at odds with an acceptable learning environment - too noisy and chaotic.

Practitioners felt that parents do not want their children to be 'rolling around' when they could be learning 'properly'.

Practitioners often stopped children from moving.

Practitioners generally controlled movement activities very tightly - often more tightly than any other area of the curriculum - especially indoors.

Children's choices about how they wanted to move were often ignored, sidelined and undervalued.

Many responses to children's movement were based on habit and assumption, rather than clearly debated policy within the team

There is a substantial body of evidence suggesting that movement underpins all learning and development, but this was not part of practitioners' awareness or practice. The consultation highlighted an unconfident and somewhat rigid approach to movement activities with young children and a marked lack of understanding about links between movement and learning.



A new approach

Developmental Movement Play

DEVELOPING THE APPROACH: 2000 - 2002



During 2000 and 2001 the JABADAO team developed a new approach designed to respond to the key themes highlighted in the consultation. We researched a range of approaches and theories and visited projects and schemes working with children's movement in a variety of contexts, in England and the United States.

Our aim was to give practitioners both the desire and the confidence to support children's natural ability to embody the whole of their lives and their learning. DMP was developed to go beyond existing aims ('fine and gross motor', 'balance and co-ordination', 'move creatively', 'understanding something about how the body works') and provide children with the opportunities they need to *be* a body - not just have a body - to be physically involved in all aspects of their lives and their learning.

Developmental Movement Play (DMP) is the name JABADAO gave to this new neuro-developmental, child-led and play-based approach

Principles of the approach

There are an increasing number of movement-based techniques designed to support aspects of development and learning. Some are therapeutic in intention and used where specific gaps in development have been identified. Some have been developed to support children's learning in classroom situations. Developmental Movement Play is concerned with children's full-bodied, wholehearted physical responses to the whole of their everyday lives - with embodied living.

DMP aims to ensure that the environments, resources and experiences we offer babies and young children focus not only on the strength, skill and health of the body, but also on the ways in which movement assists the development of the brain and nervous system. It is concerned, therefore, with the whole curriculum, not just with Physical Development.

- DMP is a child-led approach. Each child is the expert in the ways they need to move
- It recognises the body as our first home; and movement as our first language
- Children's involvement in their own spontaneous movement play is the key element
- Adults start by creating an environment in which children can value full-bodied, wholehearted, spontaneous movement play and an embodied response to the things that happen to them, as an important aspect of life and learning
- Adults enable children to organise their own movement play; they understand the developmental significance of the movement children choose; they are able to use this information to adapt the environment, resources and experiences available and to extend the potential for children's learning and development
- Practitioners and parents have to relearn how to be 'helpful adults'. The approach acknowledges that it is hard to step aside and stop telling children what to do and how to do it; hard to reassess what is 'appropriate' movement
- It is as much about simple changes to the everyday environment and routines, therefore, as it is about organising particular activities

Implementing the approach

- This is an approach to be embedded within the curriculum as a whole, not things to do in PE
- DMP addresses the environment, resources and experiences we provide for babies and young children 0 - 6. The starting point is an audit of these, followed by a reassessment of the way each setting supports children's bodies and movement
- A framework of five ways of moving is provided to support this and subsequent processes. These are not movements to be used in a programme of activities, but a way of ensuring that some key movement activities which are often undervalued, are fully supported
- Spontaneous movement play is valued indoors as much as outdoors
- A Clear Space Movement Area is usually part of the basic provision, enabling children to move when and how they want to indoors
- The floor is an important place for babies and young children - on the floor their bodies can move in ways that are important for development

- Adults join children in movement play, as they would join them in other activities
- Adults watch out for themes in children's movement play and, where relevant and with specific developmental considerations in mind, they support children to get more of what they need
- Adults support children's natural ability to risk assess for themselves. They look out for children who do not have this ability yet - and give extra help to ensure everyone stays safe



The Training

Developmental Movement Play

THE DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT PLAY CERTIFICATE COURSE



"I have a new pair of eyes since I discovered DMP..."

Aims

The DMP training was designed for early years practitioners across the sector. It aims to:

- Change the way they feel about their own involvement in spontaneous movement activities
- Give them reasons (through theory and understanding) to change the way they work with children's bodies and movement, enabling a more integrated and full-bodied response
- Give them simple, practical help to make immediate changes that are uniquely relevant to their own setting
- Support them to articulate their understanding about the significance of movement play to parents

Method

Changing practitioner attitudes and behaviour lies at the core of Developmental Movement Play. The training is insight led and theory informed.

Training for physical education, movement and dance work is often activity based. Indeed, trainees often actively seek training that gives them 'things to do'. However, this seems to add to a culture of disempowerment, lack of confidence and an over-controlling adult-led approach.

The course has three key elements:

1. A simple theoretical framework that relates readily to everyday experience of children's movement
2. A specific movement practice that focuses on making spontaneous, play-based movement as comfortable a way of working for adults as it is for babies and young children
3. Links with the Early Years Foundation Stage - ways to implement the work in settings

The course, originally four days long, was extended to five days. Days 1 and 2 focus on theory; days 3 and 4 on movement practice and application. The fifth day was added to give opportunities for sharing learning within the group and to address quality assurance issues.

1. Theoretical framework

The training is based on a simple neuro-developmental framework. Participants learn how and why movement affects the way the human brain and nervous system develop and, in turn, how this affects children's development, learning, health and lifelong wellbeing.

It draws on a substantial body of knowledge:

- Developmental movement theory: outlining a sequence of movement patterns and activities that take place from birth, through childhood and on to maturity, that both *indicate* changes in functioning ability and, through the process of involvement in those emerging patterns, *support further changes* in functional ability
- Sensory motor theory: active involvement and exploration through sensory motor activity enables a child to become a more mature, efficient organizer of sensory information - the basis of perception. Children are biologically programmed to seek out the optimum experiences to provide them with the required stimulation. The drive to engage in this kind of activity often overrides any other opportunity available
- Theory about the development of perception through the senses: specifically, three senses which are foremost in movement play, (two of which were little involved in the early years curriculum in 2002), sense of touch, sense of body (proprioception) and a sense of movement (vestibular)
- Neurodevelopment expressed within triune brain theory: identifying how movement influences specific functioning, affecting many aspects of development and learning across the whole curriculum

2. The movement practice

The movement practice aims to enable practitioners to work freely and confidently with the body as a child's first home and spontaneous movement as their first language. It recognises that, given prevailing attitudes to spontaneous movement, the training must both emphasise the need for a very different attitude to working with movement, whilst understanding how difficult it is for many people to make this change.

It is important that to note this approach is the response of specialist dancers, bringing a new perspective and a new range of theory and skills to the field of child development and early education.



Kirklees DMP Project practitioners receive their certificates

It draws on a substantial body of movement practice developed by movement specialist, dancers and dance therapists:

- Sensory motor exploration: a practice that is substantially different from creative dance or adult-led sport or activities; discovering the *intrinsic* value of sensory motor experience, not just as an aid to rational and intellectual processes
- Movement improvisation: spontaneous, unfolding movement interaction, generated in the moment in response to internal and external stimuli
- Movement play: following unfolding physical urges and drives, wallowing in the interest and experience they generate (alone or with others), for their own sake rather than for any product
- Kinaesthetic empathy: the ability to tune in and respond in sympathy to another's movement; the ability to respond in movement - as practitioners are used to tuning and responding through words

- Embodied learning: the ability to notice and make use of the languages of the body (sensation, emotion, movement and image) to augment the learning process - posing and solving problems, generating further information, coming to understanding, using that new understanding - and the way it was generated - in subsequent learning situations

3. Applying the approach within the EYFS

The application aims to make the approach immediately useful in an everyday context, fitting snugly with the aims and demands of early years sector. It supports the four themes and principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage - a Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments, Learning and Development.



2005 National Conference at the end of Cycle One

It focuses on:

- The helpful adult's role
- Joining in with spontaneous movement play
- Developmental movement in action
- Changing the environment and resources to support physicality
- Involving families
- Addressing setting policies with regard to children's physicality
- Observation

The Research

Developmental Movement Play

TWO CYCLES OF ACTION RESEARCH: 2002 - 2009



A long-term action research project was established to coincide with the first DMP course. Cycle One began in September 2002 and finished with a national conference to share the emerging themes in November 2005. Cycle 2 began in January 2007 and finished with a second national conference in November 2009.

Throughout, we have also collected a substantial body of evidence from other early years practitioners involved in the ongoing programme of DMP courses, and in DMP projects organised with local authority partners or individual Children's Centres.

The initial action research question, with the Cycle One research partners, was:

How can we help early years practitioners to be more confident in supporting children's natural inclinations to move, and to learn from this movement?

For Cycle Two, confident that the DMP approach and training build practitioner confidence, we adjusted the research question to focus on the benefits for children.

The Cycle Two action research question was:

What are the benefits of introducing a Developmental Movement Play approach, supporting more child-led movement activities, for children's wellbeing and learning?

Research Partners

Early years practitioners in both cycles were openly recruited to join the project. They began by participating in the DMP course, made changes in their practice and then gathered evidence about those changes - each over a 26 month period.

Alongside the research project, we gathered evidence from practitioners involved in the DMP training and in linked projects.

A JABADAO Co-ordinator supported this process throughout and an Advisory Group oversaw the project as a whole. Peterborough Early Years Team, who commissioned the first DMP course outside the research project, became a special partner, working closely with us throughout, seeking and evaluating effective ways to embed DMP practice.



“With new understanding about the reasons why floor play might be important for children’s development, I negotiated to reduce the number of tables and move activities onto the floor. On the floor, children were closely engaged in activities, interacting and talking with each other. Children joined in who would not normally do so.”

CYCLE ONE RESEARCH PARTNERS 2002-2005	CYCLE TWO RESEARCH PARTNERS 2007-2009
38 research partners from 14 settings	43 practitioners from 12 settings (2 dropped out, 1 closed)
Children's Centres (5) Canterbury Children's Centre, <i>Bradford</i> East Leeds Children's Centre Under Two's Unit, <i>Leeds</i> Parklands Children's Centre, <i>Leeds</i> Seacroft Children's Centre, <i>Leeds</i> Cruddas Park Early Years Centre, <i>Newcastle</i>	Children's Centres (4) Granville Plus, Nursery School and CC (until Dec 2008) Hillfields Children's Centre, <i>Coventry</i> Kate Greenaway Children's Centre, <i>London</i> Walkergate Children's Centre, <i>Newcastle</i>
Sure Start settings (3) Sure Start Ashfield, <i>Kirkby-in-Ashfield</i> Sure Start Ferryhill and Chilton, <i>Co Durham</i> Sure Start Elland, <i>Halifax</i>	
Private Sector Nursery (1) Goosehill Private Nursery, <i>Morpeth</i>	Nurseries (4) Eastwood Nursery School, <i>Roehampton</i> Kinsley Neighbourhood Nursery, <i>Wakefield (closed Dec 2008)</i> Mosaic NHS Nursery, <i>Leeds</i> Rosewood NHS Nursery, <i>Leeds</i>
School settings (4) Abbotsmede EYU within Community Primary School, <i>Peterborough</i> Holmewood Nursery School, <i>Brixton</i> Cambridge Park School, <i>Grimby</i> Old Bank School, <i>Mirfield</i>	School Settings (4) Fulbridge Primary School, <i>Peterborough</i> Northcott Special School, <i>Hull</i> Ursuline Catholic Primary School, <i>Liverpool</i> Wroughton First School, (until Jan 2008)
Family Centre setting (1) Grimsbury Family Association, <i>Banbury</i>	
ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE: 2002 - 2009	
1,003 early years practitioners have participated in 57 DMP courses. Over 400 have presented Observations and Action Research projects as part of their course work.	
Kirklees Project: (4 years) 18 participating early years settings, with 85 practitioners participating in training and evidence gathering. Regional conference: April 2008	
Camborne Nursery School and Family Services project: (1 year) Embedding DMP across the team	
Bracknell Forest Project: (4 years - in progress) Early Years settings across the unitary authority.	

Gathering evidence

Developmental Movement Play

TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING DATA

Practitioners used a range of tools to gather evidence. These tools were adjusted between Cycle One to Cycle Two to help us gather more detailed evidence whilst at the same time streamlining the contribution that research partners were required to make, as calls on their time increased.

Cycle One and Two Evidence Gathering Tools	1	2	Courses Projects
Questionnaires - beginning, middle and end (<i>round up changes</i>)		✓	
Termly Reports	✓		
Case Studies: 50 in Cycle One and 51 in Cycle 2	✓	✓	
Observation Sheets to inform Case Studies (<i>substantially refined for Cycle Two</i>)	✓	✓	
Action Research project		✓	✓
Research Group discussions: three times per year	✓	✓	
Beautiful Books - <i>free choice scrapbooks</i> .	✓	✓	
Informal interviews with parents	✓		
Video - informally collected by some research partners			✓
Photos taken by research partners	✓	✓	✓
Photos taken by JABADAO photographer - some only	✓	✓	✓
Disposable cameras given to families	✓	✓	
Structured interview at the end - <i>with individual practitioner from each setting</i>	✓		
Group discussion interview at the end	✓	✓	✓

Changing Culture

Developmental Movement Play

CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH: 1998 - 2009



“Free movement has enhanced our learning environment beyond belief and we never fail to be amazed at the changing and imaginative movement that the children generate.”

A variety of contexts are particularly pertinent to the development of the DMP approach:

- The wellbeing agenda
- Early years policy and curriculum
- The physical activity agenda
- Health and safety and Safeguarding
- Dance / Arts policy
- Joined up thinking across sectors

Early years policy and curriculum

1998 - 2009 has been the time of greatest change ever experienced by the early years sector. Cycle One and Cycle Two of this research took place, therefore, in substantially different circumstances.

Expansion of the sector

The huge expansion in the sector coincides exactly with this research project. The new Labour Government launched the Sure Start programme in 1998, followed by six waves of funding in areas of most disadvantage. Local projects, neighbourhood nurseries and early excellence centres developed new ways of working in direct response to their immediate communities. There was a real buzz in the sector. When asked to describe what they did at the start of courses, many would say, “We do Sure Start-y things” and the others would nod knowingly.

In 2003, Every Child Matters proposed a switch from local programmes to a national network of Sure Start Children's Centres to be controlled by local authorities. By 2010 every community will be served by one of these 'service hubs where children under five years old and their families can receive seamless integrated services and information'.

Developmental Movement Play has developed in parallel with this sea change. Enthusiasm for practical, evidence-based and above all *relevant* approaches, has been evident from early years practitioners, managers and advisors throughout.

Changing curriculum guidance

Before 1996 there was little government intervention in pre-school provision, in the curriculum, or in curriculum implementation. The introduction of curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, combined with the introduction of a statutory inspection process, has had a strong influence on pre-school education in England.

Over the course of this project the curriculum guidance has changed from Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning (1996), to Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (2000), Birth to Three Matters was created for the youngest children, although not statutory (2002) and most recently the Early Years Foundation Stage has been introduced (2008) bringing together the Foundation Stage and Birth to Three Matters and integrating education and childcare in a more play-based framework.

Each has had a different emphasis, with the debate over what form the early years curriculum should take (from direct teaching to child-led free-flow play) taking place throughout. Developmental Movement Play has sought to make links with these frameworks at each stage.

In addition to these key documents there have been an increasing number of strategies designed to address specific areas of the curriculum, including Communication Language and Literacy Development, Letters and Sounds, Every Child a Reader/Writer/Talker, Social and Emotional Development and 'It's Child's Play - Early Years Foundation Stage'.



"Outside we try to get children onto the floor more during play, whereas before you would probably tell them to stand up to not get their trousers dirty."

The Physical Activity agenda

Over the course of the research project a physical activity agenda has become part of the national psyche as well as part of education policy at all levels. At the start of the project there was no national focus; now there are teams and strategies across the country designed to involve children and young people in *'at least 60 minutes of at least moderate activity each day. At least twice a week this should include activities to improve bone health (activities that produce high physical stresses on the bones), muscle strength and flexibility.'* Over the course of the project the school curriculum has changed to reflect these goals - compulsory physical education rising to two hours per week, or five hours per week including involvement through extended services.

The Wellbeing agenda

In the Unicef report *'Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child wellbeing in rich countries 2007'* England was at the bottom of the tables. In measurements for Family & Peer Relationships, and Behaviours & Risks, the UK had the lowest score, with Subjective Wellbeing being second bottom. The score for Educational Wellbeing was fifth from the bottom. Wellbeing has been a growing issue, alongside educational attainment and health, throughout the project.

Safety and safeguarding

Keeping children safe is the top priority. The guidance that shapes this has changed significantly over the course of the project, especially with the introduction of Every Child Matters (2004) - an entire strategy that was initiated in response to the death of Victoria Climbié. Over the period of the project, settings have adopted substantial new policies and procedures to meet exacting new standards to protect children, including CRB checks (2002), new recruitment and volunteer policies.

The issue of touch - a significant aspect of DMP - is inextricably linked to safeguarding for practitioners. Developing clear policies that meet the current guidance has been an important aspect of all research partner's work.

Dance / Arts policy

JABADAO is a charity in receipt of funding from both the Arts Council and Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation for the Developmental Movement Play work.

JABADAO is one of 72 regularly funded dance organisations within the Arts Council of England's (ACE) portfolio of clients. ACE dance policy states: *"Dance performance and participation celebrate our capacity to communicate through movement... They offer new ways of understanding our world and our humanity.... Our ambition is for more people of all ages to enjoy and take part in dance that challenges, provokes, entertains and inspires them. Dance can have a powerful effect on people's lives. We want to see the physical, emotional, mental and social benefits of dance extended to as many people as possible."*

In 2008 ACE adopted a policy of *'Great Art for Everyone'* - aiming to *'get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. Great art inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better.'*

Developmental Movement Play is a dancer's response that would not have been created by other specialists. It is vital that this aspect of the approach is maintained, as any benefit is inextricably bound up with its unique perspective.

Joined Up Thinking

The Arts Council states that: *'We want to help build the partnerships that will develop the power of dance to promote healthy and vibrant communities.... We will build connections with wider creativity and physical activity agendas.'*

Since 1998 there has been a considerable increase in focus on 'joined up thinking' and multi-partnership working. This project has sought to place dancers alongside education and health workers, always highlighting and fostering shared aims.

Multi-agency partnerships

Every Child Matters - Change for Children was launched in 2003 to improve the way agencies work together, to 'protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life.' It has five wide-ranging aims - Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve, Make a positive contribution and Achieve economic well-being - to be used in multi-agency partnership work including children's centres, early years, schools, children's social work services, and playwork.

Focus on families

The focus on 'partnership with parents' has increased. The Children's Plan, launched in 2008 says: 'government does not bring up children, families do, so government needs to do more to back parents and families'. Parents as partners' is one of the key commitments in the EYFS.



Activity

Developmental Movement Play

A RANGE OF WAYS TO EMBED NEW PRACTICE



"It's just been a whole change in awareness of the importance of movement play. It seems to underpin all the activities now; it's not just happening in the movement corner it's right across the nursery."

Developmental Movement Play is an approach not a model. Research partners were free to create their own way of working with the theory and movement practice.

The chart on page 24 shows the things that the settings did after their participation in the DMP training.

Their evidence draws on observations made across all activities. Over the course of 6 project years, practitioners have supported 50,640 sessions - or 55,367 child involvements.

Nature of the movement activity across all research partner settings

	Cycle One														Total	%																	
	Cycle Two																																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			Total																
Adult-led groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	57%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	97%	19	73%	
Adult-led with parents				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	57%	✓												3	25%	11	42%	
Movement Area – part time					✓										0	0%													7	58%	9	34%	
Movement area - continuous				✓			✓								3	21%	✓												5	42%	9	34%	
Movement areas (more than one)	✓										✓	✓	✓	✓	4	29%	✓												7	58%	11	42%	
Movement room	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓			5	33%														0	5	19%	
No indoor movement area					✓				-	-					1	7%														0	1		
Cleared tables away	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	64%	✓													11	97%	20	77%
Put activities on the floor	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10	71%	✓													12	100%	22	80%
Home play sessions				✓						✓					2	14%														2	0%	2	7%
Provided home bags								✓							2	14%													3	25%	5	19%	
Supported by a specialist				✓					✓						4	29%	✓													1	8%	5	19%
Led by JABADAO DMP specialist	✓				✓				✓						3	21%														3	0	3	
New indoor DMP resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13	93%	✓													12	100%	25	96%
Outdoor provision for DMP				✓	✓										3	21%	✓													12	100%	15	58%
Sessions for parents				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	64%	✓													4	33%	13	50%
Leaflets made for parents				✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	6	43%														5	41%	11	42%
Made DMP info boards		✓	✓		✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	6	43%	✓													11	97%	17	65%
JABADAO DMP exhibition used	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	79%	✓													2	16%	13	50%
New floor coverings bought	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12	86%	✓													4	32%	16	62%
Photos of DMP displayed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	64%	✓													11	97%	20	77%
Stills/video to record DMP	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	57%	✓													10	83%	18	70%
Beautiful books displayed for visitors			✓				✓					✓	✓	✓	4	29%	✓													2	16%	6	23%
Gave presentations about DMP				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	64%	✓													8	67%	17	65%

Sessions and involvement over both cycles							
CYCLE ONE	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05		
	Sessions	Children	Sessions	Children	Sessions	Children	
SS Elland - outreach	13	45	36	586	41	626	
Cruddas Park CC	4	21	398	2160	93	446	
Gooschill Private Nursery	92	1350	629	3776	495	2542	
Grimsbury Family Assoc	92	900	393	3540	143	676	
East Lds CC Under 2's	94	2250	550	3225	440	3960	
Parklands CC	4	25	78	1170	728	5592	
Seacroft CC	2	17	201	2012	616	4238	
SS Ferryhill and Chiltern	0	0	48	214	76	1260	
SS Ashfield	4	24	105	490	260	2724	
Cambridge Park School	4	20	175	1050	221	715	
Canterbury CC	1	6	91	462	21	102	
Holmewood Nursery	77	833	92	1198	41	462	
Abbotsmede EY Unit	39	700	30	620	40	482	
TOTALS	426	6191	2826	20503	3215	23825	
CYCLE TWO	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		
Walkergate EY Centre	995	106	2654	110	2496	98	
Ursuline Primary	320	51	602	50	632	52	
Kinsley Nursery	1340	28	5240	28	2680	29	
Mosaic NHS Nursery	188	60	419	65	424	65	
Rosewood NHS Nursery	358	60	954	60	960	62	
Northcott Special School	587	26	1171	26	910	26	
Hillfields EY Centre	224	30	398	203	448	297	
Fulbridge Primary	3458	151	6914	157	6934	160	
Wroughton First School	72	81	-	-	-	-	
Eastwood Nursery	268	48	536	47	625	62	
Kate Greenaway Nursery	144	49	298	49	286	52	
Granville Plus Nursery	288	18	288	9	62	9	
Totals	8242	708	19474	804	16457	912	
TOTAL SESSIONS	8668		22300		19672		50640
REPEAT INVOLVEMENT		7607		22111		25649	55367

Outcomes

Developmental Movement Play

PRACTITIONER CONFIDENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND ATTITUDE



“We are more in touch with our own bodies now. It is easier to understand what the children are feeling if you are moving in the same way that the children are. ”

Practitioner confidence

All practitioners express increased confidence in supporting children’s movement play both indoors and out

- Cycle One practitioners developed a new capacity to move with children in their settings, in spontaneous ways as well as in more formal structures. This was very different from the start. Six settings referred specifically to their increased confidence at some point during their final interviews, even though they were not directly asked about this. All gave answers that indicate increased confidence even if they didn’t use the word
- It is important to note that, at the start, all Cycle Two partners felt ‘very willing’ to support movement activities. This is important, as sometimes we work with practitioners who have been nominated to projects for which they have little enthusiasm. We asked Cycle Two partners to provide more detail about their responses, asking them to comment separately on movement play in the indoor and outdoor environments; and not only to assess their confidence, but also to note how relaxed they felt about supporting physical activity and how knowledgeable they felt

Indoors:

- 4 settings started out feeling ‘confident’ or ‘quite confident’ (3 schools and 2 nurseries). By the end 10 settings said they were ‘confident’. The remaining setting, the only research partner who felt ‘unconfident’ at the start, now felt ‘quite confident’

- The 3 school settings and 1 nursery said they had ‘some knowledge’ about supporting movement play indoors at the start. By the end all settings said they felt ‘knowledgeable’
- Eight settings also said they felt ‘very relaxed’ and/or ‘very willing’ to support movement play by the end.

Outdoors:

- Research partners feelings about supporting movement indoors or outdoors were almost identical with the exception of one who felt more confident outdoors

Changes in understanding

Research partners’ awareness of the importance, and role, of movement play in learning has changed significantly

- Practitioners across both research groups show high levels of enthusiasm for their new understanding about links between movement, development and learning
- Movement play is now seen as an underpinning for all development and learning, rather than purely concerned with Physical Development, in all participating settings
- Both Cycle One and Cycle Two research partners have significantly changed the way they support movement activities. Each research partner has developed their own way of working with spontaneous movement, but all now move more freely themselves, join in more with children’s movement play and see more detail in children’s movement. They are able to respond to, and enjoy, children’s natural enthusiasm for movement in new ways
- Practitioners support a more child-led approach; many express increased pleasure in supporting movement activities now

Changes in attitude

Practitioners in both research groups now value different kinds of movement

- Cycle One research partners provided substantial anecdotal evidence of changes in attitude underpinning new practice - especially an eagerness to support a wider range of movement including movement that would previously have been stopped
- To provide more detail we asked Cycle Two practitioners, before they participated in the DMP course, about the kinds of movement that attracted approval and disapproval in their settings - and then compared this with their responses later in the project

Disapproval

- 80% of the disapproval responses referred to movement in the indoor environment. 'Running inside', (identified by eleven of the thirteen settings) was top of the list, with 'threat of hurting', (identified by 9 settings) coming second. 'Misuse of furniture' and 'misuse of equipment' were also noted by a number of settings
- 50% of settings also cited 'misuse of furniture', 'misuse of resources' and 'high energy movement' as things that caused disapproval
- Outside, only 'threat of hurting' showed up as a concern
- As the project progressed disapproval scores for indoor movement behaviours fell by 26%, leaving only 'running inside' and 'threat of hurting' with scores of any significance
- Disapproval scores for movement outside rose during Cycle Two, largely due to an increase in scores for 'threat of hurting'. As settings started to supported a wider range of movement, practitioners had to engage in fresh debate about boundaries and rules. This is not always easy

Approval

- 'Upright movement' and 'building physical skills' received the joint highest approval scores, with 'floor based' movement and 'correct use of furniture' coming joint second
- As the project progressed, 'upright movement' disappeared as an area for approval; 'building physical skills' grew in its approval rating, as did 'floor based activity'. "Turn taking" also became a significant area, even though this is not a core aim of the DMP approach as it is in some other PE activities



"I see my daughter in a different light when I come to the family sessions. I think it is because it's the only time she has me all to herself. She is more confident, tells me what to do and takes control!"

Outcomes

Developmental Movement Play

ENVIRONMENTS, RESOURCES, EXPERIENCES



"I was going to say we have a lot more tolerance, but it wasn't that we were intolerant before... it was ... just that we looked on movement play as a 'take it outside' kind of thing."

Environments

Indoor Movement Areas

Creation of an indoor movement to support child-led movement play was a consistent feature across both research groups

- 25 of the 26 research settings created new indoor movement areas for child-led, spontaneous movement play
- 8 settings offered this as part of continuous provision (3 in Cycle One and 5 in Cycle Two)
- 5 Cycle One settings set aside rooms for movement play
- 7 Cycle Two settings created more than one movement area within their organisation
- The one setting which did not create an indoor movement area was a Cycle One setting where a JABADAO practitioner led the work through weekly visits. No

setting practitioners took the DMP course and the work did not embed in the same way

- The nature of the indoor movement areas varied greatly to suit each setting. Some created elaborate areas with drapes and specialist resources. Others simply put out a dedicated mat. Some were able to provide rooms - others a small space in the corner of a room. Each created guidance, often involving the children in its creation, to support safe, child-led movement

More movement play indoors

Both research groups have increased the amount of movement play taking place indoors

- Cycle One partners reported on many ways in which they began to support children's movement play indoors - not only in organised activities, but also as part of everyday routines (nappy changing, moving about the setting, mirroring and movement conversations)
- We asked Cycle Two partners to quantify the balance of indoor and outdoor activity. They reported a shift from 35% to 60% indoor movement play over the course of the project, including provision of a movement area, activity within large group activity small group and one-to-one work

Fewer tables, more floor space

Both research groups have changed the way they used the indoor environment - to make more space for movement play and to encourage children to be on the floor

- 20 of the 26 research partner settings got rid of tables to make more space for movement
- 22 settings moved activities off tables and onto the floor, to provide more opportunity for children to be involved in developmentally significant movement on the backs, tummies, pushing up, bellycrawling and crawling

Changes in outdoor provision

There was a marked increase in consideration of the way the outdoor space can support a DMP approach in Cycle Two

- Only 3 settings in Cycle One considered ways to develop DMP approach in the outdoor space, compared with all 12 of the Cycle Two partners. We believe this reflects a greater emphasis on outdoor play within the taught DMP course, a particular interest amongst some of the group members and a different approach to the outdoor space within early years guidance and policy
- 1 Cycle Two research partner expressed increased anxiety about movement play outdoors. This appears to have followed a general increase in all kinds of movement outdoors, and the need to ensure children's safety as new guidelines are established

Resources

New resources for indoor movement

Centres have acquired new resources for both the indoor and outdoor environment

- 25 of the 26 settings acquired new resources to support DMP, especially for indoor movement play and the movement areas
- These resources were often small and inexpensive
- The one setting which did not report any new resources was supported by a JABADAO specialist, who took in equipment for weekly movement play sessions, rather than newly trained settings practitioners. This setting already had a magnificent outdoor area full of excellent resources to support movement

New outdoor resources

Some settings have acquired new outdoor play equipment

- Settings in both research groups used the DMP five-ways framework to help them audit and reassess the resources in their setting. Some then used the information they gained to prioritise the purchase of new equipment that would enable children to move in significant ways not currently open to them



Better use of existing resources

Settings in both groups are now using existing resources in new ways

With new understanding about links between particular kinds of movement, development and learning, practitioners found they now knew how to use pieces of equipment that were stored in cupboard unused

Experiences

Practitioners give different messages about the value of spontaneous movement

- Children received new messages from adults about their spontaneous movement play, and about their physicality, and as a result engage more in movement of their choosing, rather than movement directed by adults

More child-led movement opportunities

Children have increased opportunities for spontaneous movement play

- In both research groups, practitioners value and support more child-led movement play
- At the start, Cycle One research partners talked about adult-led activities at Network Days; Cycle Two described many adult-led movement activities. As the project progressed both groups spoke more about child-led activities, related stories of moving with children where the movement is initiated by the child, and showed videos and photos of themselves working in an entirely child-led way
- Both groups have a clearer understanding of the difference between adult-led or adult-initiated and child-led or child-initiated movement play activities

More adult-led and adult-initiated movement activities

Practitioners are also organising more adult-led and adult-initiated activities

- Throughout, 19 out of 26 settings continued to offer adult-led movement activities alongside the new child-led opportunities. Many said they wanted to continue to increased these adult-led and adult-initiated activities alongside increased child-led movement play

Enhanced practitioner-child relationship

Practitioners are being more physical themselves and joining in more with children's movement play

- In both research groups partners say that their increased confidence with spontaneous movement makes a positive difference to their interactions with children. They model more movement play, join in children's movement play more and say that children ask them to join in their movement play now that they know their spontaneous play is valued



Outcomes

Developmental Movement Play

PARENTS AS PARTNERS



“At movement play sessions I can feel like a parent and just focus on that and drop my other roles for a while... ”

Involving parents

Both research groups valued the involvement of parents in movement play activities and used many methods to engage their interest

- Both research groups said that their increased knowledge about the significance of movement play enabled them to engage parents in new conversations about their children’s movement
- Just over 40% of settings in each group created leaflets about movement play for parents
- 11 settings in each group created displays about movement play for parents, (Cycle One partners used the JABADAO posters and Cycle Two created their own), and 6 also put out the ‘beautiful books’ they made as part of this project for parents to see
- 20 settings displayed photos of movement play
- 5 settings provided Family Bags of props to support movement play at home
- 2 Cycle One settings provided movement play sessions in the home

Cycle One settings organised more family sessions than Cycle Two

- 9 Cycle One settings organised movement play sessions for parents and children together, compared with 4 Cycle Two settings
- Even though there was an increased emphasis on involving parents within early years policy by Cycle Two, the practitioners organised fewer family sessions

In the project work that has run alongside the later stages of the action research cycles, working with families has become a priority for the settings and the local authorities involved. Practitioners in these projects have expressed the need for the greatest levels of specialist support in setting up this aspect of the DMP work.



Outcomes

Developmental Movement Play

CHANGING PRACTICE: PLANNING AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



“We can see that the children are really good at creating their own games, working together and keeping themselves safe even though they are so young.”

DMP is embedded, in different ways, within the curriculum and planning of all the partner settings

- All research partners spoke about new movement activities being an important aspect of their curriculum now, with movement work routinely embedded within their planning. Some have created special planning sheets for the purpose
- Planning includes both continuous provision, small group work and one to one activities
- All settings use more movement observation and use these to inform planning
- Some Cycle One settings made explicit links with the Birth to Three Matters and Foundation Stage curriculum; all Cycle Two settings linked DMP with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements
- The Cycle One special school setting spoke about gaining the confidence to include this kind of movement assessment in IEPs and planning for two hours a week of activity now. The Cycle Two special school now timetables DMP sessions and estimates that one group of children are now involved in an additional 3 hours and 20 minutes of movement activity as a result
- Some managers and heads are involved in planning alongside practitioners and teachers

Impact

Developmental Movement Play

CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



"I am conscious that we didn't do enough before DMP. We provide more opportunities and encouragement now"

Children's involvement in physical activity

All 26 settings reported that children were involved in more physical activity as a result of embedding a DMP approach

- Both Cycle One and Cycle Two research partners felt that there had been a marked increase. This increased quantity varies considerably depending on the nature of the provision and the way that new opportunities are offered
- Alongside an increase through child-led activity, there was also an increase in adult-led activity and some settings felt they wanted to increase this still further
- A different awareness about movement amongst research partners - and the colleagues they have involved - has been a major cause of the increase

The movement children choose

Given expanded opportunities to follow their own movement choices, two kinds of movement play stand out across both cycles

Developmental Movement Play suggests that certain kinds of movement, within the totality of spontaneous movement play, are significant for learning and development. We asked research partners to note the kinds of movement children choose when they are given new opportunities. Cycle One used two detailed

checklists to support their observations. The five ways of moving were included amongst many other sensory motor possibilities. Cycle Two partners only observed engagement in the five ways. Further evidence has been gathered anecdotally from course participants.

- In both Cycle One and Cycle 2 the highest level of engagement was ‘spin-tip-roll-fall’ play and ‘push-pull-stretch-hang-buffet about’ came second
- We asked Cycle 2 partners also to monitor level of involvement in addition to frequency of engagement. Again, children showed highest involvement in ‘spin-tip-roll-fall’ play; with ‘push-pull-stretch-hang-buffet about’ play coming second

Children engaged in bellycrawling much less than the other aspects of the five-ways framework

- There was markedly less engagement in bellycrawling in both research groups.
- In Cycle One, active support for bellycrawling didn’t make a significant difference to the amount of bellycrawling children engaged in
- However, in Cycle Two, bellycrawling increased by 34.8% with active support for movement play

Engagement in movement play	Cycle One		Cycle Two	
	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement	Involvement
Numbers indicate highest (1) to lowest (5)				
Floorplay: back	5	5	5	5
Floorplay: tummy	4	4	4	3
Bellycrawl	6	6	6	6
Crawl	3	3	3	4
Push-pull-stretch-hang	2	2	2	2
Spin-tip-roll-fall	1	1	1	1

Impact

Developmental Movement Play

CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



“By the year-end I was thrilled by the academic progress my class had made. More than half of my class began Year 1 working below the expected levels for their age in both literacy and maths. By the end of the year over half of them were working at either age-appropriate or more than age-appropriate levels. It is impossible to say that this progress was purely due to DMP. However, if nothing else it certainly showed that allowing noisy boisterous DMP in the classroom hadn't prevented learning from taking place – which is so often a concern with movement play.”

92 Case Studies

The evidence of impact on learning and development is taken from the 92 case studies created by research partners across both research groups and from action research projects carried out by Cycle Two partners. (The themes are closely echoed by the 400 action research projects - and considerable anecdotal evidence - we have from DMP course participants.)

Although we urged research partners to make random choices about which children to choose for case studies, in practice they were keen to pursue particular areas of interest. Although these will have been varied, it is notable that there are many more case studies on boys across the two research groups.

	0-2	2.1-3	3.1-4	4.1-5	6+	TOTAL	
Cycle One	13	16	7	9	5	50	30 boys 20 girls
Cycle Two	9	6	9	13	5	42	34 boys 8 girls
TOTAL	22	22	16	22	10	92	64 boys 28 girls

Cycle One (50 case studies)

Cycle One research partners were asked to comment on Learning and Development in four broad categories - physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Their evidence was returned in report form and gathered in structured interviews.

Children create many opportunities for social and emotional learning in movement play

Cycle One research partners observed that DMP had a substantial impact on Social and Emotional learning. This is mirrored in the action research projects undertaken by DMP course participants and within the Cornwall and Kirklees projects:

- **Social:** research partners observed the value of movement play as a means by which children build and maintain relationships. They noted a big difference in social involvement for the youngest children and for children with autism
- **Emotional:** they noted increased self-confidence, with enhanced language development often cited as an example. They also noted the benefit in children's ability to express themselves, including those with English as a second language or who experience difficulties with spoken language
- **Cognitive:** research partners returned little specific evidence due to the young age group of the children and a different emphasis in the learning environment. However, they expressed a shared and emphatic general belief that increased confidence had supported all-round learning and development
- **Physical:** Not all Cycle One research partners commented on physical development as, with a new understanding of the significance of movement play for other kinds of learning, they wanted to focus on those instead - increased physical confidence, repertoire of movement, willingness to try new things, fun. They noted that most young children have a natural inclination to assess risk for themselves - with some notable exceptions

Opportunities to engage in child-led movement play creates independent learners

- **Readiness for Learning:** one case study - following a group of children from nursery to school - compared scores with the previous year's cohort, a similar

mix of children. The Reception teacher asked the Children's Centre 'what they had done differently' as this group showed enhanced scores in almost every area, plus a greater capacity for independent learning.

- The Cycle One school setting involved through an extended project also commented clearly on increased capacity for independent learning. Although neither had specific evidence, both settings attributed this to the introduction of Developmental Movement Play into their curriculum

Cycle Two (42 case studies)

We asked Cycle Two partners to link their observations and comments to the six areas of the Foundation Stage guidance - Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Communication, Language and Literacy; Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; Creative Development. Evidence was gathered using report sheets which rounded up levels of involvement for each child in number scores - with added notes. A five-point scale of involvement was used. (Chart on page 43 refers to this number scale.)

- **Level 1:** very little involvement
- **Level 2:** many interruptions
- **Level 3:** lacking concentration, motivation and pleasure in the activity. In many cases the child is functioning at a routine level.
- **Level 4:** moments of intense involvement
- **Level 5:** totally absorbed

In both Cycles, research partners were invited to create a snapshot of each child's engagement and involvement. We acknowledged the broad brush approach. *'The core of the rating process consists of an act of empathy in which the observer has to get into the experience of the child, in a sense has to become the child. This gives the information to draw conclusions...'* (Laevers) concerning the physical and mental activity of the child and the intensity of their experience.



Movement play supports involvement in four of the six areas of learning, to an equal degree as other curriculum activities

The data collected on involvement in learning and development in each of the six learning shows similar levels in each area, with the exception of Creative Development (5.45% increase) and Knowledge and Understanding of the World (12.9% less involvement). This does not match the research partners feelings and they were very surprised to see the results.

Research partners involved in a group review of the data felt that it did not reveal the substantial impact they had seen on children's involvement in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy. They felt that the tool we used to gather evidence had not captured the benefits they had observed. There was no clear, discernible reason why the data did not match - but either a larger study is needed to overcome this, or a different approach needs to be taken.

Children learn just as well - and are happier - when adults control their bodies less

- Children become more physically confident
- Research partners report that, when children are free to arrange their bodies as they wish in story time, rather than 'sit up, sit still' they focus just as well and there are fewer disruptions from children who find it a challenge to sit still
- Research partners reported that children would rather be on the floor than at tables for many activities; and that children focus better and are more involved in their learning when they are on the floor



- One research partner (and other settings when they heard about it) put paper on the underside of tables and provided mark making equipment so that children could lie underneath on their backs. This was very popular with the children

The following chart shows:

- Column 2: the average level of involvement in the 6 areas of learning in activities other than movement play
- Column 3: the average level of involvement in the 6 areas of learning, in movement play
- Column 4: The percentage difference in the level 4 and 5 scores (the highest involvement) in movement play

Cycle Two Learning and Development Evidence			
Learning and Development	Average Involvement level out of 5 in General Activity	Average involvement level out of 5 in Movement Play	% difference in 'high' or 'extremely high' scores
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	3.3	3.3	-1.1%
Communication, Language and Literacy	3.02	3.07	15.78%
Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy	2.64	2.61	20%
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	2.95	2.6	-35%
Physical Development	3.45	3.5	-3.7%
Creative Development	2.6	2.8	23%

Impact

Developmental Movement Play

CHILDREN'S WELLBEING



“Observing children over a period has been a true pleasure and to see children move freely and with confidence is a joy.”

Only Cycle Two research partners returned evidence specifically on wellbeing. This element was added in the review between the research cycles.

The evidence of impact on wellbeing is also taken from the 42 case studies. Again, research partners used the Laevers Wellbeing Scale to focus observations in both general situations and when they were specifically engaged in movement play.

A 5 point scale of involvement was used:

- **Level 1: extremely low:** tense, shows emotional discomfort, aggressive / walked over
- **Level 2: low:** often show signs of tension, emotional discomfort, aggression or lack of assertiveness. These alternate with more moments of more positive wellbeing
- **Level 3: fluctuating or neutral:** seem ‘quite’ happy; signs of wellbeing. Relatively energetic and enthusiastic. But we miss concentration, motivation and pleasure in the activity. In many cases the child is functioning at a routine level.
- **Level 4: high:** High level of wellbeing. Look happy, occasional signs of discomfort.
- **Level 5: extremely high:** ‘Fish in water’. Thoroughly enjoy themselves. Rarely show emotional discomfort.

Children show higher levels of wellbeing in all areas when they are involved in movement play

- Research partners recorded a higher level of wellbeing in movement play in each of the seven areas (see column 1 below)
- The averaged percentage increase for each child is modest, but consistent
- The greatest increase is in Vitality. This scores lowest in general observation and highest in movement play

Cycle Two			
	1	2	4
Wellbeing Indicator	Average out of 5 General Activity	Average out of 5 in Movement Play	% increase in 'high' or 'extremely high' scores
Vitality	2.6	3.5	10%
Enjoyment without constraints	3.2	3.5	28%
Openness and receptivity to others and the environment	3.2	3.2	13%
Flexibility	3	3.1	29%
Self-confidence and self esteem	3	3.1	50%
Relaxation and inner peace	2.7	2.9	38%
Being in touch with oneself	2.5	2.9	78%

This data was presented to the research partner group at the end of the project. They stated that they felt this accurately reflected their sense of the impact of movement play on children's wellbeing, especially the two highest scores - self-confidence and self-esteem and being in touch with oneself.

In movement play, there is a substantial increase in level 4 and 5 scores, 'high' and 'extremely high'

- Of most significance is the percentage increase in scores which rise from a fluctuating or level score, to a high or extremely high score
- The three areas of wellbeing which score lowest in general observations, show the largest percentage increase in movement play - being in touch with oneself (78% increase), relaxation and inner peace, (38% increase) and self-confidence and self-esteem (50% increase)

The atmosphere in the classroom / setting is calmer when children have access to a free choice movement area for at least some of the time

- Research partners who were anxious that the inclusion of a movement play area in their classroom might cause disruption, undertook action research projects to test the effect
- In each case, they concluded that the classroom / setting was calmer when children's spontaneous movement was actively valued and they were able to access a movement play area for some portion of the week

There are fewer accidents when children have expanded opportunities for child-led movement play from an early age

- Research partners were very alert to the possibility of an increase in physical accidents if children were involved in more child-led activity. Their experience was the opposite - they reported fewer accidents as children became more skilled at risk-assessing for themselves through increased practice
- Developmental movement theory also suggests that involvement in the five ways of moving framework actively helps the brain and nervous system to create connections that will give good feedback of pain, a felt sense of the position of the body and a sense of relationship to gravity and the ground - all these underpin the ability to assess risk

Conclusions

Developmental Movement Play

LEARNING FROM THE EVIDENCE



DMP supports real and lasting change

Tested over a ten-year period, the DMP approach and accompanying training has proved highly successful in increasing practitioners' confidence in supporting spontaneous movement play and in changing the opportunities that children have to be more fully physical in their everyday lives. The training is also highly popular with practitioners who attend.

Its success is based on four integral factors:

It offers insight and theory about the 'why' of movement, rather than a programme of activities that address 'how' to engage children in movement

Beyond the insight and theory, it helps adults to change the way they feel about their own involvement in spontaneous movement activities. This is the single most significant factor

It establishes different values around the body and movement, introduced by dancers, rather than educationalists with an interest, or experience, in movement

It is based on child-led movement and outlines a new role for adults

Babies' and young children's wellbeing is substantially enhanced by allowing them to be more fully physical in their everyday life

When children are able to move as they learn, they are 'fish in water'. The body is our first home; movement is our first language - yet this is underrepresented in the early years curriculum and poorly supported in the indoor built environment

Children are biologically driven to move in certain ways. Adults often stop them. When we change this, children's capacity to be in touch with themselves rises dramatically, as does their self confidence and self esteem and their ability and desire to communicate.

To ignore what children are telling us they need (in their bodies) reduces their wellbeing, learning and development. We do children a significant disservice when we sideline their capacity to learn and communicate in their bodies.

Babies and young children need to learn and develop *on the move*. This needs to be better acknowledged and supported

Developmental movement theory suggests that children need to learn on the move. Research partners' observations bear this out - they note that children seek to move a great deal. They observe involvement in all six areas of the EYFS as children engage in movement play of their own choice.

Research partners have substantial anecdotal and case study evidence of enhanced learning - especially in PSE and CLLD.

Including movement play in the indoor environment reduces disruptive behaviour and accidents

Concerns about health and safety and classroom management are not automatic reasons to limit spontaneous movement in the indoor environment. The evidence shows that:

- Children are able to focus better on other activities when spontaneous movement play is valued and they have some opportunities to move freely within in the setting and curriculum
- Children have fewer accidents when they have expanded opportunities for spontaneous movement play from a young age and are supported to risk assess for themselves
- Some children needs extra support with risk assessment. Adults need to know which children are not well equipped to risk assess for themselves and provide different support

Effective and sustained change for children

DMP is most effective in settings which understand that this approach is about culture change, not things to do for the Physical Development area of learning. When settings embrace DMP in this way, it not only involves children in more physical activity, but also builds foundations for their lifelong wellbeing and learning.

Embedded sustained change is most effective when practitioners working within the setting take responsibility for effecting change. Specialist dancers have an ongoing support role, not a primary role.

Where commitment is present at manager level, *from the start and throughout*, the subsequent informed support for practitioners plays a key role in the development of sustained new opportunities for children.

Practice changes faster and with greater depth when there are more trained early years practitioners in a setting.

Children's movement play is better supported when the whole staff team are knowledgeable about the theory and practice of DMP.

Opportunities for involvement in movement play improve when practitioners are able to share practice, concerns and ideas with each other, advisors and, especially, specialist dancers.

Involving families

Families are essential partners in change. DMP contains many new ideas about how movement supports learning and development. When parents understand these ideas they are generally extremely supportive and open to change at home as well as at settings.

Where they are unaware of 'new' ideas about the links between movement play and specific and tangible aspects of their child's learning and development, their resistance makes it harder for practitioners to embed change in settings. ('Why is my child rolling around on the floor when they could be learning properly'.)

The ability to articulate the principles and practice of DMP in simple, accessible ways to parents, is a core skill for early years practitioners and settings adopting a DMP approach. A good range of resources needs to be available to support them if this is to happen more widely, in a consistent way.

All settings were keen to involve parents. However, organising family groups - for those whose core work lies elsewhere - is the most demanding aspect of this approach and requires the most support from specialist dancers. The development of this aspect of the work requires careful consideration.

Training

The potential of the DMP course lies in its potential to change the culture within settings around children's physicality. This has major ramifications, not only for children in settings, but also for our culture as a whole and government aspirational targets for involvement in physical activity.

The success of this lies not in what we understand, but what we do - ie new ways of valuing and supporting the body and movement.

Led by dancers

This is only achieved if DMP is taught by dancers who can model a high level of comfort with spontaneous movement and offer wide experience of embodied developmental movement. They must also be able to engage participants who carry differing levels of discomfort with spontaneous movement in themselves. These should be recognised as specialists skills and an ongoing and productive partnership, (between dancers and the early years sector), nurtured to build upon this effective approach.

Investment

The training needs to be substantial in order to achieve change in attitude and the development of skills.

Training for teams

It is not sufficient to train one, or even two members of an early years team and expect the others to pick it up by osmosis. To make real and lasting change, training needs to be team-wide.

Quality Assurance

Since the DMP approach includes ideas about movement and development which are new to settings, a quality assurance pack is essential a) to provide guidance for practitioners who have trained and b) to enable managers to support these practitioners to develop quality practice.

The QA pack that has been tested in the last year of this research project forms the basis of this measure. Research partners have also asked for a national programme of Continuing Professional Development.

Quality will be undermined if the DMP approach develops in an ad hoc way, with no consistent training programme, CPD or shared understanding of quality practice.

Things which threaten the effective development of the DMP approach as an agent for change

Lack of funding: there is considerable pressure from settings to reduce the length - and therefore the cost - of the DMP course. However, a reduced course cannot encompass both the theory (necessary for new insight and understanding) and new movement practice (the aspect underpinning long term change for children). A shorter course is likely to reduce the very things that have made this approach successful.

Cascade training: practitioners are often under considerable pressure to pass on their new understanding and skill to colleagues. All agree, once they have attended, that this approach is too complex to pass on effectively in cascade training. The practice continues, however, and this is already having a substantial watering-down effect on the practice, quality and effectiveness

Advisors role: understandably, experienced early years advisors who appreciate the principles of DMP, often want to do the training in order to pass on what they learn to the settings they support. Whereas we appreciate that this would be very cost effective, experience tells us that the initial training must come from dancers with specialist skills in the core movement practice - with advisors trained to provide support to trained practitioners. This model has been tested working alongside the Peterborough Early Years Team and provides for the best long term development. Where this model is not used, we see new practice quickly becoming adult-led and programme based, (not DMP), undermining the value of the approach.

Pick and mix usage undermining the key principles of the work: there is considerable enthusiasm for many aspects of the DMP approach. However, despite the clearly stated principles, some settings implement it as a programme - offering activities which involve children solely within existing adult-led practices. As it is 'easier' to use the material in this way - without the need for real change within an organisation - this is likely to continue.

Lack of clarity as parallel approaches develop: there are an increasing number of movement approaches which draw on aspects of the same developmental movement theory as DMP. Some have been directly influenced by it; others have grown up in parallel. As the number grows - as it surely will - it is important that each approach identifies itself clearly, so that a) practitioners are clear about the approaches they are using and b) we are all clear where innovation provides more - or less - effective outcomes and impact.



Recommendations

Developmental Movement Play

ACTING ON THIS RESEARCH



A group of holiday makers from across Europe are sitting round the pool getting to know each other. "Ola! I'm Alvaro from Spain." says one. "Zdravo! I'm Dinka from Bosnia," says another. "And I'm Darren from England," chips in the lad on the end and they all turn to him. "We know" they say, "we've seen you dance."

All human beings are dancers ... we naturally yearn to respond to the things that happen to us in our bodies as well as in our heads. But in English society, somewhere between birth and eight, most children stop making a fully physical response. Why?

- Adults restrict babies' and children's movement in many ways, and give subtle and unconscious messages about what is and isn't valued, even though the evidence shows that movement is vital for lifelong, health, wellbeing, learning and development
- Adults stop children from moving as they are naturally prompted to do - and then tell them how to move instead

The Developmental Movement Play approach has been created by early years practitioners working in partnership with specialist dancers. It has proved itself as a means to bring about substantial, positive change for children, families and those who work with them. It is a simple, practical approach that can be adopted within many contexts.

The Wellbeing Agenda

- Children's natural ability to embody their lives and their learning is often ignored in this culture, but their wellbeing - and that of their families and those who work with them - can be substantially enhanced by acknowledging the significance of spontaneous movement play - and including more within family, learning and health activities

Early years guidance: learning and development

- Dancers know how to meet and maintain children's full-bodied, wholehearted physicality. An ongoing partnership is needed between specialist dancers and the early years sector, to develop and spread new understanding about the significance of spontaneous, child-led movement play and how to work with it
- Parent's role is key. Targeted project work is needed to develop more family involvement
- Long term, in-depth case studies are needed to provide detailed evidence about the impact of DMP on learning and development

The Physical Activity agenda

- Policies that aim to increase involvement in physical activity as part of everyday life need to start by addressing the subtle and unconscious negative messages children receive about their physicality from adults - and the reasons for it.
- DMP provides an evidence-based and successful means to address these issues, changing the way children's full-bodied, wholehearted physicality is valued - and growing a different attitude to lifelong involvement in physical activity

Health and safety and safeguarding agenda

- Ongoing data collection and debate is needed to highlight the ways in which increased involvement in child-led movement play can reduce, rather than increase, accidents, and increase children's confidence and ability to protect themselves in many ways

Dance and arts policy

- The Arts Council has a significant role to play in helping to grow and develop a future, strategic long-term partnership in which dancers use their specialist skills to put dance at the heart of young children's and families' everyday life, in ways that 'change lives'
- As the largest piece of collaborative research ever carried out by dancers, we offer this as a flagship, project, celebrating the powerful effect dance can have on people's lives, celebrating our capacity to communicate through movement and contributing to understanding about the health of individuals and communities.

Multi-agency working

- Specialist dancers have a unique and effective contribution to make to multi-agency working within the Every Child Matters: change for children agenda
- DMP provides a simple framework that can unify a range of practitioners - early years practitioners, teachers, therapists and families - all of whom have children's best interests at heart

Project Team

Developmental Movement Play

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