Ideas for Gross Motor Play

Early Years

Gross motor skills refer to the ability to coordinate and control the large muscles of the body in order to walk, jump, run, climb, and catch a ball. It includes posture, balance and coordination. Here are some fun play ideas for gross motor skills:

❖ Challenge balance – walking on a balance beam/narrow chalk line, standing on one foot, climbing, bike riding
❖ Jumping activities including hopping on one foot, jumping on two feet (on the spot, forward and over objects), galloping, skipping, jumping jacks, hopscotch, jump rope
❖ Activities such as swimming, yoga, gymnastics, dance, martial arts
❖ Clapping and/or beating a drum to a steady rhythmical beat
❖ Holding positions 10-20 seconds at a time (frozen tag, mirroring positions, Simon Says, yoga poses)
❖ Incorporate heavy work activities throughout the day such as: carrying large books, washing windows or walls, stacking chairs, wheelbarrow walks, push-ups (wall, desk, chair), climbing on outdoor play equipment in your yard, pulling weeds, shoveling, playing in the snow/“angels in the snow”, carrying groceries, playing tug-of-war
❖ Floor activities such as crawling or lying on tummy (propped up on elbows) to read a book, do puzzles or watch TV. This is a great way to build shoulder and back strength
❖ Obstacle courses including crawling over or under things, hopping, jumping, rolling, walking on balance beams, etc.
❖ Working on vertical surfaces such as at an easel or on the wall helps to strengthen the shoulder and arm; it is a great way to work on handwriting skills
❖ Try movement songs and games: Hokey Pokey, Bird Dance, Follow the Leader, Simon Says, Twister, animal walks (ie: bear, seal, bunny, crab, duck, inchworm, etc.), wheelbarrow walks, three-legged races, sack races, music videos, etc.
❖ Ball games – throwing, catching, kicking different size balls; throwing and catching bean bags

These activities are meant to give you play ideas. Remember, you know your child best; you can also use similar activities that your child enjoys. Be safe and have fun!

Prairie Spirit School Division Occupational Therapists

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