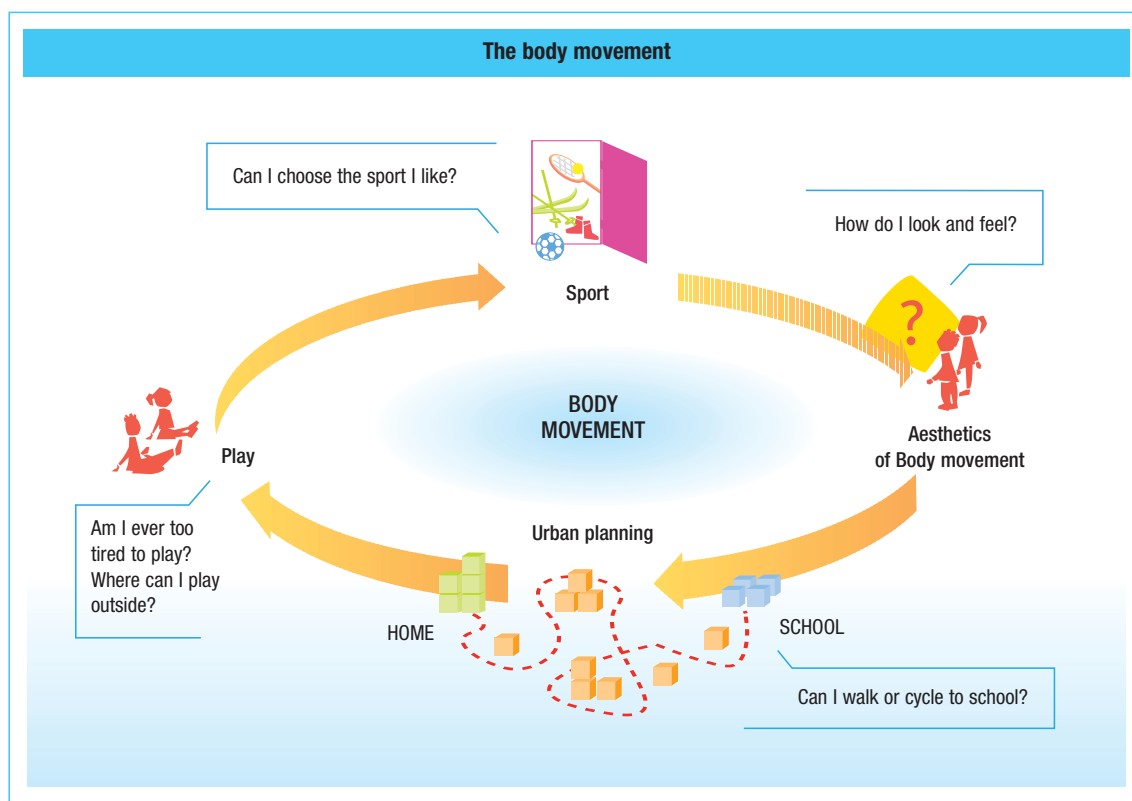




Body Movement

An approach to healthy and balanced physical activity emphasises several dimensions of body movement, including play, aesthetics/self-image and urban planning, in addition to sports and planned exercise. It embraces all areas of physical functioning in the everyday life of children and young people: areas that are appealing to them without being considered unattractive, as is often the case with planned and structured exercise. These everyday activities include walking, cycling, dancing, climbing up the stairs, rollerblading, skateboarding, helping around the home, running, playing (jumping, pulling and pushing, stretching and bending), etc.

The following model gives a frame for children's reflection on their body and bodymovement:



This broad perspective on physical activity allows for reflection and discussion with children and young people about a number of factors that encourage or restrict freedom of movement and mobility in their everyday life.

Further, the action orientation of the Shape Up approach, as discussed previously, implies engaging children and young people in initiating positive changes that enhance the opportunities for physical activity in many areas of their everyday life at school, in the local community, city and society as a whole.

The areas for change, as the example below indicates, are vast. The following are just a few potential fields for change:

- active and safe transport to and from school
- bicycle paths and parking facilities around the school
- outdoor playgrounds encouraging independent, creative and spontaneous play and physical activity by children, in the local community and throughout the city
- active parks, streets, neighbourhoods allowing for spatial mobility

Let the children explore the fields for change - and let them find other fields, themselves.

Talk about the differences between their own challenges and those of children in other areas or in other countries. Use a twinning school for exchange of opinions and ideas among the children in your and the other school.

Opportunities for physical activity

- In the countries of the European Union, approximately 80% of the population lives in urban environments, where the opportunities for independent mobility for children and young people are restricted. The development of the city environments is dictated by the needs, priorities and habits of adults; that is, car-using adults. Research has shown that, when involved genuinely, children and young people have a lot to say and do about this. A survey carried out in the UK by the city of York, for example, revealed a number of interesting findings. 15,500 primary school children were involved in the survey. The study showed that 34% of pupils in primary education are taken to school by car, but barely 15% appreciate this mode of transport. In total, 40% of the pupils would like to go to school by bicycle, but only 3% actually do so.

Kids on the move, European Communities, 2002: 12.



Children's ideas

What about physical activity?

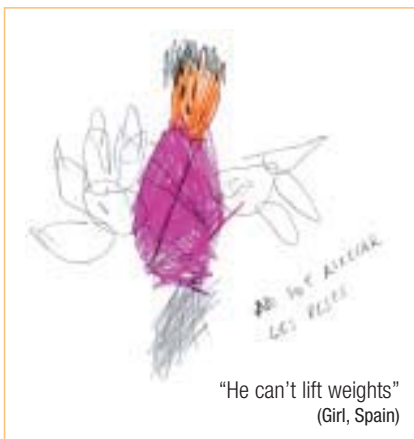


Body movement and safety

"I walk and go by bike, but when it's dark and I eat at someone else's place, then my mum and dad prefer to come and pick me up, as they don't want me to walk home in the dark..."

(Boy, Denmark)

"Handball/swimming/badminton/disco."
(Girl, Denmark)



"He can't lift weights"
(Girl, Spain)

Physical education classes, participation and choice

"It depends who you have and which teacher, and the intention the teacher has. If the teacher says you have to do 40 push-ups etc., then you don't feel like listening to him. I injured my knee today, so I can't participate."

(Girl, Denmark)

"Actually, I think that your body tells you that you feel good, because you feel really great after you have been doing something, especially if it's something that was a bit hard to do."

(Girl, Denmark)

Children's ideas/What about physical activity?

Body image

"Well, it's not something that I get obsessed about... Because everyone wants to be thin, everyone wants to be perfect, all the girls want to be pretty... I like to look after myself... but because I want to, not because they tell me to, or because I turn on the TV and it tells me to do so..."

(Girl, Spain)

"If you see some of those TV programmes, such as Life is Fat, Merete's Stomach, and all that, you don't really feel like weighing 160 kilos and destroying your back. When you are 25 years old, you think about what you'll look like in 10 years, right?"

(Boy, Denmark)

Possibilities for physical activity

"In my neighbourhood, there's nowhere to play sports, but in other neighbourhoods there are other places to play sport, like in the town swimming pool of Mataró."

(Girl, Spain)

Physical activity and quality of life

"You have to look after yourself; if you don't, it will take more out of you and, when you do things, you won't be able to do what you like, what you like to do, or I don't know, you have to do sport... That's it!"

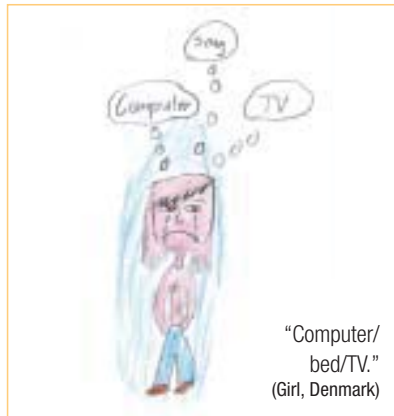
(Girl, Spain)

"[...] It's not that cool to do something just to take care of your body; it has to be something you think is exciting, or something you have an interest in."

(Girl, Denmark)

"Me... I don't like football or basketball much, but I always go to the park and I stay in the park and I go by bike and I run and we play games, me and my brother... and we do lots of other activities."

(Girl, Spain)



"Computer/bed/TV."
(Girl, Denmark)



"The girl swings."
(Girl, Denmark)

"...there are things to do, there is... there are facilities, there's a football pitch, there's a gym... I don't know, if you venture out a bit then there are things, but you have to move around and find them."

(Girl, Spain)

"Yes, because it's not hard to go; if you don't go by car, it's not hard to go by train to Herlev and then by some bus to Herlev Sports Centre, where you can do what you feel like, which you might not be able to here or in Ballerup."

(Girl, Denmark)

"It's not like this with us, we are almost never outside; we, the bigger ones, we stay indoors, and we are almost never outdoors. We stay indoors and talk and watch movies and things like that..."

(Boy, Denmark)