Transcript: Grounds for Learning - Physical literacy

Narrator: Physical literacy is the ability to move with confidence in a range of physically challenging situations, it involves being able to assess your environment, anticipate movement needs and respond with imagination and intelligence, it includes skills like climbing, jumping, balancing and being able to negotiate uneven terrain.

Outdoor active play is nature’s main way of developing physical literacy. Children commonly spend three to four hours a week in their school playgrounds. With a bit of thought playtimes can have a very significant role in developing physical literacy, complementing and supporting the P.E. curriculum.

Carolyn Paterson, Playground Supervisor: We had an obstacle course that was taking in all the areas over the wee hills and things like that, you know, and the kids really enjoyed it.

Anne Daniels, Playground Supervisor: They never stop running on it , there’s no flat surfaces so they’re up hills, down hills, rolling down the hill, jumping down the steps, it’s just great fun.

Maureen Kidd, Playground Supervisor: They can jump over things, climb on things, the children can play, you know, there’s a troll under the bridge, you know they use the logs for a magic carpet or whatever, there’s just so many things they can do.

Narrator: You can incorporate a range of different features in your play area to support the development of physical literacy, slopes to roll and run on, tunnels to crawl in, trees to climb and jump from, boulders and tree stumps to move around and uneven ground for balancing. Temporary structures like crates and planks can also keep play varied and interesting as well as encouraging creativity and co-operation between groups of children.

Susan Somerville, Playground Supervisor: What is nice about this in the playground is all ages are playing all together, it’s not just one age group so it is a big benefit because they all do get on together.

Narrator: Introducing more adventurous play can increase the risk of accidents so there is a need for careful planning and management.  Many schools use a process called ‘Risk Benefit Assessment’ to guide their planning and to help them balance the need for safety with the childrens’ need for stimulating and exciting play. By and large, initial concerns about an increase in accidents and injuries have proved unfounded.

Carolyn Paterson, Playground Supervisor: First we help them like walk along the logs, the wee ones, when they start we help, we help them to take hands and that and then within days they are more or less running along themselves. There used to be more accidents when they were just in the flat playground, they would trip over nothing but now they’re careful where they put their feet.

Maureen Kidd, Playground Supervisor: The children need to know where the boundaries are to start off with and, at the end of the day, if children do hurt themselves slightly, well, it’s a learning curve and that’s what outside learning is all about, is to find out where the boundaries are.

Anne Daniels, Playground Supervisor: Because they know it is a wee bit risky, you know they tend to sort of be a wee bit more cautious, they learn to sort of self assess risk, life has got risks anyway and it’s nice that they’ve got that chance to work out what they can do and when they do it.

Narrator: It’s helpful to introduce new risk opportunities gradually and in a carefully managed way, observing closely and developing appropriate guidelines as you see how the features are used. It’s also important to work closely with parents, helping them to understand how their children can benefit from appropriate opportunities for risk in play. Overcoming risk can help to build confidence and capacity. Physical literacy isn’t just about having the ability to do these things but also about development and enjoyment about doing these things. It’s a crucial foundation for developing competence across a wide range of sports and for becoming an active and healthy adult.