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A new physical activity and well-being programme for early childhood education

Exploring new means of incorporating physical activity into early childhood education – steps toward a physically active early childhood education

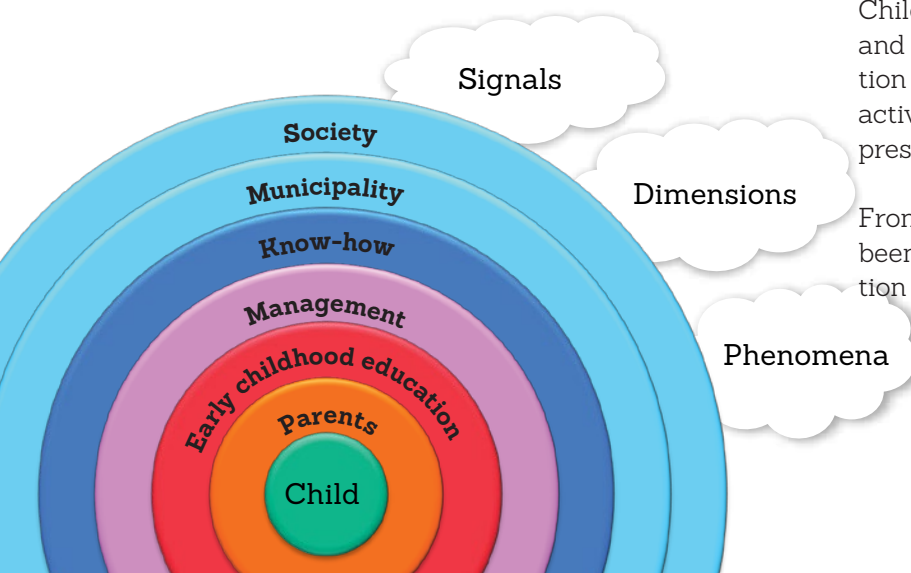
More motion!

The objective of the national Joy in Motion programme is simple: Every child should have the opportunity to partake in and enjoy physical activity and exercise every day.

We know that physical activity is of the utmost importance to a child's health and well-being, as well as for the development of the child's learning capacity and social skills. We also know that sufficient and diverse physical activity is as essential for children as are nutrition and rest. Even though we know these things, our children are not moving enough, contrary to what the majority of adults believe.

Three years of age marks the most crucial phase in terms of establishing a physically active or sedentary lifestyle. The patterns of behaviour and living that are established up until the age of three will stay with us into adulthood. Since the majority of children spend their weekdays in a day-care setting outside the home, early childhood educators play a fundamental role in the child's routines as relates to physical activity.

The Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education (2005) state that each child should get a minimum of two hours of physical activity every day. Currently, children get less than 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity within the day-care setting and nearly two thirds of the day are spent sitting or standing. So we need to get more in motion!



Joy in Motion!

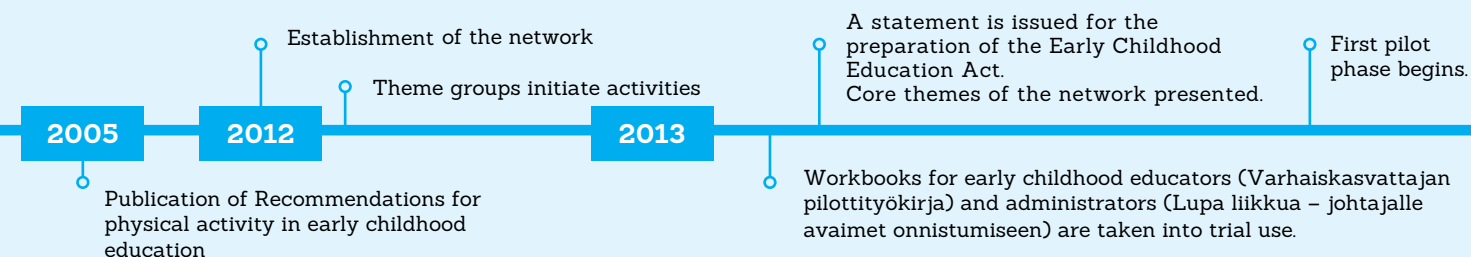
In 2012, we set up a multi-professional network through co-operation with experts and early childhood educators. The objective was to build a physical activity and well-being programme for early childhood education that would be nationwide, pragmatic and easy to implement.

The programme was created by a vast group of skilled professionals with expertise in content, network and development work. The programme has been piloted in hundreds of day-care facilities. All tools have been tried in practice and they have been further developed on the basis of experiences and feedback. Children and parents have been heard throughout the different phases of the work process.

The work of the network is one part of a more extensive national well-being programme. The Joy in Motion programme is designed to be an integral part of the daily routines in early childhood education. Its practical application supports the implementation of the Early Childhood Education and Care plan (VaSu), and the criteria of the Early Childhood Education Act, the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education, and new preschool curriculum.

From the start, the work of the network has been founded on experimentation, collaboration and the joy of success. The idea is embodied in Joy in Motion, the name of the programme published in spring 2015. We are proud of what we have already accomplished and we look forward to the future!

Moving toward big changes one step at a time



Attitude is crucial

All of the adults surrounding a child either promote or limit the child's physical activity. One of the biggest obstacles is the desire of adults to ensure children's safety; children are forbidden to run and climb for fear of injury.

A change in the operational culture calls for an adjustment in attitudes and operational methods. The programme helps us to be able to change our everyday pedagogy and the operational culture in early childhood education as well as to integrate physical activities into all aspects of early childhood education.

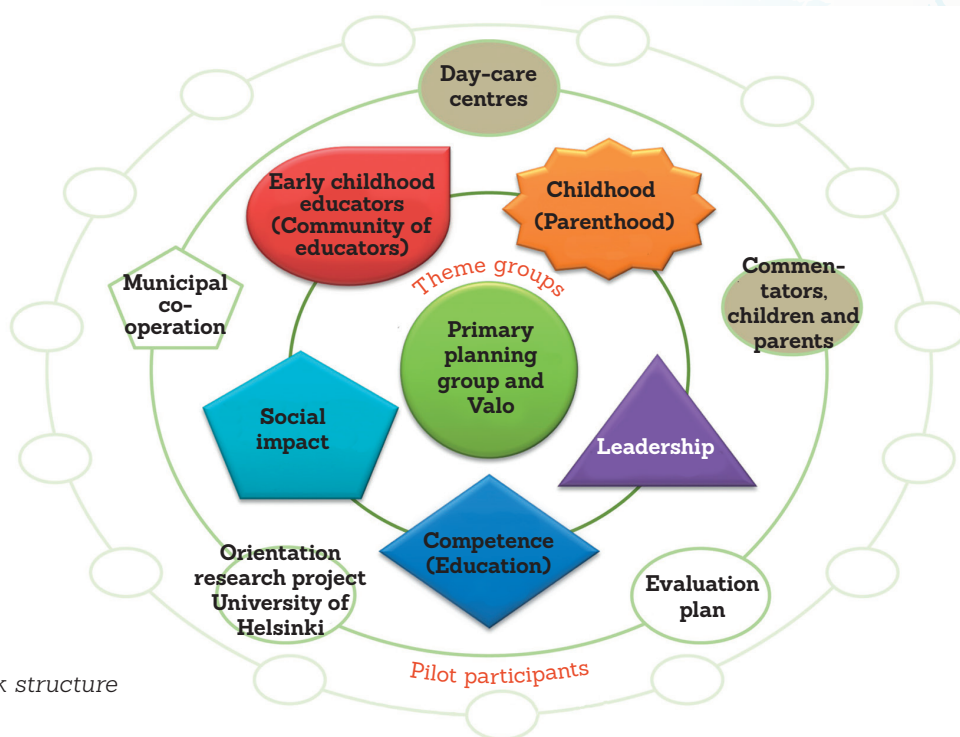
This **national programme** provides, **free of charge**, the practical steps and tools necessary for early childhood educators and administrators to increase physical activity in early childhood education. Progress along the marked path can be made according to each individual unit's timetable, needs and possibilities. It requires collaboration to motivate a more physically active lifestyle, one small step at a time.

Your contribution is important!

In January 2015, there were 15 municipalities (including Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere and Oulu) and about 70 unit level actors involved in the programme's trial phase. The work done to this point has already increased the physical activity of thousands of children.

In order to achieve a more physically active early childhood education throughout Finland, the network needs even more early childhood education actors, influential leaders and decision-makers; in other words, we need activists for change to be engaged in this work.

Join us and let us know what small step you're taking!



Network structure

The programme takes root. 1,000 day-care facilities involved by the end of the year. The network influences the curriculum work for early childhood education.

2014

Second pilot phase begins.

A statement is issued regarding the working group's proposal for the Early Childhood Education Act.

Third pilot phase begins.

2015

Municipal workbook taken into use.

Municipalities, units and other actors involved in the trial phase

5 core themes

The new physical activity and well-being programme for early childhood education is based on five core themes.

1. A child has the right to be physically active and experience joy in motion every day.

Physical activity should be viewed as a means of supporting the development of health and learning in children. It is the basic building block for growth and development, learning capacities and general health.

2. Early childhood educators must provide adequate physical activity to every child, every day.

The task of early childhood education is to teach children to be physically active and to teach them through physical activities. Children must have the right to be, live, act and learn in the manner that is natural for a child.

3. Normative steering is one way to enact a more physically-oriented operational culture within early childhood education.

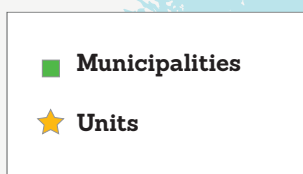
The reformed legislation should highlight the holistic well-being of children as the basic task of early childhood education and include provisions that make it a right for a child to get sufficient playtime and physical activity on a daily basis.

4. Pedagogical competence and leadership must be the focus.

Early childhood education requires responsible, pedagogically trained education professionals who understand what is necessary for the proper growth, development and learning in children.

5. There must be sufficient time and room for physical activities.

A stimulating learning environment that inspires children to move is achieved by ensuring access to indoor and outdoor areas that facilitate physical activities and sufficient basic equipment that is easily accessible to children.



Target: the network is active, and the programme involves all of Finland's municipalities, 3,000 day-care centres and family day-care operations.

2017

2020

Jubilee year: 100th anniversary of independent Finland. Target: regional networks have become established, a total of 1,700 day-care centres are involved in the programme, accumulated research information on children's physical activities supports the integration of the programme.

Independent but not alone

The Joy in Motion programme helps early childhood educators to develop aspects related to children's physical activity independently, but not alone. Concrete tools, network support and regional seminars are offered to assist in realising change. Only the Programme Document has been translated into English:

- **Baby steps (Pienet askeleet).**

- A way of thinking and acting in which large concepts are reduced to small, manageable tasks. The Baby steps tool serves as practical assistance in planning, describing and evaluating measures to be taken, as well as in drawing conclusions and making necessary changes.

- **Workbooks for different actors:**

- Municipal workbook: Kuntatyökirja Ilo kasvaa liikkuen –ohjelman rakentamiseen 2015
- Administrators' workbook: Johtajan työkirja Ilo kasvaa liikkuen –ohjelman mahdollistamiseen 2015
- Early childhood educators' workbook: Varhaiskasvattajan työkirja Ilo kasvaa liikkuen –ohjelman toteuttamiseen 2015

- **Baby steps' guide** (Pienten askelten ideaopas 2014) and report (Raportti pienistä askeleista 2013). The programme can be downloaded (in Finnish) from the website.

- **Programme Document** A document that provides background information, intended particularly for decision-makers, key interest groups, elected officials and administrators on the national level, municipal level and within the field of early childhood education.

- **Programme website (in Finnish)** Support materials and tools to assist in the process of implementing the programme are available online at www.ilokasvaaliikkuen.fi. Participation in the programme requires registration.

- **Joy in Motion seminars** The programme is introduced nationwide at regional seminars and other gatherings around Finland during 2015.



The Programme Document provides the background and the workbooks offer practical support.



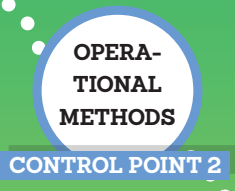
- Children's physical activity is integrated into the day-care routines.
- Personnel are skilled and enthusiastic.
- The Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education are realised within the unit.



- Physical activity is systematic and goal-directed. Included in the ECEC plans of the units and individual groups.
- The Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education are in use in the unit.
- Physical activity is part of the everyday routines.

Programme support materials

- Best practices from the network



- New methods of operation and structures
- Assessment of own work
- Best practices from the network

Programme support materials

- Workbook for early childhood educators
- Workbook for administrators

Orientation materials

- Orientation training on the use of the workbook

- Initial survey and assessment
- Observations
- Commitment of work community
- Enthusiasm

Programme support materials

- Programme Document.
- Municipal workbook
- Campaign materials

Orientation materials

- Orientation training on the use of Baby steps



- Development work in accordance with the unit's own needs and initial situation
- Rapid start-up and trials
- Inclusion of children and increased motion
- Sparring in pairs

Support materials

- Form (Pienet askeleet)

Programme process. The Joy in Motion programme will progress one step at a time, in accordance with the situation and needs of each individual unit. The journey continues even after the last control point: there is always room for further development!

LET'S MAKE IT WORK!

Become part of this important and inspiring programme work!

1

Participate in the Joy in Motion programme: www.ilokasvaaliikkuen.fi
Participation costs you nothing.

2

Gain access to support materials to help develop, plan and evaluate your activities. Become part of the national network.

3

Develop the best operational methods for your own unit and implement the Joy in Motion programme in everyday early childhood education.

More information: www.sport.fi/varhaiskasvatus · nina.korhonen@valo.fi, heli.ketola@valo.fi

Valo is a national physical activity and sports organisation. One of its objectives is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to get excited about physical activity.

Tutkimusmatkalla varhaiskasvatuksen verkosto



Yhteistyössä:
Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö

