



“Children are more aware of their bodies and that it is their job to take care of their bodies through exercise and making their hearts ‘happy’.”

— Linda Groom, Director
Hudson Community Children’s Center, Hudson

It Matters to Parents & Teachers

For Linda Groom, director of Hudson Community Children’s Center, one mother’s letter was a powerful confirmation of the positive impact of the Active Early pilot. The note, handwritten in crayon, expressed her gratitude for the new emphasis on active play and learning. The physical activity time provided her son with autism an appropriate outlet for releasing his energy, allowing him to be more attentive and successful the rest of the day. Academic preparation for school – learning letters and numbers – is often at the forefront of parental concerns when it comes to early childhood care. However, parents may overlook the fact that exercise can complement academic learning rather than displacing it.

Lifelong health became a key focus at the kickoff of the Active Early program in this group center for children age 2-5 in Hudson, WI. Physical activity was deemed an integral component of the daily lesson plans and staff designed innovative ways to include it at any time of year, regardless of the weather. Outdoors, teachers became active role models and playmates rather than standing supervisors. Indoors, paper plates and paper towel rolls became racquets for balloon tennis.

Groom credits the success of Hudson’s Active Early program to the endorsement she received from the center’s teachers. Hearing the shocking statistics on childhood obesity and learning creative ideas for physical activity were particularly motivating for her staff. To provide teachers with additional time to incorporate their new ideas into the lesson plans, Groom personally supported teachers or brought in substitutes.

Now when Groom’s teachers give children time for free play, they can choose to go to a movement center in addition to traditional centers like math, science or music. The new focus on physical activity at Hudson Community Children’s Center is not only making for a quieter story time but is also teaching the next generation how to have healthy hearts and healthy minds. Parents have been eager to share their appreciation in many ways - even in the form of a crayon-written letter.

Why Being Active Early Matters

Establishing healthy habits at an early age is key to promoting life-long health.

Movement benefits children’s:

- Brain development
- Vision and hearing
- Muscle coordination

Activity benefits everyone

Children who are regularly active:

- Have less behavioral problems
- Sleep better at night
- Feel better about themselves
- Are more alert and ready to learn
- Maintain a healthy weight

Early child care providers can improve child health and wellness by establishing policies for the expert recommended 120 minutes of physical activity each day.

The *Active Early* guide gives providers concrete strategies to get kids active.



Active Early

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/Sites/Community/Childcare/index.htm>