**GREAT PROGRAMMING**

***Why can’t we just let them play?***

Children are the essence of play—

imagination personified. The most

creative ideas in the universe are found in

the minds of children. So, quite honestly,

why can’t we simply stock an allocated

space at our facility with some really cool

stuff, and just let them play? ***Because it***

***won’t work.***

Great programs do not just happen.

A truly great program has been carefully

and thoughtfully planned. Naturally, our

desire is to get the kids into our programs,

and keep them coming back. We’ve heard

it before, it’s difficult to sell fitness to

kids; it sounds too much like work! But

children will buy into something that is

fun and exciting, and makes them feel

good about themselves.

By using the word M.O.V.E. as a

mnemonic, consider the following four

reasons why programming is critical to

the success of any youth fitness program:

**Meaningful Moments—**Program-based

activities allow instructors the opportunity

to plan ways to heap on the accolades

and positive reinforcements, as children

play their way to being fit and feeling

great. Look for occasions to make each

child feel lucky that he/she ended up in

your class.

**Shooting Stars**—is a PowerPlay game

aimed at getting kids moving and

bolstering their self esteem. Have the

participants form a big circle. Appoint

one child to start out as “the star” by

placing a large paper star around their

neck. The child then steps into the circle

and begins to move, leading the entire

group in any exercise that “the star”

chooses. You’ll see lots of enthusiasm

because kids love to imitate other kids.

Be there to offer suggestions, if needed,

but allow the children to be creative and

come up with something on their own.

After about 30 to 40 seconds, reward

“the star” with a special sticker and lots

of applause, and have him/her pass the

star to the next happy performer. When

the child receives the sticker, that’s his

cue to pass on the star. If you have

students who are embarrassed to be in

the centre alone, encourage them to

bring a friend along with them.

**Opportunity to Educate**—There are

countless ways to integrate learning skillsinto a movement program. Throw out

little pieces of information in a fun and

non-preachy way like, “Did you know

that your hamstrings give you the

ability to kick yourself in the rear?” Then

have everyone kick themselves accordingly.

Or, “Can you believe it? There’s

not one person on the face of this earth

who can hold in their stomach—really!

Your stomach is an organ, not a muscle,

and you can’t hold in an organ. But you

sure can hold in your abdominal muscles,

which help to protect your stomach. Let’s

all do that right now.” Try tying some

important values together to form a cool

little rap song.

**Rap Tap!**

*Move your body to the beat! (repeat)*

*Clap your hands and stomp your feet!*

*(repeat)*

*On your feet and on the go! (repeat)*

*Don’t be a couch Po-Ta-To! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Lookin’ good and feeling great! (repeat)*

*Must have been something I ate! (repeat)*

*Good food makes me feel so strong! (repeat)*

*Too much junk—my power’s gone! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Smoking isn’t where it’s at! (repeat)*

*And drugs are just a bad rap! (repeat)*

*You con bet that I’m no fool! (repeat)*

*‘Cuz taking care of me is cool! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap! (repeat)*

*Rap Tap.....Rap Tap......Rap Tap.......Rap*

*Tap!*

(Taught to the rhythm and tune of

miliary chant, “Sound Off.” Start the

rhythm step, clap, step, clap, then you

say each line and the class repeats it.)

**Variety** It’s easy to get into a rut, we all

do it, and we all hate when we do. So,

when we’ve entered major “rutmode,” we

sometimes find ourselves becoming a

little too impromptu. Every program

needs an element of surprise, and

although shooting from the hip works at

times, it’s not the most effective way to

run a program. No doubt, you’ll be

receiving some great ideas from your kids

on how to change and rearrange

activities, props, music, etc., and your

program will thrive on this valuable

input. Do, however, have a game plan in

terms of channelling that creativity into aformat that keeps everyone on track.

Remember, your goal is to convey one

simple message to your young students...

*fitness is fun!* And everyone has more fun

if they understand the game plan.

**Endearing the Parents** If you love my

kids, I love you. If you do something

special my sons, I am indebted and

grateful to you. We parents are a strange

breed, and the bond we share with our

offspring is somewhat indescribable. So

what’s the inevitable reaction of most

parents when you’ve gone the extra mile

in developing a quality program for their

child? How will they feel when their

child can’t wait to get back to your

program and play and sweat and

experience acceptance and love?

Simple, they will love you. Here’s a

formula you can count on: