RUNNER

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of The Alberta Teachers' Association

RUNNER

Volume 42 Number 3 2007

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Greetings and Reflections

Editorial

Dear Madame Editor,

I understand you are leaving your illustrious position as *Runner's* editor. May I take this opportunity to commend you on a fine publication? The HPECers of Alberta knew that they could count on a journal that would be filled with timely information, outstanding activity ideas, relevant research and the occasional humorous anecdote. You have done a fine job, and we thank you for your dedication.

I hear that you have received countless applications from the dedicated physical educators of Alberta who want to selflessly volunteer their time as the new editor. I am writing to recommend my husband, Paul Marlett. He is currently the physical education curriculum leader at Woodman Junior High School in Calgary. Anyone who has driven past the school on Elbow Drive knows that the school's motto is "A Great Place to Learn." Paul takes this to heart, which is why I am recommending him for the position. I am sure that he will make *Runner* a great place to learn, too.

Paul is a dedicated teacher, educator and father. He leads by example to ensure that there is an upbeat, informative atmosphere, holding his students to the highest standards. He loves to play with ideas about education and always looks for ways to have fun while he's doing it. He is a busy person, but I am sure that he can find the time for *Runner*. His enthusiasm has been known to make an appearance on the dance floor at HPEC conference socials.

Kindest regards,
Christina Marlett

Dear Madame Editor,

I hear you are finally giving up your post as editor of *Runner*. I read every page when it arrives, and I pass it around to other teachers when I am finished. First, thank you for your dedication to the journal and for keeping physical educators informed and fresh with new ideas.

I can only imagine how many people are queuing up to take over the reins of the journal. Before you make your final decision, I would like to recommend my wife, Christina. She is an outstanding teacher and has always had a gift for the written word. She spent her first four years of teaching at Lester B Pearson as their dance specialist and she built a strong, multifaceted program. She is taking time off to raise our beautiful daughter, Zoë, and she is not planning on going back to teaching for a few years.

Christina is a passionate person (I know she gets some of this from her father, Dan Cooney), who loves thinking, talking, reading and innovating teaching practice. Her students love her for her humanity and patience. I know she would bring a fabulous approach to the journal. I fully appreciate how much time and energy staying at home with a child requires, but I am sure she would jump at the chance to take on the journal. Her enthusiasm has been known to make an appearance on the dance floor at HPEC conference socials.

Yours in fitness and education,
Paul Marlett

With such glowing recommendations, we both accepted the opportunity to edit *Runner* for 2007 with high spirits. This is a volatile time for physical educators with the continual successes and trials of daily physical activity, the increasing media coverage of the obesity crisis and the prevalence of sedentary youth. However, it is also a time when the public are looking to physical educators for ideas, answers and action.

Here's to an increasingly active year. Please, if you have ever considered contributing to *Runner*, contact us at marlett@telus.net. We would love to help you reach fellow educators and get published!

Christina Marlett and Paul Marlett

The Marlett family at the Canmore Canada Parade 2006.

President's Message

A New Year's Message—Extra Time and Effort Make a Difference

Shawn O'Neill

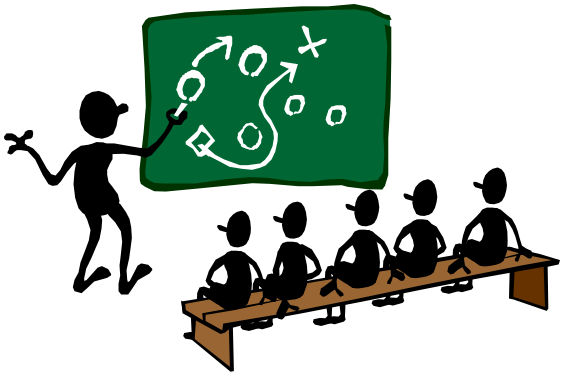
As I write this message, it is Christmas—a time to reflect on the past year and to ponder over the upcoming one. I am proud to be this year's Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) president. At every turn, I am reminded of what a first-rate organization HPEC is and how dedicated the volunteers are. We do make a difference.

At an October meeting in Edmonton, I was in a room full of specialist council presidents. We discussed the strengths and areas of growth of various councils. HPEC's list of positives was impressive: greatest membership numbers, best-run conferences, best PD opportunities for teachers outside of conferences and best organizational structure, to name a few. Numerous councils seek advice from us or admire us from afar. When asked what our greatest strength is, I respond with "our spirit of volunteerism." All of our successes are directly related to our volunteers' time and effort. HPEC's greatest volunteers and champions of physical education are our district representatives (DR).

DRs are the champions when it comes to physical education. They tirelessly promote a healthy, active lifestyle and are paramount in organizing PD opportunities in their regions. To find out who your DR is, go to www.hpec.ab.ca. I strongly encourage you to call or e-mail your DR. They are a tremendous resource and inspiration for you and your school district.

As a past physical education (PE) teacher and now as a school-based administrator, I feel strongly that PE teachers "get it." They know how important PE is to the whole school's overall well-being and, more important, how it influences all aspects of school life. Physical educators have the power and opportunity to turn a child's school year into a memorable life-changing experience. Whether it be a fantastic modular PE program that gives students voice and choice, an intramural program that involves the whole school, an interscholastic team experience or a special trip that will always be remembered, you will find the PE teacher/team behind it. If you are a part of this in your school, you, too, are a champion.

Take a few moments to pat yourself on the back, reflect on all the great work that you do and keep it up! Who knows what the next year will bring in education? I know that the volunteer spirit of PE teachers will always be there for students. Remember to recharge, relax and play a little every day. Here is to a spirited and active 2007.



New Features

Christina Marlett and Paul Marlett

The following features will be introduced on a trial basis.

The Issue of the Issue

Do you ever see your students having so much fun while fully engaged in an activity that it's hard to believe you get paid for what you do? Have you set up a system that eliminates the three questions PE teachers hear every day? Enter the Issue of the Issue. In each successive *Runner*, the editors will introduce a topic and ask for your input. We would like you to share your fantastic, innovative or just plain fun ideas with the rest of the province. The more input we receive, the more you will learn.

Letters to the Editors

We don't want to make up aliases and write our own letters to the editors, so if you feel strongly about something in *Runner* or if something (positive or negative) has got you talking—for example, policy changes, emergent issues in schools or the community—please contact us at marlett@telus.net. If it is on your mind, chances are you are not alone.

New Legs and the Old Guard

Do you remember your first teaching contract or your first time taking full control of a class while student teaching? One of our good friends once followed a boy into the boys' change room to finish a heated discussion she was having with him. Quite a learning experience! The lessons of new teachers are good reminders of our common initiation into the profession and often re-energize the profession with tough questions, energy and innovation. Through preservice programs and new teachers in the province, *Runner* will be actively seeking submissions from those new to our wonderful world.

Where are the HPECers from whom we inherit a strong legacy of professionalism and camaraderie? We are using our network to track down some of the legends and get you the update on activities.

Whether you are new to the profession or very experienced, please feel free to contact us at marlett@telus.net with any thoughts or updates.

Quotations for Displays and Classes

Many teachers have daily inspirational quotation boards in their schools. Some PE departments refer to the quote of the day in their classes; others simply post quotations. We will get you started with the first six quotations. Please send your favourites for inclusion in the next issue to marlett@telus.net.

> It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret. *–Jackie Joyner-Kersee, US Olympic athlete, track and field*

> Sports do not build character. They reveal it. *–Heywood Hale Broun, American sportswriter and commentator*

> The little things in life are generally the most important. *–Anonymous*

> The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create. *–Leonard I Sweet, historian and theologian*

> You have no control over what the other guy does. You only have control over what you do. *–A J Kitt, American Olympic downhill skier*

> "Did you have fun playing the game?" a Grade 2 student asked her teacher. "Yes, I had a great time playing," he said. "Remember what you always tell us," the student replied, "If you had fun, you won!"

Photo Gallery

Digital photographs are so easy to take. If you have any great photographs of your teaching teams or your classes participating in interesting new or old units, please send them to us with a brief write-up. A permission to print form will be e-mailed to you.

Conference Updates

Conference 2006

Super teachers celebrate!

Forget Charlie . . . we have the HPEC Angels . . . doing it daily!

Incredible teachers at HPEC 2006!

Captain Underpants and his trusty sidekick (Paul Marlett and Doug Gleddie).

We can still cheer when we are at a conference!

Conference 2007

HPEC 007

HPEC
Health & Physical Education Council
The Alberta Teachers' Association

May 3–5, 2007 ~ Edmonton, Alberta

J Percy Page
Holy Trinity High School

MacEwan South Campus
Mill Woods Recreation Centre

$210.00 early registration until February 28, 2007
$235.00 after March 1, 2007

The conference committee has blocked off rooms at the Coast Terrace Inn and the Travelodge. Both hotels are located just off the Whitemud & Gateway Blvd.

http://web.mac.com/hpec2007

For information, please contact one of the co-chairs: Lori Olson at lori.olson@spschools.org; Dean Rootsaert at dhroot@telus.net; or Heather Rootsaert at dhroot@telus.net.

Active Living

Letterboxing

Maureen Napier-Ross

When I was pregnant with my daughter, Emma, in 1998/99, I frequented a site that my husband nicknamed the mommy board. It was a bulletin board on babycenter.com, where over 200 mommies worldwide shared their pregnancy and birthing stories, and the infant and toddler adventures that we were experiencing at the same time. I received the best advice, support and friendship from that board, including learning about the Baby Einstein video series (which allowed me to have 30 uninterrupted minutes to make dinner for the rest of the family), birthday party ideas and recipes for the best diaper-rash cream. It has been a source of inspiration for so many parenting adventures, and because my parenting questions have not stopped, I still frequent the site to offer and take advice from the now-much-smaller group of 50 moms who continue to post.

> This past week, a North Carolina woman named Michelle wrote: Just curious if anyone else does letterboxing. Thanks to the *Family Fun* magazine article last month, we have really started to get into it. Dh was a little negative at first until he saw how much fun the girls had with it.

A number of people wrote to say they'd never heard of letterboxing, so Michelle wrote back and explained:

> Letterboxing started in England. Someone hides a box (a plastic container) with a logbook, rubber stamp and usually an ink pad inside. Then they list it on the letterboxing.org site with clues as to where to find it. Letterboxers then go on a hike and follow the clues to find the box. Once you find it, you put your own personal rubber stamp into the logbook along with the date and your name/trail ID. You use their stamp to mark your own book, sort of as a memento of your excursion.
>
> I read the article in *Family Fun* and it sounded interesting. Then a close friend mentioned it last week and said how much her children love it. We went on the website and found a letterbox at the park right near our house, so we thought, what the heck—at the very least, it's a nice walk out in the fresh air, right?

That last comment piqued my interest immediately. As the weather changed from pleasant to bitterly cold here in Calgary, I needed some excuse to get the Ross children outside and into the fresh air so their brains wouldn't fry from the electromagnetic forces of the computer and the television. I am not one to suggest a walk when there is no real purpose to it. I think it's ingrained in me from the many Sunday drives that my parents forced us to take and the resulting car-induced nausea that followed. My children have become enslaved to the idea that we need to get out and have fun minute by minute, but my creativity often wanes when the sun disappears and the leaves have fallen. This letterboxing idea seemed to have merit.

I went online to www.letterboxing.org to find out what the activity entailed and whether or not any letterboxes had been hidden in Canada. I was excited to find that it was a great site with explanations, maps,

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Maureen Napier-Ross is an Alberta-born-and-bred teacher on an undetermined leave, raising her three children in Calgary.

how-to-letterbox instructions, additional links and comments. I showed the site to Emma and explained what we would be doing on Saturday afternoon with the boys. She was absolutely gung-ho about it, especially when I explained that it was like a treasure hunt and that she had to use stamps and keep a journal.

On Saturday morning, we headed out to Edworthy Park in Calgary for our first letterboxing experience. I explained to Tom, my husband, that letterboxing was much like geocaching[1], but for children. The site contained clues about the location of the letterbox, and because we were searching for an easy one, we didn't need a compass or a map. That didn't stop Emma from bringing a compass that was part of the bug-finding kit I had bought for her at HPEC 2006. As we were walking along the Bow River pathway, Emma was informing us that we were travelling southeast or east. I had downloaded the directions and read them as we walked: "We need to find a huge rock with a plaque on it." The screams of excitement were deafening as Emma and Liam spotted the giant rock and read the plaque about the Douglas Fir Trail restoration and the thousands of volunteer hours that were put into it to allow us to have such a great place to walk. I continued to read out the directions, and within a half mile we found the log and the two flat rocks next to the giant Douglas fir. Liam flipped over the two rocks, and we found the small plastic storage container with a stamp of a tree and a logbook to record the names of the latest treasure seekers. We walked away from the plaque, continued our little hike for 20 minutes and then turned around. Emma then asked for clues for the next letterbox. I told her that I didn't download them, and she promptly burst into tears and explained, "But I wanna do some more!" Score one for letterboxing! Our aimless walks were now part of the past; we are now letterboxers!

Making This Work for Your PE Classes

Letterboxing is one of the best examples of an activity that can meet all four general outcomes of the Alberta curriculum. Not only are children exposed to the basic locomotor skills of walking, they apply that basic skill in an outdoor pursuit. I watched Emma become engaged within her environment and learn through guided discovery how useful a compass was. Of course, we all realized the health benefits of walking, fresh air and sunshine of a cool, autumn morning. There was no fighting or arguing. The two older ones worked together to follow the clues, count the paces between the trees and look for the two rocks that hid our first treasure. We planned ahead of time and took juice boxes, granola snacks, warm jackets and hats, and felt comfortable in one of our favourite parks, participating in a new activity in an old familiar place.

Letterboxing would also be a great daily physical activity. The cross-curricular component is very appealing to the generalist teacher: students can explore journal writing for language arts, explore biodiversity in our own neighbourhoods, weather and community for science and social studies; and incorporate counting and temperature for mathematics. The list is endless for each grade. Better yet, letterboxing is a fantastic idea for parents and families to try. Have students bring in pictures of their families engaged in letterboxing and post them on a bulletin board at the school's front entrance. Create a letterboxing club at school and encourage students to seek out new sites in the community that are known about but unexplored.

The best indicator of the success of this activity was Emma's crying that she wanted to do more hiking that day. Although she is a fairly active little girl, she is not one to initiate going for a walk. However, combining the walk with the art of hide-and-seek is appealing to the child in all of us. We will be bringing our journals with us when we travel in and around Alberta so that we can find more hidden treasures and explore our great province.

This activity also has the special characteristic of binding all treasure seekers as a community. The fact that a perfect stranger has planted something fun for you to find demonstrates that we are all seeking connections in this often disconnected society. Perhaps in planting the idea of connectivity to our environment and our fellow treasure seekers, we are creating and fostering positive relationships that might never exist otherwise. Any activity that allows students to appreciate the world and the people who live in it is to be shared with everyone. For more information, log on to www.letterboxing.org and follow the links.

Note

1. Geocaching is an adventure game for GPS (Global Positioning System) users. In geocaching, users set up caches all over the world and advise others on the Internet. GPS users then use the location coordinates to find the cache.

Walking 10,000 Steps/Day: Are There Benefits?

Jenny Burgess

Practitioners and the media often recommend walking 10,000 steps per day. This recommendation is easy to remember and gives people a goal for increasing their activity (Tudor-Locke and Bassett 2004). Given the popularity of this message, it's important to know whether or not people get health benefits from walking 10,000 steps.

Will I Gain Health Benefits from Walking?

Physical benefits have been linked to walking. For example, researchers have shown that sedentary, hypertensive women who walked 9,700 steps per day at a self-selected pace reduced their systolic blood pressure and body mass after walking for 24 weeks (Moreau et al 2001). However, in another study, sedentary adults who walked twice a week for 45 minutes at a self-selected pace decreased their systolic blood pressure, but showed no change in fitness, body mass, waist/hip circumference or diastolic blood pressure (Murphy et al 2006).

Mental health benefits have also been linked with physical activity (Fox 1999). For example, sedentary women who engaged in a walking program reported improved mental and emotional satisfaction and a decrease in stress (Nies and Motyka 2006). Another study measured 128 sedentary ethnic-minority women and found that walking more had led to improved vigour, indicating an increase in positive mental health and well-being (Lee et al 2001).

Factors That May Affect Health Benefits

Many studies have allowed participants to walk at a self-selected pace. It is thus important to determine if walking pace is an important contributor to improved health.

Walking at a moderate intensity; that is, 60–70 per cent of maximum heart rate (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology 1997) may provide greater health benefits than walking at a light intensity (Ghosh and Das Chaudhuri 2005; Paillard et al 2002; Woolf-May et al 1998).

Researchers at the University of Alberta compared a 10,000-step walking program (self-selected intensity) to a traditional exercise program (moderate intensity). Their study reported a significant increase in aerobic fitness only in the traditional fitness group. Although both groups decreased their systolic blood pressure, the traditional group reported the greatest change (Harber et al 2006).

People's health status is also important in looking at the health outcomes of a walking program. One study found that obese people walked at 70 per cent of their maximum heart rate, while non-obese people walked at 59 per cent of their maximum heart rate. The study's researchers concluded that walking for pleasure may not improve cardiovascular fitness in normal-weight people, but may be sufficient for obese people (Hills et al 2006).

Another study of people with Type 2 diabetes found that study participants walked an average speed of 3.3 km/h, which does not meet the walking speed considered to be moderately intense. Participants walked close to the recommended 10,000 steps, but because of the low walking speed, may not have received health benefits (Johnson et al 2005). Thus, walking at a brisk pace for some of the 10,000 steps may enhance certain health benefits (Duncan, Gordon and Scott 1991; Ghosh and Das Chaudhuri 2005; Paillard et al 2002; Woolf-May et al 1998).

Jenny Burgess is a research coordinator for the Alberta Centre for Active Living.

This article is reprinted from Research Update, *Volume 13, Number 4, December 2006, the Alberta Centre for Active Living, www.centre4activeliving.ca. Minor changes have been made to spelling and punctuation to fit ATA style.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

Walking 10,000 steps per day is a good starting point or goal, but to maximize health benefits, 2,000–4,000 of the steps should be done at a brisk pace (Harber et al 2006).

Walking prescriptions tend to be carried out at low intensity and may not provide the health benefits that normal-weight, active people can achieve with higher intensity programs (Harber et al 2006). Tudor-Locke and Bassett (2004) suggest that when prescribing a 30-minute walk as a way to meet physical activity guidelines; for example, at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity on most days of the week (Health Canada 1998), it is important to recommend walking at a brisk pace.

Messages to the population promoting the 10,000-step target have not emphasized the importance of intensity (Le Masurier, Sidman and Corbin 2003). Moderate intensity is a necessary part of the 10,000 steps per day target and of the current physical activity guidelines (Le Masurier et al 2003).

Harber and colleagues (2006) believe that the 10,000-step walking program is great for people because it provides a good starting point for an activity program. They also believe that to increase the effectiveness of walking 10,000 steps, a person must add some intensity or "huff and puff" to their exercise.

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Use It on Monday

The articles in this section are reprinted with permission from PE Central (pecentral.org), a website for physical education teachers. Minor changes to spelling and punctuation have been made to suit ATA style.

On the Sidelines Pulse Rate Nonparticipation Sheet

Luis Menacho

Purpose of Event: To have students chart their resting pulse rate if they are unable to participate in PE (doctor's excuse and so on).

Suggested Grade Level: 6–8

Materials Needed: Stopwatch

Description of Idea

Your pulse rate is the result of blood being pumped through your arteries by your heart. When your heart contracts (pumps), blood moves through blood vessels in your body called arteries. The arteries pulsate as blood rushes through them. This pulsation can be felt in different locations of your body (wrist, neck, chest). During exercise, your heart muscle pumps harder to move oxygenated blood to your muscle cells. Normally at rest, your heart muscle works less because your muscles are not very active.

Monitoring pulse rate is one way to evaluate one's cardiovascular fitness. Generally, the healthier your cardiovascular system (heart, arteries) is, the lower your resting heart rate.

While sitting out, use the second and third finger of your right hand to find the radial pulse of your left wrist (teacher will help).

1. Once you find your radial pulse, count each pulsation for one minute. This can be done using the wall clock. Once the minute changes, start counting until it changes again. Record your result on the data section on the sheet.
2. Repeat procedure #1, five times. Record on sheet.
3. Once you have completed your five minutes of data collecting, organize it by forming a line graph.

Conclusion Questions

1. What is a pulse?
2. What can your resting pulse rate determine?
3. What effect does exercising have on your pulse rate?
4. What can you determine about your resting heart rate after collecting and charting your data?

Note: This activity can be done using different areas of the body. It can also be used for a science fair project.

Luis Menacho teaches at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School in Clinton, Missouri.

Student Name _____
Grade _____

Minutes	Radial Pulse	Carotid
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Student Name _____
Grade _____

Use this to make your line graph:

Radial pulse (thumb side of wrist)

Beats per minute	100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10	1 2 3 4 5 (minutes)

Carotid pulse (side of neck)

Beats per minute	100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10	1 2 3 4 5 (minutes)

On the Sidelines Nonparticipation in PE Worksheet

Crystal Coffman

Purpose of Event: To have students engaged in meaningful and reflective activities while they are unable to participate in PE class.

Suggested Grade Level: 3 and up

Materials Needed: This assessment sheet and writing or drawing utensils for students.

Assessment Sheet

Student Name _____

Grade _____

On the Sidelines in PE Worksheet Questions

Directions: Since you are unable to participate in PE today, please answer the following questions during class.

1. Why are you unable to participate in PE today?

   A_____ I am sick, not feeling well or I am injured

   B_____ I did not wear the right shoes or clothing

   C_____ I am in timeout

   D_____ Another reason _____

2. Write a letter (or make a drawing) to the principal explaining what activities we did in class today.
3. Write down what cues or hints your friends learned in class today.
4. Choose a friend to watch for five minutes during class. Write down what he or she was doing for those five minutes.
5. Write down how you feel about missing PE class today.

Crystal Coffman teaches at Green Valley Elementary School in Roanoke, Virginia.

Streamers Galore

Mark Manross

Suggested Grade Level: K–5

Materials Needed: Colourful streamers (can use the ones with sticks or just an ordinary streamer will do)

Description of Idea

As students enter the activity area, ask them to get a streamer and to find a good self space. This space should allow them to safely move their streamers so that they do not hit or interfere with their classmates' movements.

When the music begins, students are to move their streamers using as many arm patterns as possible. Encourage them to be creative and to come up with their own routine. They have to move the entire time the music is playing.

Movement ideas for the streamers:

- Form letters
- Move at low, high and medium levels
- Switch hands
- Move through legs
- Throw in air and catch while continuing to move the streamer

Variations

When the music stops, have them move to another spot (put poly spots down for self space) and then continue with their stationary movements.

Older students may move throughout the general space by skipping, jumping, hopping or jogging with the streamer. Have them work with two or three streamers, or with a partner with several streamers.

Mark Manross lives in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Deal or No Deal

Steve Leary

Suggested Grade Level: 4–5

Materials Needed: Several large envelopes, index cards, two poster boards labelled *deal* or *no deal*.

Description of Idea

This activity is based on the popular TV show *Deal or No Deal*. Several envelopes are labelled with a type of exercise, such as push-ups, jumping jacks, sit-ups, mountain climbing, jogging and so on. The teacher plays the roll of the banker and offers a deal to a selected student or group of students regarding the number of reps for a certain exercise. For example, the banker might say, "I'm prepared to offer the class seven push-ups. Deal or no deal?" The students either take the deal by picking up the deal poster and do the seven push-ups or choose no deal by picking up the no deal poster. If they choose no deal, the banker opens up the push-ups envelope to see how many reps the class must do. Then the banker moves on to a new exercise and repeats this process. We have 10–12 envelopes of activities and change the index cards each day.

Variations

Instead of having one index card in each envelope, have several cards in each and let the students pick one. Also, instead of deal or no deal posters, use something creative to signal deal or no deal such as popping a balloon by sitting on it.

Steve Leary teaches at AA Gates in Port Byron, New York. An additional author for this idea was Matt O'Connell.

Life in a Blood Vessel

Ryan Battles

Purpose of Event: To help students understand the various activities in a blood vessel.

Suggested Grade Level: 6–8

Materials Needed: Paper clips, paper

Description of Idea

Assign each student in the class one of the following roles: red blood cell, white blood cell, antibody, pathogen and platelet.

Introduce one rule: no talking.

Give each student a blank sheet of paper. Ask students to draw their particular role and label it at the top (copy pictures from textbooks).

With most of the students being assigned as red blood cells, have them form a line, continually picking up a paper clip (or other object) from a certain area (which you will label as the lungs) and drop them off at different desks, evenly distributing the paper clips (which symbolize oxygen) and then returning to the paper clip source for another one. This process continues while the rest of the action takes place.

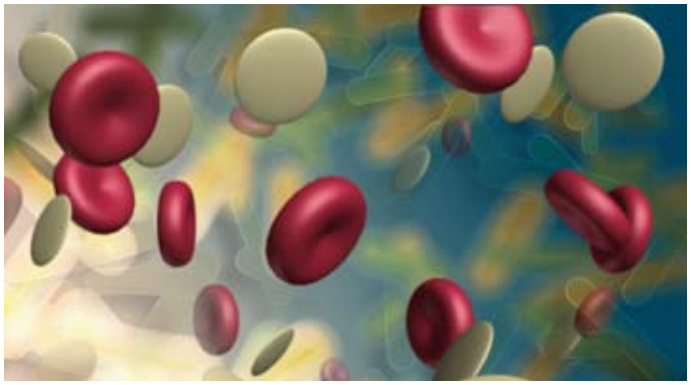
White blood cells and antibodies will be patrolling the area until a pathogen appears. The pathogens are stored in a corner until the instructor calls out "pathogen release." It helps to describe a certain external influence that may introduce these pathogens (classmate sneezes, student touches contaminated surface then eats without washing). When the pathogens are on the loose, the white blood cells and antibodies immediately walk toward the intruders and escort them back to their corner. The pathogens must comply with the white blood cells and antibodies when they are tapped.

Finally, the platelets simply roam around until the teacher opens the door (symbolizing a cut). When the teacher opens the door, the students all try to walk out until the platelet gets to the door and closes it. (The teacher may wait a second and then let the escaped students back in.)

Teachers may be as creative as they want with this. When students focus on their role, it isn't as complicated as it seems, and they can see how so many things go on in a blood vessel at one time.

Assessment Ideas

Have the students list the different roles of the items in a blood vessel on a sheet of paper.



Ryan Battles is from Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

Are You Interested in Becoming a Better Coach?

Shona Schleppe

Good coaches have the right qualifications and training in order to effectively deliver their services, especially when young people are involved. The Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation (ASRPWF) and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) have developed a training and certification program to help coaches become better.

ASRPWF is pleased to partner with Alberta Schools Athletic Association (ASAA). The focus is to support and encourage physical educators to pursue the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP).

Coaches of junior and senior high school sport (teams or individuals) may apply to be considered for an Alberta Coach Education Voucher (ACEV). If selected to receive an ACEV, the coach may redeem the voucher toward a NCCP course (Competition–Introduction Part A, B or Theory 3 only).

Through the new NCCP, coaches have the opportunity to participate in training, which will help them to improve the sport experience for their participants. Coaches who choose training will have opportunities to acquire or refine the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to coach more effectively.

However, coaches may also choose to be evaluated on their ability to be a better coach. Successful evaluation conducted by the Provincial Sport Association will result in the coach becoming not only trained but certified as well. Coaches are evaluated on their competency in several areas, which may include program design, practice planning, performance analysis, program management, ethical coaching, support to participants during training and support to participants in competition.

For more information about NCCP training and certification, please refer to www.cd.gov.ab.ca/nccp. For more information on the ACEV, please refer to AASA–Partner News and Information at www.asaa.ca/new/index.php.

ALBERTA SPORT, RECREATION PARKS & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

National Coaching Certification Program

Shona Schleppe is the provincial coaching coordinator and sport consultant with Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

Research

Effects of Extracurricular Sports Involvement on Academic Achievement

Kym Reid

The relationship between physical extracurricular activity and academic performance has been explored through numerous studies. A review of many such studies shows that a direct correlation of results is often difficult, because most studies rarely support each other in their specific themes, methods of data collection or the ages of students surveyed. Having comparable survey groups with respect to socioeconomic factors, group composition and gender create further conjecture and complexity. Hence, many myths still surround school-based extracurricular activity, especially regarding its relationship to classroom success.

I first became interested in the link between physical and cognitive ability while on teacher exchange here in Alberta, Canada. My home school in Canberra, Australia, had formalized compulsory extracurricular involvement for both pupils and teaching staff, whereas Archbishop Jordan has no such policy; extracurricular sports are purely voluntary. Because of this difference, I began to consider many questions about extracurricular participation in schools. In particular, did involvement in extracurricular activity have any bearing on a student's academic performance? As with my home school in Australia my exchange school offered many opportunities to be physically active and provided numerous avenues for extracurricular participation. But is the correlation between such physical activity and academic success positive or negative?

To further develop my own viewpoint, I undertook an investigative research study, "The Effects of Extracurricular Involvement on Academic Achievement." I randomly surveyed 170 Archbishop Jordan High students about their participation in school-based extracurricular activities. They were also asked additional, attitudinal questions about their perceived correlation between extracurricular performance and academics, their opinions on interrelated statements and their behavioural history. Participants' grade point averages (GPA) were obtained, and additional quantifying tests were applied to accurately compare the data.

The results of the statistical analysis strongly suggested that students involved in extracurricular activities had a significantly higher GPA (77.51 per cent) than those not involved (67.50 per cent). The findings also showed that participants were also less likely to have discipline problems and believe that a desire to succeed in extracurricular activity relates to their academic performance. The study also revealed the attitudes of those surveyed toward the relationships between physical activity, mental health and academic achievement. These attitudes were overwhelmingly positive and certainly supported an explicit association between athletics and academics. It is not surprising that a main theme of the 2005 World Mental Health Day was the link between physical and mental health. The World Health Organization promoted the concept that a healthy mind

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Kym Reid, an exchange teacher from Australia, spent the 2005/06 school year at Archbishop Jordan High School, in Sherwood Park, teaching Grades 10 and 11 physical education and math.

affects physical well-being. Nevertheless, mental health is often still considered second to and independent from physical health. The study further indicated that teacher–coaches have the bonus ability of providing an additional motivational tool, especially to students they teach. Students commented that they felt increased incentive to perform well for these teacher–coaches as they wanted to maintain a certain achiever reputation. It can be further suggested that this study supported others in proposing that the academic performance of students who are significantly involved in physical extracurricular activity exceeds that of students who are not (Shephard 1997).

Conflicting Arguments

Despite the many positive conclusions and reports that support this study, subsequent research has found conflicting and pessimistic arguments about the academic benefits of extracurricular programs. Skeptics invoke the image of the "dumb jock" unequipped to achieve scholastic success. They point to the instances of student athletes who earn grades well below average and who just barely make the minimum required GPA. In this view, student athletes can make it through school because of the easier courses they take, the extra help they receive and the leniency with which they are graded. In some views, those who participate in high-profile extracurricular programs, such as football and basketball, have less time for school work and miss more classes. It is also assumed that many extracurricular programs can distract from academics in general. Consideration of real-world data can demonstrate whether this view is substantiated or not.

Links to Educational Aspiration

Often researchers and the public alike make assumptions about athletic involvement and academic performance. However, most research has resulted in several consistent findings. The most prominent is that participation in extracurricular sport increases students' educational aspirations. The expectations of gaining entry to a university can be increased as a result of extracurricular teams, especially for those students who would otherwise not view it as possible. A 1989 study shows that African-American males from an urban high school, when involved in sports, were four times more likely to work toward a higher education than their nonathletic counterparts. Miracle and Rees (1994) propose two theories to explain this likelihood:

- The personal contact hypothesis states that students gain positive interpersonal contacts through extracurricular programs. They achieve access to the select crowd in school, which is typically composed of students of higher socioeconomic status. These students view university as the obvious path after graduation and instill this viewpoint in their teammates.
- Another argument asserts that extracurricular sports improve students' self-concepts thereby leading to higher aspirations, which can include a university degree.

Are these aspirations achieved? Although the skeptics would not deny that extracurricular sports foster higher scholastic aspirations, they do question the effects of high-profile extracurricular teams on higher education. They argue that by opening college and university doors to students who lack the necessary intellectual assets, extracurricular sports may be setting students up for eventual failure (Miracle and Rees 1994). Thus, those who believe that extracurricular activity hinders learning also believe that students who enter postsecondary institutions because of sports, may be hurt in the end.

What Are the Possible Cognitive Benefits of Extracurricular Activity?

Physical education teachers and coaches certainly believe in the benefits of extracurricular programs. But what does brain research tell us? Physical education teachers are well aware of the many physical benefits gained through regular exercise and sports involvement, but may be unaware of the additional benefits of regular exercise on the brain. Students participating in supplementary physical activity tend to show improved abilities, such as increased brain function, higher energy and better concentration levels. Furthermore, changes in body increases self-esteem and leads to better behaviour, which may support cognitive learning (Cocke 2002; Tremblay, Inman and Willms 2000; Dwyer et al 1983; Shephard 1997).

Regular physical activity also increases cerebral blood flow, changes hormonal levels, enhances nutrient

intake and increases arousal (Shephard 1997). Cocke (2002) states that "a trio of studies presented at the 2001 Society for Neuroscience Conference suggest that regular exercise can improve cognitive function and increase levels of substances in the brain responsible for maintaining the health of neurons." Physical activity increases one's energy, which is often expended outside of the classroom and away from studying, thus leading to varied activities that preclude boredom and increase attention spans during classroom instruction (Linder 1999). How do students get enough regular exercise to obtain these particular benefits? It seems quite unlikely that students with no prior or current extracurricular involvement could maintain a regular and beneficial exercise program. Rather, engaging in regular and beneficial physical activity is predominantly achieved through involvement in extracurricular sports.

A study that supports this line of reasoning was published by Michigan State and Grand Valley State Universities. It stated that students who engage in regular organized extracurricular programs do better in school than students who don't. This research was published in the August issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise,* the official journal of the American College of Sports Medicine. For one academic year, the study tracked 200 junior high students. For one semester half of the students took the general physical education class offered by the school, while the other half took part in a nonphysical education course. Halfway through the school year they switched. The researchers found that students taking the physical education course did no better or worse in their academic classes. They also found, however, that students who took part in more vigorous physical activities, such as organized extracurricular teams like soccer or football, did approximately 10 per cent better in core subjects such as math, science, English and social studies. Considering all the factors that go into what determines students' grades in school, a 10 per cent increase by the most physically active students is certainly affirming. Dawn Podulka Coe (2006), the study's lead author, said, "We were expecting to find that students enrolled in PE would have better grades because of the opportunity to be active during the school day. But enrolment in PE alone did not influence grades." Further, "the students who performed better academically in this study were the most active, meaning those who participated in an extracurricular or other vigorous activity at least three times a week." The difference between vigorous activity and moderate activity is most notably heart rate. This research can then only support extracurricular programs that increase heart rate.

Recent Comparable Studies in Extracurricular Activity

A cross-sectional study completed by the California Department of Education in 2002 included a sample of 954,000 Grades 5, 7 and 9 students. The study individually matched Stanford Achievement Test Ninth Edition (SAT-9) standardized test scores with results of the state-mandated, teacher-administered physical fitness test, known as the Fitness Gram. The six fitness standards included in the Fitness Gram are cardiovascular endurance, body composition, abdominal strength and endurance, trunk strength and flexibility, upper body strength and endurance, and overall flexibility. Results of this study included a "statistical analysis indicating a distinct and linear correlation between students' academic achievement and fitness scores" in all three grades; higher academic performance was positively related to higher levels of fitness, and the greatest academic gains were achieved by students who met

three or more physical fitness standards. This correlation was greater in mathematics than in reading. Additionally, females demonstrated higher academic achievement at higher fitness levels than did the males in the study.[1]

Australia

Dwyer et al (2001) completed a study of 7,961 Australian students between the ages of 7 and 15, using a questionnaire and fitness test for measurement of physical activity and physical fitness and a five-point scale to depict academic performance. Trained data collectors administered the questionnaire to ensure the questions were understood and the obtained responses were as accurate as possible. Questions requested information on the students' involvement in extracurricular activity including frequency, time and intensity in the previous week. Additionally, information about the subjects' mode of transportation to and from school as well as their activities during morning recess and lunch breaks was sought. The fitness test was administered by a trained testing team and consisted of indoor and outdoor tests. Each student's academic performance was measured on a five-point scale (excellent, above average, average, below average or poor ratings). Additionally, information regarding school size and physical activity programs was also noted on a questionnaire. After analysis of the results Dwyer et al (2001) concluded that "consistently across age and sex groups, the academic ratings were significantly correlated with questionnaire measures of physical activity and with performance on the 1.6-kilometre run, sit-ups and push-ups challenges, 50-metre sprint and standing long jump." Once more, a positive relationship is evident between athletics and academics.

The Importance of Academic Eligibility

The infrequently used academic-eligibility requirement offers additional motivation to succeed in the classroom. Under this requirement, students can participate in their chosen sport only if they meet a set academic standard. This, therefore, creates an important link between sports and academics, and can motivate students to study. A recurring problem for students with poor academic performance appears to be a lack of motivation. Academic goals or teachers alone cannot motivate some students, and many of these lost students drop out of school because they simply don't care. It is possible that academic-eligibility requirements could motivate such students to achieve academically and help them realize that they are capable if they try. While these optimistic scenarios do not always pan out, the possibility is interesting. In any case, it is clear that academic motivation, though initially extrinsic, is influenced by extracurricular participation through imposed academic eligibility requirements.

Implications

Enhanced brain function, energy levels, self-esteem and behaviour have all been attributed to physical activity and to improved academic performance. Nevertheless, one cannot make direct correlations from the information available. Perhaps instead of decreasing extracurricular programs, school leaders could create extracurricular programs that incorporate academic eligibility requirements, are well-planned programs and have the weight of research behind them. Students can learn motivation and determination through participation in extracurricular sport which they can transfer to other academic goals. Students involved in extracurricular sports have greater opportunities to practise time-management strategies to balance both sports and school. With consistent and enforced academic eligibility requirements, the criticism that extracurricular sports are a ticket into postsecondary institutions for unqualified students could be dispelled. Requiring students to achieve a minimum grade in order to play a given sport could also motivate them to achieve. The increased self-esteem resulting from sports participation is likely to enhance students' abilities in the classroom as well (Miracle and Rees 1994).

The extracurricular sports experience has not been shown definitively to achieve either positive or negative outcomes for every student. Individual differences in all students must also be accounted for. Little evidence supports the theory that sports teach skills necessary for academic success, nor does the research show that extracurricular programs negatively affect students' academic pursuits. Extracurricular programs can provide

students with opportunities for higher educational attainment, but it is up to the individual student to succeed. These studies show that we must look at extracurricular programs from both viewpoints, and be both believers and skeptics at once.

Notes

1. This study is still in the process of working with academicians to reach a published state in a peer-reviewed professional journal.

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Jumping Through the Hoops: How Do Field-Trip Policies Affect Teachers?

Carrie Yanishewski

Over the years, teachers have expressed concerns about field-trip policies. Teachers are limiting the number of field trips and the kinds of activities they do on these trips because of school board policies.

I plan many field trips every year with physical education (PE), science and leadership classes, student council and sports teams. Living in an isolated rural community requires travel by vehicle to access services beyond the offerings of a small general store. In fact, students must travel a minimum of 70 kilometres to enjoy recreational facilities and cultural amenities over and above the gymnasium and arena. I believe in the educational value of field trips—they help students explore the real world, and to learn and experience new things that are unavailable in a classroom or community. Because of my belief in the value of field trips, I wanted to know more about the expectations of risk management, the legalities of negligence, waiver forms and liability, and the effect of field-trip policy on teachers.

Going on a Field Trip

The bus is travelling ahead of my vehicle as we head toward the back country between Chetwynd and Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. The weather forecast promises a comfortable February day, perfect for outdoor activities. Preparations have been made, and the superintendent has wished us a successful outing. As part of the leadership and PE courses, Grade 9 students are going on a three-day environmental camp. The camp has no electricity, but it does have wood for the cabin stoves, a cookhouse with all the amenities of a camp kitchen, including propane lights and stove, a sauna, a storeroom of cross-country skis and snowshoes, and bathrooms with flush toilets and showers. The students are anxious about being without the comforts of home, but I have assured them that they will enjoy the experience.

I've been planning these trips for nine years, and I know how much the students will learn about themselves, their classmates and leadership. The students will cook a meal for 20, cross-country ski on marked mountain-terrain trails below the treeline, snowshoe up a slope, working as a team to ensure that all members make it, and race toboggans that they will build themselves out of cardboard, rope and tape. They will play outdoor and indoor games, and sit in the sauna. They will also clean the cabins, cookhouse, bathrooms and sauna, chop wood, and take out the garbage and kitchen grease. We'll stop at the indoor swimming pool in Chetwynd for more active fun. When we return, the students will debrief the trip, and reflect on their experiences and what they have learned.

My vehicle is meant to provide backup transportation in case a student or adult supervisor is injured. No students are travelling with me, because the bus is a safer mode of transportation. Three adults are on the bus, including the driver, who cannot participate in the activities or leave the facility—she must be available to drive home at any time. Our volunteer dad meets the criteria to supervise the boys' cabin, and he loves outdoor activities.

Carrie Yanishewski is a vice-principal at Spirit River Regional Academy and teaches PE 9, 20/30 and Math 9. She has been teaching PE for 25 years and completed her master's degree from the University of Prince Edward Island last spring. She has been president of the Health and Physical Education Council and the Alberta Association of Students' Councils and Advisors (AASCA) and is enjoying the role of AASCA past president. Carrie enjoys all sports but keeps in shape with Pilates and spinning. She is a busy hockey mom during the winter and a golfer, of sorts, during the summer. Carrie and her husband, Wally, and their two children, Mallory and Taylor, live on a mixed farm in Fourth Creek, about 55 km northwest of Spirit River, Alberta.

I have prepared the students well. They have brought plenty of outdoor clothing and footwear, as well as food for the meal that they will prepare. These students have been in school together for nine years and treat one another like brothers and sisters. However, this experience will isolate them from the rest of the world and force them to work together and really get to know each other. But they are ready. They have been practising skiing and snowshoeing in PE, and discussing relationships and interactions in leadership class.

Despite all the great things that will happen over the next few days, questions nag me—will I be allowed to go next year? What if someone gets injured on this trip? Will I and the school board be sued? I have prepared the students with adequate supervision. I am confident of the students' abilities to handle the activities on the terrain, but have I taken all the precautions to meet the safety guidelines of Alberta Education and the Peace Wapiti School Board No 33 field-trip policy? I keep telling myself that I have submitted an itinerary for the trip and will not deviate from it, and have met or exceeded all safety guidelines. What am I worried about? Well, I am worried that next year the perceived risks of this field trip might outweigh the perceived benefits by an administrator. No matter how well prepared the students are, how necessary the trip is to develop leadership skills and positive attitudes, how successful my record is, the opportunity could be revoked. Why? We are travelling out of province; only a satellite phone is onsite; the camp is in the mountains (although it is below the treeline); and emergency assistance is a 45-minute drive to Chetwynd or Tumbler Ridge. There are many risks, but they are greatly limited by the setup of the camp, the training of the students and my experience. I will have jumped through all the hoops to make this field trip a valuable educational experience, yet I could still be denied permission to go, because field-trip planning in Alberta schools has become an increasingly restrictive risk-management endeavour. School boards and insurance companies want to avoid any risk of litigation, so teachers spend considerable time and energy planning field trips to meet school board policy. A risk-management plan requires a thorough understanding of the actual risks involved with the activities and the perceived risks for the participants. A teacher who accepts the responsibility of students' education and safety during a field trip must be committed to safety and risk management. Risk-management practices and strategies reflect teachers' leadership styles and decision making. However, as the risk of litigation related to off-site school activities increases, the likelihood of school board approved field trips decreases.

Teachers' practices, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and values are all part of the risk-management strategies for field-trip planning. Classroom teachers, who are responsible for students in a school-protected environment, have a different leadership role and set of responsibilities than teachers who take students backpacking with an overnight stay in the wilds of northern Alberta (Green 1982). If teachers "fail to perceive the risks in an activity, then they are less likely to take adequate precautions," and if teachers or students "have an inaccurate perception of risk, then they obviously cannot make high-quality decisions" (Guthrie 1998, 1). Setting high standards of behaviour and making students aware of these standards are important aspects of the field-trip planning process. Lumpkin and Cuneen (2001, 40) suggest that teachers instill moral reasoning as a decision-making faculty in students. "Examination of one's attitudes, beliefs and values is an essential first step in understanding why we act as we do (Lumpkin and Cuneen 2001, 41).

Topic and Purpose

Teachers plan field trips to meet students' educational needs within the curriculum outcomes of the course. Field trips are part of the real-world experience used to complement and support students' classroom learning experiences, and are often perceived as worthwhile experiences. However, teachers are increasingly aware of the risks of taking students off school grounds and the attendant liability issues. A risk-benefit analysis may determine that any field trip is not worth the trouble, the worry of misbehaviour by participants and all the planning only to have the school board deny the activity. "The concept of risk has moved on from probability and consequences, and from threat or danger, real or perceived, into the idea of risk as accountability, or risk as blame and liability, even without fault. Risk is seen as a personal perception" (Frosdick and Walley 1997, 35–36). Any one hazard can be properly evaluated as low, medium or even high risk, so good safety

management means reducing the risks as far as is reasonably practicable (Frosdick and Walley 1997). The concern is that school boards will no longer allow field trips even if safety and risk-management practices and teacher and student strategies reduce the likelihood of litigation. "There is a suspicion that ability to pay is as important an issue as negligence in any pre-trial discussions about liability" (p 38). Teachers may choose not to plan field trips even though they support the programs' educational goals.

The literature on field trips stresses the necessity of risk-management techniques, but has not explored the effect of policies on teachers' planning of field trips. Having organized dozens of successful field trips over 20 years of teaching, I have developed several risk-management and safety practices that have reduced the risks to participants. As safety guidelines and field-trip policy have developed over time and have become more restrictive in nature, I have managed to continue taking students on field trips.

I am familiar with students' beliefs, attitudes and values from having taught for more than four years in a rural K–12 school. Sports teams, leadership groups, outdoor pursuits, class field trips and physical education off-campus trips have been an integral part of my programs. Field trips are a key component of learning and are essential for creating student memories of school.

Significance of the Study

This study explored teachers' field-trip preparations, including kinds and types of risk-management techniques, teachers' perceptions of field-trip policies, risk-benefit analysis and critical reflections following the trip, and the impact on program choices regarding field trips. The research was conducted in an Alberta school district using qualitative research methodologies. The study focused on the following issues:

1. What do teachers take into account to prepare students for field trips, and what risk-management techniques are used?
2. What risks are teachers willing to take?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the current policies of their school board regarding field trips?
4. How have these policies affected their program choices regarding field trips?

Teacher Background Information

The data in this study came from (a) a focus group interview with eight physical education teachers, (b) pre and post interviews with four physical education teachers from the Peace Wapiti School Division No 76 and (c) the researcher's journal.

The focus group interviews began in September 2005, and the individual teachers were interviewed from October 2005 to January 2006. The focus group consisted of three males and five females from across Alberta, both urban and rural, all HPEC executive members. Their teaching experience ranges from 2 to over 20 years.

Of the four teachers interviewed, one was a male and three were females. One has only taught high school, two have taught elementary and junior high, and one has taught elementary, junior high and senior high. Their teaching experience ranges from 8 to over 20 years. Two of these teachers are primarily physical education teachers, one has an extensive background teaching math and leadership, and one has been teaching mostly at the elementary level for the past 10 years. The extensive physical education background of many of the participants provided a wealth of field-trip experiences to share.

Literature Review

The literature supports field-trip experiences as worthwhile for students to enhance their learning and understanding of real-world situations (Coelho 2001; Green 1982; Hanna 1991). The literature provides guidelines for field-trip planning that support safety procedures and policies. The importance of careful, thoughtful planning and student preparation for off-site activities is emphasized. To reinforce learning and curriculum goals, students should reflect on their field-trip experiences and apply their learning to other similar activities. Much of the suggested guidelines are part of a good risk-management plan.

Risk-management plans help to reduce injuries and prevent losses for insurance companies and school boards. Field-trip policies are part of a school board's risk-management plan. The perception of risk by insurance companies and school boards restricts the activities teachers are permitted to do with their students.

The use of waivers to transfer the risk from school boards and insurance companies in the event of negligent behaviour or lowered standard of care is prevalent in many school jurisdictions, even though this practice may not best serve the interests of students or educators.

Several risk-management techniques exist to reduce injuries. The difference between actual risk and perceived risk has social, psychological, environmental and physiological aspects. When teachers follow field-trip planning (supported by the literature) they prepare students for the risks and help them make good decisions and develop good judgment while participating in the given activity. The literature supports field trips to provide real-world experiences and outstanding learning opportunities for students to meet and enhance curriculum expectations (Coelho 2001; Green 1982; Hanna 1991). However, the literature lacks information on how field-trip policy affects teachers and how these policies affect the programs teachers offer.

Findings Summary

Teachers have high expectations when preparing students for a field trip. School board policies are excellent for teachers to refer to when planning a field trip. Parents must be informed of field-trip activities, itineraries and safety guidelines; educational goals and curriculum must be carefully tied to the field trip; and students must be well prepared to learn from and enjoy the activities. Student reflection following the trip is also important. Provision of planning guidelines by the school board is necessary. Restrictions and policies that prevent field trips from occurring are considered unreasonable if careful planning has effectively eliminated risks to the participants.

Unreasonable restrictions of field trips often focused on transportation issues. Requirements for licensing, use of school buses for transporting students and restrictions on the types of vehicles that can be used were especially limiting to field-trip planning. When funds have to be raised or taken out of a limited budget to pay for bus transportation, the number of field trips and the distance that students can travel are limited.

Waiver forms are a necessity for every field trip; parents must sign an agreement to the possible risks that their child could face. However, teachers believe that waiver forms do not limit risk to students. Waiver forms list the possible injuries but do not consider the training and preparation participants have received before the trip. Subsequently, parents are asked to sign away their children's rights in the event of an accident. This is both morally wrong and unnecessary. School boards should be developing good relationships with parents, not trying to escape responsibility should an accident occur.

> I wouldn't want to cause fear in people. Parents shouldn't be made to feel that something bad is going to happen to their kid, because there's a lot of guilt associated with that. What if something did happen? Well, I shouldn't have sent them. I read about that and I knew that could happen. I think communication is great but there has to be a happy middle ground. And I don't think a person should have to jump through a thousand hoops to take little kids across the street or to go on field trip anywhere. If it's educationally part of the program, if they're going to learn from it, if there's reasonable risk, it shouldn't be made so difficult for people to go. Everything in life has risks. (Sofia, interview)

School board policy does not create confidence in teachers planning field trips. Teachers felt that decisions to approve or disapprove a field trip were inconsistent. Depending on the situation, one school board might allow activities that another school board prohibited. Restrictions were imposed based on one-time incidents or on incidents from other jurisdictions. Teachers believe that accidents should be carefully examined to prevent a further similar mishap. In this way, everyone involved can learn what to do to ensure a successful trip. Cancellation of future activities of a similar type should not be the result.

Teachers are discouraged by the inconsistency of the school boards' decision making. Teachers' morale is slipping. Experienced teachers who have a passion for their subject area and organize several field trips a year are reconsidering their decisions. Too many factors are limiting field trips, making them more and more difficult to organize. Teachers take time away from their families, plan for substitutes in their absence, use their own time and, often, their own resources, to enrich the learning and educational opportunities of their students.

According to 12 of the participants in this study, school board policies regarding field trips are becoming so restrictive that even the most dedicated field trip planners are becoming leery.

> You do a risk assessment, you come up with a way of solving that risk so asking permission is fine, but the answer is always no. Instead of my saying what the problem is and the school board working with me to come up with a solution to that problem, there are just more hurdles. (Jerry, interview)
>
> Eventually we'll have no field trips. We'll be so red-taped that nobody will find them worthwhile except for kids, and they don't have a lot of power. (Jorja, interview)

An experienced teacher who has taken several successful, safe field trips over many years is concerned when his request is denied after he has demonstrated a clear risk assessment following school board policy. Participants in the study also expressed concerns about losing their job in the event of an accident. Liability is a huge concern that school boards would like to eliminate. Experienced teachers feel that their positions are not secure at their schools when planning a field trip, and less experienced teachers are afraid to even consider a new field trip. It was believed that planning for safety and risk management on a field trip would greatly limit the likelihood of an accident occurring, but should an accident occur, teachers believe that the school board would disregard this planning when considering a teacher's future employment. If teachers are insecure, the likelihood of field trips is more remote.

Teachers believe that field trips benefit students, and that students and parents appreciate the effort and time taken to plan an excellent field trip. Spending time with peers in a new setting, whether applying established skills in a real-life situation or experiencing a new activity, is beneficial. Along with these skills, students learn many things incidentally, such as managing a room key or getting through an airport terminal to catch a flight, which will benefit them in their adult life. Memories from field trips last a lifetime. The best education often occurs on field trips, and teachers would like to continue to offer field trips to students. Currently, school board policies discourage teachers from taking field trips.

Discussion

This study shows that teachers are negatively affected by field-trip policies, which are restrictive, time-consuming and unreasonable. Many teachers were discouraged from organizing any field trips. The following concerns were expressed:

- Restrictions on the type of transportation
- Restrictions on activities that were seen as unreasonable
- Use of waiver forms
- Restrictions on destinations
- Financial costs of meeting these policies
- Expenditures of time and energy to plan worthwhile field trips
- Perceptions of risk versus actual risk may vary significantly by school board, insurance companies, administration, parents or teacher

Policies that restrict teachers to use private vehicles do not enhance programs. In fact they diminish the quality of the programs by restricting the number of opportunities for students to participate in.

Teachers' perceptions of risk come from lack of confidence and lack of experience. The provision of inservice sessions on planning and conducting field trips would be beneficial.

The perceptions of risk and insurance company requirements are the driving force of field-trip policy (Guthrie 1998), and the evaluation of risk is not based on actual risks or the preparedness of teachers and students (Canada Safety Council 2002). Yet school boards and teachers believe that student preparedness is important to risk management. Teachers believe that insurance companies drive field-trip policy and that policy restrictions are often unreasonably based on the actual risks field trips present. Insurance companies only consider the perception of the risks involved, not the risk-management planning done by teachers.

The serious tone of waivers requiring parents' signatures for low and moderate risk activities is excessive and morally questionable (Coelho 2001; Corbett 1994). Because the serious tone and length of the waivers have increased, teachers and parents will likely become more hesitant to plan and organize field trips. Teacher morale is affected by the frustration and fears these policies cause.

Restrictions on the types of activities affect programs. Transportation restrictions involve huge costs both to the school and to students and require teacher time for fundraising to offset those expenses. If school trips are prohibited or too difficult to organize, students lose out on the educational benefits and learning experiences that develop knowledge and skills and promote lifelong learning.

Teachers suggested several solutions to improve the negative effect of restrictive field-trip policies:

- Allow use of 15-passenger school vans and private vehicles to transport students to sporting events and small-group field trips.
- Avoid knee-jerk policy making based on one incident, and do not apply restrictive policy to an activity because of poor planning or the unavoidable circumstances of one field trip.
- Allow teachers to present risk-management strategies based on their experience, knowledge and the preparation of students, when assessing risk.
- Assure teachers that their jobs are not in jeopardy if something should happen on a trip.
- Provide teachers with a checklist to help them organize and account for as many variables as possible.
- Have administrators review field-trip policy at the beginning of the school year to remind teachers of the guidelines.
- Compile one off-site form so that only minor changes to the form have to be made from year to year.
- Give teachers time to plan, fill out forms, do paperwork, and make phone calls and arrangements so that field-trip risk assessments can be minimal.

Field trips are an important part of a child's education. Policies governing field trips should encourage teachers to take the time to plan and carry them out. School boards should place less emphasis on waiver forms and more effort on training teachers on field-trip planning and the benefits and components of a successful field trip (Centre for Sport and Law 2005; Kitchen and Corbett 1995; Carpenter 1995). Waiver forms are not legally binding (Corbett 1994) and are seen as a deterrent by parents and teachers, and do not involve any risk-management strategies that a successfully planned activity would have in place. Risk-management strategies (1) prepare students, (2) meet with parents and students, (3) plan the itinerary carefully and (4) meet the school board's safety guidelines.

Implications for Practice

Training to Conduct Field Trips

Providing field-trip training to teachers, especially those new to the profession, would help them overcome their concerns. Encouraging experienced teachers to act as mentors for younger, less-experienced teachers is another way to promote field trips. Training would help build organizational skills, provide teachers with experience in field-trip planning and emphasize the educational benefits of field trips.

Risk-Management Plans

Allow teachers to discuss the perceived risk concerns of the board and to show how these concerns have been addressed. Better risk management will result that will satisfy safety requirements. Good communication will be a key to solving this problem.

Support Physical Education Programs Requiring Field Trips

The program most affected by restrictive field-trip policy is physical education. Students cannot be motivated to be active for a lifetime if they think that activity can only occur in school. Experiencing activity in the community and local area shows students the possibilities for living an active life after high school.

Board Policy Should Assure Teachers and Encourage Field Trips

School boards should make the following changes to their field-trip policies:

- Examine field-trip proposals for risk management to determine approval
- Make reasonable transportation requirements or financially support the policies for transportation
- Determine the cause of an accident
- Establish guidelines to reduce the likelihood of a reoccurrence and allow field-trip activities to continue
- Support teachers by providing training and professional development

Summary

Restrictive field-trip policy has affected teachers, professionally and personally. School board policy governing field trips has generated fear, frustration and apathy for teachers toward organizing field trips for students. The literature clearly demonstrates the benefits of field trips for educational purposes (Manner 1995; Orion 1993; Smith 1995) and the need for field-trip policy to ensure consistent, well-organized, educational experiences for students while on field trips (Canada Safety Council 2002). The findings of this study support the literature. Policy regarding field trips is considered necessary by teachers to guide them through a process to plan a successful field trip.

An increasingly restrictive policy has resulted in more paperwork and more restrictions, and feelings of frustration and defeat for teachers, who sometimes simply give up trying to organize field trips.

The participants in this study believe that field trips are important experiences for young people. Being away from the classroom and parents allows students to learn lessons that cannot take place in any other way. Teachers believe field trips should be the choice of the teacher provided that safety guidelines, planning and risk-management requirements have been met. Teachers do not want to put themselves or their students at risk—identifying, measuring and controlling risks to meet the reasonable standard of care required by law, injuries are unlikely. Policy should not prevent field trips when the actual risks have been minimized by analysis and adequate participant preparations.

Field trips should be based on educational goals with links to curricular outcomes. Good planning and organization, communication with parents, clear student and supervisor expectations, an accepted itinerary and attention to students' needs will ensure a successful field trip. Some of the best learning comes from students' reflections. Field trips are what memories are made of.

Some school boards have lost sight of the importance of field trips. Restrictive policies regarding transportation, fundraising, restrictions on destinations and types of activities, and use of waiver forms have made field-trip planning exhausting and have detracted from the experience. Time spent on paperwork could be better spent preparing students for a wonderful learning experience.

Students who don't go on field trips may miss out on the educational experiences that last a lifetime and that involve real-life learning. School memories are shaped by educational experiences. As policies become more restrictive, teachers are less likely to take the time and energy to plan a field trip.

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Sharing the Value of Physical Education

Clive Hickson

Often, physical educators can be heard in school gymnasia explaining the importance of their subject matter to groups of students. However, other locations and different audiences may need to hear similar messages. For example, the staff room and principal's office can also be important places to discuss the benefits of physical education, as can meetings with members of the parent council.

By sharing their knowledge of the benefits of a quality physical education program, physical educators can help to influence the opinions that others have of the subject. In turn, this can assist in creating a sound base of understanding in all members of the learning community of why schools should support the development of a quality program.

The benefits of student participation in quality physical education programs are far reaching and well documented. Schwartz and Bouchard (2005) outlined these benefits and the corresponding research validation. They cite research that supports such benefits as improved academic achievement, likelihood of being active outside of school hours, and improved self-esteem. However, providing students, parents, staff members, and administrators with a friendly reminder of why physical education programs are essential to both students and the school is something that physical educators can do. That way, everyone has an equal understanding of the role and importance of physical education.

Here are some ideas that can be incorporated into our practice to ensure that everybody in our learning communities understands the importance of physical education and appreciates our role in helping students to become physically educated. See how many you can accomplish and notice the impact that you can make on those around you.

- Educate those around you about the differences between physical education, physical activity, recess and sport.
- Ensure that parents and students are aware that your physical education program has learning outcomes that are determined through the use of the Physical Education K–12 Program of Study.
- Provide information to staff and parents about the benefits of a quality physical education program, including its positive effect on academic achievement.
- Place quick read materials about physical education and physical activity in the staff room.
- Ensure that physical education has a regular place in newsletters. Report on class activities and future plans.
- Consider having your own physical education newsletter.
- Ensure that physical education has a place on the school's website. Keep the information current and use the space to suggest activities, and provide information and resources to parents and students.
- Ensure that the school library has current literature on physical activity, fitness activities and active living.
- Sponsor a physical education workshop at your school.
- Sponsor family physical activity night event. Make sure that you invite staff as well as parents and students. Pass out brochures that discuss the importance of physical activity and ways that parents can influence physical activity patterns in their children.
- Offer to post bulletin boards around the school illustrating the importance of physical activity and fitness.

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- Ensure that your gymnasium bulletin boards are filled with current information and ideas for active living.
- Provide parents and students with ideas for living an active lifestyle.
- Provide parents and students with information and contact numbers of local activity clubs and facilities.
- Provide parents and staff members with contact numbers and web addresses of regional, provincial and national organizations, such as Ever Active, Schools Come Alive, HPEC, CAHPERD and so on.
- Provide physical education homework to students. Suggest that parents take an active role with their children.
- Have physical education performances during open houses to demonstrate the learning that occurs in your classes.
- Have physical education performances during school assemblies.
- Have fellow staff members and administrators wear a pedometer for a day to illustrate the need for active lifestyles.
- Ensure that parents and students are aware that assessment techniques are used in your classes to evaluate that student learning is taking place.
- Invite your principal to visit your classes.
- Invite local school board members to visit your classes.
- Invite your fellow staff members and principal to participate in local professional development workshops, or regional or provincial conferences.
- Suggest that your school develop a physical activity goal for the year. Can we run around the world? Can we reach a million rope jumps?
- Suggest that your school formally acknowledge the importance of physical education by including it within the school focus goals for the upcoming year.

Be proud of being a physical educator and share the value of what you do for students in your physical education program with everyone.

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Runner is a professional journal for physical education teachers in Alberta. Submissions are requested that have a classroom, rather than a scholarly, focus. They may include

- personal explorations of significant classroom experiences;
- descriptions of innovative classroom and school practices;
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