

# Runner:



*The Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association*



No More the Hollow Men

Resilience as a Path  
to Healthy School  
Communities

Tune Out to Tune In

## HPEC Mission Statement

The Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC), as a professional organization of teachers, advocates for quality health and physical education programs and provides opportunities for professional growth and development of its members. HPEC is committed to providing leadership in creating healthy active school communities.

## HPEC Vision Statement

Alberta teachers will provide quality instruction and programs in health and physical education to promote the development of healthy active lifestyles in students.

### The objectives of HPEC shall be to

- improve curriculum, instruction and assessment in health and physical education through increased knowledge, skills and understanding;
- develop, study and propose professional resources and responses to health and physical education issues;
- ensure teachers have access to meaningful professional development opportunities that meet their needs throughout all stages of their career;
- enhance the expertise of members by promoting an understanding of current research to inform professional practice;
- liaise with other organizations that seek to promote healthy active lifestyles within school communities;

- further the continuous development and evaluation of standards and guidelines within the profession for personnel, programs and facilities in health and physical education; and
- facilitate broad-based, skilful participation in the planning and implementation of effective, collaborative, ongoing professional development.

### HPEC believes that

- a well-delivered health and physical education curriculum supported by quality instruction can change health behaviours of children and youth in K–12;
- health and physical education play a valued and vital role in providing a quality, balanced education for all children and youth in Alberta schools;
- all students in all grades in Alberta schools should have the right and opportunity to experience sustained, vigorous physical activity through participation in quality daily physical education programs;
- wellness is an outcome of quality health and physical education programs that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist students to make appropriate choices to live active, healthy lives; and
- comprehensive school health is the framework for the delivery of quality health and physical education programs to promote and develop wellness in Alberta's children and youth.

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*Runner: The Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association* is a professional journal for physical education teachers in Alberta. Authors are encouraged to submit articles of relevance in either a peer review or editorial review process. Topics may include, but are not limited to, personal explorations of significant classroom experiences; descriptions of innovative classroom and school practices; reviews or evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials; discussions of trends, issues or policies; and scientific research.

Manuscripts on other themes will also be considered for publication and may be up to 2,500 words long. References to works cited should appear in full in a list at the end of the article using *The Chicago Manual of Style's* author-date system. Photographs, line drawings and diagrams are welcome.

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Manuscripts should be submitted electronically in Word format. A cover page should include the contributor's name, professional position, address, and phone numbers and e-mail address. A Copyright Transfer Agreement must be completed once a submission is accepted.

Contributions are reviewed by the editor, who reserves the right to edit for clarity and space. Send manuscripts for future issues to Dwayne Sheehan at [dpsheehan@mtroyal.ca](mailto:dpsheehan@mtroyal.ca).

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Volume 48, Number 1, 2017

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*Runner: The Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association* is published three times yearly by the ATA for the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC). Opinions of writers are not necessarily those of the ATA or the HPEC. Editor: Dwayne Sheehan. Editorial and production services: Document Production staff, ATA. ISSN 0707-3186

Individual copies of this journal can be ordered at the following prices: 1 to 4 copies, \$7.50 each; 5 to 10 copies, \$5.00 each; more than 10 copies, \$3.50 each. Please add 5 per cent shipping and handling and 5 per cent GST. To place your order, please contact Distribution at Barnett House, at [distribution@ata.ab.ca](mailto:distribution@ata.ab.ca).

This journal is available on microfilm from Canadian Education Index, Micromedia Limited, Acquisitions/CEI, 20 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario M5C 2N8.

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## Editor's Message

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### Are We Dropping the Ball on Girls? The Gender Divergence of Object Manipulation Skills

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Dwayne Sheehan

The front cover picture on this issue of *Runner* shows a confident and highly competent 10-year-old girl. She is demonstrating strong running form and having a great time competing in a kids fun run. Most girls acquire the locomotor skills necessary to participate in movement activities throughout their lifespan, but not all do. Research shows that not every child, whether male or female, will reach the mastery level in fundamental movement skill (FMS) development. Approximately the same percentage of boys and girls achieve locomotor competency, with girls having greater proficiency in some more complex movement patterns, like skipping. Competency is not referring to performance results, since boys have a physiological strength advantage (especially after their growth spurt). Girls and women also tend to have an advantage in their balancing abilities. The growth rates and distribution of muscle mass and body fat in females affords them a slight advantage in stability, due to their lower centre of gravity. However, when it comes to object manipulation skills (OMSs), girls are at a significant disadvantage and often never catch up to boys. While this is a well-known fact based on extensive research, the reason for this seems to be a bit elusive.



Creating, implementing and evaluating programs to increase participation in physical activity across all ages, cultures and genders is important to maintaining relevant and innovative physical education (PE) programs in Alberta schools. Creating a classroom PE experience that is inclusive and supportive of young girls can help foster a sense of inclusion and increase participation in active, healthy lifestyles across the lifespan. As stated previously, boys are more proficient at OMSs in childhood and adolescence (Barnett et al 2010; Butterfield, Angell and Mason 2012). It is also known that OMSs are generally predictive of object control skills in adolescence (Barnett et al 2010). Skills such as throwing, striking, kicking, catching and dribbling are all core proficiencies that serve as prerequisites for future involvement in sport and recreation, leading to greater lifelong involvement in physical activity (Buschner 1994; Gallahue and Ozmun 1995; Wickstrom 1983; Clark and Metcalfe 2002).

Mastery of FMSs is more likely to be achieved with quality instruction (Stodden et al 2008; Goodway, Robinson and Crowe 2010). Although it is recognized that girls often fall behind in terms of OMS development and participation in recreational activities (Sport for Life 2016), it is too often attributed to physiology and anatomy rather than educational support and developmentally appropriate programming. Children taught by PE

specialists who are trained in teaching FMSs showed higher levels of perceived competence than those taught by instructors with no such training (Morgan et al 2013). Based on the current body of knowledge, evidence supporting programming designed to increase OMSs in girls is missing from the literature and, additionally, from resources available to physical educators.

As professionals in the field of health and physical education, we should consider why this pattern of diverging proficiency (based on gender) is occurring. What are the social barriers that inhibit girls from achieving the same level of success as boys? What kind of learning environment is created in PE class that is providing boys with an advantage? Who can make a difference for young girls developing OMSs?

While there may not be clear and conclusive answers about how to address this issue, one observation is clear to me. The rate at which a mixed-gender PE classroom progresses is often dictated by the speed of the boys. Since the boys typically acquire OMSs faster than girls (often due to sport involvement and influences from home prior to arriving in kindergarten), the girls may not be provided the same amount of time to fully realize their potential. For example, evidence suggests that 60 per cent of boys have mastered throwing by the time they are 5.5 years old, whereas 60 per cent of girls don't master the same skill until 8.5. This three-year gap may not be accounted for when PE teachers are providing instruction on how to throw properly. In other words, is the PE teacher spending as much time on teaching throwing basics with the girls in Grades 2 and 3 as they were with the entire class in kindergarten? Or, because the majority of boys have achieved mastery of throwing in kindergarten, do the PE teachers now move on to the application of those skills in game situations? PE specialists who have training in the area of growth and development are often fully aware of this gender disparity. However, when a PE classroom is taught by a generalist without the same training, do the girls get the attention they need?

There also appears to be very little research that measures the effectiveness of an intentional OMS program intervention with preadolescent girls. While the researchers are left to resolve the gap in the literature, PE teachers should take matters into their own hands by being acutely aware of the OMS gender gap. There may be opportunities to provide instruction of certain skills by splitting classes by gender. There could also be a renewed emphasis on teaching the basics of dribbling, kicking, striking and throwing to girls throughout their PE journey. By focusing on the mastery of FMSs with every child, we set our students on a pathway toward becoming physically literate and active for life.

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# President's Message

## Multiple Endeavours

*Elisha O'Lain*



Greetings, HPEC members! It truly is an honour to serve you as HPEC president for the 2016–18 presidential term. As I have had the opportunity to learn and play alongside many of my fellow HPEC members, I am proud to be a part of a community of dedicated individuals who work hard, embody lifelong learning and lead with a welcoming and playful spirit.

I congratulate the 2016 HPEC Conference Committee volunteers for hosting an exceptional conference in Grande Prairie. As the annual HPEC conference moves around the province to provide access to all HPEC members, each conference is unique and highlights the strengths of individual regions in the province. The conference committee in Grande Prairie organized opportunities to build connections with others, creating a sense of community while delivering a quality active comprehensive program. Thank you for your time and dedica-

tion in providing HPEC members with a quality professional and personal development opportunity. Our next annual HPEC conference adventure will take place in Jasper, May 11–13, 2017, in partnership with GEOEC, the Global, Environmental & Outdoor Education Council; our theme will be “No Limits, Education for Everyone, Everywhere.”

As a member of the HPEC executive for the past decade I have had the good fortune to work with an outstanding team of inspiring individuals who are dedicated to quality health and physical education programs in the province of Alberta. Here are some highlights of HPEC's current initiatives and endeavours:

- Physical Literacy in Residence program in partnership with Ever Active Schools. This HPEC/EAS mentorship initiative is an opportunity for schools to be coached along their own unique physical literacy journey. Each school is provided with a physical education specialist to integrate physical literacy into its existing lesson plans and activities across all subject areas. This includes in-school meetings, recess and extracurricular activities at the school. Together, the EAS/HPEC and the in-school champion help enrich the health and learning of all students through a schoolwide physical literacy lens. Three schools have been selected from 56 applications to participate in this program for the 2016/17 school year: St Joseph School in Coaldale, Holy Family Catholic School in Waskatenau and Rocky Lane School in High Level ([www.hpec.ab.ca/hpec-eas-physical-literacy-in-residence](http://www.hpec.ab.ca/hpec-eas-physical-literacy-in-residence)).
- Providing resources to members, including the creation of the Comprehensive School Health pictograph (<http://bit.ly/HPECPictographCSH>—see page 22) and Physical Literacy pictograph ([www.hpec.ab.ca/physical-literacy-media](http://www.hpec.ab.ca/physical-literacy-media)—see page 32), the HPEC blog ([www.hpec.ab.ca/blog](http://www.hpec.ab.ca/blog)), an AlbertaHPEC YouTube channel (<http://bit.ly/HPECYoutube>) and conference resource archive Google Drive (<http://bit.ly/HPECConference>).

- Over the last four years, HPEC has worked to update and streamline access to HPEC information for its members. Check out the HPEC website ([www.hpec.ab.ca](http://www.hpec.ab.ca)), AlbertaHPEC Twitter (<https://twitter.com/albertahpec>) and the AlbertaHPEC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HPECAlberta>).
- The HPEC executive includes a team of 10 regional representatives to provide leadership throughout the province ([www.hpec.ab.ca/hpec-regional-representatives-1?mid=906](http://www.hpec.ab.ca/hpec-regional-representatives-1?mid=906)). Our HPEC regional representatives are excited to connect with members in their regions, so please do not hesitate to contact them.

With physical literacy at the forefront and curricular redesign underway, I am excited for what 2016/17 has in store. Be active; be well!

# Guest Editorial

## International Physical Literacy Association

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Liz Taplin

The International Physical Literacy Association (IPLA) was established in 2014 to support, develop and protect the work of Margaret Whitehead, who first shared her thoughts on the concept of physical literacy in 1993. The IPLA exists to

- promote the value of physical literacy worldwide,
- continue to develop the concept of physical literacy,
- preserve the integrity of physical literacy,
- provide a forum for exchange of views relating to physical literacy,
- support and disseminate research and scholarly activity in all aspects of physical literacy, and
- encourage research activity and the application of research and scholarly activity into policy and practice.



These objectives are challenging because the concept of physical literacy has spread like wildfire in the years since Margaret Whitehead first began promoting the concept that she developed from her philosophical understanding of *embodiment*. The concept has resonated with so many, but some people, some of the time, misrepresent the true meaning of physical literacy—perhaps an error of judgment in their enthusiasm to make a difference.

Physical literacy is a disposition—something each of us is capable of developing (like happiness, for example). It comprises three elements: motivation, confidence and competence, which together with knowledge and understanding entwine and interact, with the desired outcome being that the individual chooses to be physically active. If this interaction occurs, something magical happens, because as the individual becomes more active, then motivation, confidence and competence, and knowledge and understanding increase and the individual feels better and more human. But, just as with happiness, things can go wrong—meaning that at some point in our lives we may choose not to be physically active. This is the key point that is often missed—physical literacy is a fluid state (it can come and go) and we have to work hard to keep things positive, not only for ourselves, but for those we are teaching, coaching or encouraging. For this reason, we refer to physical literacy being a journey with twists and turns. It is most definitely not something that can be “achieved” in childhood and then forgotten about. Yes, foundations for physical literacy can be established in childhood, but we must continue to work hard at maintaining progress throughout life.

We all want more people more active more of the time or, as the IPLA vision states, “people choosing physical activity,” but it is essential that we all work together to ensure that physical literacy is understood. Therefore, IPLA was delighted when policymakers, professionals and practitioners from a range of sectors in Canada came together last year and agreed that the IPLA definition of physical literacy should be used across Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> *Physical literacy* can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

We were even more delighted to have Canadian representation at our international workshop held in Liverpool (England) in June. Dwayne Sheehan, PhD, joined delegates from the UK, New Zealand, Denmark, Malta, Czech Republic, Greece and the Netherlands to debate and contribute to the IPLA's three main foci (advocacy, research and scholarly activity, and education and training). The group also had the opportunity to listen to a keynote, "The Value of Physical Literacy," given by Margaret Whitehead.<sup>2</sup> It is events such as these that advance the worldwide understanding of physical literacy and help to correct misconceptions. It was particularly heartening to have an audience at the workshop that embraced but also went beyond education, with sport, recreation and health represented. The international workshop is now an annual event in Liverpool, and consideration is being given to taking the workshop concept on the road. This year, a one-day conference will precede a two-day deeper dive into physical literacy, starting on June 27, 2017. Anyone interested in attending these three days of physical literacy professional development in Liverpool should check out the IPLA website.

The IPLA website, [physical-literacy.org.uk](http://physical-literacy.org.uk), is central to our work. Having established a sustainable framework, the website will grow substantially in the coming months. Some pages are open to all, namely the general information pages and the IPLA blog. The bulk of material is accessible to members only;<sup>3</sup> this includes a discussion forum and a resources section. A quarterly newsletter is soon to be launched. Engagement with the IPLA guarantees a better understanding of physical literacy, which subsequently helps practitioners, policy makers and others provide the ideal environment for people of all ages and all abilities to engage in more physical activity.

We warmly invite you to come and join us—join in the discussion so we can all learn from each other.

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<sup>2</sup> The paper "The Value of Physical Literacy" and accompanying handouts are available on the members-only section of the IPLA website, [www.physical-literacy.org.uk](http://www.physical-literacy.org.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Membership is open to all and costs £20 per annum.

# Ever Active Schools



## Ever Active Schools ...

is a provincial initiative designed to assist schools in creating and sustaining healthy school communities. An initiative available to all schools, Ever Active Schools (EAS) contributes to the healthy development of children and youth by fostering social and physical environments that support improving the health and learning outcomes of students in Alberta.

<p><b>Vision</b> All Alberta students belong to healthy school communities that enable optimal health and learning.</p>	<p><b>Mission</b> To provide provincial leadership that promotes and supports healthy, active school communities through a Comprehensive School Health Approach.</p>	<p><b>Priority</b> Lead, support and connect work towards improved health and learning outcomes of children in Alberta.</p>
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### 5 Core Strategies

- Collaborative Partnerships
- Support of Wellness Education and Comprehensive School Health
- Communication and Knowledge Exchange
- Capacity Building through Innovative Projects
- Competency Focused Learning Opportunities

### 5 Key Outcomes

- Increased coordination and reach of school health-related activities in Alberta.
- Increased support to First Nations, Métis and Inuit school communities through strength-based initiatives focused on resiliency and healthy families. EAS reached **11** First Nations school communities, improving graduation rates and student social & emotional well-being.
- Increased knowledge and application of 21st century learning competencies as described in the Ministerial Order on Student Learning.
- Through the Healthy Active School Symposia events, EAS reached **305** school communities, supporting behaviours change in mental health, physical activity and healthy eating.
- Support school communities in having increased readiness, ability and capacity to address comprehensive school health priorities.



**Stats**

Engaged **920** school communities in Alberta

Distributed **6965** wellness-related resources to Alberta school communities

Supported **652** Alberta School communities in using a Joint Consortium for School Health, Healthy School Planner.

Connected with all **61** jurisdictions in the province through the Shaping the Future Conference

**SUPPORTING HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN ALBERTA**

# Movement Matters in Healthy School Culture

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*Chris Fenlon-MacDonald*

When school leaders set out to create a healthy school community, they often do so by focusing their efforts in a few key areas. Environments that support healthy eating, positive mental health, positive social and physical spaces, and daily physical activity have all been proven to support the healthy development of children and youth—especially when these efforts are combined with a comprehensive school health approach. Healthy environments matched with curriculum are integral elements that encourage student and school health.

Implementation of quality health and physical education in healthy school communities is shown to be critical to the development of healthy citizens who positively contribute to society. This quality implementation of curriculum could even be viewed as Alberta's greatest health promotion strategy, and the largest group to advocate for a physical literacy focus is students and their parents.

It is important to note that physical literacy lives beyond the walls of a school gymnasium and those teaching health and physical education—school culture can also play an important role.

School culture that allows for and promotes physical activity will yield strong physical literacy outcomes. After all, the environments we operate in provide cues, nudges and incentives that influence our actions in subtle yet profound ways. The creation of activity-permissive learning environments is one way to automate or reward healthy behaviours. For example, hallways with well-placed, colourful floor patterns will see an increase in active student movement between classes, and teachers whose lessons are embedded in physical activity will yield strong academic outcomes in addition to increased physical literacy that supports student well-being.

Children and youth with a strong sense of physical literacy are confident and motivated movers with a daily desire to be active. Movement is foundational—research would argue a necessity—to learning. In a time when our children are facing a movement deficit, finding quality opportunities in their school day to move is important to the health of our schools and, equally important, the health and academic outcomes of our children.

# Resilience as a Path to Healthy School Communities: Lessons Learned from Indigenous Teachings

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*Melissa Tierney*

“So much of what we are doing in the school this year, the staff learned at this event. Ways of working with the students, classroom activities, it’s all playing out in the school now,” said Mark Rossetto, principal of the Paul Band First Nation School.<sup>1</sup> Mark was referring to a full-day workshop titled Resilience as a Path to Healthy School Communities: Lessons Learned from Indigenous Teachings, and he credits the workshop as a key driver of change in his school.

Held on beautiful Nakoda land, the workshop was part of the annual Shaping the Future conference, drawing more than 400 youths, teachers, coaches and health professionals. All participants were given both philosophical foundations and practical tools they could use in their work immediately to thoughtfully develop resilience in youth. Adults were also able to learn from the youth themselves: young people from the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (AYMP) in Manitoba and the Alberta’s Future Leaders program shared lessons and processes from their mentorship work in First Nations and Métis communities, and students from Banff High School shared what resilience means to them.

School teams brought the lessons from Shaping the Future back to their own communities. Lee Ann Johnson, wellness coordinator with the Kainai Board of Education, had similar feedback to Mark’s. “The

students just loved it, and the teachers are all using it today in the school; it’s foundational to our work.”<sup>2</sup>

Students spent most of the day outdoors, working with Blackfoot traditional games mentor Jason Plain Eagle to learn and practise a variety of games that promote life skills like perseverance, focus and working together. Students also were able to meet mentors from other provinces, becoming inspired by the successes of initiatives created by students like themselves. Youth from the Nakoda Youth Council taught other youth to create bannock on a fire, and Stoney elders provided tea teachings and blessed the event with prayer and ceremony.

Adults at the conference, including teachers, principals, school staff, community members and health practitioners, had the opportunity to meet renowned Indigenous scholar Martin Brokenleg. His Circle of Courage provides a unique model of youth resilience: in order to be successful, youth must develop their sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.<sup>3</sup>

Ever Active Schools will make the resilience workshop an annual event at Shaping the Future, and is actively working with First Nations and Métis schools to support innovative ways of strengthening the youth of our province.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal interview with author on June 3, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with the author on May 20, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Circle of Courage, see “The Circle of Courage Philosophy” at the website of the Reclaiming Youth Network, [www.reclaiming.com/about/index.php?page=philosophy](http://www.reclaiming.com/about/index.php?page=philosophy).

# Common Interest Articles

## Project Overseas—Togo

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*Simone Desilets*

During the summers of 2014 and 2015 I was fortunate to participate in Project Overseas with the Canadian Teachers' Federation. This annual program provides an opportunity for 10 volunteer teachers from Alberta to travel with other Canadian teachers to various countries in Africa and in the Caribbean. While in-country, we and our host cotutors facilitate week-long professional development programs for teachers who travel from near and far to learn and share best practices. During 2014, I led a team of 4 teachers to Togo, a francophone country in West Africa, where we worked with 40 primary teachers, 40 secondary teachers and 30 school inspectors. While all of our participants had more than five years of teaching experience, none of them had received any formal teacher training. This may appear shocking by our standards, but it is common in Togo, where teachers face numerous challenges daily. Although our program was focused mostly on mathematics and science, the primary teachers specifically requested some help with physical education instruction.

We soon heard from the Togolese teachers that they most often neglected physical education altogether due to the challenges created by their large class sizes. With the average primary class having over 100 students, the teachers face incredible difficulties in managing activities and games that enable all their students to participate at the same time. Their greatest challenge is getting their students to stop and listen once the activities have started. They indicated that nothing short of a siren would be required to assist them in stopping the ongoing activity and gaining the attention of their students. This is where we suggested a Fox 40 whistle, like those used in soccer matches and heard in huge stadiums. Although soccer is a

well-known sport in Togo, none of the teachers had ever heard of these whistles. This led my team on a mission to find them; despite much effort and numerous contacts with storekeepers and sports personnel, we soon realized that these whistles were not available in this West African nation. With the average teacher salary being approximately \$110 per month, trying to order them online and asking teachers to buy one was not a reasonable expectation. This gave me the idea to make a request to the Health and Physical Education Council for a donation of these whistles so that I could provide one to each participant upon my return to Togo in 2015.

Last July, thanks to the generosity of this specialist council, I was thrilled to return to Togo with my "super stash" of 40 brightly coloured Fox 40 whistles complete with lanyards. The mere mention of physical education brought about the usual sighs and looks of discouragement from all the primary teachers in the room. However, the grumbling quickly subsided when my Canadian colleagues and I told them that we came to Togo with a solution to their biggest challenge. We pulled out our donated whistles and told them that this simple device was all they needed. When they saw all 40 whistles hanging on the lanyards and heard that these were for them, the cheers and applause in the room were almost enough to drown me out completely as I tried to demonstrate the sound of these simple tools. All the participants had to try them out for themselves once they received their very own whistle. It brought back memories of the notorious *vuvuzelas* that drowned everything out at the FIFA World Cup in South Africa in 2010! Afterward, we had no problems motivating these elated primary teachers to participate in our

physical education workshop, which included games, relays, races, and team and individual sports. All of them knew that all our suggestions were now a possibility for them as they had the necessary tool to ensure easy classroom management during these activities. How I wish I could have filmed these moments to give everyone an idea of the immense gratitude and joy expressed by our teacher-colleagues

in Togo. Although it may appear small, this is a significant donation that goes a long way in helping these teachers carry out their teaching duties more easily. It also speaks volumes about the importance of international development and our collegial role in providing support to teachers abroad. Thanks so much for your generous donation to these devoted teachers and colleagues.



# No More the Hollow Men: Promoting an Ethos of Well-Being Through Academic Buoyancy and Health Literacy

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*Astrid Kendrick*

This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.  
—T S Eliot, “The Hollow Men”

As I walked through the halls in January and June in an Alberta high school, the demeanour of my students reminded me of T S Eliot’s famous poem “The Hollow Men.” Rather than being excited about graduation and looking forward to transitioning into post-secondary schooling or the workforce, they were worried, anxious and fearful. In the weeks leading up to the writing of the Grade 12 diploma exams, my gymnasium, normally buzzing with activity, was nearly empty as students opted to study instead of exercising. As the physical education teacher, I knew that this behavioural change was a negative response to stress, because most of my Grade 12 students appeared to have replaced physical activity with sedentary work. When I asked them why they were choosing not to participate in class, despite the adverse consequences to their health and overall physical education grade, their responses were variations of “I’m so behind in Bio 30/English 30/Social 30—I have to study to get a good grade, or I won’t get into postsecondary/get a scholarship/pass the diploma exam.”

As I observed the school community, I realized that my students were not the only ones choosing to sacrifice their healthy habits for sedentary behaviours. Staff members complained of working long hours and not having the time for proper nutrition or daily walks. Even my most dedicated morning exercisers were reluctantly skipping their workout to complete report cards, independent program plans and course outlines for the following September. Given the well-known connections between exercise and the management of stress and anxiety (Atlantis, Goldney and Wittert 2009; Vilela et al 2015), I wondered why it was that at exam time, students and staff alike seemed so

willing to abandon their known strategies and became “hollow men,” ending the school semesters with a whimper—anxious, stressed out and barely coping with their everyday responsibilities.

As I began my research into finding links between school leadership, student academic pressures and staff health, I began reading about an emerging area of study on the psychological construct *academic buoyancy*. Academic buoyancy centred on students’ ability to “successfully deal with setbacks and challenges that are typical of everyday life – an ‘everyday resilience’” (Martin and Marsh 2008, 168). Martin and Marsh suggested that this everyday resilience appeared to be integral to students’ ability to cope with the pressures they faced when taking exams, dealing with failing grades or creating effective student–teacher relationships. I wondered if by integrating academic buoyancy into the school’s ethos (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012), could school leaders promote student well-being? Further, could health literacy, a student’s ability to understand and create knowledge related to their own health (Paakkari and Paakkari 2012) be a vehicle that school communities could use to promote well-being? What role could collective leadership (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012) play in creating a culture of student academic buoyancy?

## Academic Buoyancy

Integrating academic buoyancy into a school’s culture would require a deeper understanding of the theory and its impact on student well-being and achievement. The theory of academic buoyancy emerged as a derivative of the research into academic resilience. Unlike *academic resilience*, a trait which refers to an individual’s response and recovery from extreme trauma and often involves severe challenges and educational setbacks (Earvolino-Ramirez 2007),

*academic buoyancy* refers to an individual's ability to bounce back from the challenges faced at school every day (Martin and Marsh 2008). Martin and Marsh suggested that academic buoyancy did not exclude resilience, and that the two concepts worked together along a continuum of response to adversity. Students could be both buoyant and resilient—able to accept and improve on failed assignments without losing their self-efficacy, while also using their buoyancy to adapt to adverse conditions, such as coping with educational gaps caused by chronic truancy. An importance distinction between the two constructs was that academic buoyancy focused on the healthy behaviours of the whole population of people in schools, while resilience had a more limited focus on the (often maladaptive) behaviours of the relatively few students operating under chronic negative conditions (Earvolino-Ramirez 2007). Because academic buoyancy was a more global construct, it could be more easily embedded into school culture and would be of more relevance to a greater number of learners (Martin and Marsh, 2008).

Instituting academic buoyancy in a school's culture could also benefit the adults in the building who experienced a related concept, *workplace buoyancy* (Martin and Marsh 2007). Martin and Marsh studied adults and students in 18 schools in Australia, and they determined that adults profited from workplace conditions that improved their ability to cope with daily pressures. They found that gender and age discrepancies in academic buoyancy grew over time. Specifically, as women grew older, their ability to bounce back from everyday challenges varied, and was at its lowest level in their early 20s and in their later life. Women's scores appeared to rebound after their 20s and were at their highest in their midcareer. Men, in general, had higher levels of academic buoyancy than women, and these levels remained stable over time. This finding could have implications for a school administration team with a predominantly female, younger staff team—professionals who may become overwhelmed by the well-known early pressures in the teaching profession (Boyd et al 2011) and would need specific guidance to retain their confidence.

Martin and Marsh (2007, 2008) also found that anxiety, a relatively common mood disorder, played

a crucial role in academic buoyancy for both students and staff. Of the many factors of well-being that they studied, they found that anxiety levels had the greatest impact on their participants' ability to recover from daily school-related stresses (Martin and Marsh 2007, 2008). Anxiety, defined as a person's response to stress (Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada 2007) could play either a positive or negative part in a person's development, depending on the person's response to the stressful situation. For example, a student should have an elevated heart rate and feel heightened tension when presented with a unit exam, as this response is a normal body response to a perceived threat—in this case, an exam that the student may not feel fully prepared to write. Once the exam has been taken, normal anxiety should dissipate, resulting in a return to normal body functions. If the anxiety remains, a positive intervention would be aerobic exercise, which would assist the body to return to regular function (Atlantis, Goldney and Wittert 2009). Once the body returns to homeostasis and the anxiety is reduced, the student should experience psychological growth, and should feel less anxious when writing the next exam.

This psychological growth that staff and students experienced after having successfully completed a challenging task contributed to academic buoyancy (Martin and Marsh 2007). However, as staff and students reported higher levels of anxiety about their ability to cope with their daily pressures, they reported lower levels of academic buoyancy on the Buoyancy Scale (see Appendix A). Therefore,

[i]f buoyancy is a construct that is psychometrically similar across personnel and student samples, then there is scope for the development of similar intervention programs for personnel and students that might vary more in the level of intensity and duration than in fundamental orientation, construction or application. (Martin and Marsh 2007, 180)

This finding was of significance to school settings, because the researchers determined that both staff and students could benefit from the same strategies to reduce anxiety and increase academic buoyancy. The overall programming would not have to be

different for staff and students for both groups of people to experience the same positive outcomes.

Malmberg, Hall and Martin (2013) reinforced that academic buoyancy was a competence that could be taught in a cross-curricular manner that could be embedded into schoolwide programming. In their cross-sectional study of adolescent students from England, they determined that academic buoyancy was not associated with a particular subject area or its perceived ease or difficulty. Students indicated that they could rebound from academic setbacks despite the effort put into a subject or the subject difficulty. They transferred success in one school subject to a confidence in their own abilities to succeed in other school subjects, and this self-assurance related both to academic and nonacademic courses. As a result, the researchers suggested that interventions that were broadly based would have the highest impact on academic buoyancy for most students, which could translate into better school achievement.

School leadership that addresses anxiety and improved academic buoyancy in students could see improvement in their overall academic achievement. Miller, Connolly and Maguire (2013) determined that a strong relationship existed between well-being and academic achievement across genders and socioeconomic status in younger students. They reported that “greater well-being [was] associated with higher achievement in school” (Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013), and that this association was robust across gender and all socioeconomic levels of students in primary grades. The study suggested that academic buoyancy was a healthy response to overcoming daily challenges, and that students who persevered through academic setbacks could build on past learning from mistakes to predict and manage future challenges. Connecting well-being, academic buoyancy and academic achievement could be a powerful tool for school administrators hoping to lessen the pressures and stresses felt by all members of their school populations. Health literacy, an emerging area of school curricular outcomes, could assist school communities with increasing both academic and workplace buoyancy.

## Health Literacy

Health literacy could provide an educational framework for enabling increased buoyancy in school community members. Paakkari and Paakkari (2012) defined health literacy as follows:

- Health literacy comprises a broad range of knowledge and competencies that people seek to encompass, evaluate, construct, and use.
- Through health literacy competencies people become able to understand themselves, others, and the world in a way that will enable them to make sound health decisions, and to work on and change the factors that constitute their own and other’s health choices. (p 136)

Acknowledging the importance of knowledge building as a necessary contribution of students within classroom organization, Paakkari and Paakkari (2012) described the building of health knowledge as a constantly evolving process in which students thought critically about their own well-being and constructed effective responses to external pressures using the most current information at their disposal. They identified five essential components of teaching health literacy: theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, critical thinking, self-awareness and citizenship. Students would be encouraged to link theoretical and practical knowledge of health outcomes to their own lives while also understanding the impact of their actions and decisions on the people around them. Teachers would act as active participants in the construction of knowledge, and would provide consistent and timely feedback to ensure that the students could use research-informed data and current information to make better health decisions.

The central components of health literacy outcomes lined up well with the salient factors for academic buoyancy, anxiety being the most significant, but also including self-efficacy, academic engagement and teacher-student relationships (Martin and Marsh 2008). If students, staff and school administration create a common vision (Robinson 2011; Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012) toward improving academic buoyancy by embedding health literacy into locally

developed curricula, then students may choose to manage stress through increasing their well-being rather than succumb to the pressure to achieve at the expense of their well-being. Further, because health literacy encourages active participation by teachers in health promoting activities, staff members might also benefit by increasing their own workplace buoyancy.

## Academic Buoyancy and School Leadership

The findings of the referenced four studies on academic buoyancy (Malmberg et al 2013; Martin and Marsh 2007; Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013) and health literacy (Paakkari and Paakkari 2012) suggested that students and staff would benefit from a school culture of well-being, which decreases anxiety, thereby increasing their ability to deal with daily challenges and academic setbacks. Because school leaders could have the greatest impact on student achievement indirectly by setting priorities and exercising influence (Robinson 2011; Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012), being mindful of the staff and students' levels of anxiety would be necessary to cultivate a culture of well-being. By supporting school members' needs for physical activity and relaxation spaces, and by building a strong relational trust (Robinson 2011), principals could realize positive results as student and staff buoyancy improved.

Martin and Marsh's findings (2007, 2008), which discussed the inverse link between academic buoyancy and anxiety, should interest school administration teams because normal anxiety that is not effectively managed could deepen into a mental health problem (Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada 2007). With the known pressures of the teaching profession (Ingersoll 2001), schools that strive to decrease their community's anxiety could see lessened teacher absenteeism and turnover as staff members increase their workplace buoyancy. Principals, having the greatest impact on students through teacher selection, retention and motivation (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012), should be concerned about their teachers' health because anxious teachers could struggle to effectively manage their students' learning environments and daily needs.

Principals could reduce the high level of turnover of younger teachers (Boyd et al 2011; Ingersoll 2001) by working to increase their workplace buoyancy, which may not have been activated in their early years in the profession (Martin and Marsh 2007). Younger teachers were more likely to face anxieties in their first years of teaching as they worked to learn both content and procedures to be effective teachers (Boyd et al 2011; Ingersoll 2001). Unchecked, these anxieties could reduce their ability to cope with daily challenges, such as managing student behaviours or meeting report card deadlines. To have school administrators recognize and limit the anxiety that younger teachers feel about their competence could also influence the development and strengthening of their relational trust (Robinson 2011), which would increase the likelihood that beginning teachers would persevere through the early, difficult years of their tenure (Boyd et al 2011).

Addressing workplace buoyancy in a school setting could be exemplified by a principal considering having an *open to learning* (OTL) conversation (Robinson 2011) with a new staff member about exam results. The following example illustrates this point. A staff member had expressed to the principal that, "I can't seem to deal with my pressures at work" (see Appendix A), complaining that he or she was struggling to complete report card comments. The principal, knowing that the staff member felt low workplace buoyancy, might expect that the staff member would enter the meeting with low self-efficacy and a feeling of less situational control (Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013). The staff member might struggle with disclosing his or her views in the OTL conversation because of anxiety about disclosing perceived incompetence. Before addressing any exam results, the principal could address the staff member's anxiety by giving the staff member a sense of control over the meeting's directions and goals (Martin and Marsh 2007), respecting the staff member's professional expertise about his or her subject matter (Robinson and Melnychuk 2008), and building strong relational trust with him or her through deep listening and building respect (Robinson 2011).

Because academic buoyancy has been shown to be general in nature, can be applied to both staff and students, is present in men and women, and is stable

across socioeconomic status (Malmberg, Hall and Martin 2013; Martin and Marsh 2007, 2008; Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013), school administrators would benefit from investigating programming that enables all members of the school community to build their ability to deal with daily setbacks.

## Effective Programming for Well-Being

Fortunately, most schools have the capacity to build academic buoyancy through increased health literacy without making a large financial commitment or significant structural changes. Because academic buoyancy is on the same continuum of behaviours as academic resilience (Malmberg, Hall and Martin 2013; Martin and Marsh 2007, 2008; Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013), programs have been developed both internally by schools and externally for schools to increase resilience in their students (Ungar, Russell and Connelly, 2014). School-based programming that interrupted negative behaviour, worked to establish strong teacher–student links, and were contextually and culturally appropriate have been shown to have the strongest impact on building resilience in students (Ungar, Russell and Connelly 2014). To adapt existing programs to address student well-being, school administration teams could research potential school programs and decide collectively, with valued input from both staff and students, which program would increase academic buoyancy in their own context.

Collective leadership (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012) would be a useful model for designing a broadly based, contextually relevant program to improve student and staff well-being, since successful implementation would require engagement from all community members. Leithwood and Jantzi (2011) determined that three variables were strongly associated with collective leadership: teachers’ knowledge and skill, motivation, and work settings—with work settings having the strongest impact on student achievement. Principals, having the ability to influence positive work settings, could initiate a culture of well-being by engaging the school community in discussing a culture of well-being. An obvious place to start the conversation would be within the existing physical

education program, because physical education teachers are likely to be interested, engaged, and knowledgeable about well-being (Rickwood 2015; Robinson and Melnychuk 2008).

Most schools have physical education programs, and in Alberta, since 2005, all kindergarten to Grade 9 schools have been mandated to provide 30 minutes of activity to their students every day. Despite the mandatory daily physical activity (DPA) initiative, obesity rates in Alberta had increased by 5 per cent in the five years following its implementation (Moffatt and Coupland 2010). This suggested that the implementation of DPA in Alberta has been a partial failure (Robinson and Melnychuk 2008). Robinson and Melnychuk attributed this failure to the implementation of DPA enacted by school administrators and generalist teachers providing “supervised recreation” (p 246), rather than by physical education specialists who have the professional expertise to engage students in effective exercise. An additional reason for the failure of DPA, to be researched further, could relate to the increased diagnosis of anxiety over the same number of years (Canadian Mental Health Association 2015), which has a correlation to obesity (Atlantis, Goldney and Wittert 2009). Given the inverse relationship between anxiety and academic buoyancy, a reason for the failure of DPA to lower obesity rates may also be attributed to increased student anxiety without corresponding action by schools to effectively deal with that mental health problem.

That said, DPA could be an effective policy lever to motivate schools to implement health literacy and to begin building a culture of well-being. To build a culture of physical activity, Rickwood (2015) suggested that the principal and school administration could allow for active time during the school day for staff and students, promote physical education classes and personally engage in fitness activities. Administration teams could encourage staff to be active as a part of the work day, which has been shown to reduce workers’ use of sick leave and increase their productivity (Vilela et al 2015). As staff members became active promoters of the school ethos based on well-being, they became crucial role models of an active lifestyle for students, who are then more likely to participate

in fitness activities (ParticipAction 2015). Promoting a healthy lifestyle has been connected to building resilience (Ungar, Russell and Connelly 2014), which also builds academic and workplace buoyancy. By empowering staff to care for their own well-being by providing the necessary work conditions to encourage regular physical activity and decrease workplace anxiety, principals could see an overall improvement in their teachers' and students' well-being.

## The Case for Creating Academically Buoyant Schools

At present in Alberta, despite governmental policy changes and curricular redesign initiatives, child and youth health outcomes continue to worsen over time, which could present a challenge to our health care system in the future (Moffatt and Coupland 2010). While health problems are complex and require a multifaceted response, schools should consider their role in helping or hindering progress to achieve better child and youth health outcomes. Schools are the centre of children and youths' lives for at least 12 years, and have the capacity and time to develop a strong sense of well-being through health literacy and academic and workplace buoyancy. With a stronger school culture of well-being, students may be more likely to transfer their academic buoyancy to workplace buoyancy, recognizing the importance of using effective anxiety management strategies after their mandatory schooling has ended.

Further, by creating academically buoyant, health-literate school cultures, school communities could work to counter the anxiety created by external pressures to maintain high rankings, locally and globally. For example, students and staff members with high levels of buoyancy would have the confidence to believe that poor achievement results on standardized tests were temporary and not an indication of future exam results. Staff could then work collaboratively with students to determine the cause of the poor results and determine more effective learning strategies. Principals could work with staff to use the exam data in meaningful OTL conversations to improve results. The self-efficacy of individuals involved would

not be impacted by the exam results, and they would feel confident that they could rebound and perform better the next time. Meanwhile, health outcomes would not be compromised in exchange for higher test results, as health outcomes would be regarded as integral to the process of increasing achievement.

To display well-being as a valued part of a school ethos, cultural artifacts (Rickwood 2015) such as honour rolls and academic scholarships could be balanced with photos of students engaged in physical activity, community service projects completed on staff professional development days, or "Zen rooms" designed for anyone needing quiet reflection. These artifacts would be equally important as the more competitive accomplishments of students, showing that active participation was as important as top achievement (ParticipAction 2015). Developing, committing to and resourcing strategically for a strong vision (Robinson 2011) of an academically buoyant school community by school leaders could be a promising start for a healthier population.

With well-being as a valued and supported part of the school vision, students might be more likely to use exercise or other anxiety-reducing methods to release their anxiety before writing exams. Having school leadership that models and encourages fitness classes, meditation or outdoor play during the school day, instead of reassigning noncore subject time for exam preparation or extra study, could develop into a school culture that values both well-being and accomplishment. Students may complete their exams with more confidence and less fear, and feel a sense of fulfillment at the end of their schooling.

January and June in schools should not feel post-apocalyptic, filled with students and staff numbed like the hollow men that T S Eliot described: men who drifted through a wasteland of post-World War II England with a lost sense of self, motivation and well-being. Schools could promote students who have a deep self-awareness about their own well-being and their academic competencies, and can rebound from the daily challenges and setbacks that they encounter. Final exams could be viewed as a transition to another chapter in life, and the results of these exams judged as a momentary reflection of a student's abilities, not

the final result of all his or her learning or a reflection of the school's excellence or failure.

Schools would have equally health-literate staff members who cherished their position as active role models and felt confidence in implementing positive change or challenging ill-informed or regressive policies. An increased sense of well-being would allow these staff members to experience less anxiety about daily problems and be more inclined towards OTL conversations, implementing school change initiatives, and working collaboratively with other professionals and their administrators. With their professional expertise valued through collective leadership, they may be more inclined to use the results of formal testing to improve their overall school achievement. Final exams would not be linked to their sense of workplace buoyancy or used to judge their effectiveness as professional educators—instead, they would offer valuable data to drive school growth.

School administrators could support implementing a culture of well-being in schools by recognizing that teachers, principals and peers can mediate external pressures felt by individual students (Miller, Connolly and Maguire 2013). They could hire and retain teachers who understand the importance of well-being (Rickwood 2015), and they can move resources toward initiatives that may produce higher levels of academic and workplace buoyancy. In reframing test results as temporary indicators of a student's understanding of a core subject, rather than the current framing of test results as an indicator of school effectiveness or teacher excellence, principals could see fewer students in crisis when the high-stakes tests are written. With a school ethos of well-being, developed through increased health literacy, school could end with a bang, not a whimper.

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## Appendix A

The Buoyancy Scale for Academic Buoyancy was developed as a self-assessment tool using a Likert scale and had students respond to statements like “I am good at dealing with setbacks.” “I don’t let study stress get on top of me.” “I think I’m good at dealing with schoolwork pressures.” “I don’t let a bad mark affect my performance.” (Martin and Marsh 2008, 78).

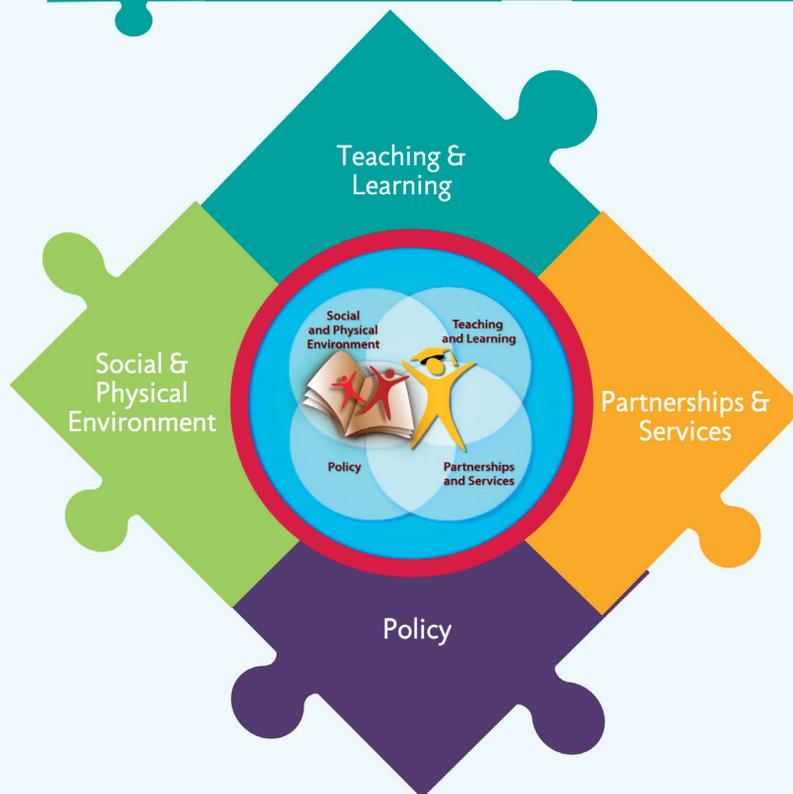
The Buoyancy Scale for Workplace Buoyancy used the statements “I don’t let work stress get on top of me.” “I think I’m good at dealing with work pressures.” “I don’t let a bad performance or outcome at work affect my confidence.” “I’m good at dealing with setbacks at work (eg, poor performance, negative feedback).” (Martin and Marsh 2007, 173).

# COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH

Comprehensive School Health is an internationally recognized approach to supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated and holistic way - Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH)

Comprehensive School Health is the framework for the delivery of quality health and physical education programs to promote and develop wellness in Alberta's children and youth.

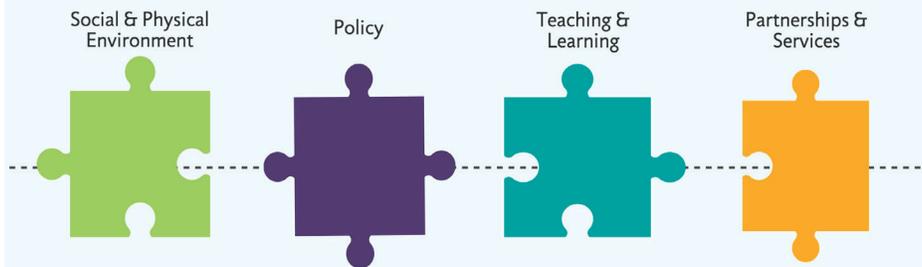
Wellness is an outcome of quality health and physical education programs that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist students to make appropriate choices to live active, healthy lives.



'This whole-school model builds capacity to incorporate well-being as an essential aspect of student achievement. Actions address four distinct but inter-related components that comprise a comprehensive school health approach' - JCSH

The more synergy between each of these components results in a greater student success.

## Components



'Comprehensive School Health addresses four distinct but inter-related components. Addressing all four component creates a greater impact on student health and well-being.' - Alberta Education

## Essential Ideas

### Comprehensive School Health

- Recognizes that healthy students learn better and achieve more
- Understands that schools can directly influence students' health and behaviours
- Encourages healthy lifestyle choices, and promotes students' health and well-being
- Incorporates health into all aspects of school and learning
- Links health and education issues and systems
- Needs the participation and support of families and the community at large

References:  
\*Joint Consortium for School Health  
\*Alberta Education  
\*Health & Physical Education Council



Supporting Healthy School Communities in Alberta



# The Challenges of Alberta Education's Daily Physical Activity (DPA) Initiative

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*Danielle Boutette and Julie Jansen*

Alberta Education's daily physical activity (DPA) initiative was launched in 2005 as a response to alarming statistics on Alberta children's rising obesity rates and declining physical activity levels. Aware that schools are in a unique position to target children from all walks of life, Alberta Education created and implemented a policy to make a difference "based on the belief that healthy students are better able to learn and that school communities provide supportive environments for students to develop positive habits needed for a healthy, active lifestyle" (Alberta Education 2008, 1). However, despite its obvious significance, there appears to be a lack of current research on the success of this mandate.

## The DPA Initiative

Alberta's daily physical activity (DPA) initiative requires schools to use instructional and/or non-instructional time to ensure that students in Grades 1 to 9 receive 30 minutes of physical activity (PA) per day. The 30 minutes must vary in form and intensity, allow for all students' abilities and ensure student choice. School authorities are expected to assume responsibility for implementation of the DPA initiative. Alberta Education planned to extend the DPA initiative to include Grades 10 to 12 in 2006.

At the onset of the DPA initiative, Alberta Education committed to supporting schools through resource development, professional development and an increase in funding (Bates 2006). Professional development (PD) was offered to teachers across the province, the *Daily Physical Activity* handbook (Alberta Education 2006a) was created and distributed, and the *Creating a Desire to Participate* video (Alberta Learning 2006b) was produced. Schools were also given annual funding of approximately \$1,000 to use at their discretion.

## Problem Description

In 2016, 11 years after its launch, the question remains: How well is the DPA initiative functioning in Alberta schools? The answer is unclear. Through research conducted on Alberta Education DPA policy, there is little information available on the current state of the policy and how it is functioning in schools. Three Alberta Education documents, from 2004, 2006 and 2008, were reviewed; there is little evidence of subsequent documents. It appears that only five other scholarly articles have been published on Alberta's DPA initiative, the latest one from 2010, all of which are discussed below. The result is an apparent lack of current and credible information about how the Alberta Education DPA mandate has been functioning in schools over the past half-decade.

## Literature Review

Prior to the introduction of the DPA mandate, Alberta Education consulted with stakeholders and produced a discussion paper to deal with the stakeholders' concerns, *Daily Physical Activity Initiative in Alberta Schools: Creating a Desire to Participate* (Alberta Learning (2004). Since the introduction of the DPA mandate, Alberta Education completed two reviews of the initiative: *Daily Physical Activity for Children and Youth: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature* (Bates 2006) and the *Daily Physical Activity Survey Report* (Alberta Education 2008). Bates (2006) conducted a literature review designed to accomplish two things: identify promising practices in school-based physical activity interventions that could be used in Alberta schools, and identify data collection tools that are capable of reliably measuring the short- and long-term effects of the DPA initiative. Additionally, Alberta Education's 2008 report was used to gather information from principals and teachers to

ensure a better understanding of how the DPA initiative is being implemented, as well as an opportunity to provide feedback associated with the operation of the DPA initiative.

In addition to the three documents by Alberta Education, five scholarly articles were published regarding Alberta Education's DPA initiative:

- "Discourse, Teacher Identity, and the Implementation of Daily Physical Activity" (Robinson and Melnychuk 2008),
- "Public Policy Processes and Getting Physical Activity into Alberta's Urban Schools" (Gladwin, Church and Plotnikoff 2008),
- "Daily Physical Activity Initiatives Across Canada: A Progress Report" (Chorney 2009),
- "Exploring the Influence of a Social Ecological Model on the School-Based Physical Activity" (Langille and Rodgers 2010), and
- "Has the Alberta Daily Physical Activity Initiative Been Successfully Implemented in Calgary Schools?" (Kennedy, Cantell and Dewey 2010).

Through analysis of information from all eight sources, key issues emerged about how well Alberta Education's DPA initiative has been functioning. These key issues are consultation and response, support, implementation and time, and monitoring and accountability.

### Consultation and Response

The evidence suggests that there is frustration with the DPA policy itself. The top-down approach led to lack of interest, misunderstanding and dissatisfaction from more than 400 stakeholders representing every school jurisdiction in Alberta who attended the area consultation meetings prior to the implementation of the DPA initiative (Alberta Learning 2004). In consultation with stakeholders in 2004, five common concerns were brought forward: (1) time allocation and time-tabling, (2) quality of learning experiences, (3) infrastructure and facilities, (4) DPA in senior high school and (5) successful implementation (Alberta Learning 2004).

Alberta Learning released a discussion paper (2004) to address these concerns but, reviewing their responses to alleviate these concerns, there did not appear to be factual, practical solutions to any of them. In fact, the

concerns listed prior to the DPA initiative being mandated continued to be the biggest concerns in all reviews and articles published on the DPA initiative since then.

### Support

Schools required funding, PD and resources to support teachers' ability to fulfill the DPA initiative, which Alberta Education provided. However, the *Daily Physical Activity Handbook* (Alberta Education 2006a) and the *Creating a Desire to Participate* video (Alberta Education 2006b) created in 2006 were found to be only somewhat effective (Alberta Education 2008). These findings are now 10 years old, and it appears that these two resources have not been updated since their release in 2006. In fact, the video is still using the old physical activity guideline of 90 minutes of physical activity instead of the current 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA), which was recommended in 2011.

In 2005, Alberta Education offered professional development for this initiative to teachers across the province through Schools Come Alive to support implementation of the DPA initiative. There has been little to no evidence released since then to determine whether Alberta Education has provided any ongoing PD.

Regarding funding, in 2005, schools received just over \$1,000 allotted specifically for DPA to be used at the school administrations' discretion. This funding was meant to continue annually; however, our review of current research and policy documents failed to uncover publicly available documentation to demonstrate that the funding has continued as originally promised.

All eight articles found this lack of support to be problematic to ensuring DPA for students; however, the data may now be reasonably considered outdated.

Finally, Alberta Education never extended the DPA mandate to Grades 10 to 12. No reason was found as to why this mandate did not become policy; however, Robinson and Melnychuk (2008) noted that "some educators and administrators are realizing that DPA is actually not worth fighting for in their schools ... [and] administrators have successfully taken up the battle to keep DPA out of their schools" (p 249).

## Implementation and Time Challenges

From the outset of the initiative there was concern about the lack of direction and support given to principals and schools about how to effectively implement the DPA initiative. Research shows that the initiative was mandated to school-based administrators to implement without any concrete evidence on how to effectively apply it in their schools. While some principals appreciated the flexibility, others left it up to teachers to decide how best to fit DPA into their schedules.

Many principals chose to offer daily physical education (DPE) to meet the mandate. At the induction of the DPA initiative, daily PE classes were offered by 40 per cent more schools (Alberta Education 2008). The benefits of this are significant; if more students are receiving PE on a daily basis, then physical activity is increasing for the students in these schools. On the other hand, lack of trained and knowledgeable teachers and facility space was still a concern. There cannot be an increase in DPE in schools without the facilities and staff to ensure that the program can operate successfully. With only 47.3 per cent of schools having a physical education (PE) specialist on staff, not all schools could offer DPE (Kennedy et al 2010).

To further the problem, classroom teachers were then expected to implement DPA. Classroom teachers had “limited resources combined, in some cases, with no professional preparation in either physical education instruction or quality knowledge pertaining to physical activity planning” (Chorney 2009, 13). With lack of PD, resources and knowledgeable teachers, the implementation of the initiative was facing even more difficulties.

Principals struggled to ensure space and time for DPA. As winter set in, the struggle for the indoor space required for activity hit its peak. Teachers needed space to run DPA but were met with competition for time and lack of knowledge. Teachers also felt the time pinch because DPA was in competition with academics. The increased pressure for core curriculum and provincial achievement tests (PATs), and the fact that many classroom teachers were expected to implement DPA, caused a rift within schools (Langille and Rogers 2010; Robinson and Melnychuk 2008; Alberta Education 2008). Teachers and principals alike recognized that the focus of

schools is still on academics, because that is the quantitative yardstick by which success is traditionally measured. DPA does not fall into that academic category (Langille and Rogers 2010) and, therefore, is often not seen as a priority.

Once again the majority of the evidence established these concerns in the early years after the launch of DPA, but there seems to be little to no current data to determine if any changes have been made to address these concerns.

## Monitoring and Accountability

The purpose of the literature review by Bates (2006) and the survey by Alberta Education was to aid in the continual monitoring and adaptation of the DPA initiative. Bates (2006) made four recommendations: (1) some type of self-report instrument should be used to assess PA as a component of data collection, (2) pedometers should be used to objectively measure PA for data collection, (3) self-report and objective measures should be used in conjunction with each other and (4) strategies need to be developed to better evaluate and disseminate promising practices in school-based PA. Recommendations presented by Alberta Education (2008) included (1) creating DPA booklets or tip sheets, (2) providing opportunities to share DPA success strategies, (3) creating mentorship opportunities and (4) creating a healthy school analysis tool. Currently, there is a paucity of evidence to demonstrate that any of these recommendations have been followed.

The available literature pinpointed the lack of monitoring and accountability as a major roadblock to the DPA initiative’s ability to function in schools. Without this key element in place, there is no reason for principals and teachers to ensure that the mandate is being met. Without any current information, no empirical conclusions can be drawn; however, it is clear that since the beginning of the DPA initiative there was no way for schools to monitor DPA. It would appear that principals were given no direction on how to ensure accountability to Alberta Education to prove that their schools are meeting the requirements of the DPA initiative. Once again, the lack of current information is alarming.

## Recommendations

It is evident that Alberta Education must facilitate another review of the DPA initiative. New, relevant data is necessary to ensure that this mandate receives the attention it deserves. Without current data, recommendations can be made only from qualitative or policy reports that are now unequivocally outdated.

Based on the literature found, it is clear that there are three key areas that need to be improved. The first is improved direction from Alberta Education. Evidence-based suggestions on best practice for implementation of the DPA initiative are an important element for the success of this program. Principals could use the information established by Alberta Education and still be granted the flexibility in determining how to implement it. The second is support for schools. This needs to come in the form of increased funding for facilities, equipment, PD and hiring of specialized teachers. This will allow for principals and teachers to have the resources to ensure effective delivery of the initiative. Last, in order to show progress at the school level, teachers need an effective way to monitor the DPA endeavours at the student level and administrators need an accountability tool. These will ensure that the DPA initiative is constantly being monitored and revised for best results.

The reality, however, is that more research needs to be done on the current state of the DPA initiative, because these recommendations are based on limited and outdated data.

## Conclusion

The Alberta Education (2008) survey found that “a total of 53.5% of respondents indicated that 100% of students in Grades 1 to 9 in their schools were active for a minimum of 30 minutes per day” (p 25). Information like this highlights the challenges facing the DPA initiative since its commencement. The initiative undoubtedly allows for an improvement of physical activity in Alberta children, and it is acknowledged as an important initiative in all articles. However, it is clear that it has not lived up to its full potential within all Alberta schools. The

DPA initiative undoubtedly lacked input, support, accountability and monitoring from the beginning and created stress for the principals and teachers expected to implement it. The problem now, 11 years later, is the lack of any information on the current state of this important initiative. Without any current data it is unclear how or if the DPA initiative is performing in Alberta schools.

Due to the unique position schools have to make an impact on overall student health, the Alberta Education DPA initiative has undeniable value within the education system. However, the current state of research, or lack thereof, shows that there are clear barriers to this program’s success. In order to see any real improvement in both the DPA initiative and students’ physical activity levels, it is essential that these barriers be addressed with practical guidelines for schools, funding and accountability measures.

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# One PE Teacher's Analysis of Adolescent Female Perceptions and Participation in Physical Activity and Physical Education

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*Shelagh McCracken*

A large part of my master's degree in school administration was spent completing an action research study. As a physical education (PE) teacher looking toward a future in administration I was torn when choosing a topic to commit two years of my life to. I wondered how I could stay true to my interests while honouring the focus of my school board. As much as I tried to delve into the pedagogy topic of the day, I often returned to thoughts of my experiences and passions in physical activity and sport. I am also a middle school teacher, which means that I teach a unique demographic of students who experience significant changes throughout their time at my school.

Manitoba Education (2010) published a report to provide an in-depth understanding of middle school students in order to maximize student engagement. The report indicated that addressing the following key areas could improve middle school education: developing a deeper understanding of adolescents, nurturing stronger peer and teacher relationships, increasing voice and choice, and encouraging involvement of parents and community. I began thinking about my passions at work as a PE teacher—areas such as building and maintaining purposeful relationships, striving to include reluctant and lower-skilled participants, increasing overall participation of my students while maintaining their dignity, and increasing student confidence. Building physical literacy in my students to enable them to use their bodies effectively and competently in life is also an important part of my job.

My thoughts turned to the girls in the PE classes at my school, where I have observed that some girls do not enjoy PE. Some, especially girls in Grades 8 and 9, avoid PE class by not changing, being late and/or consistently bringing excuse notes; others appear to lack the confidence to participate fully or

to their true abilities. I have also seen this specific female population subtly giving up their spots in line when playing a game, or congregating with friends to visit instead of participating. Frequently during game play, I have seen boys noticeably take over—often not excluding the girls purposefully, but the boys' aggressive tactics seem to deter some female participation. Girls have frequently reported that the pressure to be athletically successful in front of their peers overwhelms them to the point of preferring not to participate fully.

As a physical education teacher, I began reflecting on which conditions in our school and my classes hinder and which ones facilitate female participation so that girls can feel more successful in their PE programs. My action research was born! I set out to investigate the impact of an all-female Grade 8 PE class on perceptions about and engagement in physical activity and physical education. Exploring perceived barriers and successes that affect female participation in physical activity (PA) and physical education (PE) is important in determining what patterns exist. This knowledge informs my practice and the practice of my colleagues as we challenge the girls in our classes to participate fully. Supporting girls in recognizing and overcoming barriers may also assist in their responsiveness to interventions that could increase participation in physical activity and physical education classes.

The participation of adolescent girls in PA and PE has been thoroughly researched. Conclusions indicate that girls' participation in physical activity decreases as they become adolescents, and adolescent activity levels are often maintained as adults (Camacho-Minano, LaVoi and Barr-Anderson 2011; Constantinou, Manson and Silverman 2009; Fairclough et al 2012). Many effective interventions associated with increasing

female adolescent participation in physical activity and physical education are school-based. Enright and O'Sullivan (2010) noted that allowing girls to negotiate their curriculum gave students more ownership of their learning, made learning more important and increased student participation in PE class. Fairclough et al (2012) delivered choice-based lessons in a supportive, cooperative setting with positive teacher feedback, which proved to increase the motivation and physical activity habits of the students. Brooks and Magnusson (2006) offered a modified a PE program that focused on participation and considered adolescents' opinions. Camacho-Minano, LaVoi and Barr-Anderson (2011) found success by offering choice and noncompetitive activities.

For my action research study, 21 Grade 8 girls voluntarily participated in a 16-week all-female PE option class. Scheduling conflicts required the class to be an option, so these 21 students would also participate in their regular PE class each day. This likely affected the type of participants who volunteered for the class because many of the girls were already highly active and many already had positive perceptions of PA and PE. I found examples of successful interventions, including providing choice and allowing for a negotiated curriculum, from a literature review and used them in the class to encourage participation. In year one of the study I was also able to teach a 12-day all-female Grade 8 PE class that occurred during regularly scheduled PE classes.

During the study, I collected quantitative and qualitative data; the results indicated that empowering and encouraging female adolescents could improve their perception of and participation in PA and PE. Seventy per cent of girls said they joined the class for enjoyment and to be without the boys, which increased to 87 per cent on the post survey. As aligned with the literature review, 93 per cent of the girls in the class stated the class met their expectations because it was fun, allowed for more choice and had a small class size. The focus group responses toward perceptions were similar to the open-ended responses; for example, all focus group members said they joined the class to have fun. When asked about the advantages of not having boys in class, seven out of nine girls in the

focus group said they felt they could participate more without boys in the class. During the post-focus group interview, four members indicated that they joined the class to be away from the exclusionary practices and judgment of the boys. Seven out of nine also said that having choice was why they liked the class. The focus group discussed the boys' judgments and "purposeful" interruptions as a hindrance to participating. The findings also suggested that after participating in the all-female class, the girls increased their participation levels when they were participating in front of boys in regular PE classes. This indicated that the girls not only perceived that the boys were including them more, but that their participation increased when boys were present. Having voice and choice of activities may have increased the participants' positive attitude toward new activities. Participating without boys present may have allowed for an increase in teacher interaction with students, which also could have increased the overall perception of finding new activities exciting. I observed behavioural and participatory changes during classes, as students participated with more confidence in the all-female class than in their regular PE classes. The students' body language and verbal interactions were observed to be more boisterous, more supportive and more frequent than in a regular PE class.

The need to shape and influence the behaviours and beliefs of female and male adolescents became apparent in this study. Adolescent classes taught with the intent of forming positive relationships may increase the participation rates of females and may teach the males how to interact in a supportive, caring manner. Focusing on developing positive interactions between males and females is important for both groups to coexist and find success while participating together. Building relationships between male and female students is an important aspect of a PE teacher's practice and should be taught with intent.

The importance of increasing female participation and improving perceptions needs to be addressed as the vast majority of female adolescents decrease their activity levels in middle and high school. The confidence of the females in PA and PE needs to be readdressed at the middle and high school levels

where lifelong habits are created. This confidence may initially need to be built in a segregated PE setting or a setting where choice is given, such as competitive versus recreational PE classes. This setting may be limited to a month or two in which females reluctant to participate can gain the confidence to participate with the males in the class, and males are taught how to interact appropriately with the females. A segregated PE class should be offered as a choice in lieu of regular PE and not an additional class, so that participants who would benefit from the class can be recruited in hopes of finding success without having to take an additional PE class. Adding segregated PE classes may require innovative scheduling and potentially more funding for the addition of classes. The funding for such courses may be compensated by a decrease in long-term health care costs, as such courses may increase the pursuit of lifelong healthy lifestyles. Professional development for educators will also assist in increasing awareness of the unique needs of the female population. This awareness will provide educators with insights on how to provide enriched learning environments. Purposeful planning is needed to implement successful interventions.

The health and wellness of today's youth continues to be an important topic for families, educators and governments alike. All parties have a vested interest in assisting in the development of healthy members of society. As North Americans continue their love affair with fast food and attachment to technology, our youth are becoming increasingly malnourished and sedentary. Numerous studies have provided conclusive evidence that physical activity improves or maintains cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body composition, bone density, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, and aspects of mental health (Haerens et al 2006; Tremblay et al 2011; Vu et al 2006). Physically active adolescent girls are more likely to develop into healthy women who are satisfied with life and productive at work, and who are not a burden to the health care system. Exploring factors that affect girls' participation in PA and PE is a key component in enabling physical educators to effectively program for the unique needs of this population. Physical educators at the middle school level have a

responsibility to help their female adolescent population reach their potential and realize the benefits of participating in lifelong physical activity. Physically literate students move with competence across a wide range of physical activities, and developing physical literacy in youth will enable them to live an active life (PHE Canada 2015). Providing a school setting for this population, where students and PE staff can explore the benefits of a healthy lifestyle together, may affect and increase the lifelong activity levels of the participants. Middle school can be considered an important transition time, when adolescents either maintain or improve their PA levels, or decrease their activity levels for life. Female students are unique in that their PA and participation in PE decrease as they age (McKenzie 2001). Implementing an all-female program could increase participation and improve perceptions of PA and PE.

This study did not change the world, but it changed me and it affected a small group of young women at my school. My study was dedicated to girls and women everywhere who have been able to overcome obstacles to see and feel the importance of physical activity and physical education, and especially to those who may still struggle. There are students who still have obstacles to overcome. In fact, my studies suggested a need to create a future targeted group comprising reluctant PE participants, both male and female, who could receive personalized programming in order to succeed. There is work to do, and as physical educators we need to continue advocating for and creating programs that better meet the needs of the female population.

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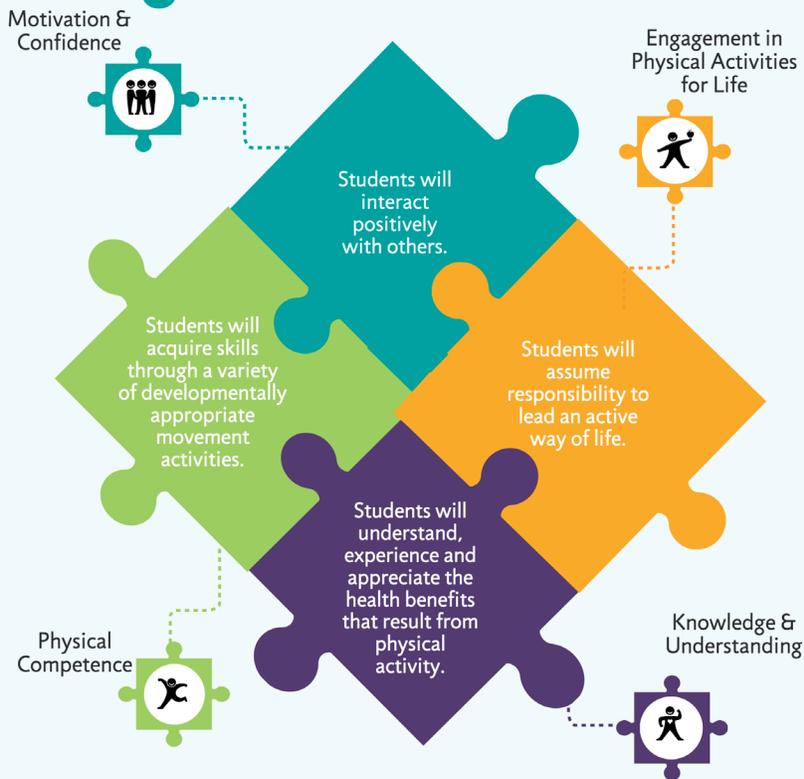
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# PHYSICAL LITERACY

Physical Literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. ~ International Physical Literacy Association, May 2014

Physical Literacy lives in the Alberta Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study.

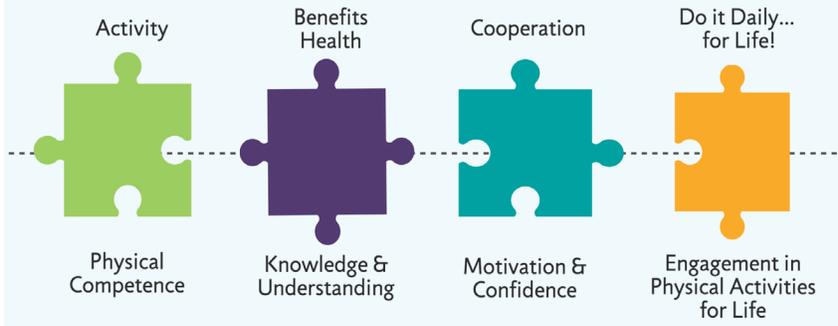
The aim of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Physical Education Program of Studies is to enable individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead an active healthy lifestyle.



The definition of #physicalliteracy includes four essential & interconnected elements whose importance will change throughout a student's time in school, and throughout their life.

The more puzzle pieces we have, the larger the picture we see.

## General Outcomes



## Essential Elements

### Core Principles

- ✘ is an inclusive concept accessible to ALL students
- ✘ represents a unique journey for each individual
- ✘ can be cultivated and enjoyed through a range of experiences in different environments and contexts
- ✘ needs to be valued and nurtured throughout life
- ✘ contributes to the development of the WHOLE student

References:  
\*International Physical Literacy  
Association  
\*Alberta Physical Education  
Program of Studies



Supporting Healthy School  
Communities in Alberta



# Tune Out to Tune In: Do Students Desire a Connection with the Outdoors by Way of Technology?

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*Ken Jorgensen*

Has the way that young people experience the outdoors really changed all that much? If so, does finding out how students wish to connect with nature really matter? Perhaps it is enough that they are given opportunities to be in the outdoors, living experiences that they can get nowhere else. Does the constant access to portable wireless technology ruin or enhance the experiences of the student participants? In my 20 years as a trip leader, there has been a colossal change in the way that students experience outdoor adventures. Students truly have an expectation that they can and should have access to their mobile devices and technology at all times. Certainly the societal push is to always be connected. Just look at the recent wireless service commercials showing people enjoying the remote wilderness with cellular connections by which to send back their impressive selfies.

Is it an essential component of a modern nature experience to have technology along for the ride? Steven Spielberg questioned this when he suggested that

Technology can be our best friend, and technology can also be the biggest party pooper of our lives. It interrupts our own story, interrupts our ability to have a thought or a daydream, to imagine something wonderful, because we're too busy bridging the walk from the cafeteria back to the office on the cell phone. (Kennedy 2002)

As a mature trip leader, I have a perspective that a cell phone is not a necessary component of an outdoor excursion. So how do you keep your students from checking their texts and e-mail while they happen to have their phone out to take the photo? And does it really matter? There has to be a happy medium for the acceptable application of technology in the wild. What effect does being constantly connected really have on our kids, and can they appreciate any benefits of tuning out for periods of time on wilderness trips?

Students from two Calgary public high schools were administered an online survey followed by a small focus group interview during December and January of 2015–16. Students that had been or were currently enrolled in an outdoor pursuits course during their high school career, or had participated in extended overnight trips, were selected to participate in the survey and focus group interviews.

A series of questions were used as a guide to help facilitate discussion surrounding the students' perceptions of technology usage and how it affects the trips they have participated in. From the results, it was evident that there was a clear desire by students to physically have their devices on these outdoor excursions, but the students also showed a strong interest in being able to disconnect from the social media component of technology for an extended period of time.

So, do students desire a connection with the outdoors by way of technology? The simple answer appears to be "not necessarily."

We experience technological overload. We live a life where connecting is everything. Even at school we are expected to connect, with the Internet or D2L. Everything we do has a nature of connectedness to it. Sometimes I just want to relax and not have to worry about anything.

It is hard to disconnect if you have it. If I have service (cellular) I will use my phone. It is a habit that is pretty hard to break. Sometimes I just need a push in the right direction.

The participants agreed unanimously that the teacher in charge of the group was the key figure who could provide this push and ultimately would ensure their success in giving up their phones, or specifically the connected aspects of the device, for the duration of the trip. Many respondents indicated that having the teacher as a "scapegoat" worked

really well in terms of giving the student a guilt-free out if someone back home questioned why they had abandoned their online presence for a few days. The participants felt that being able to lay the responsibility for their behaviour on the teacher supervisor, if necessary, was very helpful in the initial stages of giving up their devices.

While the respondents indicated that they had a desire to have access to their cell phone during the trip for taking photographs and videos, they also indicated a desire to disconnect and really experience the outdoor activities.

The purpose of outdoor ed is to disconnect. We all want to be here to try something new in the outdoors. I do not want to miss any moments because my nose was stuck in my phone. I want to make memories with people I maybe normally would not even talk with at school.

Understanding that many of the study participants had common sets of goals for themselves before embarking on their outdoor adventures helps to understand why there were so many similar responses in terms of the overall expectations of these trips.

I go hiking to get away. I do not need to worry about other people. If I feel like talking to someone on the trail, I will. If not, that's OK too ... silence is comfortable. You get more comfortable with people as you actually get to know them. I am not going to talk to someone on the trail for six hours straight.

Ultimately, the participants had a consistent message that they really wanted the opportunity to get to know the people on their trip, and as a group they saw the benefits of being disconnected in order to achieve that goal.

Playing real games together as a group helps us to connect. It is those challenges that do help us bond together. It doesn't have to be fancy—just hanging around and playing cards was great. Otherwise we would just revert to old habits and would probably sit around with our faces in our phones worrying about what is happening 100 kilometres away instead of interacting with the people right in front of us.

One of the final items of note was that 100 per cent of the respondents indicated that they felt a tangible decrease in their overall stress levels when their cell phone access was restricted, and an increase as soon as their cell phones were given back to them.

This was such a break from reality. We are always connected 24-7, so this was awesome. It actually felt like we were far away on an adventure. After a while I did not even think about my phone, and didn't really care [because] I was having so much fun. But as soon as we were back on the bus and our phones were given back, I turned it on and it went crazy with alerts. I felt like "Ohhh, it's starting already." I was so relaxed for the past two days.

## Conclusions

It is evident, given the limitations of this rather small sample size, that there is a desire by these students to break from reality and disconnect from what they consider to be the real world. It is also apparent that trips without a cellular device decreased the overall stress levels of the participants.

As more and more cellular providers push connectivity into areas that were once considered remote, the opportunities to be truly out of touch will become more limited. The students commented that phone usage was a habit, and with no real incentive or reason to break this habit, behaviours tend to continue unchecked. On trips where cellular access was nonexistent, phone usage was or would also be a non-issue.

On the other side of the coin, the participants also acknowledged that the advances in technology had indeed provided opportunities in the backcountry that were never available before. The students indicated that they would bring a cellular phone on an extended trip as a safety device, even if it were left in the bottom of their pack. The positive aspects of using technology as a tool certainly outweighed the negative implications of accessing social media. Like any good tool, however, its ultimate utility lies in the hands of the user.

The technological limitations and specific restrictions that the participants encountered were put into place by the teacher in charge of the trips that all of the students engaged in. It would be interesting to see

whether young people would be willing or able to put these same kinds of restrictions on themselves, or whether the trip leader is indeed the ultimate facilitator for learning this type of new behaviour. Would young people recognize the potential benefits of disengaging from the outside world while on a trip of their own choosing, or is this truly a case of what Peter Khan (2011) calls environmental generational amnesia?

All of us construct a conception of what is environmentally normal based on the natural world we encounter in childhood. The crux is that with each ensuing generation, the amount of environmental degradation can and usually does increase, but each generation tends to take that degraded condition as the nondegraded condition; as the normal experience. (p 165)

As a trip leader that grew up without the potential for cellular reception on a backcountry trip, my “normal condition” is to not feel the need to be connected on an excursion. I struggle with the value of cellular connection outside of the safety aspects indicated by the respondents. All of the students in the study, however, have grown up

with widespread cellular access; hence, their expectation of the degraded condition of full cellular access everywhere is indeed their “normal” experience. I wonder if modern trip leaders will be willing to impose cellphone restrictions on trips if they, too, are as integrated in the social media world as their students.

There can be no doubt that the students recognized the value of having their cellular devices on hand to record photos and videos of their adventures in the outdoors. It is also clear that the students appreciated being given the opportunity to be free of the shackles of the technology that they so willingly embrace on a day-to-day basis. What remains to be seen is whether truly being unplugged on wilderness excursions will become an experience that is undervalued, unrecognized and eventually unused.

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# Award Winners

*Editor's note: the articles in this section have been contributed by HPEC members who received awards from the council. Madeleine Wise received a Friends of HPEC grant; Kris Horb, Charlene Saunders and Suzanne Beckett received HPEC membership grants.*

## Our Journey Together Toward Wellness: École St. Cecilia

*Madeleine Wise*

I am a fairly new teacher. I started teaching kindergarten at École St Cecilia in Calgary three years ago, fresh out of school myself.

We are a close-knit school that feels like a family. We have wonderfully dedicated teachers and an outstanding group of parent volunteers. We are very involved in community-oriented endeavours: fundraising, volunteerism, awareness and school sponsorship (schools in need). We are a very giving school because we know how fortunate we are; however, there is one thing that our school has been lacking: a cohesive health program.

In the first year of our program (2015/16), we established a wellness committee, led by two teacher representatives, one each from Division I (me) and Division II. This committee also has a student voice because it includes Grade 5 students as well. The committee will establish the educational needs of students and staff surrounding nutrition, physical activities and mental health (primarily anger, stress and anxiety management). This will be done by discussions and surveys. Teachers have already started "The Zones of Regulation" in our classrooms. This focuses on teaching the students to try to understand where their feelings are coming from and how to talk about them. We also hope to send eight students and two teachers to a workshop on empowering school teams, Resilience as a Path to Healthy School Communities: Lessons Learned from Indigenous Teachings. Our vision is to implement our wellness program through play and really just have fun with it. We want to inspire the students to want to make healthy choices independently.

In order to get on the right track we are using a comprehensive school health approach, in partnership with Alberta Health Services.

As a team, we will create a school action plan based on the guidance and strategies provided by Alberta Health Services comprehensive school health resources and the school nurse. We will complete the action plan template, which will enable us to reflect and then prepare for the aspects of which we would like to focus on for our school community's well-being this year (nutritional, physical and mental).

We will

1. create a shared vision,
2. determine the priority issues,
3. develop an action plan,
4. implement and monitor, and
5. reflect, evaluate and celebrate.

Families are busy, and an easy go-to for school lunches are the more expensive prepared meals, many of which tend to have less nutritional value and more preservatives than a traditional sandwich. I have noticed that my little kindergarteners have lots of screen time, which can affect sleep. Educating students about the variety of healthy options available to them is our goal. We would like students to be able to choose healthy alternatives for themselves. We are so excited to start this program, to be able to foster healthy skill sets and habits for the students of St Cecilia. Wellness education is integral because it nurtures the whole self and establishes healthy practices that will follow the children throughout their life.

# Cannons and Boulders

Kris Horb

## Equipment

Beanbags, to use as targets (8)

Pylons, for targets (8)

Rhino Skin dodgeballs, for cannons (15)

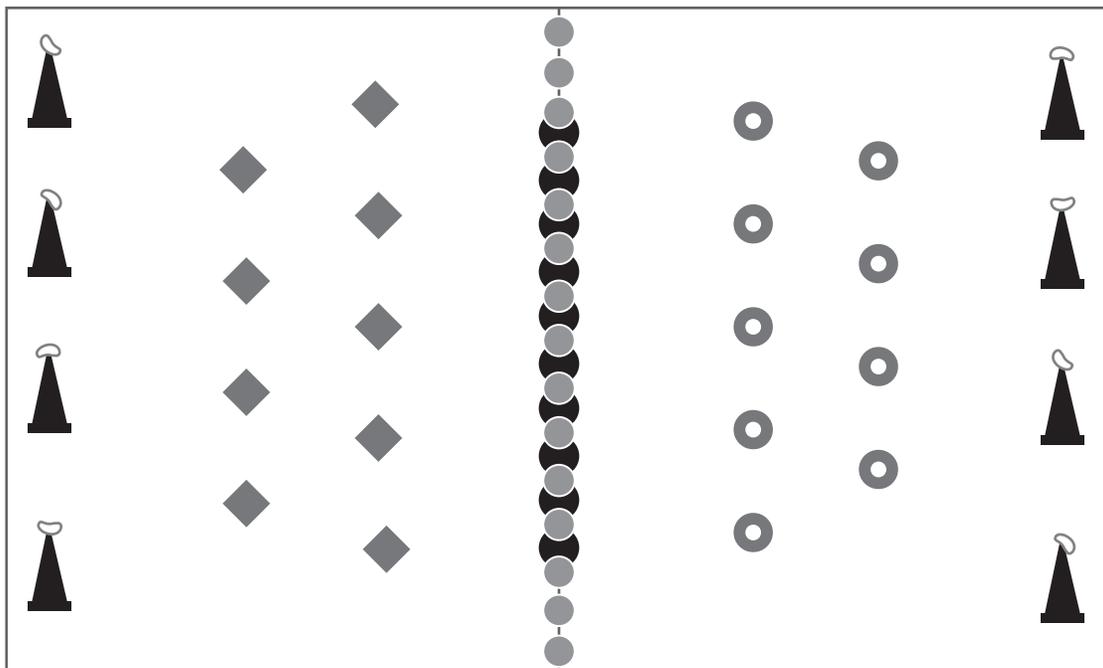
Playground rubber balls, for boulders (10)

## How to Set Up

Divide the class into two teams. Place four pylons at each end of the gym, with a beanbag on top of each pylon. Place all the cannons and boulders on the centre line in the middle of the gym and have each team start on the wall behind its targets.

## Rules

- Players on each team try to guard their targets and knock down their opponents' targets at the same time.
- The students get to decide whether they will guard or attack, and are able to switch at any time throughout the game.
- Cannons can only be thrown and boulders can only be rolled—no kicking either ball.
- If a target is hit and the beanbag falls off, the target has been destroyed and the guard must find another target to guard. If a guard accidentally knocks off their own beanbag, they must leave it on the ground and move to another target.
- Once one team has destroyed the other team's targets, the game is over and all cannons and boulders are placed back in the centre of the gym to start again.



# Grinchy Claus

Charlene Saunders

## Introduction

The game Grinchy Claus is a low-organizational, large-group game. It is a Christmas adaptation of the many versions of Quidditch games that are played in physical education (PE) classes. It works best in a gym but could easily work outdoors. The purpose of the activity is to develop skills in chasing, fleeing and throwing for accuracy. Students rotate through each of the positions during the game, which gives them varied roles. The game is very continuous and chaotic!

## Materials Needed

- Gator Skin balls (snow balls)
- Foam Frisbees
- One bouncy ball (present/gift)
- Four cones per side with toys on top (toys are any object that will balance on the cone)
- Four sets of different-coloured pinnies for each team

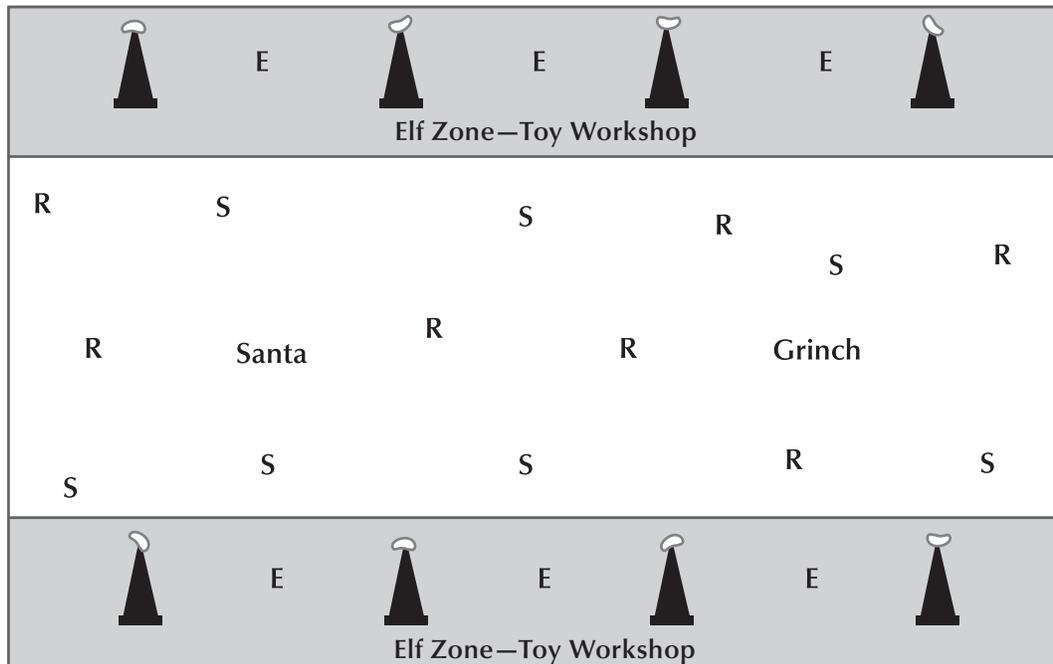
## Rules

1. To begin the game, players are assigned their positions. Each team includes the following positions, each with a specific role:
  - a. **Grinch/Santa**—one team has a Grinch and one team has a Santa who, when the “present” is thrown, try to get it and score 20 points for their team.
  - b. **Reindeer**—there are three or four reindeer per team. They are the players who throw the foam Frisbees at one of the toys and score 10 points for their team by knocking a toy to the floor.
  - c. **Snowmen** (or taggers)—there are three or four snowmen per team. These are the players that use the snow balls and try to tag the Grinch/Santa, reindeer and the other team’s snowmen.
  - d. **Elves**—there are three or four elves that try to protect the toys. They also repair the toys by placing them back on top of the pylons when they are knocked off.

Note: Each role has a designated colour of pinnie. Each team should have extra players along the sideline. These players will switch into the game on a continual basis as their teammates are substituted. This allows team members to play all of the positions.

## Substitution Rules

- a. Any player, except an elf, who is tagged by a snowman must sub off. They hand their pinnie to a teammate on the sidelines who then enters the game, taking over their position.
  - b. Elves sub off after replacing four toys on the cones.
  - c. Players who sub off wait along the sideline and fill the next position available. Players are therefore constantly re-entering the game at a different position.
2. The game begins with all of the players on their own side of the court. When the whistle goes, players may move anywhere in the gym except in the other team’s toy factory.
  3. Each team has a toy factory along its end line, where the toys are placed on top of pylons. Create a line where the other team’s reindeer have to throw the Frisbees from. Reindeer may go into the end zone to retrieve a Frisbee but cannot throw from within the zone. Each time a reindeer knocks over a toy they must run to the scorekeeper and report 10 points.
  4. Throughout the game, the referee (teacher) will throw the present (bouncy ball). The Grinch and Santa chase down the bouncy ball and return it to the referee to earn their team 20 points. They are the only players that can go after the bouncy ball.
  5. The snowmen are continuously trying to tag the other team’s Grinch/Santa, snowmen and reindeer, thus forcing them to switch off with someone on their sideline.
  6. Either a time limit or a score limit can be set for the game. The game can easily be played for 30 minutes, allowing each student to play a variety of positions.



**E** - Elves

**S** - Snowmen

**R** - Reindeer

Each team has an end zone where the elves set up toys.

Reindeer must throw the Frisbees at the toys from outside the zone.

All players except elves can go anywhere in the gym.

*The Grinchy Claus game was invented by the author and is freely offered for use by way of publication in Runner.*

# Tennis in Physical Education ... And I Promise It Doesn't Have to Be Scary!

*Suzanne Beckett*

Have you longed for a racquet sport in your class besides badminton and pickleball? One you can enjoy outside with your class? Were you scared to try tennis because “it’s too difficult”? Well, here are the basics of the forehand and backhand to teach your kids as well as a few fun ways to get tennis into your class.

The following is an adaptation of Tennis Canada’s first lesson for Grades 6 to 9.<sup>1</sup> The lesson outcome is that students will be able to strike forehand and backhand groundstrokes over a net.

<sup>1</sup> Note that Tennis Canada’s lessons are designed to meet the learning outcomes of provincial physical education curricula. For more information, visit [www.tenniscanada.com/community/tennis-for-schools](http://www.tenniscanada.com/community/tennis-for-schools).



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<b>Getting Ready</b>	
<p><b>Activity: Racquet and ball control</b></p> <p>Although this may seem basic for students in Grades 6 to 9, I have seen success with challenging the students to go off the sides of their racquets or off the bottom of the handle. This adds interest for the “bored” ones.</p> <p>The students self rally<sup>2</sup> the ball while moving around one half of the court. They must complete the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self toss, bounce, strike the ball up into the air with the racquet, then catch on racquet.</li> <li>2. Bounce the ball off the racquet up into the air (only head height), let the ball hit the ground and strike again (I make this into a competition to see who can go longest).</li> <li>3. Continuously bounce the ball off the racquet (no contact on the ground). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In pairs, standing sideways to one another two metres apart, students share a ball by striking it back and forth with one bounce between strikes, using a line on the ground as the net.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Note:</b> All drills and games are to be played on mini courts, using only the area to the service line, to encourage control.</p> <p><b>Key Cues</b>  Keep your wrist firm.  Keep your body sideways to the target.  Keep the ball in front of your body.  Strike the ball at knee to waist level.</p>
<b>VARIATIONS</b>	
<p>Less challenging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to remain stationary.</li> <li>• Allow multiple touches (self rallies) before passing to their partner.</li> </ul>	<p>More challenging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternate forehand/backhand side of racquet.</li> <li>• Use a shared target in between students and have them try to hit it each time (flat target)</li> </ul>
<p><b>GAME</b></p> <p>Bingo is a great game for every level. This game has many variations as well, listed to the side.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The object of the game is to spell <i>bingo</i>, either with a partner or as individuals.</li> <li>• Line students up with their partners standing across from them along one line of the court (or in the gym).</li> <li>• Call out a number [of strikes] the students have to get (I usually start low, with two or three).</li> <li>• Whoever calls <i>BINGO</i> first has the letter B. This continues, with you controlling the number, until someone finishes spelling the word.</li> <li>• I like to throw in a zero every so often to see if they are paying attention!</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bingo Variations</b></p> <p>Stay with same partner.  Individual self rallies.  Have an anchor and rotate through partners.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Self rally is to bounce the ball off the racquet, into the air (NOT into the ground), let it drop, then repeat. A self rally does not go over the net and should be hit no higher than head height. Also make sure students have their racquets facing the sky when they hit so that the ball isn't hit away from them. The point of a self rally is control.

Ready to Learn	
<p><b>Activity: Striking a ball (groundstroke) and recovery</b></p> <p>Recovery is so important in tennis—in any racquet sport. Make sure the kids have a specific “dot” they can recover to after each shot so they are ready for the next one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in pairs, one student tosses a ball (gentle underhand) to his partner, who returns the ball using a forehand groundstroke. Repeat using backhand (to adjust from self rally, simply have the racquet strings face the target, still using an upward motion). Continue, making sure students recover to “home base.”</li> <li>• Working in pairs, students share a ball and practise shots together, with only a toss at the beginning. Remind them that it does not have to be a rocket; we are trying to help our partners learn!</li> <li>• These can be done without the net at first, over a line on the ground.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> All drills and games are to be played on mini courts, using only the area to the service line, to encourage control.</p> <p><b>Key Cues</b>            Keep your wrist firm.            Keep your body sideways to the target.            Keep the ball in front of your body.            Strike the ball at knee to waist level.</p>
VARIATIONS	
<p>Less challenging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow multiple bounces (I don’t like this because it hurts them in the games we can play).</li> <li>• Allow forehand shots only.</li> </ul>	<p>More challenging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the net instead of a line on the court.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GAME</b></p> <p>Bingo can be played again here, or a game called Bump. Be aware of major cheating in this game!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide your courts into three even playing spaces using small pylons.</li> <li>• Each mini court has a designated number of rallies assigned to it. I start the bottom with 2 or 3, depending on the level of my students.</li> <li>• Students need to <i>bump</i> other teams to make their way to the top.</li> <li>• To get ahead, they must get the number on their court before the team ahead of them or the team behind them does. If successful, they <i>bump</i> the next team down and switch courts. It is also possible to double- and even triple-bump, but you have to be wary of cheating!</li> <li>• The objective is for students to practise groundstrokes, so the ball <i>must</i> bounce in between rallies to count.</li> <li>• Once on the top court, students try to “set the record” by getting as many rallies as possible before getting bumped.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Cues</b></p> <p>Keep the ball in the middle of the strings.            Keep the face of the racquet moving toward the target.            Recover to home base.</p>

## Ready to Play

### **Activity: Winner Up (King's Court)**

Now you can stop the “When are we going to play real tennis?” questions and have them try their forehand and backhand groundstrokes in a more competitive environment. The serve is simply a groundstroke over the net or line, or students can toss to serve. I never allow a point to be won on the first two hits, so missing a serve or the return is not a point in this game.

- Boundaries are half of a court, only to the service line, again emphasizing control.
- Students play games to 7 points, winning a point only after two [or more] successful rallies.
- You can play with three players per half court to maximize space, having the player who loses a point switch with the person standing at the net post.
- The serving player must call their score first, even if they are losing. Any discrepancies are fixed with a best-of-one rock–paper–scissors.
- When a player reaches 7, they call “Winner up.”
- Everyone freezes. Winning players move half a court toward the top court (as you have designated it), middle players (if playing with three per court) stay on the same court and the player with the fewest points moves down half a court. After the switch, begin again.

Eventually the game will even itself out so a similar level of players are playing against one another. I usually make my better players start in the middle so they have to work to move up.

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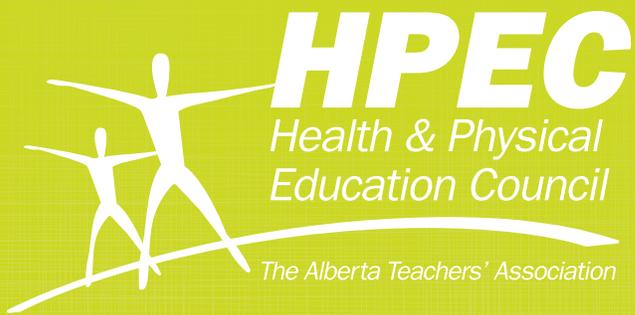
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The Journal of the Health & Physical Education Council  
of The Alberta Teachers' Association

ISSN 0707-3186  
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11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association