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PAMPHLET

EXTRACURRICULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

To encourage young people to be physically active on a regular basis, schools need to plan and offer physical and sports activities that correspond not only to students' interests and preferences, but also to their developmental stage. At the elementary level, extracurricular activities should refrain from early specialization and focus on providing a variety of games and opportunities for self-expression, cooperation and healthy competition. At the secondary level, extracurricular activities at lunchtime or after school should include more than just competitive interscholastic and traditional sports programs.

This pamphlet is intended for elementary and secondary schools who would like to offer a diverse selection of extracurricular physical activities or improve the existing selection. The program offering should target not only students who are already very active, but also those who are less active.



A. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN ACTIVITY SELECTION

Allowing students of different age groups and from both sexes (with different interests and tastes) to participate in the selection of activities is a better way of helping to meet their needs, particularly those who are less active. Below are some suggestions on how to involve students in the decision-making process:

- > Conduct a survey among students on activities they would like to do.
- > Form an organizing committee composed of adults and students.
- > Analyze existing activities to highlight those that could be improved.
- > Promote activities through positive peer influence and use committed young leaders as spokespersons.
- > Allow students to assume responsibility by promoting and leading activities, refereeing, lending equipment, etc.
- > Train older students to lead activities with younger students, etc.

In order to train students to organize and lead activities, the *Acti-midi* program provides lunchtime training sessions and various other tools for adults who work with elementary school students. The program can also offer useful suggestions to secondary school staff.

www.sportetudiant.com/fre/isoActif/6303.cfm#activite%20physique

B. ACTIVITIES THAT EMPHASIZE ENJOYMENT

Laughter, sharing good times together, having fun, socializing, relaxing, meeting a personal challenge—these are all essential factors in getting the less active students hooked on regular physical activity. On the other hand, giving less playing time to players who don't excel at sports or placing too much emphasis on winning makes sports less enjoyable and often leads students to give up playing altogether.

When planning activities, schools should include cooperative games that emphasize enjoyment and good sportsmanship. For example, kinball is a sport that requires the participation of all players. For more suggestions of activities, see the enclosed tables.

C. ACTIVITIES SPECIFICALLY GEARED TO GIRLS

While 52% of boys engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day (the recommended minimum), only 32% of girls do so.¹ Schools must pay particular attention to girls so that the physical activities offered correspond to their interests as well.

The report *Les filles c'est pas pareil : rapport sur la problématique des jeunes filles et la pratique de l'activité physique* contains data on the level of physical activity among girls, their attitudes towards physical activity, the sociological factors that lead them to persist in or drop out of an activity, and suggestions and recommendations on how to improve it.

www.kino-quebec.qc.ca/scolaire.asp

The association *Égale action* also provides resources and suggestions on how to increase physical activity levels among girls.

www.egaleaction.com

1. B. Nolin, D. Hamel and P. Gamache, data to be published (Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2007).

D. CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES THAT GET STUDENTS MOVING!

Extra creativity is required to spark the interest of students who don't normally engage in physical activity and sports, and to help them develop new interests that will get them moving. Incorporating physical activity into more comprehensive projects is one way to reach less active students.

For example:

- Organize a physical fitness program when preparing a trip or an expedition.
- Introduce students to circus arts by combining physical training, theatre and makeup arts.
- Organize social and educational activities, such as discovering other cultures, by introducing aspects of physical activity that are specific to each culture. For example, introduce students to African dance by combining the discovery of African cuisine with that of African culture.

E. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

The Physical Education and Health program, as well as the Preschool Education program,² contain information on ways of developing extracurricular activities. The competencies developed in the Physical Education and Health program—Performs, Interacts and Adopts a healthy, active lifestyle—represent principles that should be taken into account when selecting lunchtime and after-school activities. The Preschool Education program contains suggestions for activities to improve motor skills. These suggestions can be used by daycare workers. Whatever the educational level—be it preschool, elementary school or secondary school—the objectives and types of activities must correspond to the chronological and biological age of the students as well as to their levels of physical and motor development.

F. ACTIVITIES FOR LIFE

There is no need to go over the immediate or future benefits of active living once again. As the Comité scientifique de Kino-Québec stated in a brief entitled *L'activité physique, déterminant de la santé des jeunes*, "teenagers who maintain a physically active lifestyle throughout adolescence will be in better physical shape as adults and thus better able to complete in little time the volume of physical activity required to benefit their health."

This brief by the Comité scientifique de Kino-Québec, published in 2000, describes the effects of physical activity on the health of young people, particularly their level of physical fitness, growth, lipid profile and mental health.
www.kino-quebec.qc.ca/scolaire.asp

The activities suggested should help young people develop competencies and skills from the perspective of acquiring healthy habits that are likely to continue for the rest of their lives.

2. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program, Preschool Education, Elementary Education* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001) and Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004).

G. JOINT EFFORTS

Because gymnasiums are often very busy places, it might be necessary to make better use of the schoolyard (see Pamphlets 5 and 6) as well as facilities around the school. Collaboration with the community (e.g. municipality, community centre, private club) starts with an inventory of equipment and services around the school to prevent duplicating local services and to maximize the selection of activities offered.

Community facilities can increase opportunities for young people to be active. Partnership agreements can be arranged to enable students to use neighbouring facilities such as a pool or a skating rink at lunchtime.

Schools can also work with municipalities to promote active transportation and ensure safe areas around the school.

Guides, resources and activities to encourage walking or cycling to school are available at:

Vélo-Québec: www.velo.qc.ca/monecole/index_e.lasso

Go for Green: www.goforgreen.ca/home_e.html

Sharing human resources can also be an interesting solution. Monitors and facilitators employed by municipalities could share their time with schools. In addition, several associations, clubs and federations provide turnkey programs to schools (e.g. kinball) or have adapted teaching guides (e.g. mini-tennis). These organizations could also partner up with schools to organize extracurricular activities. Community volunteers, such as parents, can also help optimize the selection of activities offered.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONSULT:

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www.mels.gouv.qc.ca