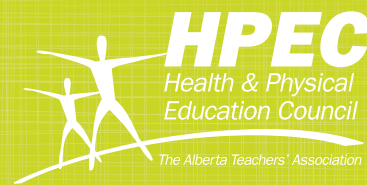


# Runner:



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



Integral Yoga as a Daily Physical Activity?

Technological Possibilities in Today's Physical Education Classroom

Teaching Can Be a Lonely Experience: Does It Have to Be?

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

- to further the continuous development and evaluation of standards and guidelines within the profession for personnel, programs and facilities in health and physical education; and
- to 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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# Runner: *The Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association*

Volume 46, Number 2, 2014

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# Editor's Message

## Bambi Is a Boy Deer: Lifelong Learning in Real Life

Dwayne Sheehan

In our world, lifelong learning is a daily reality. Teaching children constantly affords us new layers of wisdom, and those cumulative experiences help form us as educational leaders. It's similar to parenting. I remember adding all sorts of wonderful and exciting adventures to my life as a new dad. Parenting turned my level of understanding and appreciation for children upside down. There were so many things that I had no idea about, and even the things that I thought I knew, I really didn't. For example, I didn't know kids have projectile poop or that diapers typically have a little cartoon on the front to help prevent us rookie parents from putting it on backward—thank goodness for Winnie and Eeyore! Sure, things like how long babies sleep and how fast they grow were new to me, but I expected to be surprised by that. The kind of stuff that really astonished me is when my assumptions (again based on what I thought I knew) were totally wrong—like when I started reading to my son and discovered that Bambi was a boy deer! It took me some time to reconcile that with a name like Bambi and eyelashes to die for, he would become the king of the forest!

Although inspired by my kids, this editorial is not intended to be a dialogue on what I have learned as a parent but rather what I have just started to learn about our profession. I have been to several national and international health and physical education conferences in the past decade and confirmed what many HPEC presidents and physical education leaders have been telling me for years—Alberta really is a leader in the field of physical education and health.

This journal is intended to be part of your personal lifelong learning professional development commitment, and your elected HPEC executive wants to know what you think of it. In a survey conducted with HPEC members (n = 72) in November 2013, 71 per cent of the respondents were familiar with the journal, but only 45 per cent were satisfied with the content. When asked what could be done to improve the journal, 87 per cent responded that the articles should be practical, research based and of Canadian content. Also, 76 per cent would like hard and electronic copies.



Dwayne Sheehan, professor of play.

This issue of our newly branded publication (*Runner: The Journal of the Health & Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association*) offers a variety of articles written by Alberta professors and Canadian authors. I have gathered some strategically selected articles for your reading pleasure as well. As a new editor of the journal, I am committed to providing you with a professional resource that you can be proud of. I am also very interested in your thoughts and welcome your e-mail feedback to [dpsheehan@mtroyal.ca](mailto:dpsheehan@mtroyal.ca).

# President's Message

*Heather Rootsart*



After serving 15 wonderful years in various roles on the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC), I am truly honoured to serve as president.

HPEC's outstanding executive members dedicate their time to help serve you, our membership. The executive meets throughout the year to plan and work on three main areas that we have identified in our strategic plan (communication, membership engagement and leadership in curriculum and pedagogy) in an attempt to provide meaningful professional development to members. The executive members' expertise and hard work stretch across our province to ensure that Alberta's teachers are receiving ongoing, high-quality health and physical education professional development opportunities throughout the school year.

This is an exciting time for education in Alberta. As many of you know, curriculum redesign is an Alberta Education initiative designed to help bring the vision of Inspiring Education to life. Ideally it wants to ensure that Alberta students are engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit. "The goals of Curriculum Redesign are to develop revised standards and guidelines for future curriculum (programs of study, assessments, and learning and teaching resources), and revised processes for curriculum development" (Alberta Education 2013). For more information, curriculum redesign updates are available at [www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/curriculum.aspx](http://www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/curriculum.aspx).

As the curriculum redesign process is further developed throughout the province, rest assured that HPEC will be part of the discussions. Our vision of providing quality instruction and programs in health and physical education to promote the development of healthy active lifestyles in our students will be reflected.

I urge you to visit our website ([www.hpec.ab.ca](http://www.hpec.ab.ca)) regularly for updates and information on upcoming conferences, awards and other exciting news from our council and professionals in the fields of health and physical education. We welcome your feedback on these and other areas surrounding health and physical education. Please encourage your colleagues to take advantage of the ATA's free specialist council membership by choosing HPEC and becoming involved in this outstanding council.

I would like to personally invite you to attend this year's HPEC conference, "POW—The Power of Wellness," in Edmonton, May 1–3, 2014. I am excited to be one of the three conference chairs working with an amazing committee to put on a powerful conference with super sessions and networking possibilities. It is bound to be a POWERful weekend!

## Reference

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# Ever Active Schools

## 2012/13 Review

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*Brian Torrance*

Ever Active Schools (EAS) is designed to assist schools in addressing and creating healthy school communities. An initiative available to all school communities in Alberta, 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 2012/13, EAS continued to support the growth of comprehensive school health in Alberta by engaging with schools to implement strategies that support healthy school communities. EAS supported the development of school district wellness policies and strategic initiatives that focus on embedding student-centred wellness activities in school communities.



EAS supported the implementation of wellness initiatives, policy and local innovative projects.

In 2012/13, EAS worked with 738 school communities in 52 school districts in the province, supporting them through a comprehensive school health approach. Schools engaged with EAS to assess wellness in their school community and participate in a community-development process that aims to support healthy, lifelong learning.

Alberta schools are supported by the following EAS strategies:

**Collaborative partnerships:** EAS facilitates collaborative partnerships between schools and local, provincial and national organizations to support the health and learning outcomes of students in Alberta.

**Wellness education and comprehensive school health:** EAS contributes to the development and delivery of wellness-related curricula through resource development, support for the implementation of the daily physical activity initiative and the use of school planning tools that support the implementation of comprehensive school health.

**Communication and knowledge exchange:** EAS is a conduit for communication and knowledge exchange for school communities to improve student health and learning outcomes through the EAS website ([www.everactive.org](http://www.everactive.org)), newsletters, Shaping the Future conference and meetings with community organizations. EAS is a platform to promote wellness resources by providing ongoing support and informing schools of evidence-based best practices.

**Capacity building through innovative projects:** EAS is a catalyst for innovative projects, enhancing student wellness through interdisciplinary collaborative processes and support of new partnerships. Projects

empower local communities to build capacity to support wellness initiatives both in and out of school hours, and use evaluation to determine best practices that can be scaled up and shared across the province.

**Learning opportunities:** EAS provides interdisciplinary learning opportunities for students and teachers in school communities. The student-centred Healthy Active School Symposia (HASS) events focus on building competencies that support students to become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

## HASS

The Healthy Active School Symposia (HASS) are one-day events designed to provide Alberta school communities with the knowledge, skills and resources to enhance school health wellness. The events focus on empowering students to develop communication skills, opportunities to think critically about their role as school health champions and activities for participants to interact with others and work cooperatively with their school wellness team. The events support the development of wellness, including physical activity, healthy eating and creating a positive social environment in school communities. This is accomplished by allowing the students to be the active agents in building a school environment that fosters their personal growth and well-being.

Logistically HASS is just a one-day event, but it is the catalyst for continued wellness in a school community. It brings together school teams, and the ripple effect of the interactions and learnings of the day has a great effect on the healthy social environment of students and teachers throughout the year.

# Common Interest Articles

## The Greatest Game Ever: Swatball

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Daniel R Swartz and Jim Rauschenbach

Copyright 2014 from *Strategies: A Journal for Physical and Sport Educators*, Special Issue: Back-to-School Issue: Fitness Benefits of Physical Activity Through Regular Participation. Volume 26, Number 5, pp 36–38, by Daniel R Swartz and Jim Rauschenbach. Reproduced by permission of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance ([www.AAHERD.org](http://www.AAHERD.org)) Minor changes have been made to conform to ATA style.

“This is the greatest game ever!” is just one rave review overheard during numerous presentations of the game swatball. Swatball is a game that can help solve many common physical education problems. Don Puckett, author and nationally known physical education presenter and consultant, stated, “I have seen the same problem (of large class sizes) existing all across the country. For the most part, the teachers are doing a good job with team-teaching and stretching the limits of their facilities. They could use a lot of help with equipment and activity ideas” (D Puckett, personal communication, February 6, 2012).

The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) recommends that “the size of physical education classes be consistent with those of other subject areas for safe and effective instruction” (NASPE 2006, 1). Yet, “without a doubt, many physical education teachers today face class sizes larger than this (40+ students is not uncommon) and other similar situations like multiple classes sharing one activity space” (NASPE 2006, 1).

Certainly, large class size is a crucial issue many physical educators face in a variety of school contexts. While considering the alternative of playing a large-group game, such as swatball, keep in mind AAHPERD’s

excellent set of suggestions for coping with large class sizes.

The guidance document *Teaching Large Class Sizes in Physical Education* (NASPE 2006) suggests incorporating small-group work by putting students into small groups to work on a concept, skill and/or task and using small-sided games that use a smaller number of players and a smaller playing area than those of a regulation game. It also suggests the use of peer-teaching/ coach-teaching strategies where students help one another by completing peer assessment tools. A final suggestion is to structure classes into a station format that allows students to move through a series of stations set up for different tasks.

If you are going to select a large-group game as a solution for large class sizes, keep in mind that the game of swatball possesses three advantages over other large-group games. Large-group games typically involve a great deal of waiting. Because of their complexity, they are typically dominated by higher-skilled students and involve students who rarely break a sweat because they are squeezed together and relegated to small spaces. Swatball, on the other hand, allows for high-activity time even with very large classes, is appropriate for a class of students with diverse skill levels and is a great cardiovascular fitness activity.

### National Standards

The game of swatball is appropriate for middle and high school students. Standard 1 of the *National Standards for Physical Education* states that students should “demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities” (NASPE 2004, 11). The expectations for students in Grades 6–8 are that they achieve



maturity in the basic skills of more specialized sports and that they use these skills successfully in modified games or activities of increasing complexity.

## Boundaries

Swatball can be played in any gymnasium or large multipurpose room with four walls and a high ceiling. The end walls serve as goals, and the side walls of the gymnasium are in the field of play. Tape is used to mark a crossbar across the entire length of the end walls about five-and-a-half to six feet high. The crossbar defines the top of the goal. A goalie box may be fashioned using an existing line on the gym floor or by creating a line using floor tape. This line should be anywhere from six to eight feet away from the end wall.

## Equipment



The equipment needed for swatball is minimal and inexpensive. The best ball to use is a simple vinyl ball, the type of ball you might find in a wire cage bin at the supermarket or value store. These balls rarely pop during play and usually cost less than \$2. Any other type of ball would prove to be too heavy or could pop too easily. The only other equipment needed to play is a set of pinnies and floor tape.

## Teams

Depending on the size of the gymnasium and the age of the participants, swatball can be played with anywhere from 20 to more than 60 students on the court at one time, with the same number ready to replace them after a short and well-needed rest period. If the playing area is large enough for 40 active students, the game is played with two equal-size teams of 20. In this case, each team is divided into two groups of 10 players. One of these groups acts as the goalies. The other group of 10 acts as the offense and their job is to score goals (see Figure 1).

## Rules

A game of swatball begins with a jump ball similar to a jump ball in basketball; however, each team must remain on their own half of the court until the ball is tapped. The ball may only be struck by swatting it with the front or back of an open hand (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY3gN6wbZzg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY3gN6wbZzg) for an example). Players may never possess or hold the ball. A player may not use fists to strike the ball.

The ball may be swatted to make three different types of passes. A player may swat the ball to make short passes in order to move the ball down the court. Medium passes are swatted to perform tactics such as a give-and-go, and long passes are swatted to clear the ball and/or move the ball quickly to open spaces.

Besides passing, the only other way a ball may be moved is through the use of an air dribble. Air dribbling occurs when a player strikes the ball in the air above their head repeatedly (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvZ1NMWIXTk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvZ1NMWIXTk) for an example). An opponent may intercept an air dribble or any other type of pass at any time as long as there is no foul committed. A foul occurs when there is excessive contact between players.

Goalies are required to stay in the goalie box. Offensive players are not allowed inside the goalie box. Unlike the other players, the goalies may use any part of their body to block the ball from going into the goal (including kick saves), but they may never catch or possess the ball and must only strike the ball with an open hand.

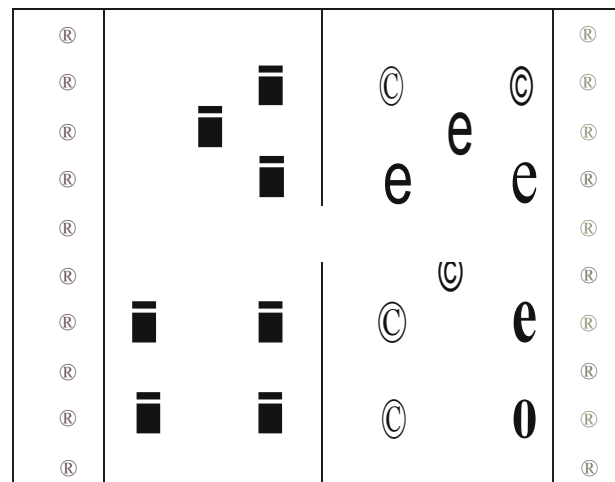


Figure 1. Swatball court and players

Each goal is worth one point and there is only one way to score a goal: by striking the ball into the goal area. One of the most exciting and unique aspects of the game occurs when a goal is scored. After a goal, without a break in the action, each team's offensive players must quickly switch roles with the team's goalies. All players must move into their new positions as quickly as possible. In other words, as soon as a goal is scored, the goalies of the team that were scored on immediately go on the attack and become the offense while their teammates run back to become the team's goalies (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIA2z7-0eKg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIA2z7-0eKg) for two examples). If there is a large number of players in the class or more frequent rest periods are needed, two new teams can come into the game after every few minutes.

There are a number of limitations or violations that can occur during a game of swatball:

- Players strike the ball with a closed fist.
- A player catches or possesses the ball.
- A player dribbles the ball on the floor.
- There is too much physical contact by a player. The amount of allowed physical contact is similar to that of a basketball game.

If any of these violations occur, play is whistled dead, and the ball is given to the opposing team at the spot of the foul. Play is resumed with a free pass. The opposing team must give the passer five feet of free space in which to pass the ball.

## Game-Play Tactics

Many territorial game-play tactics are employed in swatball. To create and use space effectively, players are prompted to spread out across the entire court during play and to move to open spaces off the ball. To create scoring opportunities, players are prompted to distribute the ball from player to player, look for open seams and penetrate the defense to shoot on goal. On defence, players use space as they maintain distance between one another and step into possible passing lanes. Perhaps the most defining tactic of the game of swatball is that of transitions. Swatball can be used to teach this challenging game-play tactic. Recall that after a goal, teams transition from offense to goalies.

Successful teams are composed of players who are able to quickly transition at any time during the game.

## Possible Game Variations

Two balls can be used instead of one during game play. At any point during the game, the teacher can toss a second ball into play. After a goal is scored, the second ball is typically passed by a retreating offensive player to a teammate who is coming out of the goal to play offense. Another variation is to split each team into three squads. Each squad rotates from goalie to offense to sideline after each goal. A third and more challenging variation is to employ four teams on the court at the same time, with each team guarding their own wall and shooting at the other three teams' goals. Safety must be ensured throughout the game, especially when a goal is scored and all four teams transition from offense to goalies.

## Conclusion

As budgets decrease, large class sizes have plagued physical educators for several years. Unlike some other poorly designed large-group games, swatball is an excellent remedy for the issues related to large class sizes. Swatball generates high-activity time even with very large classes, is appropriate for a class of students with diverse skill levels and is a great cardiovascular fitness activity.

For a five-minute video of the full game of swatball, please visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rZ7G3pgxel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rZ7G3pgxel).

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# Technological Possibilities in Today's Physical Education Classroom

David Chorney

When considering integrating technology into curriculum, physical education is often not the first subject area that comes to mind. However, it is a discipline that lends itself very easily to incorporating a vast array of technological devices as well as leading-edge gaming devices, audio and visual hardware along with a plethora of web-based tools and countless applications that are constantly being developed and released.

It is possible to integrate technology into the physical education curriculum, but many people still think that the only goal of physical education programs is to get and keep students active. Along this narrow line of thinking are those that believe integrating technology into physical education also includes only using computers, stereos and PowerPoint presentations.

Today's teachers of physical education must be open to new ideas as well as being receptive to possibilities that may stray from the traditional methods of teaching physical education. A few ways to increase student physical activity levels yet not lose focus of what is to be learned within physical education lessons

can include the implementation of exergames, geocaching activities and integrating technologies like the Nike Fuelband or Fitbit to hopefully increase student motivation to be active and ultimately healthier people. We must remember that physical education has never been solely about movement. We must be cognizant of the whole body and creating learning experiences for students that attend to the thinking, feeling and doing aspects of learning as well.

## Exergaming as Motivational Tool

Exergames are a way of engaging students who have lost interest in traditional forms of physical activity (Sheehan and Katz 2010). This form of interactive fitness is a good motivational tool because students want to play in order to advance to a higher and more difficult level. There is also a level of competition in these games, which can motivate children to keep playing in order to win.



Some examples of the most popular exergaming devices on the market include Konami's DanceDance Revolution, Xbox One, Xbox Kinect, PlayStation 4, and Nintendo 3DS. All of these devices can have a place in a physical education program; however, teachers must know why they are going to use the device and which curricular outcomes are intended to be achieved by using them.

As a former physical education teacher who never used exergaming in my PE program, I see potential in choosing the right gaming device for today's PE classes. Products such as DanceDanceRevolution as well as Xbox Kinect have the advantage of not requiring much hardware and focus primarily on the participants using their own bodies to move in order to score points, beat a time or perform a movement accurately.

A game like DanceDanceRevolution is a fun way for students to learn about rhythm, tempo, dancing and choreography (Hicks and Higgins 2010). From a practical perspective of teaching students and using exergames in a physical education setting, it is often best to have more than one gaming device in play at the same time to allow more students the opportunity to be involved. As well, think about using a portable data projector to display the exergame content on a gym wall for added interest and greater ease of viewing the activity.

## Conclusion

Technology is here to stay and will only continue to grow and evolve at a dizzying speed. We must also

remember that technology can be defined in many ways, and we must not let personal bias or fear of trying something new limit our planning and teaching for the benefit of our students. It is important to remember that what works well for one class may not work well for another class, so it's vital to get to know our students' technological capabilities and make them feel as though they are an integral part of the teaching/learning process.

Technology will only continue to evolve and become more prominent in the lives and teaching of both teachers and students alike. It is therefore incredibly important for today's teachers to familiarize themselves with current technologies and remain up to date and relevant not only for their own knowledge acquisition but also to be able to share this knowledge and provide current and meaningful learning opportunities for today's youth. As the old saying goes, it's better to try and fail than to never try at all. What are you trying that's new in your own physical education teaching?

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# Encouraging More Daily Physical Activity by Walking to School

*Green Communities Canada*

*Reprinted with permission from The Physical and Health Education Journal, Volume 78, Number 4, Winter 2013, 34–35. Minor changes have been made to conform to ATA style.*

Canadian children are not getting the physical activity they need, according to the Active Healthy Kids Canada report card. The report card assigns us an F and says that only 7 per cent of our children and youth get the 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by Canadian guidelines.

The report card also says that our children are getting an incredible seven hours and 48 minutes of screen time per day. This is just one indication of children’s sedentary time, which has been linked to obesity and metabolic disease independent of the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity that they might get in physical education classes or elsewhere during the day. In other words, if kids are sitting for more than two hours per day the effects of physical education classes and other physical activities may not reduce their chances of becoming obese or reduce their chances of suffering a metabolic disease.

But children can learn to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. Studies show that children who walk and cycle to school are more likely to get the amount of physical activity they require in a day than those who do not participate in active transportation, and children who develop the habit by Grade 1 are more likely to retain a favourable body weight across the early years.

Recent findings from Canada Walks showed that across Canada, 41 per cent of children are regularly being driven to school in personal vehicles. However, advocates across Canada have begun to shift that trend by inspiring their school communities to use school travel planning to foster a culture of walking and cycling for the school journey.

School travel planning addresses the barriers that prevent children from walking and cycling by bringing together stakeholders from the community to create a unique plan for each school. The stakeholder group often includes decision makers (school trustees and municipal councillors), public health officials, police, land-use planners, transportation engineers, school bus consortia, school planners and school administration—anyone with an interest in the school journey and who can help alter infrastructure, change policies or offer education that will make the choice to walk and cycle easier.



The unique plans at each school include actions like creating walking school busses that make it easy for busy parents to allow their children to walk with others. Infrastructure changes, like the installation of pedestrian islands or bump-out curbs, make it safer for children to cross streets. Additionally, education pieces teach children the links between active travel and health, the environment, community cohesiveness and happiness.

That's right: happiness. In a national project called Children's Mobility, Health and Happiness: A Canadian School Travel Planning Model, parents who walked to school with their children reported feeling happier. Catherine O'Brien, project researcher, says "active transportation is a perfect example of sustainable happiness; that is, happiness that contributes to individual, community and/or global well-being and does not exploit other people, the environment, or future generations." O'Brien has created sustainable happiness curriculum-linked resources for each province that helps teachers draw such connections for students.

In Regina, Ruth M Buck School used the idea of sustainable happiness to create a thank-you campaign they hoped would influence drivers to think twice before idling and rethink parking in no-parking zones. The Ruth M Buck circle of courage student volunteer group created bright posters that thanked drivers who make the safer and/or more environmentally sound choices. The campaign also planned for student-made notes to be dropped off at area residents' homes in the winter, thanking them for keeping sidewalks clear.

School travel planning found phenomenal success at Wismer Public School, in Markham, Ontario, getting 28 per cent of the student body to walk or cycle regularly. The school was a new school in a new neighbourhood, and at the beginning 70 to 80 per cent of the students were driven to school. As a result, there was chaos in the parking lot, cars were getting dinged daily and it was not unheard of for a car to wait for 45 minutes to make a left-hand turn out of the school lot.

The project lead, Sharon Delurey of York's Health Services Department, says that Principal Debbie Donsky "mobilized the teachers so well" and that

"teacher engagement was key to making this work." By engaging the teachers and exciting the students, Donsky was able to really affect the parents. This wasn't an easy task, given that a large percentage of the school population is made up of new Canadians whose first language is not English. "Over 35 languages are represented at Wismer," says Delurey.

It was no wonder these new Canadians—and all parents in the community—were confused. There were no lines painted on the wide boulevards that led to the school. People didn't know where to stop and they sped because there were no speed limit postings.

In the end, these barriers were resolved by stakeholders on the school travel planning committee, and even the mayor rolled up his sleeves for the project, designing new crosswalks for the neighbourhood. Students were encouraged by their teachers to interpret letters at home so that all parents would understand the school's commitment to walking and cycling. Walking Wednesdays drummed up excitement in the students, and by the end of a concentrated four-month cycle, many had changed their mode of transportation for good.

A comprehensive and free guide to school travel planning found at [www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning-toolkit](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning-toolkit) can help your school community develop a plan to get more children walking and cycling.

After all, when more children walk and cycle to school, everyone wins.

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See [www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walking-school-bus](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walking-school-bus) for more information on the Walking School Bus.

See [www.sustainablehappiness.ca/for-educators/](http://www.sustainablehappiness.ca/for-educators/) for all provincial and territorial versions of the *Sustainable Happiness Teacher's Guide*.

See [www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkwheel-wednesdays](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkwheel-wednesdays) for more information on Walking/Wheeling Wednesdays.

# Motor Proficiency and Physical Activity Levels in Children

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*Nadine Van Wyk*

To curb the increasing trend toward overweight and obesity it is important to determine the strengths and shortcomings that motor proficiency plays in determining children's participation in physical activity (PA). This article will specifically examine the influential role that motor proficiency has on children's behaviours toward PA and the elements that contribute to their participation.

The overwhelming perceived benefit of motor proficiency, as suggested in the literature, is the association between motor proficiency and continued lifelong participation in PA (D'Hondt et al 2009; Higgs et al 2008; Logan et al 2012; Trost et al 2003; Wrotniak et al 2006). The literature demonstrates that children who are confident and competent in their physical skills will participate more often in vigorous healthy play compared to children who are less skilled (D'Hondt et al 2009; Higgs et al 2008; Logan et al 2012; Robinson 2011; Wrotniak et al 2006).

This becomes a cyclical process where children who do not have the physical skills do not participate and, therefore, have fewer opportunities to enhance their skill performance (Higgs et al 2008). Often, as a result of their limited skill ability, those children who are less skilled tend to withdraw from participating in physical activity (D'Hondt et al 2009; Logan et al 2012; Robinson 2011; Trost et al 2003). Furthermore, children who have movement difficulties see themselves as less competent compared to other children, and as a result tend to be less physically active and demonstrate a preference for sedentary activities (Fisher et al 2005). This highlights the importance of skill development as it relates to participation in organized and unorganized activity (Okely, Booth and Patterson 2001).

In contrast, children who have a strong sense of motor competency are more likely to participate in a variety of activities because of their ability to draw from a strong repertoire of fundamental movement

skills (FMS) and fundamental sports skills (FSS) (Wrotniak et al 2006). It is also suggested that these children are more involved in organized structured types of physical activity compared to those with limited proficiency (Okely, Booth and Patterson 2001).

There are many elements to consider when discussing the concept of motor proficiency. Motor proficiency is best defined as "a person's movement coordination quality when performing different motor skills, ranging on a continuum from gross motor skills to fine motor skills" (D'Hondt et al 2009). Perceived competence, according to Stuntz and Weiss (2010, 435), "refers to how good individuals think they are in a specific domain (e.g. school, physical activity, social relationships) or subdomains (e.g. math, swimming, friendships)." The ability to become proficient in anything is a result of practice, encouragement and reinforcement (Logan et al 2012). It is essential for children to develop motor proficiency and develop foundational skills to break through the hypothesized "proficiency barrier," which is suggested to limit potential future participation as a result of lack of skill development (Clark 2007; Higgs et al 2008; Logan et al 2012).

Specifically, this barrier implies that if children miss opportunities to develop basic foundational skills then the likelihood of engaging in various future activities will be limited. Therefore, the importance of developing a strong foundation of FMS is crucial to increased opportunities for later participation. This development will also contribute to health across the lifespan as regular physical activity is associated with maintaining a healthy weight, reduced blood pressure and positive psychosocial benefits (Barnett et al 2008; Okely, Booth and Patterson 2001).

Enhancing motor competence in children and youth should be the objective of parents, educators, coaches and recreation leaders. The question becomes how do we increase proficiency to cultivate sustained participation? This may be done by providing sufficient



time to practise, offering professional development opportunities to leaders regarding best practice (that is, motivational theories and appropriate feedback) as well as ensuring that children have the opportunity to experience enjoyment and develop feelings of self-efficacy.

Future research should continue to explore the influence of motor proficiency on PA in conjunction with motivational theories and early intervention activities. However, most important I believe, education, recreation and sport should come together to enhance the development of motor proficiency. At present, each of these realms exists within silos with little collaboration to improve the movement qualities of children and youth. To provide opportunities for lifelong participation, all sectors should work together to provide experiences for children and youth that will facilitate opportunities for future participation.

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# Integral Yoga as a Daily Physical Activity?

*Karen Ragoonaden, Stephen Berg and Sabre Cherkowski*

*Reprinted with permission from Canadian Children: Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children, Volume 37, Number 1, Spring 2012. Minor changes have been made to conform to ATA style.*

Are you looking for an innovative, fun way to incorporate physical activity into your elementary classroom? In January 2011, an integral yoga session was offered to primary age students as a component of the British Columbia's Ministry of Education Daily Physical Activity (DPA) initiative. The DPA initiative implements 30 minutes of daily physical activity for students up to Grade 9. Yoga was chosen as a daily physical activity because of the overwhelming research

indicating that it can help develop flexibility, strength, endurance, agility, balance, coordination and cardiovascular health (Birdee et al 2008; Khalsa 2007; Moliver et al 2011; Tran et al 2001). Specifically, integral yoga is a hatha yoga practice that incorporates a holistic approach to physical activity by focusing on overall mind-emotional body-spiritual union through pranayama (breath-control exercises), asana (physical yoga) and chanda (meditation).

In order to determine the effect of the integral yoga sessions, journals were handed out to the students, and they responded to a daily set of four reflective questions. At the end of the week, a semi-structured interview with the teacher and a group discussion



with the students were done to corroborate the journal responses and observations. The Yoga Kit for Kids program, by Imaginazium LCC ([www.imaginazium.com/products-yoga-kit.html](http://www.imaginazium.com/products-yoga-kit.html)), was used to determine the flow of poses. This award-winning Yoga Kit for Kids is both a game and a teaching tool that combines fun, fitness and imagination. Bright, 5 × 7 inch cards feature photographs of children in 30 easy yoga poses. The cards are illustrated with the object or animal the pose is named after. Kids can imitate the illustrated photographs on the cards to pretend to be dogs, lions and heroes. To help novice yoginis, on the reverse side of the card is a cartoon and a short rhyming poem describing how to move into the pose (Yoga Kit for Kids). Modifications were made to ensure the yoga poses were developmentally appropriate for the group of children. Sanskrit names were not used, and because many poses were given an animal name, often an animal sound would accompany the pose.

Nineteen students took part in the integral yoga program, 11 male and 8 female. They responded to the questions below.

**Question 1. What poses did you like the best and why?**

Responses showed that students enjoyed doing most of the poses including the balancing poses. For example, Lexie wrote the following:

On Tuesday at school when it was yoga I learned something cool, and it was called the tree pose and I liked it. It was fun it will help me with my school work.

However, some poses were more challenging. Most students had difficulty with the peacock (sitting with legs outstretched); the balancing pose, tree (standing with one leg bent on foot or calf); table (aligning the spine); and the forward bends (allowing fingers to touch the mat). Overall, most students responded that their favourite pose was candle (introductory pose with focus on breath).

**Question 2. How do you feel after the yoga sessions? Explain why you feel this way.**

Generally, students indicated that they felt good, comfortable, relaxed and happy during the practice, but as the week progressed there were noticeable

changes in the responses. Two students indicated that the practice was not beneficial.

David wrote, "My back hurts every day of the week." Devon stated that he was tired every day of the week.

**Question 3. Do you like doing yoga in the classroom with your friends?**

The majority of students indicated that they liked doing yoga with their friends.

Cathy: It makes me happy.

Lexie: I liked it. It was fun

Helen: I love it.

As the week progressed, responses indicated that a minority of students did not enjoy these sessions.

Matt: No.

Bill: No!

Carol: Nothing.

**Question 4. Do you think that yoga helps you with your school work?**

Students were divided in response to this question. Some thought that it helped and others did not. No reasons were given to explain why this practice helped or did not help with school work.

Kailey: Yes. I do think it will help me work. And it was fun to do yoga.

Ben: No! I don't think so.

Helen: No because my legs hurt.

## Yogic Conclusions

We were able to identify the yoga poses that Grade 1 students liked as well as the problematic poses. Even though there were some directional issues with left and right, students were comfortable with the integral yoga practice and attempted all poses, even the challenging ones. When they could not find the full expression of the asanas (poses), they reacted with laughter and interacted positively with classmates. In terms of experiences, approximately 75 per cent of students indicated that they felt good, comfortable or happy with their integral yoga practice. Approximately 25 per cent indicated they felt bad or tired. Toward the end of the week, some students did identify elements of discomfort such as sore back or tiredness.

## Teacher Responses

Because recess followed right after the mid-morning yoga sessions, the teacher found it hard to observe a change in classroom behaviour and experiences. However, she did notice a difference in students' interactions with one another, particularly during group work. During the week, students were more patient and courteous with one another. She intends to use the candle pose to bring silence back to the class and to incorporate the breathing exercises into the daily classroom to calm students during transitions. On a final note, she indicated that the integral yoga sessions do fit into the mandates of the DPA. Though she considers integral yoga to be an alternative practice, it is an activity that had a positive effect on interpersonal relationship between the students, and between the teacher and the classroom experience and culture.

## Yogic Action Plan

In keeping with the concept of sustainable practice, the school decided to buy yoga mats and to incorporate yoga as a DPA within the school curriculum. During the course of an integral yoga session, it is possible to introduce the poses and to help the students make connections to how the yoga practice affects their educational and personal experiences. For example, regular class can begin by setting an intention for strength and calmness throughout the day. The candle pose can also be used as a classroom management strategy to help students maintain focus. Finally, since the yoga instructor was certified, exploring options for sustaining yoga practices within primary school classrooms remains an important component

of the DPA program. A program like the Yoga Kit for Kids, by Imaginazium LLC, can provide classroom teachers with the necessary parameters to maintain a sustainable yoga program for elementary students.

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# Got Game? Playing Other Sports Helps Hockey Players Improve

Mark Janzen

*Reprinted with permission from Hockey Now (<http://tinyurl.com/mdl5xzd>), August 1, 2013. Minor changes have been made to conform to ATA style.*

Where has the well-rounded athlete gone? That's what some NHL and junior coaches are asking. We are living in an era where young players are specializing in hockey, year-round; but experts are saying kids who play multiple sports have the advantage.

Scott Bonner is concerned. And, for that matter, so is Brent Sutter. Over the past couple of months, both Western Hockey League general managers—Bonner of the Vancouver Giants and Sutter of the Red Deer Rebels—have aired their anxiety about the state of hockey and the current era of uber-specialization.

It seems, for many young hockey players, gone are the days of playing a variety of sports. Gone are the springs filled with the sounds of the cracking of bats and baseballs in leather mitts. Absent are the summers of halftime oranges and curling corner kicks. And departed are the mad wolfing-down-dinner scrambles from the basketball court after school to the ice in the early evenings.

Instead, for the aspiring youngsters keen on greater heights, it's hockey in the morning, hockey in the afternoon, hockey in the evening and hockey in summertime.

But for both Bonner and Sutter—two GMs who, of course, are always looking for better ways to both develop and mine talent—they believe the relatively



*Former Vancouver Giant and current Winnipeg Jet Evander Kane takes part in the NHL draft prospects clinic in 2009. Kane attributes much of his athletic development to the variety of sports he was able to play growing up. (Getty Images)]*

new idea of a one-sport focus is a detriment to the game and the players who play it.

“It’s good for guys to get away from the game,” Bonner told *Hockey Now* in a recent interview. “Last year, some of our guys were playing basketball and it was shocking how bad some of them were. We’re in an era in which hockey players are becoming one-dimensional at a young age. I think society is at risk of losing a generation of quality all-around athletes and it’s a dangerous precedent.”

In a story written in the *Edmonton Journal*, earlier this year, Sutter made his position on the matter clear. And in general manager meetings since, he’s continued to voice his concerns.

“You just don’t have as many players today that are as good athletes as they used to be,” Sutter told the *Edmonton Journal*. “Too much today, especially in young players, is focused on hockey 12 months a year. They don’t play soccer, they don’t play baseball or tennis or the other things that people used to do.

“It is so noticeable on a hockey team that the kids who have played other sports and experienced different things are always the smarter players on your team, and they are able to handle adversity better.”

With the allure of the NHL or, perhaps even junior or university hockey, Bonner can see why parents might feel it’s necessary to enrol their children in every power-skating session, bodychecking camp and line-changing lesson they can find. He just doesn’t think it’s necessary. And, even further to the point, actually detrimental.

As was well-documented in a previous *Hockey Now* feature, the odds of “making it” in hockey, be it junior hockey or beyond, are slim. So, even as a man heavily in the business of preparing players for professional hockey, Bonner is well aware there is more to life than a sheet of ice and everything that goes on between the boards.

“Parents don’t want their kid to miss an opportunity, so the parents become competitive,” Bonner said. “Yes, of course, some of the kids are succeeding and becoming very good hockey players, but others I think are going to miss the opportunity to join other sports.

“I’m sure there are a lot of kids that I wouldn’t come across at our level that, by the time they got to midget,

it didn’t quite work out for them, and now they’ve missed an opportunity to play other sports because they decided to focus on just hockey.”

“If you close the door to other sports at a young age, you don’t know what you’re missing.”

## Proof That Multi-Sport Athletes Can Thrive In Hockey

There are few teams in the WHL that can rival the lineage of talented stars produced by Bonner’s Giants. For five years in particular, from 2005 to 2010, the Giants churned out the likes of budding NHL stars Milan Lucic of the Boston Bruins, Evander Kane of the Winnipeg Jets and, most recently, Brendan Gallagher of the Montreal Canadiens.

Not surprisingly, all three have one thing in common: a sporting passion away from the rink. As teenagers, Lucic was boxer, Kane was a soccer-playing striker and Gallagher was a baseball player. All of them chose hockey, but undoubtedly benefited from their athletic pursuits beyond sticks and pucks.

“Hockey doesn’t become mundane,” Bonner said. “You don’t necessarily have to play (these other sports) at a high level. I would just suggest they enjoy other sports, meet other people and work to become a more well-rounded person.

“For a player like Brendan, playing baseball and getting away from hockey made him really enjoy hockey when he came back.”

Kane, who has taken up tennis in recent years and, growing up, was also a track star, has long been a proponent of playing a variety of sports—even now, as an NHLer. “Some kids might not have the opportunity to play a number of different sports, but I think, if you do, you should really take advantage of it,” Kane said. “I was fortunate enough to play multiple sports and it’s something I really enjoyed. You look back, and those were some of my best memories growing up.”

## Athleticism at the Core of the Elite Hockey Player

If there’s one person who is qualified to discuss the how-to of developing hockey players, it’s Peter Twist.

The founder and CEO of Twist Conditioning has coached over 700 pro athletes and mentored thousands of young players. From former NBA star Hakeem Olajuwon to NHLers like Pavel Bure, and Daniel and Henrik Sedin, Twist has seemingly trained them all.

He knows what it takes to get the top. And, largely, athleticism is at the core.

“Without question, the best athletes rise to the top,” Twist said in an e-mail to *Hockey Now* this week. “Elite hockey requires a plethora of physical ingredients and movement strategies that are best grown and compiled from varied sport participation. The body and mind would appreciate variety and, really, at an early age, you don’t know which sport a child even has the best potential to excel in, or which one best lights his fire.”

As it turns out, putting the whole puzzle together takes a number of different pieces. As Kane discovered, playing sports like track and soccer were quite obviously beneficial, not only for variety’s sake, but also as a practical improvement on the ice. “Track definitely helped with my speed on the ice and developing an explosive start,” Kane said. “As for soccer, it’s quite similar to hockey in that you have to learn to play properly without the ball. Having a good sense of both sports can really help you while playing either of them.” While injuries are bound to arise in a fast-paced contact sport like hockey, look back at the careers of Kane, Lucic and Gallagher and, knock on wood, generally, they’ve been void of major injuries.

Other than the 2009/10 season, when Lucic was limited to 50 NHL games because of a pair of injuries—a broken finger followed shortly thereafter by a sprained ankle—none of three have missed any more than 20 games in any regular season dating all the way back through their WHL careers. Indeed good fortune is a factor, but there’s no denying that their overall athleticism has played a part in their collective health.

“Both good athletic-oriented and hockey-specific training helps with injury prevention,” Twist said, “but so does shifting the types of sports played throughout the year for a young developing body, because it imposes a variety of demands on the muscles, bones and joints.

“The body is a complex machine operated by ‘software.’ The muscles, sensors and receptors in the skin, muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia detect what our body is doing and feed the info to the brain where the brain then computes the exact motor response the whole body needs. This amazing machine feeds off of variety. The more variety there is, the better software will run.”

## The Corner Piece: Mental Variety

When so many players are so close in terms of talent and hard work, the mental aspect of the game is most often the difference maker. Sure, he ultimately lost in the Stanley Cup final, but how else do you explain Patrice Bergeron reportedly playing Game 6 with a broken rib, torn rib cartilage and a separated shoulder?

## Mental Fortitude

Variety gives the brain a chance to recover from the stress of high-level hockey. It grants the mind a break to do something different. And it offers a player the opportunity to learn mental skills in a different context.

Douglas Smith, working with Pro Mind Sports Psychology, is a leading psychologist in Ontario who has worked with professional and elite-level athletes for the last 20 years. For Smith, life is all about striking a balance. “Sometimes we get too narrow with one sport and see it as do or die,” Smith said. “Playing different sports allows the player to stay fresh and enjoy life even when things don’t go so well with hockey.”

While Smith doesn’t rule out the positive effects of specialization at a certain age, he is concerned—perhaps not unlike Bonner and Sutter—about the burnout process. Recently, Smith has been working with a few elite-level hockey players. This summer, he is encouraging them to get away from the rink, try something completely new and forget even baseball or soccer. How about white-water rafting or canoeing or kayaking?

“Let kids have fun,” Smith said. “When you get to be an adult, then you can be a professional. But even then, when (adults) haven’t learned that balance as a

kid, they have major problems, which I'm dealing with a lot. And then, when they're not playing well or their team isn't playing well, it's like the end of the world.

"I think these kids I'm working with this summer are going to be better-rounded, have more fun and, in the fall, they're going to play better. Making adults into kids at such a young age is kind of ridiculous."

And for Bonner and Sutter, they are definitely not in the business of ridiculous.

Bonner has been the Giants GM since their inaugural season and has seen his team qualify for the playoffs in 10 of 12 years and win a Memorial Cup in 2007. Over that period of time, Vancouver has had 23 of its players selected in the NHL draft. He knows

what players need to succeed. "If they just do hockey 24/7, by January, it becomes a really long process," Bonner said. "Mentally the change in sports is good for them."

With hockey academies, winter clubs, and spring and summer hockey, the stark reality is that if a player wants to play hockey every day of the year, it's possible. However, it's clear that's not the best route to the top. Sure, sometimes it'll work, but even some of the most respected people in the junior hockey world believe that kids—ultimately, if they "make it" or not—will be a whole lot better, as both players and as individuals, if they dip a paddle in the lake or slide into home plate or cross an actual finish line.



# Leadership's Future

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*Meagan Clarke, Amanda McGarry, David Merkosky, Madisson Richardson*

Attending the 2013 Student Leadership Conference has been one of the most positive and motivating experiences of our student life. Who knew that going to this conference would be the most unique and life-changing experience thus far in our postsecondary education? Although we didn't know each other prior to this experience, we were brought together to represent the Edmonton area by Doug Gleddie and Michelle Kilborn, who are influential mentors in the field of physical education. These mentors strongly encouraged our participation at the conference because of the amazing opportunities that it has to offer. We were reminded of the unique opportunity that awaited us, as it is not often that you get to attend a conference with like-minded people nationwide who all share the same passion for physical education. With optimism and an open mind we all found ourselves arriving at the Ottawa airport to attend the conference. Soon after arriving in Ottawa we started to meet fellow conference attendees, and at this point we knew that our mentors had guided us in the right direction

and that this conference was going to serve a purpose.

Collectively we decided that it would be more powerful to give four individual outlooks from the conference as we all kept journals while at the conference to elaborate on our unique experiences. We feel strongly about the benefits that the Student Leadership Conference has to offer and would like to share our experiences as we all have different backgrounds and goals in the field of education.

## **Meagan Clarke, BEd Secondary Education; Major in Physical Education and Minor in Special Education**

When I arrived in Ottawa, I started meeting fellow students from across the country and I knew I had made a right decision by attending this conference. The atmosphere was positive and welcoming right from the beginning. My personal awaking point of the



conference was when the large group was brought into the dining hall for ice-breaking activities. Our 14 mentors put on music to help silence the large group, which turned into a conga line followed by dance offs. That very moment allowed me to recognize that I was going to spend the next five days alongside a large group of people who all share the same vision. On day one we broke off into teams, which were all represented by coloured bandanas. Being placed on a team created a sense of belonging. I quickly developed a strong relationship with my team members as we took on leadership challenges each day. The patient, supportive and cohesive nature of my team taught me so much throughout the process. I learned that being a strong leader also means being a strong follower. This lesson proved to be the greatest challenge that I faced at the conference. In so many aspects of my life I have been headstrong and believed that the only way to get things done was to step up and take on challenges myself. I always found myself falling into the leadership position regardless if I felt capable.

Through this conference I discovered that in order to succeed you must not only recognize your own strengths and weaknesses but also those of your teammates. Through working with my team I learned that a cohesive team is the most effective.

The highlight of my experience was attending the daily keynote speaker. Keynote speaker Colin Higgs really got through to me with his stories and personal philosophy. As a man of many talents, Higgs has made a huge difference in many lives through his passion for physical education. One key phrase in particular has stuck with me, "Create a vision, not a plan." This phrase has a hold on me because until my attendance at this conference I found myself stressed about what the future would hold for me. Will I be employed after graduation? What am I going to do next? Higgs's philosophy helped me to become more optimistic about my future. Higgs continued to provide examples of how he initially had a plan, which didn't work out, and his life is so much better because of it. It is so easy to get caught up in our own plans and close



ourselves off to better opportunities. I learned that, as cliché as it may sound, things do happen for a reason, and Higgs's stories were living proof of this. I feel I am now a better person for spending time alongside Higgs at the conference, which is a feeling that I don't want to lose. Through a one-on-one chat with Higgs I was able to make contacts for volunteer opportunities I am seeking in the Caribbean. I am no longer scared of the future, and I have Colin Higgs to thank for that.

### **Amanda McGarry, BPE/BEd Secondary Education; Minor in Biological Sciences**

After the long and enduring bus ride full of conversation of meet and greets, I stepped off the bus into this sensational vibe that the camp had to offer. All of the mentors were ecstatic that we were ready and eager to embark on five days of complete adventure, learning and making lifelong friendships. After everyone was all settled, we had our first big group meeting, the music was turned on and immediately a conga lined formed with 75 students, which then turned into a dance battle. If there was any ice that needed to still be broken, I am sure that was the breaking point! The rest of the evening consisted of more meet and greets and forming a connection with each of our individual groups, coming up with a team name, flag, staff and morning activities to lead.

Throughout the conference many experiential learning sessions were done in our individual groups, which consisted of about 11 people each. During this time I really started to notice the many different styles of leaders that were at the conference and how leadership personalities can complement one another. I found the contrast of loud and quiet leaders to be very beneficial. I think this can be implemented in an education setting quite easily and would help to show the educator how students are able to interact with one another.

Another inspiring experience that I shared at the camp was being around people who all shared the same goals and visions in life. It had such a positive effect on me to know that I am not striving alone for a shift in the physical education world, and that others

are advocating for it as well. Each day there were keynote speakers who are very influential in the field. It was so amazing that I was able to connect with these people one-on-one. I now have mentors spread across every province in Canada, and I would feel comfortable contacting any of them for advice. One speaker, Colin Higgs, really struck me in a positive way by one of his quotes, "The need for you to have a vision (not a plan) for your life and career." This is very motivational for me, because I have always had a plan of what I wanted and it had recently gone awry before the conference. After Colin's quote I have been faced with a new challenge of finding what my vision is. After attending this conference I now have many different guiding outlets that I can access. This is a very important process to go through. When I become an educator I can help guide students through the proper steps to achieve a vision for their life and careers.

### **David Merkosky, BPE/BEd Secondary Route; Minor in Religion**

Camp Cedar Ridge was an amazing venue for the adventure that we would soon be having. After some ice breakers and mingling, we were sorted into groups for the week and the programming could now begin. Over the next few days, we participated in great team-building activities. These activities were set up to bring forward the unique leading styles of everyone in my group. At times we would butt heads and find great difficulty in completing tasks, but just because that was the case, we were still always learning and having a good time.

What was most remarkable about the conference participants were their amazing enthusiasm and readiness to do things. Every morning a large amount of people would go for an icy swim in Wannamaker Lake; almost every night there was a campfire with songs and games. The list goes on and on—I simply can't write all the amazing student-led activities.

While it is always fun to learn through experience, it is also valuable to learn from experienced people who can share insight. Mentors and speakers gave us their insight and shared their stories of success and failure. Most of these talks were formal presentations



performed in front of the whole camp, but to gain personalized insight, we were able to talk to any of the 12 mentors. The mentors all came from largely different career pursuits and all had varying degrees of experience under their belts. The insight into my future was so valuable, and through talking one-on-one with some of them, I have been able to solidify the path of studies in which I wish to follow. Like keynote speaker Colin Higgs said, we need a vision rather than a plan, and this conference has given me a bright vision of my future.

### **Madisson Richardson, BEd Elementary Education; Minor in French**

After one interesting bus ride, I arrived at the camp and was immediately greeted by some incredibly enthusiastic mentors and staff. I knew only one person there, my professor from school, but that quickly changed. I soon met a huge number of students from across Canada, learning about their programs in school and happy to realize that we all shared some similar interests and passions. I realized that out of about 100 students at the conference, I was the only student who wasn't enrolled in a physical education program of some sort. I had definitely expected to meet other students who were in my program, but I never felt that I was at a disadvantage being an elementary education student with a minor in French as a second language.

Over the weekend, I participated in many incredibly cool activities (rock climbing, canoeing and swimming), experienced some firsts (climbing the vertical playground blindfolded, polar bear dips, campfire songs) and heard from some exceptionally inspiring mentors and staff. I bonded with an amazing group of people as we learned to be leaders together, and received motivating and valuable life and career advice and support from my two mentors.

This experience gave us a refreshing perspective on the importance of leadership and physical education. One of the most inspiring things that we learned about leadership is that teachers need to be leaders in a way that empowers others to find leadership within themselves. A key takeaway from the conference was that leadership means knowing when to step up but also when to step back. Without going to the PHE conference, we would not have been able to experience such a unique, life-changing experience or establish contacts from all across the country. As for people who represented Alberta, we plan on advocating for future student leadership conferences. From our shared experiences, we hope to encourage future teachers to attend this conference, regardless of their program or specialization. By attending the PHE conference, we now have the confidence and supports to be able to move forward as we journey into our next endeavours within the physical education and health and wellness fields.



# Participation Nation: An Inside Look at a Sport and Physical Activity Initiative from Newfoundland and Labrador

Trisha Keough-Boyer

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School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador (SSNL) is the sport governing body responsible for provincial interscholastic sport within Newfoundland and Labrador. The not-for-profit sporting organization is operationally funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, with a governing structure consisting of teachers and school administrators who serve as volunteers on the board of directors. SSNL holds membership with School Sport Canada, formerly



Canadian School Sport Federation (CSSF) and affiliate membership with the National Federation of State High School Associations in the United States.

## The Origins of Participation Nation

From 1969 to 2003, SSNL administered only high school interscholastic competitions. In 1997, education reform occurred within the province that changed its school structure from denominational to nondenominational. As a result, a number of schools were merged or closed, and high schools were reduced in number from 195 to the current 125. This has meant fewer school teams and, as a result, fewer chances for student athletes to participate. Predictably, SSNL noted that fewer opportunities for student involvement in interscholastic athletic programs were available. Students were being cut from teams, and there was no alternative program available for them. SSNL decided to fill this gap by developing a program to keep students active and involved in school sports.

## Building a Base

In 2003, SSNL put forth a proposal, and funding was provided through a federal/provincial/territorial bilateral agreement under the 2002 Canadian Sport Policy (CSP) to create a participation-based program. One of the four goals of the CSP was enhanced participation with a vision of working toward ensuring that, “A significantly higher proportion of Canadians from all segments of society are involved in quality sport activities at all levels and in all forms of participation” (Government of Canada 2002, 4). With the Sport Canada bilateral funding in place (the cost shared equally between the federal and Newfoundland governments), SSNL began its noncompetitive sport and

physical activity program: Participation Nation. The program aimed to allow every Newfoundland student to experience an active environment without the pressure of needing to win. Students were encouraged to get active for the enjoyment of the game itself and the reward that comes from participating. The Canadian Sport Policy has since been renewed, in 2012, and as a result the Participation Nation program has been extended.

## Junior High Program

Between 2004 and 2008, the program was implemented in Grades 7, 8 and 9 and targeted students who did not play school sports or who attempted to play but were cut from various teams. Students could participate in four ways:

1. In-house activities: This is similar to intramurals without a playoff or elimination tournament structure. Students must commit to playing a series of games in order to qualify for the rewards.
2. Friendlies: Two schools come together to play a sport or physical activity.
3. Festival of Sport: Three or more schools come together and play a sport.
4. Jamboree: Three or more schools come together to play three or more sports over a day or weekend.

In all of these interscholastic events, students do not represent their school. Instead, all are mixed and matched and placed on teams since socialization is a key piece of the program.

At the end of each event, every student is rewarded with a lapel pin depicting the sport they played. They are also provided with a pennant so they can display their achievements at home. These are motivational tools that impel students to keep playing because there are over 32 lapel pin designs depicting traditional and nontraditional sports for the student to collect. Another popular feature of the program is the sport equipment and athletic clothing prizes awarded after each event. Students who have participated to the best of their ability, have great attitudes and who demonstrate fair play have their names placed in a draw.

The cost to participate in this program is \$1 per student per event or sport. Our approach is to accept all students who want to play and create the teams before the event. There are no coaches, but rather facilitators who also act as referees. Rules can be modified to ensure that each student achieves success within our welcoming environment. Facilitators rarely hear complaints such as: "Hey that's not fair! Bobby gets to move closer to the net to serve." In reality, every student can move up if they need to and by

playing this way we hope they gain the confidence, skill and fitness to one day move to the service line.



## Elementary Program

In 2009, Participation Nation was introduced to the elementary grades (4–6) through a certificate achievement program. Every student receives a certificate at the beginning of the school year and by participating in an in-house sport or physical activity series during lunch or after school, they earn a sticker and a chance to win a prize. There

are over 20 sticker designs depicting a sport or physical activity. Schools also participate in friendlies, festivals of sport or jamborees, but these types of events are regarded as special events.

## **High School/Elementary School Leadership Partnership**

In 2010, in response to a need for after-school programming, SSNL launched Participation Nation Unplugged. This physical activity program for Grades 4–6 encourages students to unplug themselves from the computer, TV, cellphone and video games, and stay after school to play games. Grades 10 and 11 students are recruited to act as leaders in the program and fulfill their volunteer requirements for high school graduation by working in the program. All students receive free training with Parks and Recreation Ontario's High Five Principles of Healthy Child Development. This year we will add PHE Canada's *Leading the Way* resource into the training program. Once students are trained, they work as a team to deliver the program under the supervision of a teacher. The program must be administered at least one day per week immediately after school. A nutrition grant is provided so the students can have a healthy snack before they participate. Nine schools are running SSNL's program with an anticipated five more schools scheduled for training in fall 2012.

## **Participation Nation and Special Olympics NL Partnership**

Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador (SONL) and SSNL formed a partnership as a way to introduce the Special Olympics Canada Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) program to schools in the province. The Participation Nation office designed a certificate and six stickers to accompany the 12-week FMS program so that the students would experience consistency between the SSNL and SONL programs. Three schools currently take part in the program.

## **On the Horizon**

SSNL is currently awaiting word on another bilateral funding partnership between the Public Health Agency

of Canada and the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to begin development of a program for K–3 students entitled Play for Fun. The program framework requires that parents administer the program in the early evenings. Using cooperative games, Play for Fun will strive to teach students the fundamental movement skills needed to achieve physical literacy as well as to support healthy nutrition and active relationships between families.

## **Factors Contributing to a Successful Participation Nation Campaign**

Participation Nation has evolved from a junior high school program into a movement. This success is the result of numerous factors.

The first factor is the presence of a sustainable funding stream from the provincial and federal governments. Financial investment and support from the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation has allowed the SSNL board of directors and staff to set short- and long-term program goals and to work strategically with program partners to reach those goals. It is no coincidence that SSNL's Participation Nation program is aligned with the goals of the Sport Canada Policy, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sport and Recreation Strategy, and the principles of the Canadian Sport for Life Movement.

The second factor is the support and partnerships we have built within the education system. This includes the four school districts' program specialists, health promotion liaison consultants, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Physical Education Special Interest Council who endorse and promote our program. Participation Nation implemented in the school as an extracurricular activity falls under the Comprehensive School Health Model's fourth pillar: partnerships and services in the school.

The third factor contributing to a successful program is its human resources: the dedicated teachers and, predominately, physical education teachers who volunteer their time to implement the program. In particular, PE specialists greatly value our program



philosophy of fun, fitness, fair play, and friendship and the directive to actively recruit the nonengaged student to participate. They understand the reasons why youth stop participating in sport at the community level and work with SSNL to combat the issues of overzealous coaching, parental interference and early sport specialization. If we consider these factors, it is no wonder that 70 per cent of young athletes quit organized sport outside of school programs by age 13 (Eng, as cited in Wheeler 2008). In the 2011/12 school year, 98 (62 elementary and 36 junior high) schools out of a possible 236 eligible schools were consistently implementing the program, organizing some 246 events.

The final factor—and the most important—is the student. The students in the province have taken up our challenge and responded to our question: “What do you want to do today?” They want to have a voice in determining the activities they play, they want to have fun and, most important, they want to play with their friends. In 2011/12, elementary students earned 11,048 stickers and junior high kids earned 4,181 pins. Meanwhile, 12,520 students participated in school walks and runs and 2,223 students participated in the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association Education Week Subway Jamborees.

We have done so much already, but we are just getting started! Why don't you (and your students) join us?

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# Teaching Can Be a Lonely Experience: Does It Have to Be?

*Shannon Funk*

I was asked in a recent conversation with a university student after class, “How did you get such a cool job?” His question caused me to take a step—a large step—back and reflect on many stories and experiences in my life. How did I end up in such a fantastic profession alongside supportive colleagues? I cannot share an inspirational childhood dream of being a teacher; I wanted to play professional hockey. However, I also had never imagined making a living while standing knee deep in snow, surrounded by enthusiastic young adults, demonstrating amazing engineering of a quinzhee (a pile of settled snow used as a winter shelter), which I would later spend the night in. As the student described, “a cool job” is where I now find myself. How am I so fortunate? His question gave me reason to reflect on how and why I got to where I am and the many people who I consider to be my life mentors. His question also reminded me how important it is for preservice and early-, mid- and late-career teachers alike to have continued support and encouragement in our often challenging profession.

It has been estimated that almost half of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Odell and Ferraro 1992; Posden and Denmark 2007; Smith and Ingersoll 2004), a statistic that is alarming yet not at all surprising to me. I have heard this number many times in various contexts, and each time I wondered how I survived these dreaded first five years of teaching. Looking back on my stories of endless planning, marking, coaching and teaching, I wonder how many other early-career teachers also experience(d) similar stories? What caused me to keep going and causes others to leave? Each time my thoughts return to the exceptional support I received and the mentors with whom I developed close relationships.

We know that mentoring and support can be an essential part of the growth and development of teachers, especially in the beginning years of the profession. Yet, when asked about their first year or two of teaching, many beginning teachers will explain feelings of isolation and lack of support (Gratch 1998; Huling-Austin 1992; Posden and Denmark 2007; Smith and Ingersoll 2004). Mentoring involves practising reflexivity



by sharing an emotional, intellectual and ideological journey, which can be empowering (Chawla and Rawlins 2004). Teachers who receive mentoring are more likely to stay in the profession, develop more effective instructional practices and overall have better teaching attitudes (Cothran et al 2005). I wonder, then, how we continue to allow so many teachers to flounder and struggle, knowing that a conversation with a professional friend may be the missing piece to a frustrating puzzle?

Much of my research has involved preservice teachers and focused on their experiences as they learn to teach physical education. During a 16-week internship, I consistently hear preservice teachers speak more often about their experiences of building relationships than they talk about lesson plans and instructional strategies (Funk 2013). Yes, connecting with students in the classroom/gymnasium builds professional confidence and lessens classroom management concerns. However, time and time again, preservice teachers share experiences that revolve around the relationship(s) they form with cooperating teachers and colleagues. Some of these relationships are educative, supportive and productive. However, what happens to preservice teachers who receive little support and mentoring during such an important stage in their career? Do they feel isolated, lonely and eventually become a statistic?

In my cool position as an assistant professor, in a department where collaboration and collegiality are foundational, I cannot help but once again realize how essential mentoring is at every stage in the teaching profession. I wonder how different my experience in a new city, university and position would have been without ongoing support from my colleagues. Throughout my teaching career I've been fortunate to take on such roles as a cooperating teacher, faculty advisor from the university and a teacher educator instructing courses in the areas of physical, outdoor, and health

education. A thread of connection that has emerged and become foundational in my own stories of experience is the importance of ongoing support and mentoring. Collaboration is a healthy and professional activity; conversations among colleagues and the experience of learning alongside each other create collegiality and a sense of belonging within the larger context.

A question I continue to ask is how can we work together as preservice, early-, mid- and late-career teachers, and teacher educators more effectively in order to create a more sustainable profession across the board? I invite these critical conversations to continue. I also invite you to engage in a conversation with colleagues who are in a different stage in their career. Although it may be a simple conversation, it has the potential to make a big difference. Those colleagues may end up describing their career as a cool job because of the support they gained from you.

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