



LET THEM PLAY

LESSONS IN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM QUALITY THROUGH
THE RBC LEARN TO PLAY PROJECT IN KINGS COUNTY NOVA SCOTIA

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WITH SUPPORT OF:



RBC
Learn to Play
Project



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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Let Them Play project began under the name “Learn to Play” and was funded by the After School Program Partnership (which includes the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, Sport Nova Scotia, municipal recreation departments and the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness) and the RBC Learn to Play Community Grant Program. The original intention of the project was to address concerns about after school program quality, specifically regarding training and retaining leaders so that programs could better teach physical literacy. Two Leadership Mentors were hired to develop and deliver customized training and support to leaders of after school physical activity programs for children ages 5-12 throughout Kings County.

As the project progressed, several things became apparent:

- The project provided an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast programs to better understand what made a program work well, providing 19 case studies
- Insights could be gained about how programs and training could be structured in the future to ensure high quality, sustainable programs beyond the life of this one year project
- Children have an innate drive to play, learn and be physically active, and the role of an after school program is to uncover and inspire this, rather than to directly and formally teach physical literacy.

Regarding how to structure a successful after school program, the project uncovered the following insights:

- A program coordinator is common to all high quality programs; a coordinator may be able to work with two programs at once if schools are near each other and have complementary schedules.
- A child-centred approach is the most important quality to look for in a leader. Everything else is trainable.
- A program based in a town or village should aim to use whatever recreational facilities are available, and to walk to them with the children if possible, rather than using the school as the program home-base.
- A program based in a rural school should use the school facilities, and bring in community expertise to provide new and engaging experiences for the children where possible.

- Leaders are easier to find and retain when the structure of the program works for their life stage. Young, high school or university age leaders need to work only a few afternoons per week in order to have time for their other activities. Adult leaders need to have as many hours as possible in order to have a substantive part-time job that they can commit to.

Insights about the types of programs that work well for engaging children in physical activity are:

- Nature-based free play programs such as Trailblazers are great for getting kids curious about nature. Nature-based play tends to be more physically active than indoor play.
- Choice is an essential part of a program for a child’s sense of fun and whether she/he feels like she/he is actually playing.
- Structured, specific activity programs (such as fencing, speed skating or rock climbing) work well when children have a genuine choice to register for the program (essentially, the program is not scheduled or structured to serve as child care) because they allow children to have a natural context, motivation or reason to learn fundamental movement skills rather than have them taught directly.
- When creating a structured, specific activity program, ask what activities or sports have infrastructure and a community built around them in the area as a starting point. This way the after school program can act as a doorway to greater involvement and community for the children who like the activity.
- All-girls programs are important and successful for all age groups of girls and should be developed wherever possible.

These observations coincide with a number of different studies and guidelines, particularly with the recent ParticiP ACTION report card and Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, as well as the Heart and Stroke Foundation Physical Activity After School Program Guidelines for Nova Scotia.

From these findings come several recommendations for funding and policies related to after school programs going forward:

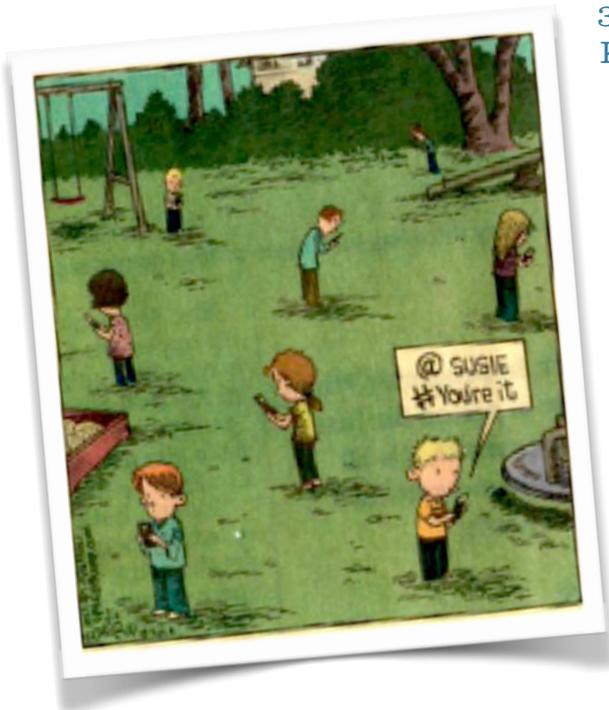
- Increase the flexibility in terms of how the per school allotment of funds can be spent to include before and during school time slots
- Recognize that paying for a coordinator’s time is an excellent use of the per school funding
- Recognize that having new leaders on payroll in the late spring to help transition them in is an excellent use of the per school funding

- Set aside funding for leadership training which is customized to the program and the leaders. This can look like one or two needs assessment visits to the program(s) and then a planned training taking place during a time when the leaders are normally available, such as during an early dismissal or professional development day

3. PROJECT BACKGROUND

3.1. WHAT TRENDS AND PROBLEMS MOTIVATED THIS PROJECT?

3.1.1. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL TRENDS IN KINGS COUNTY/NOVA SCOTIA/CANADA



It is widely recommended that children and youth get 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.¹ The benefits of physical activity are widely recognized and include: healthy weight maintenance; prevention of chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer, arthritis, and depression; mood regulation; improved sleep; longer lifespan; stronger bones and muscles; improved concentration and learning²; and improved self-confidence.³

Unfortunately, most Canadian children and youth are getting nowhere near the recommended amount of physical activity. In the new

ParticipACTION report card on Physical Activity in Youth and Children released in June 2015, those numbers are cited as 14% of children age 5-11 and 5% of youth ages 12-17.⁴

In Nova Scotia, research from 2009-2010 school year found that approximately 80% of children in grade 3 got 60 minutes or more of physical activity in roughly equal proportions for both

¹ Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines www.csep.ca/guidelines

²Active Education: Growing Evidence on Physical Activity and Academic Performance. Active Living Research. <http://activelivingresearch.org/ActiveEducationBrief>

³ The Benefits of Physical Activity. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/>

⁴ <http://www.participaction.com/report-card-2015/>

boys and girls. However, this number dramatically declines as children get older, and statistically significant differences emerge between girls and boys. In grade 7, only 13.2% of girls and 28.4% of boys met the guidelines, and by grade 11 those numbers drop to 0.9% of girls and 4.5% of boys.⁵ Clearly, there is a need to understand why these trends are occurring as well as to understand the most effective ways to intervene to get a majority of children and youth physically active so that they can enjoy the myriad benefits of physical activity noted above.

3.1.2. AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

In 2006 the Municipality of West Hants started running an after school program at one of the elementary schools in its region. The success of the program led to the formation of the Annapolis Valley After School Programs Partnership in 2007. The Partnership consists of Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Sport Nova Scotia and municipal recreation departments. Each partner initially contributed \$500 per school, for a total per school budget of \$1,500. The Nova Scotia Department of Education subsequently increased the school board's contribution to \$1,500 per school, for a total of \$2,500 per school. The programs are managed by each municipal recreation department.

While there have been some very successful programs, some recreation departments have struggled to offer programs at several schools. Many have not spent all their money, leading to a pool of accumulated funds. Two major challenges have been finding qualified leaders and providing training and support to the leaders.

3.2. PROJECT HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

The Kings County CS4L Leadership Development Project was set up to address the challenges faced by the Partnership. The Kings County Recreation Group is made up of seven recreation departments: Municipality of the County of Kings; Town of Berwick; Town of Kentville; Town of Wolfville; Village of Canning; Village of Kingston; Village of New Minas.

Each of the recreation departments offers a wide range of programming for children, including after school programs and day camp programs. Collectively the seven recreation departments employ approximately sixty to seventy program leaders, mostly in part time or seasonal positions.

⁵ <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pasr/documents/Keeping-Pace-Physical-Activity-and-Healthy-Eating-Among-Children-and-Youth-Key-Findings-from-the-2009-2010-Study.pdf>

A key component to providing quality recreation and sport programs is having leaders that are qualified/trained, as well as caring and passionate. This project is focused on providing after school and day camp program leaders with the necessary training, mentoring, support, and resources to deliver quality sport and recreation programs that help to develop physical literacy in children aged five to twelve.

The project has three main components:

1. Development of a Leadership Training/Mentoring Program that involved hiring and training two half time Leadership Mentors. The Leadership Mentors would, in turn, train and mentor approximately sixty part time and seasonal program leaders.
2. Development of a Program Resource Guide and Tools for program leaders. The tools would include activity guides and educational materials for parents/guardians.
3. Provision of a customized activity kit for participating schools and recreation departments.

Training for after school program leaders has happened in the past, but usually in one or two full day trainings that not everyone can attend. In addition, those who do attend then face a disconnect between the training and their actual work with children throughout the year. This project allows training to be decentralized, personalized and on-going, as well as ensures that all leaders receive a minimum level of training. The leadership mentors are able to assess which programs and leaders require additional support and schedule their time accordingly.

The Project began in September 2014, with funding support from Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Sport Nova Scotia, Municipality of the County of Kings and a RBC Learn to Play Community Grant. Once the leadership mentors were hired, they underwent intensive training, including HIGH FIVE® Principles of Healthy Child Development, HIGH FIVE® Sport, Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS), and HIGH FIVE® QUEST 2, along with some customized training and orientation.

The Project originally focused only on the sixteen elementary schools (P-5) in Kings County. It later expanded to include programs offered at the middle and high school levels. In total, nineteen of the twenty-three Kings County schools offered after school programs during the school year and were included in the Project.

3.3. DESIRED OUTCOMES OF PROJECT

The original intent of the project was to develop and implement a project that would provide training and support to program leaders who would help Kings County children (ages 5 -12) develop physical literacy. The project would be designed to be fun, inclusive, age and ability appropriate, and would incorporate Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) principles (such as avoiding pressure to specialize in a sport until after physical maturity, learning fundamental movement skills appropriate to the child's age, and an emphasis on fun) into existing and new after school and municipal recreation day camp programs.

As the project rolled out, the most immediately relevant training to the leaders and their ability to implement a high quality program seemed to be the HIGH FIVE® Principles of Healthy Child Development. The core principles of HIGH FIVE® are: A Caring Adult, the opportunity to make Friends, Play, Master Skills and Participate. The Design Guidelines are: Developmentally Appropriate, Safe and Welcoming of Diversity and Uniqueness.⁶ The main assertion made by HIGH FIVE, which is supported by extensive research, is that when these principles and guidelines are present in a children's program, a child will feel comfortable and welcome to continue attending the program happily.

As the project progressed through the year, it evolved to include these goals as well:

- To understand the breadth of after school programs in the county at a basic level:
 - ★ Who are the leaders?
 - ★ What activities happen at each program?
 - ★ How many kids attend each program?
 - ★ How are the programs structured?
- To understand at a deeper level what factors influence the program quality in terms of children's experience of the program, the amount of physical activity gained through the program, and the ability of the program to continue through multiple years
- To understand how programs can most effectively be structured and supported through the after school partnership funding

3.4. KEY ASSUMPTIONS AT START OF PROJECT

It was assumed that increasing the capacity of the after school programs to teach physical literacy would be a major goal or outcome of the project. Embedded in the concept of physical literacy is the assumption that if children are physically literate, they will achieve healthy levels of physical activity throughout life, primarily through sport and recreation. The definition of

⁶ HIGH FIVE® Principles of Healthy Child Development Workbook

physical literacy put forth by the International Physical Literacy Association is “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”⁷

4. OBSERVATIONS FROM KINGS COUNTY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

4.1. KEY FINDINGS

During the 2014-2015 school year, after school programs were run at the following schools: Aldershot Elementary School, Berwick and District School, Cambridge and District Elementary School, Central Kings Rural High School, Coldbrook and District School, Dwight Ross School, Gaspereau Valley Elementary School, Glooscap Elementary School, Hantsport School, Kings County Academy, LE Shaw Elementary School, New Minas Elementary School, Northeast Kings Education Centre, Port Williams Elementary School, Pine Ridge Middle School, Somerset and District Elementary School, St. Mary’s School, West Kings Rural High School, and Wolfville School.

In working with and observing this broad range of after school programs in Kings County, four key factors emerged as having an important influence on program quality. They are:

- program structure
- leadership
- activities in the program
- location of the school and surrounding community

Program structure refers to things such as the number of children attending, the frequency or schedule of the program, the age groupings, the number of leaders and the relationship between the school or recreation department and the program. Leadership considers who the leaders are, what life stage they are at and what kind of background, attitudes and training they bring to the program. Activities refers to what children are actually doing in the program. The location of the school or community impacts what types of activities are possible in the program.

⁷ Canada’s Physical Literacy Consensus Statement. June 2015 <http://www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Consensus-Handout-EN-WEB.pdf>

4.1.1. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “HIGH QUALITY”?

When this report refers to a “high quality” program, we mean programs that have many, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- Caring, prepared, flexible and fun leaders
- Dependable leaders
- Lots of opportunities for stimulating physical activity
- Happy, active, engaged kids
- Consistent attendance

HIGH FIVE®’s QUEST 2 evaluation has been a useful tool for evaluating program quality. Programs that we think of as being high quality in terms of the above factors also tend to have very high QUEST 2 evaluation scores.

4.1.2. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

There are many ways a program can be set up. The programs observed through the project ranged from a 45-minute program twice per week with one leader for children in grades P-2 at Dwight Ross Elementary School in Greenwood, to a 2.5 hour, five day per week program with a coordinator and several teenage leaders in Berwick. **We observed that perhaps the most important factor influencing program quality is the presence of a program coordinator.** This person is responsible for managing the program budget, setting the schedule, hiring leaders, planning activities, overseeing payroll and attendance forms, and generally advocating for the program. However, the coordinator may or may not be a program leader.

Berwick School and St. Mary’s Elementary School are excellent examples of how important a program coordinator can be in supporting the quality of a program. These two schools provide excellent models for after school programs. **The Berwick program suggests a model of a program that could work well in a town or village, while the St. Mary’s program suggests a model of a program that could work well at schools in more rural settings.**

4.1.2.1. BERWICK AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Berwick After School Program is run by the Town of Berwick Department of Recreation and Community Development. This program has a coordinator, who was hired by the Director of Community Development and Recreation and works 15-20 hours per week. She is a mother of two young children and lives in the community. The program runs five days per week, for 2.5 hours per day, for children in grades P-5. Two of the five days the program is funded by the After School Program Partnership and the other three days are \$8 per day. The coordinator in the program is also the head leader, and she is assisted by 2 to 3 teenage leaders from the community each day. There are seven leaders in total; six of them are high school students. The students are hired for their diverse interests, their ability to be role models for the children and their ability to connect with children. They each work one to three days per week depending on their availability. Most of the teen leaders attend West Kings Rural High School, which has a dismissal time which is earlier than the elementary schools, which makes it possible for them to be at the program in time for its start at 2:30 pm.

The coordinator is able to manage planning and scheduling of activities, as well as communication with the parents, and hiring, scheduling and supporting the teenage leaders. Each month, the coordinator puts together a visual calendar of the activities for the month (see sample calendar in Appendix), so that parents and children can choose which days to attend. The fact that most of the activities are planned so far in advance and are written so that parents and children know what to expect is an important piece of program quality. Having a written and visible program plan is a factor in the QUEST 2 program evaluation tool, which very few programs we have worked with have done. The time it takes to do this well is only possible if there is one person who is designated a coordinator and is paid for their time to do the planning.

Another issue that having a designated coordinator mostly solves is leader reliability or attendance. Many of the programs observed were continually struggling to find and retain leaders, sometimes on a daily basis. Because, at least in the case of Berwick's ASP, the program is the coordinator's substantive part-time job, there is almost always at least one person available to run the program and who is prioritizing her/his commitment to the program over other things in her/his life. With younger leaders who have many other things going on in their lives, commitment to run any particular session can be variable. Obviously, that is a big challenge, as parents expect that their child has a place to go after school, and having no leader is a chaotic situation.

In terms of program continuity session to session during the same school year or between school years, a program coordinator is also very helpful. If there are gaps in leader availability or new leaders need to be found and hired for the next year, the program coordinator is able to take that on.

4.1.2.2. ST. MARY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

St. Mary's Elementary After School Program is set up slightly differently than Berwick's but it still demonstrates the benefit of having a designated program coordinator. The key differences are that the coordinator is not a program leader and she is a teacher at the school. The program at St. Mary's runs five days per week, but with a different group of children registered each day. There are five teenage leaders who live in the community who work one to four days per week. Each day of the program is free and runs from 2:45 - 4pm each day. In the case of both Berwick and St. Mary's, it is possible to have high school aged leaders because West Kings Rural High School dismisses earlier than the elementary schools. This is not the case with Central Kings, Horton, or Northeast Kings High Schools.

Having a coordinator for this program has meant that the program could evolve as needed over the course of the year. For example, Tuesdays are for children in grades 4 and 5. That ended up being the day with the highest attendance and many rowdy boys and only a handful of girls. For the winter session, the coordinator was able to make some changes to improve that situation by adding a third leader to the Tuesday session and creating an all-girls program on Wednesday to create a more welcoming space for girls of that age. **The girls program has had consistently high attendance, which shows that the atmosphere of the Tuesday group was preventing many girls from joining in (see more about Girls Attendance in the Appendix).** Both of these changes directly addressed the issues that had arisen, and would have been hard for the student leaders to make on their own, given that they work at different times. The leadership mentor role was also important in making these changes, as the mentor was able to suggest an all-girls program which has been working so well at another school.

A coordinator who works at the school is also important for continuing the program from year to year. When working with high school students as leaders, there is high turnover, so as wonderful as they often are to work with, they need to be found and hired nearly every year. In this case, the coordinator knows many of the students who are available in the community to serve as leaders because she has taught many of them herself. Between her own instincts and the recommendations and instincts of the current leaders, she is able to identify and hire appropriate leaders.

This program could serve as a model for an after school program in a rural community, where activities are based at the school, and there are youth leaders available. Opportunities for high schools which do not have dismissal times which permit high school students to be leaders include the Options and Opportunities program, which is available at every high school in the AVRSB. A handbook which describes in detail how this program runs is included in the Appendix of this report.

4.1.2.3. LE SHAW/HANTSPORT AND DWIGHT ROSS ASPs - CREATE SUBSTANTIAL PART-TIME WORK FOR ADULT LEADERS

Model for Schools Sharing Leaders

Another structural choice programs can make in order to find and retain leaders is to use creative ways to make substantial part-time work for the leaders, especially if leaders are adults living in or near the school community. LE Shaw and Hantsport after school programs are a great example of this. Each of these programs on their own would have trouble finding and keeping leaders because each runs only two days per week for 1.5 hours. However, since these two schools are located near each other, and because the programs have been set up to not overlap, the same two leaders can run both programs. This means that each leader has eight hours of consistent work each week.

It is likely that Dwight Ross Elementary School's after school program struggled to find leaders because the number of hours of work available was so small as to be not worth rearranging a schedule to lead a program in the middle of the afternoon. That program only ran twice a week for 45 minutes. If the program had expanded in length per day and in number of days per week, it is more likely that a member of the community would have been interested in rearranging his or her schedule to run the program. Another option for Dwight Ross might be to explore after school programming with nearby schools and plan a calendar that would enable two leaders to lead programs at two or three schools to get enough hours to make a

4.1.2.4 OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Programs also greatly benefiting from a coordinator are Port Williams Elementary School, which functions similarly to St. Mary's Elementary School, in that there is a single coordinator who works in the school and facilitates a popular after school program that runs five days per week for different ages groups. That program has been able to take on different types of activities, most recently tennis.

Programs with a coordinator who also serves as a leader that have been successful are Cambridge School, where the coordinator/leader is an EA at the school, and Coldbrook, where the two leaders co-coordinate and are also EAs at the school.

We also observed programs that struggled in the absence of a coordinator. Somerset Elementary School has a free (grant funded) 2.5 hour per day five day per week program that

lacks a coordinator. Program quality and staff stress and burnout are issues at this program. There have been only two consistent leaders who work every day. Both leaders are under the age of 20 with no specific training in child development or physical activity. Under this circumstance, often with up to 35 children attending the program on any given day, and with no one responsible for program planning, the activities in the program tend to be uninspired. There is a lot of time for free play, but it happens in a repetitive environment. The program also uses the gym and the expansive school grounds. A library and a wetland science room could be more fully utilized with a confident and creative program coordinator whose time was valued.

4.1.3. IMPORTANCE OF CHILD-CENTRED LEADERS

Leadership is clearly one of the most important factors influencing the quality of an after school program. Good leaders at minimum need to be reliable and have a child-centred approach. Program structure helps with reliability, and keeping a child-centred approach or philosophy at the centre of the hiring process allows other important qualities to fall into place through training and mentorship.

People with a child-centred approach understand that children deserve the same respect as adults, but can keep the unique needs of children (such as the needs to play, to have caring adults in their lives, to make friends, and to learn and grow at their own pace) front of mind. These people naturally enjoy working with children, children trust and gravitate toward them, and creating a positive experience for all children in their program is their ultimate goal.

We have found that nearly all other qualities needed in a leader can be developed through training and mentoring. For example, the leaders at the L E Shaw and Hantsport programs were unprepared for and intimidated by their role to provide physical activity opportunities for children. But given that they came in with a desire to work with children and provide a positive experience for them, they were open and receptive to the support, encouragement and training provided through the Leadership Mentor program. They built up program attendance at both schools, so that each school had around 15 children in attendance each day. The leaders are interested in continuing to run these programs next year as well.

Nearly all of the other programs that could be held up as an example of a high quality after school program have leaders who demonstrate an inherent child-centred approach as well. This is true of Cambridge, Coldbrook, Port Williams, Gaspereau and KCA's Trailblazers. The interesting fact is that many of these leaders have not had the High Five Principles of Healthy Child Development training, which introduces and emphasizes this approach fairly well. They might find the training helpful in confirming or summarizing their approach or practice, but they already embody many if not all of the key points in that training. This is exemplified by these programs' high QUEST 2 evaluation scores.

However, it is important to remember that this personal characteristic can be taught. The young leaders at St. Mary's Elementary School and at Berwick School all either took the High Five Principles of Healthy Child Development or received a custom fit version of the content of that training. Because these teen leaders are young and inexperienced leaders and their full time job as students is learning, they are very open to new ideas and are able to apply the learnings from the training to their work with children right away.

4.1.4. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES



The activities in a program are a third key factor in determining the overall quality of an after school program. Over and over, we observed that kids want to be stimulated by their environment and engaged in what they are doing. This can happen in several ways. Essentially, good programs with happy and engaged kids have a balance of free play and more structured activities, and when activities are more structured, that the kids have had a choice to participate in them.

When programs use games intended to involve all the participants, leaders should use the LET US Play guidelines: “removing **Lines**, eliminating **Elimination**, reducing **Team Size**, getting **Uninvolved staff and children** involved, and being creative with **Space, equipment and rules**.”⁸ These simple guidelines help to increase the density of physical activity in a program.

4.1.4.1. FREE PLAY

Free play is when children are directing the play themselves and are making choices about what to do, who to do it with and when to switch activities without the interference of adults.



⁸ LET US Play Guidelines. <http://www.p2yp.org/training/get-kids-active/let-us-play-videos>

A widely used definition of play, developed by Bob Hughes in 1982 is “freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated, i.e. performed for no external goal or reward.”⁹ While the Leadership Mentors were visiting programs, children were heard saying on several occasions that when a program had not incorporated time for free play, they felt as though they haven’t played at all, saying “But we haven’t gotten to play today!” To them, playing structured games not chosen by them doesn’t count as playing. Thus, it’s debatable how much fun they are actually having! And if physical activity is not fun, they are not likely to do much of it on their own time.

Some programs make excellent use of free play. Free play seems to work well for children when there are many interesting and challenging activity options in a stimulating environment. Great examples of this are when programs allow children to use gym equipment creatively and with minimal instruction, or when there are exciting natural areas to explore, such as the ravine area of The Gorge, used in the Trailblazers program in Kentville. Children in this type of stimulating free play are able to find their own edges of challenge and work toward mastery. For example, children playing basketball during free time are often doing things like keeping track of how many baskets they can make in a row, or standing further away, from different angles, etc. Children playing Bubble Soccer are sometimes not actually engaged in soccer, but are trying new and challenging things with the bubble, such as understanding how to make the bubble flip over, or how to get the bubble right side up from a still position upside down. In the Trailblazers program, children are learning about navigating in the woods, jumping into puddles or from heights, learning how far they can leap to cross a stream, walking and running on uneven ground, walking across logs, assessing risk for themselves, and other meaningful growth opportunities. These are environments where children can easily avoid more challenging things if he or she feels unready.

Other programs provide a lot of time for free play but the children seem to get less out of it because it happens in a repetitive, indoor environment. When these children are offered new activities to do, many enthusiastically chose to participate in the new activity, likely because they were bored with the usual options of games and puzzles available to them. From these instances we learned that while free play is important, it is not enough for leaders to be passive about providing free play. They must be continually introducing new materials, spaces, and activities to choose from in order for children to get the full benefits of free play.

4.1.4.2. SPORT PROGRAMS

High quality after school programs also make great use of specific sports to engage children. We observed highly successful after school programs which focused on speed skating, tennis, fencing, mountain biking, rock climbing, and CrossFit. The speed skating program was for

⁹ Youth Highland. What is Free Play? <http://www.youthhighland.org.uk/what-is-free-play.asp>

grades P-8; tennis and fencing were for grades P-5; mountain biking was for girls in grades 6-9; rock climbing was for girls grades 5-9, boys and girls for grades 6-8, and boys and girls grades 9-12; and CrossFit was for girls grades 9-12.

These programs consistently scored very high on the QUEST 2 evaluations. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First, these activities are interesting, challenging, and involve a clear skill progression. This means that the adults leading the activities are usually committed to and passionate about the activity, and are leading in large part because they want to share what they love with children who may also grow to love the activity. These leaders show a higher level of engagement, enthusiasm and preparedness than in the more mixed activity programs, resulting in a higher quality program. Second, children feel this enthusiasm and also become more engaged in the activity. Third, children often want to do adult things through their play- they see adults playing tennis or rock climbing, and they want to do it too. Therefore, the physical literacy development involved in trying these activities is naturally or intrinsically motivated- it emerges as a by-product of being engaged in the activity. We saw children eagerly trying to learn fundamental movement skills such as throwing and catching because they wanted to learn tennis, for example.

Another feature of these specific sport programs is that they are all sports that have an active community of people of all ages enjoying them in the Annapolis Valley region. They are not randomly selected activities, but rather chosen by asking "What interesting activities or sports have people organized around here?" This means the programs are available and if a child enjoys the after school program introduction to the activity, there are clear paths to continue to do the activity with people of all ages after the program ends. This means children and youth can find a sustained community around a physical activity, which for many people is very important in being active for life.

Lastly, these activities help children see the range of ways to be physically active beyond traditional team sports. Team sports are certainly not for every child. The culture around each



The physical literacy development involved in trying these activities is naturally or intrinsically motivated- it emerges as a by-product of being engaged in the activity.

activity can be as important in determining whether a child likes an activity and wants to stick with it as the activity itself, and each of these activities has a different cultural tone that will appeal to different children.

4.1.4.3. ROLE OF CHOICE

We have seen that when children have choice to be involved in the activity at hand, they are more engaged and active. This is true both of free play time, and of the more structured activities. It may seem like the more structured, activity specific programs (such as the tennis or fencing programs) have less choice than free play, but these programs work because children have the choice to be there (if the program is not set up to be childcare). Essentially, children would likely get less out of a speed skating program, for example, if it was embedded into a daycare program like Berwick or Somerset, which many children attend every day because they have to. These programs could be offered, but there should be an alternate activity option available. The reason is simple: if kids do not want to be there, they will not have fun, and physical activity may become another thing children avoid because they are made to do it. Choice has a fundamental mental health component as well: people who feel they have control over their own lives are less likely to develop depression or anxiety.¹⁰

4.1.4.4. LEARN TO PLAY VS. LET THEM PLAY



A key theme that emerged from observations at many after school programs is that children seem to instinctively know how to and enjoy play. In fact, developmental psychologists have known that human children have a strong play instinct, and that children learn much of what they need to know through play.¹¹ This is at odds with the name of the RBC grant funding a portion of this project, Learn to Play. This name implies that children do not know how to play on their own, that they need to be taught. **Instead, it seems that the work of ensuring that children get the physical activity they need comes from creating**

fun, inspiring and stimulating environments for play and learning new forms of physical activity. If these conditions are met, then children will want to challenge themselves to learn the necessary fundamental movement skills and physical

¹⁰ Gray, Peter. Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life. Basic Books, 2013. p. 16

¹¹ Gray, Peter. Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life. Basic Books, 2013. P.113-114

literacy they need to do the activities that excite their imaginations.

4.1.5. PROGRAMS FOR TEENS

An unexpected but extremely positive outcome of the project was observing some successful programs for teenagers. Teens, especially teen girls, show the lowest rates of physical activity among youth.¹² In addition, teen attendance to programs tends to be low. However, the girls-only CrossFit program offered at Central Kings Rural High School and the Rock Divas program at Northeast Kings Education Centre were well-attended, and offered an important outlet for physical activity.

The girls who attended the CrossFit program spoke of the welcoming and supportive atmosphere which encouraged setting personal goals and challenging oneself on one's own terms. This atmosphere was possible because of the all-girls environment, and an instructor who was passionate about both CrossFit and encouraging girls through the unique challenges of that age. The girls spoke of how the experience of pushing through physical challenge helped them feel more able to take on other types of challenges in their lives with more confidence. While some girls were athletes who appreciated the

Interestingly, the girls also mentioned that it is rare for teenagers to be able to be a beginner in a challenging, progression oriented, skill based activity like CrossFit. By the time youth are teenagers, they are either in fairly competitive sports streams or not very active. There are few opportunities to do sports and other physical activities as a teenager for purposes of fun, recreation and personal growth.



chance to work on strength in their off season, many of the girls were those who did not do any kind of physical activity before starting the program. All body types and ability levels were

¹² Thompson, A.M. and Wadsworth, L.A. Keeping Pace: Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Among Children and Youth, Key Findings from the 2009-2010 Study. Government of Nova Scotia. <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pasr/documents/Keeping-Pace-Physical-Activity-and-Healthy-Eating-Among-Children-and-Youth-Key-Findings-from-the-2009-2010-Study.pdf>

welcomed. Lastly, the girls said their experience in CrossFit will help them stay active because they want to keep getting stronger, they know some exercises to do that can be done anywhere, and they have more confidence to go into a gym in the future.

Interestingly, the girls also mentioned that it is rare for teenagers to be able to be a beginner in a challenging, progression oriented, skill based activity like CrossFit. By the time youth are teenagers, they are either in fairly competitive sports streams or not very active. There are few opportunities to do sports and other physical activities as a teenager for purposes of fun, recreation and personal growth.

Take swimming for example: for young kids, there are a variety of swimming levels and options, and for adults, there are casual clubs and teams like masters swim clubs which are welcoming of all abilities and interest in competition. But for teens, there are generally just competitive club and high school teams. In most sports, it is hard to stay in the sport as a teen if one does not want to be competitive. The climbing, mountain biking and CrossFit programs all represent this rare opportunity to be a beginner as a teenager, and to not feel funnelled into a competitive path. We recommend exploring this idea further with teens to learn what other types of sports and activities they wished they had access to on a low-pressure, recreational basis.

The rock climbing and mountain biking programs are also very influential in the lives of many of the participants. These are sports that people grow to love if it is a good fit for them, and they are things that one can do for life. They can be competitive, but it is very common to do them for social and recreational purposes. There are several teens who have gotten started in these sports through the after school programs and have had the course of their lives change as a result of deepening their involvement with the sport. And because these are sports which have a reasonably well-developed group of people doing them in the Valley, these teens can keep doing them outside of the after school program.

4.1.6. PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS



Girls-only programs were some of the most successful programs observed through this project. At the elementary level at the beginning of the year, there was one girls-only program at Cambridge and District Elementary School. This day was consistently well-attended. St. Mary's Elementary School

implemented a girls-only program starting in January after hearing about the Cambridge program, and after a boy-dominated program day for grades 4 and 5 seemed to be excluding girls from participating. That program was immediately very well-attended by many girls in the grade 4-5 age group, which indicates that creating a girls-only program was critical for making these girls feel comfortable.

Similarly, there were many girls attending the girls-only Rock Divas climbing program at Northeast Kings Education Centre for grades 6-12, but only two girls attending the Pine Ridge Middle School rock climbing program and no girls attending the West Kings rock climbing program, both of which were co-ed. And of course, the girls attending the CrossFit program said they would not attend if it were a co-ed program. All of this indicates how important all-girls programs are for increasing the numbers of female participants in physical activity programs.

Based on the positive feedback and success of these programs at both the elementary level and the middle and high school levels, and given that girls, especially teen girls, tend to be the most inactive group of youth, it is important to continue to offer all-girls programs. Moreover, they should be expanded to more schools. Girls have many ideas for what programs they might like to try, so recreation and after school program coordinators should continue to ask girls what activities they are interested in, and offer a variety of programs to see what works well.

Many people who run all-girls programs find that it can be difficult to justify all-girls programs in a society that increasingly values gender equity.¹³ However, a growing body of research is recognizing the benefits for girls of girls-only spaces. Girls and boys face different issues as they move toward adulthood. Single gender programs provide safe, welcoming contexts to explore these issues. Body image is an example which intersects with physical activity. Programs like CrossFit can help girls value their bodies for what they can do, rather than simply what their bodies look like. Single gender environments also allow both boys and girls the opportunity to stretch themselves beyond gender stereotypes.¹⁴ For example, girls in an all-girls program may be more assertive and competitive than they would be in a co-ed program. And single gender environments allow girls to feel comfortable taking on more risks and opportunities. Again, we heard this from the girls in the CrossFit and Rock Divas programs: most of the girls in these programs would not have even attended a first session if boys were present.

¹³ Girls Action Foundation. Communicating the Need for Gender Specific Programs: Tips for "Why Girls?" <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/amplify-toolkit-/section-1-organizing-a-girls-program/promotions-and-communications/communicating-the-need-for-gender-specific-p>

¹⁴ National Association for Single-Sex Public Education. Advantages for Girls. <http://www.singlesexschools.org/research-forgirls.htm>

5. RESEARCH CONSISTENT WITH PROGRAM OBSERVATIONS

5.1. PARTICIPACTION POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIVE OUTDOOR PLAY¹⁵

The newly released Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, published by ParticipACTION, contains many points that we have directly observed in the after school programs, and highlights a new direction for all after school programs. The crux of the report is that “when children are outside, they move more, sit less and play longer”. The Trailblazers program in Kentville certainly demonstrates this, as it is the only program where leaders, kids and parents alike are noting how blissfully tired the kids are when they go home.

The statement also points out that there are just as many risks to keeping children inside, but the risks are simply different ones, such as the temptation of screens (and the associated cyber bullying and violence), unhealthy food and air quality, and the long term risks of sedentary behaviour. It also notes that children are less active if they are closely supervised outside, something that many adults are not ready to let go of, especially because paying close attention is nearly synonymous with being a responsible teacher/leader/parent/babysitter.

Finally, the statement reports that children are more drawn to natural play areas like forests or meadows than constructed play areas like playgrounds and playing fields. This is certainly apparent to anyone who has tried to lead a group of children both indoors and outdoors. Indoor programming places a huge onus on the leaders to keep things interesting and engaging, whereas the natural world does most of that work for children who are used to being outside for outdoor programming.

5.2. HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN NOVA SCOTIA¹⁶

The Heart and Stroke Foundation also released guidelines in May 2015 for after school programs in Nova Scotia, and there are many overlaps in what we have observed and recommend, and the guidelines listed. The following are the recommendations that strongly align with our key findings:

- “When physical activity is scheduled, more than one option is scheduled so participants can choose.”

¹⁵ ParticipACTION. Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play. <http://www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Position-Statement-on-Active-Outdoor-Play-EN-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁶ Heart and Stroke Foundation. Physical activity guidelines for after school programs in Nova Scotia. May 2015.

- “The children play outside regularly including contact with nature. Participants bring appropriate clothing for the weather.”
- “The program is offered at least two days per week.”
- “The program provides a variety of physical activities that are fun, selected by participants, and led or facilitated by adults or older youth.”
- “Time is provided for child- or youth-initiated play that is physically active. A variety of equipment is available and leaders encourage all children and youth to play.”
- “Collect more information from girls on what would motivate them to be active. Offer girls only scheduled time for physical activity.”
- “The program uses a variety of indoor spaces and outdoor spaces including natural play areas.”

6. FUNDING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN KINGS COUNTY

Some after school programs have consistently exceeded the per school funding allocation (\$3,500 per school in 2014-15), while others have spent little or no funds. In some cases, programs have not run because the recreation department was unable to find leaders or secure a suitable facility at the school. In other cases, it was because the after school programs partnership guidelines, insisting that programs take place at the school and only during the after school time period, were too restrictive. Overall it is expected that the total program spending will come in under budget for 2014-15, resulting in the leftover Department of Education funding being added to the surplus fund.

Our experience this year has shown that increasing the flexibility in how the funds can be spent can generate positive outcomes. Allowing programs to take place within communities and using community facilities creates more opportunities for effective programs. Some recreation departments and schools have indicated that they would be more successful if they were able to offer programs before school or at lunchtime. If the desired outcome is to increase students’ physical activity levels, flexibility in the time of day for programs should be considered.

Because we have seen the value of a program coordinator, it is important to allow for a program coordinator to receive extra hours and a higher wage. Coordinators are especially

important for five day per week programs, whether based in a town or at a rural school. In the case of 2 to 3 day per week programs, a single coordinator could work with two nearby programs, allowing for a substantive part-time job and consistency in the programs.

Another factor that increases the consistency of programs is to have program coordinators do leader hiring before the end of the school year, rather than in the summer or fall. This allows the new leaders to shadow the current leaders so that they know the basics of how the program runs. However, there must be enough money available to have more leaders on payroll at the end of the year.

Being able to provide on-site training and support significantly strengthened some programs. This was certainly the case with programs at L.E. Shaw, Hantsport, St. Mary's and Somerset schools. Other programs that would have benefited from the training and support offered include Aldershot, Glooscap, New Minas and Kingston, where programs only ran for a short time or not at all. While it is unlikely that we will have two leadership mentors hired for the upcoming school year, some consideration should be given to putting together a training program that would involve small group sessions on early dismissal days.

Specialized training workshops were developed and run, by the Annapolis Valley Climbing Club, for the climbing programs at Northeast Kings and West Kings, resulting in a pool of trained leaders and student assistants for the upcoming year. These workshops should be offered at least once per year.

The success of several girls-only programs, whether they were funded through the After School Programs Partnership or After the Bell, provides examples of programs that can be offered in more communities to reach this important target group. We feel that more emphasis should be put on girls-only programs and access to After the Bell funds should be handled by the County groups, as the Partnership funding is. This change could lead to more collaborative programs, more opportunities to create attractive leadership opportunities, and more high quality programs for girls.

7. CONCLUSION

The Kings County Learn to Play (or CS4L Leadership) Project achieved its main objective of providing training and support to the after school program leaders throughout Kings County. By having ongoing contact with the many programs, the leadership mentors were able to assess the needs of each program. Where additional training needs were identified, the mentors were able to prepare and deliver the required support. At programs that needed little support, the mentors were able to observe and document best practices that could be shared with other programs. The net result was a more consistent higher level of quality to the programs offered.

The project also aimed to improve the physical literacy of participants. Originally it was thought that this would be done by focusing on teaching fundamental movement skills. It quickly became apparent that the best way to develop physical literacy was to focus on ensuring that the programs were fun and engaging, and delivered by well prepared, child-centered leaders. Programs could include lots of unstructured free play or they could be focused on a specific activity or sport. If focused on a specific activity or sport, it was important that they be delivered in an age appropriate manner.

The work done with the girls-only programs and the programs for teens provided valuable insight into what types of programs work for these very important target groups. The evidence showed that providing girls-only programs dramatically increased the numbers of girls participating at all levels. The success of programs such as the CrossFit and climbing show that teens are open to new opportunities. These programs worked because they tapped into community resources – leadership and facilities, and were delivered in a format that allowed individual participants to set their own challenges and goals. They also provide a supportive social environment, something that is very important for adolescents.

The Annapolis Valley After School Program Partnership has been in place since 2007 and has had mixed results. Quality after school programs can help children and youth be physically active and develop physical literacy. They can also connect children, youth and their families with leaders, programs, facilities and natural areas in their communities. Good programs will also help children and youth develop fundamental movement skills, confidence and social skills. This project has shown that it is possible to offer high quality after school programs for all levels. For programs to be successful, they need the right combination of leadership, activity and structure. This report identifies ways to structure programs for different types of communities and different target groups.

8. APPENDICES

8.1. BERWICK MONTH AT A GLANCE CALENDAR

8.2. ST. MARY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM HANDBOOK

8.3. GIRLS PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE DATA

8.1 BERWICK MONTH AT A GLANCE CALENDAR

TOWN OF
berwick

**After
School
Program**



**February
2nd- 27th
2015**



Name	Position	Phone Number	Email
Mary Desormeau	After School Coordinator	698-3449	marydesormeau@hotmail.com
Carol Boylan-Hartling	Recreation Coordinator	538-8616	cboylan@town.berwick.ns.ca
Julie Glaser	Director of Community Development & Recreation	538-4016	jglaser@town.berwick.ns.ca

Important Dates to Remember:

Feb. 3rd—Activity with the Wildcats, pick up at the Apple Dome
 Feb. 6th—Skating 4:00-4:50, pick up at the Apple Dome
 Feb. 10th—Activity with the Wildcats, pick up at the Apple Dome
 Feb. 11th—Skating 3:00-3:50, pick up at Town Hall
 Feb. 16th—No School
 Feb. 17th—Early Dismissal, please provide lunch & extra snacks
 Feb. 25th—Skating 3:00-3:50, pick up at Town Hall

TOWN OF
berwick

**After
School
Program**



**February
2nd- 27th
2015**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>In My Backpack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refillable Water Bottle Comfortable shoes Extra Snacks Warm Clothing 	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Talent Show</p>	<p>6</p> <p>4:00-4:50</p>
<p>Our Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick up at Berwick School Activity at the Town Hall Pick up at or before 5:30pm 	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>3:00-3:50</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>
	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Early Dismissal</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>
	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>3:00-3:50</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>
		<p>Prices:</p> <p>Monday, Wednesday, Thursday \$8.00</p> <p>Tuesday, Friday Free!</p> <p>Half Day: \$15.00</p>	<p>Please let Mary know if your child will not be attending on a day when she is expecting them.</p>		

St. Mary's School After School Program Handbook

Prepared by Emily LeGrand and Heidi Hayden-Buchanan

June 2015

LET THEM PLAY Project

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Purpose of this Guide

This after school program guide has been prepared to support a coordinator of an after school program at St. Mary's Elementary School to run a program that is informed by previous versions of the program which has successfully run in the past. This guide is intended to help if there is ever a loss of continuity in the program leadership either at the school principal or program coordinator levels.

Background and Goals of the After School Program

The after school program at St. Mary's Elementary School in Aylesford, Nova Scotia is funded by the After School Program Partnership with the intention of providing a high quality, free opportunity for physical activity to all interested children attending the school. These after school programs are one way to address a lack of physical activity in children. Physical activity is increasingly understood as vital for good physical and mental health. Developing a habit of physical activity and fundamental movement skills in young children has been demonstrated to lead to active teens and adults. After school programs remove two common barriers to physical activity in children in Nova Scotia, transportation and cost, by having free programs at the school. The programs ideally provide at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity to participants on the day of the 1.25 hour program. Whether this is true or not depends upon the pacing of activities and the type of activities chosen. One of the goals of this guide is to help leaders ensure that the programs actually give children a chance to get 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.

Staff Structure

Coordinator

The after school program works well when there is a designated staff coordinator. This person should be someone who already works at the school and knows the school community. The responsibilities of the staff coordinator of the program are to:

- Find and hire leaders
- Communicate with county recreation staff
- Communicate with the school principal
- Set the program type and schedule
- Manage the program budget
- Train and support the leaders to the extent possible

- Oversee leaders in handling attendance, registration and payroll
- Communicate with parents about program plans and changes
- Evaluate and make changes to improve the program

Leaders

The after school program leaders are generally high school students attending West Kings Rural High School in grades 11 and 12. West Kings dismissal is at 2pm, allowing the student leaders to make their way to St. Mary's to lead the programs which run from 2:45-4:00pm M-F.

Finding Leaders

One of the best ways to find leaders is to ask other teachers who may have had these students in younger grades if they know of potential good leaders. If there are current leaders, they will likely have ideas for specific people, and will have an accurate feel for who would make a warm, fun, caring and reliable leader.

This program has a reputation among teen leaders as being a fun, supportive leadership role to have in the community. This is because the current coordinator has given the teen leaders support but also space to develop the program as they see fit. This trust and responsibility models best practices in youth engagement. The teens are in charge of program planning and determining their own schedules.

For the 2014-2015 school year, there were five leaders, four girls and one boy, three in grade 12 and two in grade 11. Two leaders generally work each day, with the exception of the high enrollment day (Tuesday grades 4/5) which has three leaders, one boy and two girls. The all girls day leaders are both girls.

Current Program Structure

During the 2014-2015 school year, the program ran five days per week. Mondays were for grade primary children, Tuesdays for grades 4-5, Wednesdays originally for grade 3, then switched to an all-girls program, Thursdays for grades 2 and then switched to grades 2-3, and Fridays for grade 1. All the days run from 2:45-4pm. Girls who attend the Wednesday all-girls program can also attend another day according to their age group. Generally, the program consists of games played in the school gym.

Activities in the Program

The leaders run age appropriate games and activities in the school gym. The program has had access to the school gym equipment, which is well stocked. The leaders found an excellent rhythm to the activities. Generally, the children arrive one by one and begin playing their own favourite tag games while everyone trickles in. Once everyone is there and they have had a chance to run around for five minutes or so, the leaders call everyone into a circle in the middle

of the gym. They go through attendance quickly and welcome all the children. The leaders ask for some favourite quick warm up game suggestions, the children vote, and they play one to two of these games that tend to involve simple set up and lots of running around. The goal here is to continue to get enough energy out after the school day so that the children can focus on learning a new and more complex game or activity.

Then the leaders introduce a game that is A) more complex, or B) has a specific fundamental movement skill component to it, or C) facilitate a team of two children leading a game they have found or invented, or D) facilitate the children to develop a unique obstacle course. This is described in more detail below. Finally, conclude with some free time. Children love free play and often get more out of it in terms of challenge, choice, engagement and social practice than the more structured activities. During free time, it is important to make sure a variety of equipment is available so that there are lots of interesting options. One method is to pretend that the equipment room is a toy rental store, and each child can rent whatever they want to play with during free time- the leader just handles getting items from the equipment room.

For options A) and B), these games might be something a leader has developed, or it might come from the Move and Play Activity Cards or the New Zealand Developing Fundamental Movement Skills Handbook, which can be found at this link: <http://www.sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/guides/fundamental-movement-skills>

C) This activity is great for increasing child participation and sense of involvement in the after school program. To set it up, develop a simple system for pairing students and keeping track of who has been paired and picked each week. Then choose two children according to your method who will be responsible for finding or developing a game or activity to share with the rest of the program the following week. As a facilitator, the leader should come prepared with another activity in case the children have not come prepared or are not present that day. Otherwise, facilitate by helping set up the activity, by asking key questions of the rules or instructions to get to the heart of it and help other children hear and understand how it works, and by helping the two children work well together by perhaps asking the quieter child to add in explanations.

Make sure to choose two new students for the following week and make sure they know they have been chosen. Have a back-up activity planned in case they forget.

D) The obstacle course activity also allows children to practice working in pairs and getting to know new children in the group. It also provides an opportunity for deeper involvement and participation in the program by allowing the children to exercise choice and creativity. To set it up, begin by pairing the children. Pretend the equipment room is a toy rental shop or library and one of the leaders is the rental shop clerk or librarian. You can place whatever limits on equipment rental seem appropriate for your group (ex. No scooters, or only three toys for rent per pair, etc). Each pair rents their items and sets to work on creating their piece of the obstacle course. Go around, find out what each group is doing, and offer suggestions on how to best link activities, and make sure what each group is proposing is a safe and do-able activity for each

child in the group. Allow ten minutes or so to rent equipment and prepare each station, and then run the course! You can run it, and then allow them to modify it to improve it.

When designing activities, think about the LET US PLAY principles to maximize physical activity and participation. Read more about these principles here: <http://www.p2yp.org/training/let-us-play>

Lines (remove them!)

Eliminate elimination (no sitting out!)

Team size (make it smaller, more teams)

Uninvolved staff/kids (welcome them into activity)

Space, equipment, rules (modify to allow everyone to play at once)

Play

Leader Training

There are three main components of leader training: 1) working with children; 2) physical activity guidelines; and 3) administrative expectations

A great way to incorporate leader training into the program is to hire new leaders in the spring prior to the next school year and have those leaders shadow the existing leaders as they run the programs. This way, the new leaders know what type of program, activities and atmosphere they are expected to create the following year. It also helps to have leaders who are in both grades 11 and 12 so that there is more likely to be leader overlap from year to year.

1) Working with Children

A very useful package of material to train leaders to work with a child-centred approach is the High Five Principles of Healthy Child Development. High Five is a quality assurance program for recreation and sport developed by Parks and Recreation Ontario and has grown to be the national quality assurance standard for Canada. See the Appendix for key documents which are useful to young leader. The full Principles of Healthy Child Development training is a full day, 6-7 hour training which is often put on by the Municipality of the County of Kings. Contact Steve Raftery, Active Living Coordinator for the Municipality of the County of Kings at sraftery@kings.county.ns.ca to learn when a training might be scheduled. The leaders will be paid to attend.

Key elements of the training include:

- an appreciation of the importance recreation or sports leaders had in one's own life
- an understanding of how children learn and develop socially, cognitively, physically and emotionally at different ages
- how high quality recreation programs incorporate the five principles of healthy child development: a caring adult, friends, participation, play and mastery, as well as how they can be safe, developmentally appropriate and value diversity
- how to approach conflict resolution and bullying from a child-centred perspective

2) Physical Activity guidelines

The primary goal of the program is to get kids moving! One of the best ways to do physical activity training with the leaders is to make time for them to go through activity guides, such as the ones mentioned above, and actually play as many of the games as they can with each other. It's often hard to tell which games are good ones from just reading them, so encourage the leaders to actually set up and play many games. A good time to do this is when there is an early dismissal or no school day, a time when the leaders would normally be working, but kids are not present.

3) Administrative Expectations

This includes things like which leaders work on which days, when they are expected to arrive each day, how to fill out and fax timesheets, attendance forms, and where paperwork is stored. This is the responsibility of the program coordinator to set this systems in conjunction with the youth leaders.

Funding Information

The school generally receives \$3500 each year to run the after school program from the After School Program Partnership.

Lessons Learned

The main lesson learned during the 2014-2015 school year was the importance of an all-girls program. Few girls were attending the busy grade 4-5 program on Tuesdays, but once an all-girls program was started on Wednesdays, fifteen or more girls consistently attended, many of whom were in the grade 4-5 age range. This suggests that they did not feel comfortable or welcome when the activities were dominated by boys. With this experience, it is strongly recommended that the all-girls program continues in some form, as girls generally get less physical activity than boys.

LET THEM PLAY.

8.3 GIRLS PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE DATA

Programs Attendance Data

Cambridge School

Overall Average Attendance for both Co-ed and Girls Programs: 15.8 kids

Average Co-ed Program Attendance by Gender: 6.8 girls and 9.5 boys

Average Girls Program Attendance: 15.2 girls

St. Mary's School

Average Attendance for all Co-ed Programs: 12.1

Average Attendance for Girls Program: 15.6

Average Attendance for all Co-ed Programs by Gender: 9 girls and 6.8 boys

Average Attendance for grade 4-5 Program by Gender: 2.9 girls and 10.1 boys

Climbing Programs

West Kings High School - Co-ed

Average Attendance by Gender: 0.7 girls and 2.5 boys

Pine Ridge Middle School- Co-ed

Average Attendance by Gender: 1.6 girls and 4.7 boys

Northeast Kings Education Centre - Co-ed

Average Attendance by Gender: 2.8 girls and 2.8 boys

Girls' Rock Divas Climbing Program

Average Attendance: 10 - 12 girls