Discussion Post – January 2019 Physical literacy / activity – school health promotion program

Question: Christie Docking (BC) January 3 3019

As I mentioned at our last face to face, we are in the process of developing a new school health promotion program that is to be focused on developing physical literacy, increasing physical activity and supporting positive mental health promotion. This is intended to be an evolution of Action Schools! BC.

We’d like to get a sense of programs being offered in other jurisdictions that are focused on similar areas. Would you be able to e-mail out to members, asking for them to a) identify programs they’re aware of focused on these areas, and b) to provide a program contact if they’re aware of one?

Responses:

1. Ian Parker (YT) January 8 2019

Here’s a link to some of the Physical Literacy work happening in YT:

<https://sportyukon.com/programs/physical-literacy/>

Apparently they are b/w Coordinators right now, with a new one starting Feb. 4. If you have questions about this work in the interim you could contact:

Tracey Bilsky, Executive Director

2. Sterling Carruthers (PE) January 10 2019

We have:

- mental health literacy training for teachers (Dr. Stan Kutcher's work)

- various schools are signed up to the BOKS program to provide more PA during the school day and/or before and after school. Based on Dr. Ratey's SPARK.

- GoPEI puts on after-school activity hour programs in many of our east and western area schools.

- individual schools (particularly elementary) do offer after school programs for example Glen Stewart school's "kids on the move"

- many run morning PA clubs and an after school PA club; however we don't have a running list of those ones.

3. Jocelyn MacLeod (SK) January 14 2019

I am wondering if what is sent  for BC could also be sent to us? We are looking to renew some of our work on the topic of Physical Activity and think this scan would be very helpful.

4. Pat Martz (AB) January 14 2019

I sent out an email and gave time for responses.

Overall the response was that there was no program that is specific to physical literacy/physical activity targeted to support mental health.

I did receive the following response that cautioned against using any one-fit program.

I look forward to the PT responses on this one.

Thank you for asking this question as I in turn learn from gleaning the responses.  Pat

Physical literacy initiatives, and pedagogical practices in classrooms at their conceptual root, do support mental health as a 'universal-support' from an strength-based perspective. Although, the idea of physical activity has many 'canned' programs that claim to be prescriptive in nature, in the "fight" against mental health, (such as: anxiety and depression), you can search and find many free resources of this nature on the internet. But as a caution, they are often not sustainable and still require teacher professional development to be implemented correctly. The research however, points to physical activity as a modality to increase self-regulation, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility which are part and parcel of a larger picture - being that of executive functioning - and should this idea be combined with strong teaching practice and carefully selected activities can lead to the decrease of some mental health issues. Physical Literacy is a bridge between curricular content and teaching practices for a life long journey (as a holistic construct), this is what builds the confidence and competence to continue to be motivated to move, while gaining independence through perseverance and persistence as skills are required to perform tasks/goals/performance measures (physical, affective, cognitive, and social).

Physical Literacy being a holistic concept, draws attention to the embodied learning process that involves movement education for a "healthier" version of self. The danger in believing that there is a one fit or prescriptive measure or program that will solve all, is an easy mistake made often by those who do not have a deeper understanding of the intended purpose of health and physical literacy pedagogy. Physical Literacy and Mental Health are life long journeys that have their inherent up and down swings, the resources that are currently available to teachers need to be carefully considered before becoming "married' to.