



# Guidelines for After School Physical Activity and Intramural Sport Programs

A Position Paper from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide teachers, school activity directors and administrators and program leaders with basic information for planning and implementing physical activity and intramural programming for children in grades K-12.

All children should receive basic instruction in motor skills and sport activities through comprehensive physical education programs. We believe that such programs facilitate the skills and knowledge necessary to support an active, productive and healthy lifestyle. Intramural and other physical activity programs extend and complement physical education to ensure that all children are provided the opportunity, regardless of athletic skills, to participate in lifetime physical activity that can contribute to their enjoyment of leisure time. We believe that school-based programs promoting and providing physical activity should be available to students in elementary, middle and high school years.

## Characteristics of Intramural and Physical Activity Programs

The term “intramural” simply means “within the walls.” Traditionally, this term refers to team and dual/individual activities, tournaments, meets, and/or special events that are limited to participants and teams from within a specific school or institutional setting. More recently, efforts to expand participation have broadened the definition to include all physical-activity based programming including clubs, open gym days, dance activities, etc.

Other than being limited to participants from a specific school, there are three things that distinguish an after-school physical activity program:

1. Activities are intended to be voluntary in nature, i.e., the student has a choice of activities or participation.
2. Every student is given an equal opportunity to participate regardless of physical ability.
3. Students have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, organization and administration of programs. Such involvement should be age-appropriate and under supervision and guidance of a qualified adult.

## What are the goals of an intramural/activity program?

- Provide an opportunity to participate in sport and physical activities without regard for high performance skill or ability.
- Provide activities in a safe and professionally supervised environment.
- Nurture healthy competition, enjoyment, fair play and teamwork.
- Establish a student-centered program that considers the needs and interests of all students.
- Enhance social interaction and reduce student conflict.
- Provide opportunity for co-ed physical activity participation.

- Provide opportunities for students to experience a variety of physical activities that will contribute to an active lifestyle and enhance their leisure time.

## **The Intramural/Activity Program**

### **Organization and Administration**

- Intramurals should be considered an enhancement of the school's physical education curriculum.
- Schools should provide for physical activity opportunities for students outside the physical education program. Intramural programming does not replace a physical education curriculum, but provides an outlet for learning achieved in physical education classes.
- Intramurals should be directed by professional educators, have access to adequate facilities and equipment, ensure safety of participants, and be adequately funded.
- A student leadership program should provide input into selection of activities and policy development and enforcement.
- Grouping of students during activities should be based on age-appropriate activities as well as considerations to skill and maturity level.

### **Professional Leadership**

Professional preparation in physical education or recreation provides appropriate qualifications for leaders responsible for intramural and physical activity programs.

Specific competencies include:

- Understanding cognitive, psychosocial, and motor development of youth.
- Knowledge about components of physical fitness and appropriate training principles.
- A knowledge of sport and physical activities including skills, rules, officiating techniques for a variety of activities.
- Knowledge of sports safety requirements and first aid.
- Knowledge of program planning and various resources available for providing appropriate physical activity experiences.
- Knowledge and skills related to organizing competition (teams, ladders, tournaments, practices, rotations, etc.).
- Younger or less experienced leaders can be trained to oversee certain age groups and activities or can assist professionals in other situations.

### **Activities**

The program of activities should include competitions in various sports, clubs, self-directed activities, open gym, special events, field trips, instructional and practice opportunities.

Guidelines for selection should include:

- Providing opportunities for inclusion for males, females, and co-educational participation with organization which facilitates full participation for all students in all activities.
- Activities meet the needs of all skill levels and physical abilities, including students with disabilities.
- Modification of activities so that they are appropriate to the age, physical development and skill levels of individual participants. In some cases, height and weight may be of more importance than age or grade level in determining groupings for team and individual competition.
- Leagues may need to be established based upon low, moderate, and high skill levels.
- Specific rules and regulations should be established that assure equal opportunity, fair play, and safe participation.
- Activities should reflect student interest and provide challenge, enjoyment and moderate to vigorous activity for all participants (Sport For All).

### **Facilities/Equipment**

Adequate facilities and equipment are critical to support the success of physical activity programs. Programs may be modified and adapted to meet the budget and space available.

Basic guidelines include:

- Facilities should be adequate to meet the needs, interests and number of students participating.
- Safety standards must be considered and met for each activity in the program; all damaged equipment should be repaired or discarded.
- The amount of equipment depends upon specific programs, but should meet the needs of participants so that programs can serve the maximum number of participants under established safety standards.
- Equipment should be modified according to age, size and / or physical ability of the participants.
- Regular inspections should be implemented to assure safety for all activities.

### **Health and Safety of Participants**

In order for intramural physical activity programs to enhance the health and fitness of participants, the following guidelines are recommended:

- All activities should be structured to ensure that safety requirements are met including consideration of each participant's readiness for the activity based upon age, skill, and physical condition.
- All participants should have medical clearance to participate.
- Medical problems that may affect participation should be communicated to the program leader. Medical clearance should be reaffirmed on a periodic basis.

- Locker rooms should be supervised with clear rules for student behavior.
- Parents must provide informed consent.
- Written policies are available outlining procedures for accident prevention, management of injury situations, reporting, and notification of parents / guardians in the event of an emergency.
- Immediate first aid must be available from trained providers any time the program is in progress. First aid equipment must be available on-site, be part of the budget for the program, and be regularly monitored.
- Communication in emergency situations must be available.
- Pupil/teacher ratio must be 4 to 1 or better.
- Students must be supervised at all times.

### **Awards**

The focus of intramural programs is participation. Modest recognition for outcomes may be appropriate.

### **Evaluation**

Intramural programming must be subjected to continuous, on-going evaluation. Areas to be reviewed include:

- Objectives
- Programming
- Facilities / equipment
- Safety
- Organization / Administration
- Student response

The results of the evaluation process allow for modification of objectives, planning and implementation of program needs, justification for budgets, and program changes.

### **Useful Publications**

Sport For All; Ideas I, II, III