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Promoting Active Lifestyles in Schools: THE PAL PROJECT

Jo Harris, Lorraine Cale, Ashley Casey, Ashley Tyne [afPE Members] and Babita Samaria

As part of their research into the role of schools, and physical education (PE) in particular, in promoting active lifestyles and contributing to public health, a number of colleagues from Loughborough University's School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences presented their findings at the Association for Physical Education (afPE) conference in July 2016. This article presents the key principles emerging from that work and shares examples of those principles in action from two of the three schools who also presented on the day.

PROMOTING ACTIVE LIFESTYLES PRINCIPLES

The research undertaken by Loughborough University identified the following as key principles for promoting active lifestyles (PAL) in schools.

WITHIN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Limit/reduce time spent getting ready for/ from PE lessons to maximise learning time.
- Meet the afPE guideline of pupils moving for 50-80 per cent of the available learning time (excluding changing and getting to/from venues) by limiting/reducing the time spent giving instructions and queueing/waiting to access equipment/resources.
- Use the time spent getting to and from venues actively (e.g. walking briskly, jogging) as part of the warm up/cool down.
- Teach pupils about the broad range of benefits (physical, psychological and social) of a healthy, active lifestyle, including the role of physical activity in healthy weight management.
- Move pupils on to the next task without stopping the whole class, where appropriate.
- Acknowledge, praise and reward effort and progress.
- Include assessment of learning and progress in active ways (e.g. show me, demonstrate, shadow....).
- Routinely inform pupils where they can be active within 3-5 miles of the school radius (in every unit of work and via the school's intranet/library).
- Teach pupils how active they should be, involve them in monitoring their activity levels so they become aware of how active they are, and inform them of multiple ways to increase their activity levels.

- Identify low-active pupils and offer them (and their parents/carers) support/guidance/information and targeted/bespoke activity sessions.

ACROSS THE WHOLE SCHOOL

- Include the physical activity for health guidelines for children in the teaching of PSHE (alongside other health guidelines) as well as in PE.
- Discuss the promotion of active lifestyles, including marketing the one-hour-a-day physical activity guideline, with all staff, governors, pupils and parents/carers.
- Put increasing physical activity levels on the agenda of school councils and encourage pupil representatives to propose ideas for achieving this.
- Increase activity levels in non-PE lessons by having pupils move more within the learning environment (for example, in the classroom or outdoors).

- Promote active travel to school (cycling, walking, scooting) and ensure safe storage of cycles and scooters.
- Ensure physical activity facilities (including changing areas) are well-managed, clean and safe.
- Review the school's extra-curricular physical activity programme and consider how accessible and appealing it is for all pupils.
- Encourage and reward teachers from all subjects to contribute to the school's extra-curricular programme.
- Visibly raise the profile of physical activity in school (for example, via noticeboards, newsletters, intranet/website, assemblies and the media).
- Develop good community links (for example, with feeder/partner schools, local leisure centres and sports clubs) to increase the quality and quantity of physical activity opportunities for pupils.



EXAMPLE ONE: LUTTERWORTH COLLEGE – BABITA SAMARIA

WITHIN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

• PRINCIPLE 2:

Meet the afPE guideline of pupils moving for 50-80 per cent of the available learning time (excluding changing and getting to/from venues) by limiting the time spent giving instructions and queuing/waiting to access equipment/resources.

This was done with a number of my classes and the percentage varied a great deal – between 45 and 85 per cent. I found the amount of active time varied a great deal depending on what was being taught. For example the 45 per cent activity was for a new sport – Touchball – and the 85 per cent was for football. The proportion of activity reduces if the teacher needs to explain and demonstrate certain aspects.

• PRINCIPLE 6:

Move pupils on to the next task without stopping the whole class, where appropriate.

This is something I have done a great deal as it supports differentiation. It works particularly well for activities such as badminton and basketball as, when the class is in smaller groups, the teacher is able to move around and set challenges for particularly able students.

• PRINCIPLE 7:

Include assessment of learning and progress in active ways (e.g. show me, demonstrate to me, shadow...).

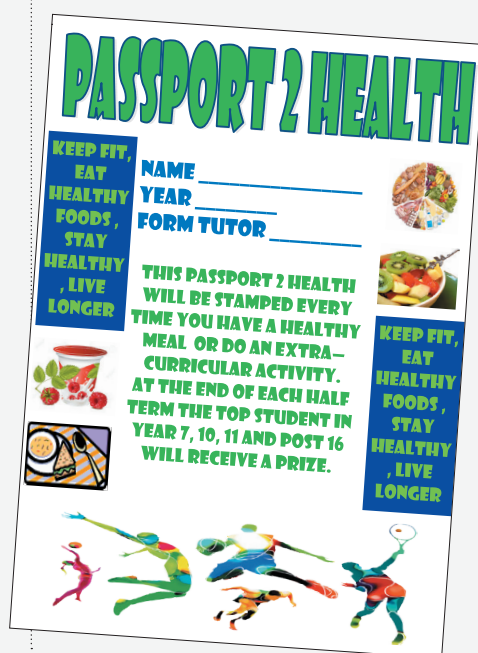
This is something the teacher can do during a starter to recap the skills taught in a previous lesson, during the lesson as a mini-plenary and at the end of a lesson. I mainly used it during the lessons when students led stations. This enabled me to move around the class and question students to show and demonstrate to me what they had been taught. It is something I will continue to do in my future practice as those students that struggle with their literacy skills can demonstrate what they have learned in the lessons. In addition, I will use written peer and self-assessment to ensure literacy skills are met.

ACROSS THE WHOLE SCHOOL

- **Principle 9: Visibly raise the profile of physical activity in school (e.g. via noticeboards, newsletters, intranet/website, assemblies, media).**

I raised the profile of physical activity through posters being distributed around school so that students and staff are informed and can make up their own minds about changing their life styles. In addition, we displayed information on the sugar content of drinks, chocolates and sweets and also the amount of exercise that needs to be completed when certain foods are consumed. This has been very successful as staff and students are absorbing these facts. They are usually surprised at the sugar content in the food and drinks they have. It has made them think about nutrition a little bit more and make better choices.

A new initiative launched last term was the Passport 2 Health Initiative. This encourages students to make the right choices about their food and be more active. Students receive stamps for choosing healthy foods from the canteen and when they participate in an extra-curricular activity. At the end of term the student with the most stamps gets a prize. We started with Year 7s to test the scheme and, so far, more than half of the students in most of the six mentor groups have requested the booklets, so it has been popular. ■



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EXAMPLE TWO: BEAUCHAMP COLLEGE – ASHLEY TYNE

WITHIN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- **PRINCIPLE 4: Limit/reduce time spent queueing/waiting/accessing equipment/resources.**

To prevent students queueing for equipment, it was organised before the lesson into team piles. This enabled individuals to take responsibility for setting up a particular area and allowed students to progress to the task quickly, following the warm-up.

- **PRINCIPLE 6: Move pupils on to the next task without stopping the whole class, where appropriate.**

This was something I tried to do from the start of my placement. However, what I realised was important to know is not only the ability of the students you are teaching but how they learn. I used task cards and demonstrations of tasks throughout lessons, which aided this approach. Stopping individual groups allowed the tasks to progress according to the ability of the students, alongside differentiated questioning of students. Small group discussions also allowed for higher levels of engagement during questioning and provided an assessment for learning opportunity.

One thing I had to do was step back and observe the whole class working rather than just going from group to group. It was also important to know the students, and give them specific tasks within groups, as a way to prevent behavioural issues.

- **PRINCIPLE 7: Include assessment of learning in active ways (show me, demonstrate, shadow...).**

To assess students, a simple task, such as show me your forehand grip, can be a quick and easy way to assess understanding. Another example could be, "Can you shadow your forehand technique?" This allows teachers to assess students without the influence of a feed. However, students can also be asked to demonstrate how they would perform a forehand during a rally. Students who perform the demonstration well could provide demonstrations to the rest of the group/class as an example/expectation of how the task should be performed. ■

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