

**Daily Physical Activity
Early Leader Schools
Project**

Executive Summary

June 2008

The Daily Physical Activity (DPA) Early Leader Schools project was initiated in November 2007, led by the British Columbia Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA). As part of this initiative, 13 early leader schools were selected to develop and apply DPA models in advance of the September 2008 timeline for implementation of DPA in schools across the province. Following implementation from January to April, each school was required to report back to the BCPVPA and outline information on how they set up their DPA program. This information included scheduling, activities and resources used, tracking and reporting, communication strategies, feedback and results, and challenges and solutions.

Given that the project was launched mid-year, it was challenging for schools to make significant changes to the school timetable for DPA. Nevertheless, many of the Early Leader Schools developed very creative methods of integrating DPA into the school environment, ranging from classroom-level to school-level activities. Some of the approaches for implementing DPA included:

- School-wide walks/runs
- Structured recess and lunch time activities
- Intramural and extra-curricular sport/activity programs
- Converting unused classrooms into fitness studio/activity rooms
- Daily Physical Education (PE) classes
- Action Schools! classroom activities
- Healthy Buddies program

Schools that proved more successful in implementing DPA integrated activities into their school's structure/timetable. As one principal stated, "In the busy day-to-day activities of a classroom, it would appear that it could be very easy to 'forget' to do DPA. Also, the gym schedule may not be such that 'drop-in' times really work effectively. For these reasons, I would recommend that DPA be at a scheduled time in most instances."

Tracking of DPA varied from school to school, often based on how their DPA model was structured. In a number of schools, teachers tracked classroom activities in their daybooks, whereas other schools developed individual student tracking sheets. Some schools that focused more on daily PE, school-wide walks/runs or structured recess/lunch activities tracked and reported DPA via student attendance and/or PE report card comments. A number of schools designated a staff member to assist with the tracking process, and collect and compile the school's DPA results.

Student feedback to DPA was generally very positive, and the majority of students interviewed were supportive of more time for physical activity at school. The vast majority of parents and staff interviewed were also highly supportive of DPA. A number of reports noted that DPA had a positive impact on students' behaviour and ability to focus.

Challenges identified from implementing DPA varied from school to school, some of which were unique to the school's particular make-up. Space and scheduling issues were overcome in some cases by maximizing use of unused classrooms and hallways for DPA

purposes, and providing staff with flexibility in terms of how to structure DPA sessions throughout the course of a day (e.g. 1 x 30 minute session vs. 3 x 10 minute sessions). Scheduling DPA for grades 8 and 9 students, in schools with grades 8 to 12, appears to be the biggest scheduling challenge for secondary schools.

Many schools overcame financial and resource (i.e. staff training, equipment, etc.) challenges by structuring DPA to be as easy and accessible as possible. Walking programs were a frequent example of a DPA activity that required no cost, equipment or training.

Recommendations for Schools

The following recommendations reflect the best practices of the DPA Early Leader Schools:

- Incorporate DPA into the school timetable.
 - If the implementation of DPA rests with individuals in isolation, it will not be effective.
- Create a DPA implementation committee of staff.
 - Committee members could include administrators, teachers and other staff that work in the classroom or directly with students. Committee objectives could include implementation of DPA, reviewing and evaluating DPA strategies and communicating DPA updates to the school community (staff, students and parents).
- Integrate DPA into the School Growth Plan.
 - DPA could be a stand-alone goal, or included as part of a Healthy Living Goal, Social Responsibility Goal or Learning Goal.
- Select a teacher leader/champion.
 - The teacher leader/champion would be responsible, along with the principal, for implementation of DPA in the school. They could chair the DPA implementation committee, provide resources to staff, and network wherever necessary.
- Include DPA as a regular item at staff meetings.
 - The teacher leader/champion could provide updates to staff and resources that could be used in the classroom. These resources could be modelled at the staff meetings.
- Provide regular communication to students and parents regarding DPA.
 - DPA updates could be included on school bulletins, school bulletin boards, school newsletters, school websites, local newspapers, school signs and at student/parent assemblies. Information can also be provided at parent or PAC meetings, School Planning Councils, parent/teacher conferences and at student led conferences.