

Some Tools for Advocacy

Standing up for Health and Physical Education

Physical activity is a key component of the health curriculum and health promotion.

A school community that promotes Health and Physical Education gives a clear message to each student that their wellbeing is valued.

This section aims to help teachers and other interested persons to be successful in presenting their case for improved outcomes for students in the Health and Physical Education learning area and/or the wider school community.

The following points may be helpful to you if you need to:

- persuade the school to maintain an appropriate timetable allocation to Health & Physical Education.
- argue for extra resources for Health & PE in your school.
- muster extra support for a new project.
- convince teachers or community organisations that there is a need for change in relation to some aspect of Physical Education or Health Education.
- protect a valuable aspect of your program which is being threatened.

Planning for Change

To be successful you will need to plan thoroughly. Here are some primary considerations.

Be Clear About what the Needs are

- Gather school based data to support your case, eg statistics, surveys of parents, students, other teachers, case studies.
- Present this to your audience clearly and briefly. Leave them with a clear understanding of where you are coming from.
- Use current and relevant articles, studies etc to support your case.
- ACHPER can provide professional publications, a research data bank and other contacts to help you in this.
- Bear in mind your audience and ensure that any material you hand out is in language appropriate to your audience. Avoid jargon.
- Relate to the school's stated aims, purpose, mission statement etc.
- Show how your proposal can enhance that and better meet the needs of the students.
- Point out how your proposal furthers school-community links.
- Outline deficiencies that exist currently and show how your proposal will meet some or all of those.
- Once you have established the needs, monitor them on a regular basis as they may change or not be met either in part or fully. You may need to promote or advocate your cause further.

Gather Support

- Start with your faculty or sportsclub etc - sound out your friends.
- Target key people who are influential in decision making and who are likely to support you. Make sure that they are clear on what you are proposing and why.
- Enlist support of colleagues, to contribute to your ideas and strategies. Ensure that they are all well informed, have relevant printed information and are aware of your plan of action, meeting times etc.
- Use the skills and links that your supporters have, to inform and influence others.
- Know your audience before you address any group or start your promotion within that group.

**THIS SECTION
OFFERS STARTING
POINTS &
STRATEGIES**

for

- an underpinning argument on Health & PE, see page 10
- information & strategies for school/community links, see pages 63-68
- increasing participation of girls in physical activity, see pages 29-34
- health promoting canteen, see page 38
- improving perceived self confidence in physical activity, see page 12
- for supporting comments from politicians, see pages 119-122
- curriculum outlines from each state/territory, see pages 111-118

Recent research findings appear throughout in the margins

- It will take time to gather support. Be patient and look for small gains.

Deal with Resistance

- It is a good idea to predict what the major objections may be and prepare an answer beforehand.
- Sound out people who are likely to resist your proposal early. Find out what their objections are and discuss them.
- Consider the perspective of your objector. A change of your plan may be possible or a compromise may be reached. You may be able to show them that there is something in it for them.
- Remove any threat that others see in your proposal.
- Try to minimise the change for others so that they are not threatened or overloaded.
- Be prepared to spend time advocating with any key decision-makers or respected peers who are likely to resist, so that their resistance can be weakened if not removed.

Promote your Cause to the School/Community

- Look to spread your views to other areas of the organisation - parents, teachers from other faculties/school sections, students (through classes or Student Representative Council), community members.
- The broader your support the stronger your case and the greater the supporting vote.
- Plan a series of steps you will take.
- Promote your cause on a number of fronts eg special staff groups, staff meetings, newsletters, assemblies, local clubs/associations, parent meetings.
- Present ideas to staff on how to integrate physical activity into a range of key learning areas.
- Consider the best ways to present your ideas for that specific audience.
- Choose your timing to maximise your support – consider staff energy, optimum time for affecting curriculum change/staffing, time of year. Could you join forces with another appropriate initiative?
- Present your philosophy of physical activity and demonstrate your commitment to the promotion of lifelong physical activity to fellow teachers, community members, parents and students.
- Publicise the positive outcomes for the school and/or community.

Raise and Maintain the Profile of Health and Physical Education/Physical Activity

Once you have achieved your promotional goal you will need to maintain awareness of the new gains. Here are some suggestions.

- Involve the parents and community members so that they have first hand experience of the good work you are doing and its value for the young people in your care.
- Recognise and acknowledge students, teachers and parents who have made significant contributions.
- Hold special days or lunchtimes which highlight healthy practice/physical activity.
- Have a regular column in the school or community newspaper.
- Arrange visits and demonstrations or talks from high profile public figures.
- Seek media coverage for special events, innovations, school community links.
- Use school assemblies, class meetings or school notices to promote current happenings.
- Have a school Health & Physical Activity Notice Board to display posters, activities, "Did You Know?" information, student accomplishments.
- Develop a Health & PE school homepage.
- Encourage student involvement as much as possible in the promotion of physical activity. They are often excellent, passionate advocates.

Be a Good Role Model

- Be courteous, cheerful, enthusiastic and open in your dealings with others.

The attitude toward physical activity of children in Victoria has been shown to have stabilised by grade 4 and to alter little thereafter. Prior to grade 4 exists the best window of opportunity to influence positively children's attitudes toward physical activity. (Walkley J, Treloar R, et al, 1993)

Many children have lost the capacity to be independent activity seekers: Highlighting opportunities for incorporation of incidental activity into everyday life is the real challenge. ACHPER Research Database.