
TRY IT AT LUNCH

Good Shepherd School

Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Good Shepherd School wanted to increase their middle school students' participation in physical fitness activities by 10%. Most students stayed at school during the lunch break, which made them available for lunchtime activities. A traditional intramurals program existed, however it consisted mostly of competitive sports and involved a limited number of students. Teachers invited local fitness instructors to offer sample physical activity classes for students during lunchtime. Students participated in different activities available in the community, especially those students who would typically remain uninvolved in competitive sports and traditional physical activities.

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) Coordinator asked students which fitness activities interested them. The Coordinator approached the instructors to see if they would be willing to teach, on a voluntary basis, 30-minute lunchtime classes. Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do, and Hip Hop Dance instructors offered sample classes to interested students. Lunchtime classes were better than evening classes, which would have required the many students who live in rural areas to make a special trip back for the event. Besides, a number of the instructors were busy with regular students and classes in the evenings.

Judging by the numbers of students who participated, Try It at Lunch was very suc-

cessful. Each session reached the maximum number of students allowed, and a second session of the Hip Hop Dance course was offered because it was so popular. Try It at Lunch gave students exposure to new fitness activities, and sparked an interest among many in joining the classes regularly. Each session taught participants new physical skills and the importance of warming up and cooling down. In the Tae Kwon Do session, students also learned to count to ten in Korean. Students who would not otherwise have been able to enjoy these programs (because of lack of money, time, and/or transportation) were able to participate. Students asked, "Can we do this every week?" and "How can I sign up for regular classes?" An unexpected benefit of Try It at Lunch was the establishment of a weekly Tai Chi class for staff taught during recess by a volunteer from the community.

Students, teachers, and community members benefited from the opportunity to work together at increasing physical fitness and learning about new forms of physical activity. Try It at Lunch could be expanded to include other areas like arts and music.

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