

INPUT



ONTARIO INTRAMURAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION

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A PRINCIPAL ISSUE

MAY THE FIRE OF INTRAMURALS BURN BRIGHTLY IN YOUR SCHOOL

Fire building is a time-honoured and historic, if not prehistoric, skill. It is a skill which is fundamental to survival. In addition, fire making has an almost magical attractiveness to it.

We have found that some students are regularly highly enthusiastic about learning to start campfires. It is surprising though how few high school students (boys or girls) have had much fire building experience. We have found that once started, students are genuinely enthralled with their fires — even to the point of not wanting to put them out and thus helping others learn how to build a fire.

There is some real skill and knowledge (and maybe even a bit of luck) in getting a fire started. Success is immediately reinforcing and is intrinsic. No one needs to tell a student whether he/she started a fire successfully or not. Thus, we have found the activity to be an excellent activity which can be begun with students operating in a small group.

Fire Ingredients:

All fires need the following ingredients. We suggest that all the ingredients be gathered at the beginning.

a. **Tinder**

a few teachers dedicated to helping students develop leadership

skills and plan and organize activities. The essence of their enthusiastic message is that Intramurals are FUN — they supply the initial "new flame".

b. **Kindling**

a small group of students who have the time, interest and energy to plan and participate in the Intramural program. The essence of their enthusiastic message is that Intramurals are for EVERYONE. There are several different kindling configurations:

1. pyramid or teepee — a hierarchical leadership structure usually headed by an executive with a

President. However, all the kindling is expected to catch.

2. rick arrangement — an egalitarian leadership structure sometimes arranged so that senior students support and train younger members. All kindling contributes to the fire.

There are, of course, other kindling arrangements which are effective given the unique qualities of the fire wood available and the environment in which the fire is being started. Experimentation is a necessary learning process in successful fire building.

c. **Fuel**

that which sustains a fire. Some woods provide better firewood than others. Some students will be easily attracted by the variety of Intramural activities and the comraderie/excitement engendered by participation.

Others, like hardwoods are harder to ignite. However diligent Athletic Council work should foster interest — hardwoods burn slower but provide good continuous fuel for program success.

d. **A Flame**

A good fire can be lit by one match — the Principal. The flame for Intramurals can come in several forms:

a. giving "air time" for Intramurals in school newsletters, press releases, course calendars, grade 8 presentations by admin./counsellors/Intramural student leaders, grade 9 parents night.

(See THE FIRE, page 3)



The Ontario Intramural Recreation Association acknowledges the financial support of the Sports and Fitness Branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation.

Hidden beneath the vast wasteland of many organized sports - underneath the obnoxious fans and the greedy players and the silly owners and the tennis mothers and the Little League fathers and the winning-is-the-only-thing mentality, lies an oasis of sanity, a breath of fresh air called intramurals. It's a place where fun counts more than the score, where participation is paramount to competition.

- Gary Reinmuth -

Elementary School Contributing Editor Dave Schlei, Queensmount Senior Public School

WHAT PRICE INTRAMURALS?

by Gerald C. Forler, Principal

Queensmount Sr. P.S., Kitchener

Having had the opportunity to serve as vice-principal and principal at several senior public schools in Waterloo County, I am convinced that a strong intramural program is essential to the success of the total school effort. I must be quick to add, however, that the benefits gained from intramurals have a wide range. Simply to assign students to teams or activities, to have a schedule of games and a posting of team scores and standings to me is only a token approach to intramurals. In other cases, the labelled intramural program exists solely to keep students occupied during unscheduled time

or to keep them "constructively" busy until their school bus arrives. If the basis of the intramurals does not have a more in-depth purpose than those mentioned, I would suggest that the program is serving very little purpose for the students — individually or as a group.

I believe that the philosophical basis of a meaningful intramural program must be inherent in the overall school philosophy. If programs are assessed on the accomplishments of an elite few, a particular philosophy is in place, whereas if the program is designed to provide growth and development for all students then, I suggest, there is a different belief in place.

At Queensmount, a major component in our overall philosophy is the nurturing and development of each student's self-image. Therefore, all of the experiences provided day in and day out, curricularly and extra-curricularly are designed to improve the student's self concept. It is within this framework that the philosophy of the intramural program complements and typifies the objectives of the overall program at Queensmount.

Because of the fact that the intramurals are an ongoing part of the overall program, and do not stand apart from it, all teachers and all subject disciplines play a role in meeting the objectives of the program — improving one's self image.

A program that places demands on other teachers and their subjects must surely have the support of the entire staff if it is to succeed. As the principal, then it is most important that I believe in the value of the program strongly enough to consciously hire staff with the pertinent philosophy as well as the flexibility and energy required. Certainly, the physical education teachers, who coordinate the total staff effort, must also feel strongly about the program benefits so that they can "sell" the approach to new and existing staff on an ongoing basis. A student, for example, who wishes to play with his

team at the same time as he has been asked to return to class for extra help or to serve a detention must be given the opportunity to negotiate an alternate time to fulfill his responsibility. Too often it is the less capable academic student who runs afoul of the classroom expectations and thus misses out on the houseleague or class team effort. The very student whose self-image needs a boost becomes a victim of an inflexible structure. Here, too, the interaction between student and teacher takes on a different perspective. Each sees the other in a different light, exhibiting qualities that are not normally evident in a solely academic setting. Teachers not only teach students to read print but also teach them to read, understand and appreciate themselves. In our mainstreaming program the interrelationships between students of various abilities also result in empathy being displayed among peers. Students are accepting of the less talented, for example, when the final score is not relevant. To see students ranging from the educable retarded to those entering advanced programs in the secondary school working and playing together cooperatively is but one example of tolerance and acceptance that such an intramural program can achieve.

A second important component of our intramurals is the stress on play and playing rather than on the game itself. To have played is what is most important, not whether you have won or lost the game. We are looking for participation, experimentation and discovery, not polished achievement. The emphasis on play encourages the overweight, the poorly skilled, the shy and uncertain. When active participation is impossible for any number of reasons, a student can still show support for his team by being an enthusiastic spectator at the activity. The non-threatening approach to intramural activities provides an inviting setting for students

THE FIRE

(Continued from page 1)

b. participation — in role of "judge for special events, teacher-student games, participants in special events — "dunkee" in the Dunk Tank.

c. timetable consideration for teachers involved in Athletic Council work — may be in the form of teaching period granted or removal from regular lunch-hour rotation supervision.

d. notes of appreciation to staff/students involved in Intramural leadership.

e. volunteering assistance/support to the program if needed.

f. carrying the message to other Principals at meetings — encouraging associations such as O.I.R.A. to make presentations.

g. bring a visible spectator at Intramural events and discussing the program with known participants during informal/formal student contacts.

The essence of the Principal's enthusiasm must be — I SUPPORT INTRAMURALS.

(See INTRAMURALS, page 4)

INTRAMURALS

(Continued from page 3)

new to the school to make social contacts. Often we count on the low organizational activities, sports days and spirit days in September to give the new students a feeling of belonging, a feeling that this is a good place to be, not because my parents or government officials say I must attend, but rather because I want to be a part of the school life. We use the intramural program as one way of "locking students in" to our program. This process is especially effective with the non-academics who often are somewhat suspicious of the school's motives at the best of times.

School spirit, pride in "my school" is another important aspect of this program. Everyone gets a chance to wear a Queensmount sweater, to feel a part of the big team. Spirit activities, an outgrowth of the intramural program, provide opportunities for grade 7 and 8's to interact with each other, to model enthusiasm for new arrivals, and to create a social chemistry that separates our school from others. Spirit activities carried into the regular school day, periodically, ensure that all students experience the excitement of sharing in activities where team members are not motivated by the final score or team standings but by participation. For many students who learn to risk in this setting, to discover a new self or who simply improve their self-image, the program provides a stepping stone to future involvement at the interschool and secondary school level as well as introducing life style interests.

Where low organization is in place, many students are given opportunities to perform leadership roles normally reserved for adults/teachers. Through an active student intramural council, students help to develop the program, organize and officiate the games and make improvements where and when necessary. These students are often those who would not get opportunities to serve on high profile groups such as the student council.

As mentioned earlier two physical education teachers, a few teachers and an intramural student council do not ensure the success of this program. The success depends entirely on the total staff who feel that all

subject areas benefit from the positive attitude developed by the students; an attitude that enhances and supports learning inside the classroom. Teachers share in the noon-hour activities, playing with their teams or participating as spectators. Through this interaction with students the staff readily senses which students are not buying into our school. When identified, these students are provided with personal staff sponsors who set out to encourage involvement by specific students. Because of the high percentage of participation, it is evident to the staff of a definite need being served by the program. Teacher support, too, is given because staff members appreciate the fact that their time, energy and effort are not serving only the few elite athletes but rather are benefiting the majority. The interaction between boys and girls, grade 7's and 8's, and students of all abilities also encourages staff support and involvement.

By this point many may wonder "Where does this philosophy meet the competitive interschool philosophy or does Queensmount not compete with other schools?" To experience another level of play, that with other schools, it not something we want our students to miss. To be able to wear the sweater of Queensmount School on the field of a neighbouring school is an experience we do not want to deny. Fortunately, because of the philosophy of staff and students involved, the interschool organization complements rather than competes with the intramural program. With the interschool program there are no stressful tryouts and/or subsequent "cuts", here everyone plays and the only commitment required is "to be there." Students are not categorized into A, B, C groups. There is no need to worry about being good enough as participation alone makes one good enough. Naturally this approach produces basketball teams with 50 members or field hockey teams with 80 participants, but those numbers do not create insurmountable problems. However, to describe the interschool program in detail would require another article of this size. Suffice to say that "it works." Students have expressed their preference for playing on the school team as an alterna-

tive to traditional community minor sports where youngsters are placed in categories after highly stressful tryouts. At school they have an opportunity to play the sport, to learn to love the sport for the sake of the sport. With this opportunity, students then personally decide if the sport is for them or if they are for the sport. This decision is not made by an adult in the student's developing years, who as coach has to make the infamous "cuts."

An additional benefit from the emphasis on play rather than the game is the fact that students will choose to try a wide variety of sports, not only those where they initially appear to have some ability. They are comfortable making mistakes when they don't have to worry about the score. Students at the intramural level have stated, "If I want to experience more challenge than that provided by playing in intramurals, I'll join the school team and play against other schools. Even on the school team, though, at Queensmount, the good feeling comes from having played, and not from the final score.

As the overall emphasis of the school's program is to improve the self-image of the student, I am always looking for evidence of the success of this goal. I know that students who have a self-image problem, usually have a social problem and because they have a social problem they are lonely, scared and miserable. When people feel this way they tend to seek revenge of some sort.

Often this revenge takes the form of vandalism, lying, stealing or flouting authority. The person wants to give others a taste of their own medicine. If the above is true, and I believe it is, then our school is reaping the benefits of an excellent intramural program as vandalism is minimal and our staff deals with very few students who are involved in lying, stealing and flouting authority. There are many persons who want to give others a taste of their own medicine — but at Queensmount it is good medicine.

A school without a meaningful, enriching intramural program is a school with a vacuum; a vacuum of spirit, involvement, of feeling that this is my school and I'm glad to be a part of it. For students and staff alike at Queensmount, the benefits gained from our intramural program far outweigh the costs involved.

Secondary School Contributing Editor Jennie Hood, Scarlett Heights Secondary School

By Lesley K. Thompson
Moose Factory
Ontario

In our school in Moose Factory, all the children go home for lunch as do most of the teachers, since we have a 75 minute break. The children in the older grades had an established schedule of afterschool Intramurals. I was able to easily use any lunch hour for a Primary Intramural programme. At first the leagues were set up for Indoor Soccer, Floor Hockey and T-ball. Four or five teams were created for students in Grades 2-4.

That first year, I ran the programme alone. In the second year, I began to use older students as coaches and referees. This proved to be invaluable to both the students and myself. Our school has many students involved in the local YMCA leadership programme but in such a small community, these young leaders needed a place to use their skills. The youngsters responded extremely well to their coaches, who in turn assumed complete responsibility for their young charges. The leaders participated every day, while each team was scheduled for two out of four days. When the leaders were not coaching, they would referee or run the clock and keep score. This allowed me to effectively oversee the entire operation and deal with any first aid or other problem. It seemed that there were very few accidents as the coaches were able to keep the children in a positive frame of mind. Even though this was a competitive structure, we still stressed playing fair with nobody hurt.

The rules of our games evolved from regular class games. Any game we play includes the rule that "any rule can be changed to improve the game". This allows us to modify any game and that includes playing with modified equipment. Our floor hockey "puck" and scoop balls are a perfect example. We would take an old wool sock and stuff all the material into the toe and then sew the open edge so that it forms a ball. This ball doesn't bounce, but it is heavy enough to allow the children to feel it in the scoop or through the

hockey stick. It moves slowly so that the young child can track it with their eyes. The success level rose dramatically and accidents disappeared.

It is interesting to see how the style of play changes with a simple modification like the ball. All of a sudden the game is not as similar to ice hockey and much closer to a game that the children might invent themselves. They played more naturally and relaxed and the "poor sport" behaviours similar to those seen in hockey rinks went missing altogether. There is no place for a poor sport in fun games like these. The children sense this intuitively.

Over the years we have added activities and modified the reward system. The championship crests are no longer needed since the concept of a single winner has been replaced by the idea that everybody is a winner. All children now receive a tab that indicates the activity in which they participated. We no longer keep team points and are considering methods to change the scoring of each game. Fewer and fewer children are still caught up with the idea of winners and losers as the idea of playing for fun is spreading throughout the division.

Our leagues have become compressed since extramural teams now want to use the lunch hour as well. We have solved this by running four teams only with everyone playing every day. While two teams eat lunch together, the other two play in the gym. Then the teams switch. Each league plays four days of the week for two or three weeks. This intense schedule allows the children to be excited about their activity without burnout or loss of interest. The concentrated time also allows for greater aerobic development.

We have expanded intramural activities to include Jump Rope For Heart (open to all grades through Grades 1, 2 and 3 represent over 70% of the participants), Parachute and Co-operative Games (run for 3 days only, Grades 1 and 2, over 50 children each day) and a Winter and June outdoor Playday.

Our community of Moose Factory is rapidly approaching the easy life as fewer houses heat with wood, more houses have VCR's and local taxi's have never been busier. With this reduction in daily physical activity, the role of the school becomes even more important in the physical development of our youth. Providing a vehicle for safe and healthy sport and play activities should be the main focus of a Primary Intramural programme. It's easy to run and more fun with a friend. Invite a colleague, or several teachers on a rotational basis, to assist in one or more of your activities. Better yet plan out several activities and take turns with two teachers leading each activity. Use the energy and leadership skills of the senior students. They need and benefit from this programme as much as the younger children do. Give them a chance to prove their stuff. The co-operative games and parachute activities were such a success in just 3 days, that we are planning to expand to a one week session in each term next year. The Grade 1 students will become involved during the winter or spring depending on their social development.

Children need routines and come to expect them. When setting up Primary Intramurals, establish the routines with all concerned (ie. teachers, coaches and players). Modify them as necessary and then let the routines work for you. A well run Intramural programme at any level takes time and planning at the start-up, but the fruits of these seeds are well worth the effort.

On the last day of each league we present tabs to the children with better than 50% attendance and we always ask these two questions.

- 1) Did you have fun playing this game?
- 2) Should we play this again next year?

The answer is always deafening and in the affirmative.

Post Secondary Contributing Editor Meg Innes, York University

Intramurals — An Administrative perspective

by Don McDowell
Principal, Ayr Public School
Ayr, Ontario

Before discussing intramurals from an administrative perspective it is essential to establish, rightly or wrongly, that the principal of a school is likely to hold some different views of intramural programs than the P.E. person co-ordinating it. The P.E. teacher's job will generally include teaching P.E. and health, coaching school teams and running intramural programs. The principal, on the other hand, has a much broader range of concerns when looking at the total operation of the school and must consider intramurals as only one aspect of the total spectrum. This is not to say that they may not share many of the same views but rather to explain why different points of view may exist.

My purpose then is to help you see intramural programming through the eyes of a school administrator which in turn should be helpful when you next attempt to gain approval for a new house league.

I have yet to teach in a school where discipline in some form has not been a serious concern. Most teachers feel that discipline problems do not occur because kids are "bad" but rather because the educational system does not offer them anything of interest. Here, a well organized house league can be the salvation of students and teachers. The opportunity for interest in such a program should be diverse enough to appeal to a great variety of students. Athletic ability is certainly going to be one component but the less athletic can feel successful by including such incentives as points for perfect attendance, team costumes, team cheers or team spirit. By being conscientious about appealing to as many students as possible you create a wider range of interest which will undoubtedly reduce behavior problems.

A good intramural program can go a long way in building school spirit among students and staff members.

While we naturally think first of the direct benefits to students I have often seen staff members as coaches, referees or players having as much or more fun than the kids. This undoubtedly is good for staff morale which in turn will benefit the children even more.

It is unlikely that a principal ever would choose to put thumbs down on a *good* intramural program. However, if he/she was unwilling to support a program it might well be for one of the following reasons:

1) Organization

The organization of a house league program should be consistent with general school organization. That is, it should operate at appropriate times, be planned well in advance so as not to conflict with other school activities, and be properly supervised. If the program "fits" well into the total school organization it will be more readily welcomed by the principal (no conflicts).

2) Curriculum - Related

Most house leagues are direct extensions of the regular P.E. programs; soccer, 3-pitch, floor hockey just to name a few. It would, by contrast, be foolish to run a basketball house league at the grade 5 level if you have never taught basketball in your school. There may be some logical exceptions to this but the natural sequence is to teach skills in P.E. classes which then can be practised in the intramurals. Your house league therefore is much more likely not to be accepted if you attempt to introduce a sport which is totally unrelated to the curriculum.

3) Participation

One of the purposes of intramural programming should be to get away from elitist programming. Most schools have inter-school teams where exceptional skills can be used and given due credit. Intramurals on

the other hand should emphasize total participation and be carefully set up not to scare off kids of limited ability.

Critical to gaining participation is the way in which it is presented to the students. If a half enthusiastic "sign up if you are interested" approach is used you will get the keeners who would sign up for most anything. On the other hand if the program is sincerely and enthusiastically explained to each class and indeed to individual students if necessary, the participation level is likely to approach 100%. (The principal finds it reassuring if he can tell parents that virtually everyone takes part in the intramural programs.)

4) Supervision and Discipline

Supervision and discipline have been mentioned earlier but I feel they deserve special attention now. Ultimately the principal is responsible for what happens in the school. If in the past, house leagues have been poorly supervised and disciplined, possibly to the point where unnecessary accidents have occurred, the principal is naturally going to be cautious about supporting another such program. If in effect, the program is creating more problems than it is eliminating then it is unlikely to receive administrative support.

5) Philosophy

Probably one of the first questions to be asked when you propose to start a house league is "Why?". If your only answer is, "Because other schools do it! or I think it would be good for the kids!" you may not receive much support. On the other hand if you have a definite view on where it fits as part of the total P.E. program and what the specific benefits will be to the school as a whole, as well as to individual participants, you will find more enthusiasm for your program.

(See INTRAMURAL, page 7)

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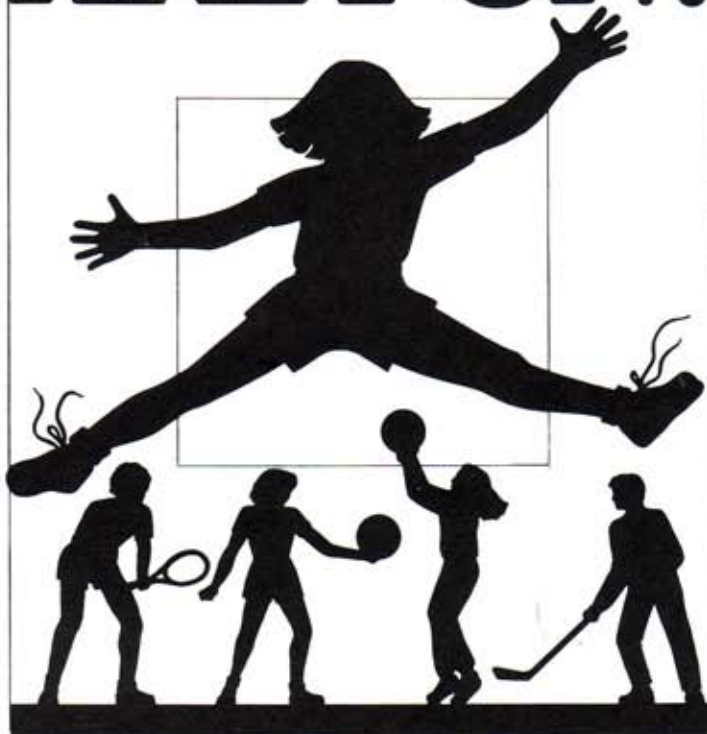
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Intramural (Cont. from page 6)

Most schools in Ontario, at present, to some degree have the problem of trying to integrate students of different cultural backgrounds. I need not enlarge on the types of problems to which this can lead. Although 1980 may not be the year to make this reference, the olympics have long proven that sport is one of the best ways to overcome cultural differences. I have, on more than one occasion, seen foreign students struggle, with little success, to achieve acceptance in a new school only to suddenly vault to the pedestal of a hero when he/she has played a major role in a class victory in a house league game. This concept of eliminating prejudice and encouraging greater class unity is a valid point

when you are looking for support for your new intramural program.

It is naturally impossible for me to express all the points of view of all school administrators with respect to intramurals. What I have tried to do is zero in on at least some of the high priority ideas your principal might hold when making decisions about house league programming. If you can use any of these ideas and thereby be better equipped to promote your own intramural program

with your principal, then I have been successful.

In closing I can conscientiously say that most school administrators look to the P.E. people in the school for a sincere, personal type of leadership all too rarely found in other educational programs. We are rarely disappointed!

Reprinted from the Ontario Intramural Recreation Association Directors Conference, 1980.



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