

Guidelines for School Intramural Programs A Position Paper From the National Intramural Sports Council

The purpose of this position paper is to provide teachers, intramural directors, school administrators and curriculum planners with basic guidelines for planning and providing intramural programming in the school setting for grades K-12.

We believe that all children should receive basic instruction in motor skills as well as sport and recreational activities through a comprehensive program of physical education. We believe that such a program includes not only training in motor development, physiological integrity and the knowledge necessary to support an active, productive and healthy quality of life but also sport and recreational opportunities so that such skills can be practiced and reinforced. Intramural/recreational sports programs as a part of the school curriculum insure that all children are provided the opportunity, regardless of athletic skill level, to learn an energetic approach to life that can contribute to their enjoyment of leisure and maintain a style of living that contributes to their emotional, social, and physiological well-being. We believe that such programs should be available to children during their entire school career.

What are Intramurals?

The term “intramural” simply means “within the walls.” It has been traditionally applied to sports tournaments, meets, and/or special events which are limited to participants and teams from within a specific defined community such as a school or other institutional setting. Today’s programs are broader in nature, encompassing recreational as well as sports activities.

While the emphasis in a physical education intramural program should focus upon sports and active recreational pursuits such as hiking, dance, leadup games, fitness etc., a school intramural program might also encompass leisure activities such as photography, philately, board games, music, art, etc.

Much of what constitutes an “intramural” program depends upon the imagination and creativity of the leadership within individual school programs.

Other than being limited to participants from a specific school, there are three things that distinguish an intramural program—

1. Intramural activities are intended to be voluntary in nature, i.e. the student has a choice of activities.
2. Every student is given an equal opportunity to participate regardless of physical ability.
3. Students have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, organization and administration of programs. Such involvement is always under supervision and guidance of the intramural director and must be age-appropriate. However, even at the elementary level, students can participate in program development and operation.

What are the Objectives and Goals of an Intramural Program?

- Provide an opportunity to participate in sport and recreational activities without regard for high performance skill or ability.
- Provide activities in a safe and professionally supervised environment.
- Nurture a healthy spirit of competition, sportsmanship and teamwork.
- Develop a sense of community within the school.
- Enhance social interaction.
- Expose students to leisure activities that will contribute to an active lifestyle and enhance physical fitness.
- Provide an opportunity to practice and internalize the skills, attitudes, and knowledge acquired in the physical education class.

The Intramural Program:

Organization and Administration:

- Intramurals should be considered a part of the curriculum. Adequate time should be set aside to facilitate maximum participation.
- Intramurals should be seen as an outgrowth of the physical education program. Skills and activities used in the intramural program should be taught in the physical education program. Intramural programming does not replace physical education instruction.
- Intramurals should be funded to provide for appropriate leadership, facilities, equipment and safety.
- A specialist in physical education should be designated to plan and supervise the program. Appropriate compensation in terms of salary and adjusted work load should be provided to the intramural specialist.
- A student leadership program should be established. Student advisory boards can help with administration of the program, especially in the areas of participant policy development and enforcement, activity selection, and officiating.

Professional Intramural Leadership:

Professional training in physical education is the most appropriate qualification for persons selected to provide intramural leadership in the school setting.

Specific competencies should include:

- Understanding growth, psychosocial, and motor development.
- Knowledge of physical fitness and a variety of sports activities including rules and officiating techniques.
- Knowledge of sports safety requirements and first aid.
- Knowledge of tournament planning and various methods of establishing leagues, brackets, etc.
- A sense of fun.

Activities:

The program of activities should be broad-based, provide for variety, and include sports tournaments, clubs, self-directed activities, special events, etc.

Guidelines for selection should include:

- Program should be an outgrowth of instruction in physical education.
- Programming for males, females, and co-recreation.
- Programming that meets the needs of all skill levels and physical abilities, including the disabled.
- Modification of activities so that they are appropriate to the age, physical development and skill levels of individual participants. (In some cases, height and weight may be of more importance than grade level in determining groupings for team and individual competition. Leagues may need to be established based upon low, moderate, and high skill levels.)
- Specific rules and regulations should be established that ensure equal opportunity, fair play, and safe participation.

Facilities/Equipment:

Critical to any sports activity program are adequate facilities and equipment to support the program. However, lack of sophisticated gymnasium facilities and large budgets for equipment should not deter provision of programs. Programs may be modified and adapted to meet the budget and space available.

Basic guidelines include:

- Facilities should be adequate to meet the needs, interests, safety and number of students participating.
- Equipment and supplies for the intramural program should be budgeted apart from the physical education instructional budget. While some equipment may be shared, each program's needs should be considered.
- Equipment must be modified when required by the age, size and/or physical ability of the participants.
- Appropriate maintenance should be provided for facilities and equipment so that they meet basic standards for cleanliness and safety.
- When new facilities are to be built, or new equipment purchased, all physical education/intramural staff should be consulted to ensure that needs are met. Students should also be given an opportunity for input.

Health and Safety of Participants:

An intramural sports program seeks to enhance the health of its participants; therefore, the following guidelines are critical to the success of the program:

- All activities should be structured to ensure that safety requirements are met including consideration of each student's readiness for the activity based upon age, skill, and physical condition.

- All participants should have medical clearance to participate.
- Clothing should be appropriate to the activity.
- Locker rooms should be supervised to ensure safety.
- All activities should be supervised to ensure safety and orderly progression of each event.
- Recognize that because of the nature of physical activity, injuries will occur. Parents must be given the opportunity for informed consent. Immediate first aid must be available from trained providers any time the program is in progress. Attention must be given to communication with emergency services in the event of a serious injury. All students and staff should know the emergency procedures to be followed.

Awards:

The emphasis of an intramural program should be on participation and fun. Winning and losing are part of the process but should not be a primary focus. If awards are to be given they should be for recognition of achievement and not excessive in nature. If possible, some recognition should be available for participation regardless of win/loss records. All students should be made to feel that they are a winner by virtue of their participation and not because of the relative points scored.

Evaluation:

Intramural programming, just as with other curricula, must be subjected to continuous, on-going evaluation. Areas to be reviewed include:

- Objectives.
- Programming.
- Facilities/equipment.
- Safety.
- Organization/Administration.

Information gleaned from the evaluation process allows for modification of objectives, planning and implementation of program needs, justification for budgets, and program changes.

Useful Publications:

Bonanno, D., editor. (1986). *Intramurals and Club Sports*. Reston, VA:AAHPERD

Bonanno, D., editor. (1987). "Intramurals and Recreational Sports: Perspectives Beyond Competition." *Journal of PERD*, V.58, No. 2, pp. 49-61.

Calgary Board of Education. (1983). *High School Intramurals*. Vanier, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Intramural Recreation Association. CIRA.

Calgary Board of Education. (1986) *Intramurals in the Elementary School*. Vanier, Ontario, Canada:CIRA.

Calgary Board of Education. (1983). *Junior High School Intramurals*. Vanier, Ontario, Canada:CIRA.

Dougherty, N. (1985). "Intramural Liability." *Journal of PERD*. August, pp.45-49.

Ewert, A., editor(1986)."Outdoor Adventure Activity Programs." *Journal of PERD*, V.57, No.5, pp.56-69.

Gerard, G.K., et.al.(1978). *Focus on Physical Education, Intramurals, and Interscholastics*. East Landing, MI: Michigan Assoc. of Middle Schools Educators.

Pankau, M., editor. (1978). *Intramural Portfolio*.Reston, VA:AAHPERD.

Stein, E., editor. (1983)."Starting Intramural Programs in Elementary/Secondary Schools." *Journal of PERD*, V.54, No.2, pp.19-31.

Mass, G., editor. (1981)."Intramuraling for Everyone." *Journal of PERD*, V.52, No.7, pp.19-32.

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