

Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division

Physical Education Report

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Prepared by Joy Taylor

Introduction:

Upon meeting with Associate Superintendent Mariette Moss; we agreed upon several areas to investigate in regards to the physical education review for Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division. The areas are: facilities, resources (including equipment), teachers, programming, curriculum fit as well as anything else that I might observe. I later added in a section relating to the new K-4 Wellness Curriculum from Alberta Education and its relationship to this review.

I was able to do on-site visits to all schools with the exception of Assumption School in Oyen due to distance and time. I did however, talk with the principals and phys. ed. teachers at each site, including Assumption School. I requested a gymnasium schedule from each school and the teacher's yearly plans to review. From these items, as well as from my interviews, I was able to ascertain several things: utilization of the gymnasium, scheduled weekly minutes for phys. ed., the balance dedicated to each dimension program, linkages to the Program of Studies (P of S) curricular outcomes, access of community facilities, adequate equipment to provide a well-balanced program and structure and content of the program.

Overall Impressions:

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting your schools and was amazed at how welcoming the front entrances were in so many of the buildings. I found them very warm, peaceful and the Catholic presence was evident and respectfully present. Many of your schools were utilizing the community resources with recreation centers, with many local swimming pools, skating rinks, curling rinks, bowling lanes, tracks and climbing facilities scheduled into the yearly plans. Schools within the towns of Brooks and Strathmore however face a bit of a set-back as the facilities are booked out to the public schools first and then whatever is left, to CTR. This did not always have a positive result for your schools.

In all schools, in order to take some of the classes off site, bussing had to be secured. Many of your schools have their own bus but they can only accommodate 24 and therefore cannot always house a full class. Many times, the cost of the bussing prohibits the program from happening; especially in the elementary schools.

Facilities:

Another challenge in many of your schools was the scheduling of all classes within one gymnasium. For optimal implementation of a daily phys. ed. program with one gym; the ideal number of students is around 350. With many of your schools sitting well above that number but still having only one gymnasium; creativity is vital. Your schools do an excellent job of making this work with what they have. In one case, one school divides their gym into two halves and then one of those halves is divided again to accommodate the classes. It is always a delight to see how flexible teachers can be.

Equipment:

Upon viewing the equipment rooms and talking with both the phys. ed. teachers and the administration at the schools, the majority of the schools seem to have a plentiful amount of equipment to run their programs. Several of the teachers told me that they are pleased how the admin supports their program and the purchasing of needed phys. ed. equipment. There is some borrowing between schools but it is mostly limited to unique items such as snowshoes. There is presently no provision to move this equipment so many teachers are moving it in their own vehicles. Two schools do share the outside track on site at one of the schools.

The equipment used in the weight rooms is a costly item to maintain and to replace. The phys. ed. teacher at one school does the maintenance himself and replacing old equipment can and is an issue. The students are keen to use these rooms and they seem to be in high demand.

Teaching Staff:

I asked the phys. ed. teachers from each school what their educational background was in terms of Physical Education. There was a variety of replies; from teachers with a kinesiology degree, a physical education degree, no courses on teaching phys. ed. to only an interest because they love sports themselves. I found that they are, however, all keen, willing and anxious to do a good job. There was at least one school that chose to not utilize their physical education specialists to teach the phys. ed. program but had others teaching the program. These teachers did a very good job in spite of lack of subject area training.

Teachers said that there is little opportunity for teachers to network together with colleagues to discuss program and there is no PD at the division level. Funding for provincial conferences is only sporadically available. They also said that sometimes, networking opportunities were possible but only for athletics and not for program. This is always more of a challenge for rural school divisions.

Planning and Program:

As I went through the yearly plans of your teachers;

- 58% of the schools made reference to the P of S outcomes in their yearly plans.
- 41% made no reference to the curriculum in their plans.
- One school within the 58% changed the wording of the outcomes within each lesson plan but referenced the P of S outcomes in the total yearly plan.
- Methods of assessment were not observed nor requested within this review.

The Alberta Education Program of Studies (2000) states that: *The general outcomes are interrelated and interdependent. Each is to be achieved through a variety of physical activities. Students **must** have the opportunity for participation in each of the following five dimensions: dance, games, types of gymnastics, individual activities and activities within an alternative environment.*

After going through all of the schools yearly plans;

- two schools teach 3 of the five dimensions
- four schools teach 4 out of five
- nine schools teach 5 out of five.
- The St. Luke's Outreach Centre and the Centre for Learning @Home were not included in these numbers due to the unique nature of their programs.

Note: 60% of your schools are teaching a physical education program with over 60%-85% focused on games (the majority of this time is spent on team sports). 40% of your schools are teaching a physical education program with 30-60% focused on games. The main areas lacking in terms of exposure and instruction for students are dance and types of gymnastics. There are various reasons for this; most common are lack of expertise and comfort level of the teachers. Many schools are teaching a "sport based" program rather than an active-living program (Alberta curriculum). This could be the result of some teachers teaching the PE program without any training in the pedagogy of the curriculum.

Bouquets:

There are many incredibly wonderful things happening within your schools in the area of Physical Education. Some (but not all) that I noticed are:

- Holy Trinity Academy has a weight room just off their gym which is used by students all day long. The teacher does the maintenance of this equipment and it is a big part of their successful program.
- Notre Dame Collegiate has a teacher who inservices other teachers on physical literacy and they offer an interesting archery program within their school.
- St. Mary's School works hard at making connections with their students on fitness and overall health within their program. The teacher also takes the lead in organizing an athletic program for the division.
- Holy Cross Collegiate teachers have a good understanding of physical literacy and offer a wide variety of activities which, in turn, motivate the students to be more active. Many have phys. ed. everyday.
- St. Francis of Assisi Academy has a terrific partnership with the arena next door which

enables a hockey option and skating program for the elementary students; they also work very hard at keeping their students active (PE plus option)

- St. John Paul II Collegiate has a full team of cracker jack PE teachers! Their creative use of their facility and equipment supply allow them to run a great program.
- Holy Family Academy offers many extra activities for their students such as Terry Fox Run, intramurals weekly for all grade 1-4 students and have brought in DANCEPL3Y for inservicing teachers.
- Sacred Heart Academy might have a small gym but their program is anything but small. The teacher is up to date and offers her students so much, such as; orienteering, classroom equipment for recess, intramurals, dance concert for parents, inline skating, water polo and so much more.
- Holy Spirit Academy focuses on offering the maximum for their students through securing grants, working with Everactive (a provincial initiative), utilizing parents to augment the healthy choices already taught, offer special activities such as Para-Olympics, Briar activities, Olympic activities as well as intramurals for Div. II students.
- Christ the King Academy has an incredible arrangement with the recreation center close by. Blocks of time are booked so that regular scheduling can incorporate the center within their own plans.
- Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy has a teacher with an incredible understanding of the PE pedagogy as well as the school has found a way to accommodate so many students within their gym schedule that it was impressive to observe.
- St. Anthony's School uses all of their facilities both within and outside of the school very well. They also have a recess program facilitating leadership for their students to create peace on the playground.
- Assumption School is an interesting school. For being the smallest of all of CTR schools, the school PE plan was the most well balanced of all!
- Ecole Good Shepherd School is doing an incredible job of teaching physical education in spite of not having a gymnasium! With a creative teacher, the use of the recreation center and a lot of outdoor education classes, this teacher also finds the time to help organize the athletic program for your division.
- St. Joseph's Collegiate has a well knowledgeable specialist teacher who offers a program

enhanced with the recreation center and some very skillful scheduling.

- St. Luke's Outreach Centre offers a unique program over several campuses. The one that I visited had a small area with fitness equipment set up and had students working there even prior to regular school time. The progress of the students is well documented and weekly lessons are provided to the students.
- Centre for Learning@Home was amazing. The outcomes are followed, they use the Alberta Education PE on-line program as well as offer regular lesson opportunities for students in spite of not having a facility space of their own.
- Many of the CTR schools presently schedule and teach Health and Physical Education together or at the very least overlap the outcomes which will make it easier in transitioning to the new curriculum

K-4 Wellness Curriculum

The implementation of the K-4 Wellness Curriculum is well underway within Alberta Education. It is expected to be field tested in September, 2019 with the hope that it can be implemented in the fall of 2020. I would be remiss in not linking this review to the new program of studies.

After many phone calls, researching documents on-line and speaking with many of the provincial stakeholders; the following was determined:

- The K-4 Wellness Curriculum (as well as the 5-9 Wellness Curriculum being developed) will incorporate both the Health and the Physical Educations programs as one. This was done with the intent to provide a more holistic focus for students. Financial literacy, social-emotional health and consent will all be elements of the new program.
- According to the Alberta Education website; *Wellness education has a strength-based focus that promotes the development of the whole individual and aims to nurture students in their pursuit of a healthy, joyful and active life. It supports the belief that mind, body and spirit are inseparable, intertwined and interconnected.*
- There are seven dimensions of this new program: emotional, environmental, intellectual, occupational, physical, social and spiritual
- This is a concept-based curriculum

Differences/similarities between the current Program of Studies and the new Wellness Curriculum

- Current P of S is an outcome-based curriculum and the Wellness curriculum is a concept-based curriculum
- Currently Health and Physical Education are primarily taught as two separate subjects
- The Guide to Education will continue to provide recommended times for each subject (based on current information)
- There are a greater number of outcomes within the present P of S than listed in the new Wellness curriculum
- The current P of S states that the aim of the program (K-12) is to enable individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to lead an active, healthy lifestyle.
- The aim of the new Wellness curriculum states that it promotes the development of the whole individual and aims to nurture students in their pursuit of a healthy, joyful and active life.
- The current P of S states that students must have the opportunity to participate in the following areas: games, types of gymnastics, dance, alternative environments and individual activities
- The Wellness curriculum states that students have learning opportunities in the following contexts: games, rhythmic, gymnastic and expressive activities, individual activities, challenge and adventure activities and cultural activities.

Recommendations:

These recommendations were deduced from analyzing submitted plans and documents, observing sites, facilities, discussions with administrators, teachers and other stakeholders, reviewing Alberta Education documents and my overall opinion based on experience and knowledge. They are listed in no specific order of importance or ease of implementing and are merely suggestions.

1. Provide professional development for teachers on planning more balanced programs while focusing on the difference between a sport based program and an active living curriculum
2. Provide professional development for teachers in order that they feel more skilled and comfortable in Dance and Types of Gymnastics
 - There are companies that will come into schools to do dance residencies (can be costly) or dance companies that will teach a couple of lessons with the teachers observing , DANCEPL3Y (playeducation.ca) or workshops can be arranged through HPEC (ATA specialist council) to assist with this
 - CTR has several extremely qualified teachers who could lead workshops for other teachers in the areas of dance and gymnastics
3. Work with the Towns of Strathmore and Brooks to ensure that CTR schools have the same opportunity for the booking of facilities as the local public schools
 - Some municipalities have joint use agreements with the school jurisdictions and both groups find it advantageous
4. Use the excellent teachers that you presently have to lead professional development and mentor other teachers
5. Consider the possibility of a routine service check for larger physical education pieces and fitness equipment (example: once a year for HS, once every two years for JH and once every three years for elementary schools)
6. Organize and facilitate (perhaps electronically) the network meetings to discuss program and not just limit these meetings for athletics. Best practices can be shared and informal or formal mentoring is often a result of these.
7. Look at the possibility of providing funding for one teacher per school (yearly) to attend the provincial HPEC conference and then share their learnings with other staff members
8. Involve the PE teachers in the scheduling process within their own schools
9. Use the qualified PE teachers on staff to teach PE when possible
10. Look at the possibility of an on-site space for large group activity at the Centre for Learning@Home

11. Look at the possibility of allocating extra funds for outdoor education equipment for Ecole Good Shepherd School

12. Provide access to a copy of - Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools, for all teachers of physical education

- Can be accessed electronically from <https://education.alberta.ca>

Final Thoughts:

Many of the findings that I discovered are similar to other areas within the province. Teachers teach what they are comfortable with and many in secondary schools are influenced greatly by the athletic schedule in terms of planning. It has always been the goal in Alberta to provide a program with a diverse variety of experiences to ensure that all students develop the desire to participate actively for the rest of their lives. Optimally, student choices of activities is recommended although this is not always possible due to staff numbers and space constraint. This is not an easy task in any school jurisdiction.

Teachers within CTR are used to integrating health and physical education which will give them a head start with the newer curriculum in the future. There are many stellar teachers within CTR that could be utilized in providing PD to others or can be provided further PD for them to work within the Train the Trainer model.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this project. If I can be of any assistance or if further clarification is required please feel free to contact me.