Prospect North Primary School

School Yard Designs to Enhance Physical Activity

An eat well be active - Primary Schools project school

Our thanks go to ACHPER for this article from ewba Newsletter 2010

Prospect North Primary has recently undergone a major redevelopment which included the redesigning of the school yard which meant that the yard was out of action for some time. When we were able to use the yard again it was bigger and more open. This gave us an opportunity to see the new yard as a blank canvas and to establish new ways of involving students in active play. I asked myself ‘How can I create a safe and active yard and increase the capacity to involve others in fitness and being active?’

To answer this question I surveyed all classes, supplied them with a map of the new schoolyard, and asked students to colour the area in which they play. They identified problem areas in the yard and let me know where they would like to play in the future. Along with the surveys I took a series of photos of the yard during playtime. From the data we could see where the problems were occurring and with what types of activity. We next began to put in place interventions to engage students in safe play that included setting up defined yard playing spaces, specific rules for the football and cricket games on the oval, a red card system for soccer games and supplying more sports equipment for playtimes.

While students were getting involved in safe activity in the yard teachers were improving their knowledge and skills by attending a Fundamental Movement Skills session (FMS) offered off site. I also ran a staff meeting session aimed at building confidence in teachers to run a successful ‘fitness’ program in their classroom. This was further supported by our participation in the Premier’s be active Challenge with every class completing the challenge and even some teachers! The hype is now evident in the high activity levels in the yard.

After being inspired at the Annual ACHPER (SA) Conference in April, I assembled a student leadership team to focus on students facilitating play during lunchtime sessions. After receiving many applications we selected four House Captains and Vice Captains who now help manage our school’s ‘be active’ program. Some of their responsibilities include monitoring classroom borrowing for teachers’ class fitness programs, providing sports equipment for yard play, monitoring our school’s sport equipment, planning and running lunchtime activity programs, monitoring and delivering our be active classroom activity boxes, contributing to special sporting events in the school like PE Week, running our school’s Sports Day Health Hustle and individual stationed events, and leading their teams proudly on Sports Day.
Our next step is to review what we have implemented and work out ‘Where to next?’ With the excitement of our new Gymnasium opening soon, there is a whole new area for our school to explore ways of engaging students, staff and the school community in the eat well be active – Primary Schools Project - Amber Heaff

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