ACTION RESEARCH REPORT ON
BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY TO
DELIVER PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN
ACT PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS
PILOT PROGRAM

A ROLE FOR LEADERS

Schools Cluster Project
Education Directorate
August 2016

A HEALTHY WEIGHT INITIATIVE
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I am pleased to present the Action Research Report on Building Teacher Capability to Deliver Physical Education in ACT public Primary Schools (The Report) to school leaders and physical education providers. I believe that the resources will provide teachers with valuable support to build quality, structured and developmentally appropriate physical education programs in ACT public primary schools.

The habits children develop during their formative years will largely influence the type of life they lead as an adult so it is really important that we encourage young people to be healthy and active. We can do this by ensuring they are given fun and engaging opportunities to be physically active and are provided with high quality physical education. The evidence shows that being physically active helps students to concentrate during class, enhances their capacity to learn and, in the longer term, healthier students tend to attain higher levels of educational achievement.

As the Minister for Education I recognise the significance of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education in all ACT schools. The Report provides insight into the importance of physical activity within the curriculum and aims to offer teachers a better understanding of the research linking health and education. It is timely as it offers the opportunity for school leaders to better understand the broader national and international contexts of physical education in schools and emerging evidence-based research on improving practice.

The Report is accompanied by a Discussion Paper for teachers and school leaders that encourages teachers to reflect on their current practice and identify areas for potential improvement.

I commend the joint work of ACT Education, ACT Health, and Active Canberra on the Action Research Report on Building Teacher Capability to Deliver Physical Education in ACT Public Primary Schools and their ongoing commitment to the health of students in ACT Government primary schools.

Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Education
The ACT Government *Towards Zero Growth: Healthy Weight Action Plan* 2013 (the Action Plan) builds on existing activity and scopes future collaborative actions to reduce rates of overweight and obesity in the ACT community. Schools Cluster projects under the Action Plan are:

1. Develop an ACT Government school food and drink policy with supporting guidelines that includes implementation of the *National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines* in ACT public schools.
2. Build teacher capacity to deliver physical education programs in ACT public primary schools.

These projects are collaborative initiatives between Education, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development, and Health Directorates.

This paper summarises the pilot program *Building teacher capacity to deliver physical education programs in ACT public primary schools.*

The ACT Education Directorate *Physical Education and Sport Policy* 2009 requires ACT public school teachers to implement balanced physical education programs designed to develop students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes through delivery of essential and meaningful content as described in the *Australian Curriculum*.

In 2014, four programs were designed by external providers to build teacher capacity to deliver physical education. Eleven ACT public primary schools were involved in piloting these programs over the course of a school term. Pre and post-intervention questionnaire data was collected from 24 public primary schools, including the 11 schools involved in the pilot programs. Additional qualitative data was collated via questionnaires, interviews and workshops with teachers and school leaders.

The project identified five key themes and good practice approaches within each theme to be considered by school leaders and physical education providers when building teacher capacity to deliver high quality physical education in primary schools. The five key themes are:

- school governance and leadership
- teacher engagement and professional learning
- the components of physical education programs
- resources available to teachers
- risk and issue management.

This paper supports Australian and International research findings in similar studies, and provides recommended areas of focus for principals in working to improve the capacity of primary school teachers to deliver high quality physical education in ACT public schools.
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KEY FINDINGS

To build teacher capacity to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate and high quality physical education programs in ACT public primary schools it is recommended that school leaders and physical education providers consider a number of good practice approaches under each of the following key themes:

- governance and leadership
- teacher engagement and professional learning
- components for physical education programs
- resources provided to teachers
- risk and issue management.
PURPOSE

The purpose of the Building Teacher Capacity to Deliver Physical Education in ACT Public Primary Schools project was to identify key areas and good practice to be considered by school leaders when building teacher capacity in ACT public primary schools to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education programs.

The purpose of this paper is to present and describe each of the 5 key areas and identify the good practice approaches for building teacher capacity to deliver physical education programs in primary schools under each area.

BACKGROUND

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that obesity is a rapidly growing threat to the health of populations in an increasing number of developed and developing countries worldwide. WHO ranks obesity as one of ten preventable conditions that require urgent attention and considers the dramatic rise in childhood obesity over the last decade as one of the most serious challenges of the 21st century.

In Australia, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has recognised that overweight and obesity pose a major public health problem. As an early priority under the national Promoting Healthy Weight Policy 2013, prevention of overweight and obesity in children has been prioritised using multiple strategies in a range of settings.

In the ACT, the Whole of Government Towards Zero Growth: Healthy Weight Action Plan 2013 (the Action Plan) builds on Commonwealth initiatives and the many programs currently operating through ACT Government to promote good health. The Action Plan takes the agenda beyond the health portfolio to improve coordination and actions across all arms of government. Each of the ACT directorates is engaged in activities that will make healthy choices easier across Canberra.

There are two actions for schools under the Action Plan:

1. Develop an ACT Government school food and drink policy with supporting guidelines that includes implementation of the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines in ACT public schools.
2. Build teacher capacity to deliver physical education programs in ACT public primary schools.

These projects are collaborative initiatives between the Education, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development, and Health Directorates.

The Building Teacher Capacity to Deliver Physical Education Programs in ACT Public Primary Schools project commenced in August 2013. Key milestones achieved in 2014 included:

- the development and piloting of professional learning models and activities to increase teacher capacity to deliver physical education in primary schools
- improving the capacity of primary school teachers to deliver daily, structured and developmentally appropriate physical education programs.
Four physical education providers were selected through an Expression of Interest process to run pilots in 11 schools in Term 3 2014. The outcomes of these programs were:

- improved skill in developing structured, developmentally appropriate physical education programs
- increased confidence in delivering physical education programs
- an increase in school based decisions and actions that support daily delivery of physical education programs.

A subsequent Findings Workshop was held in July 2015 to identify the specific elements of pilot programs that resulted in these outcomes.

To facilitate a deeper exploration of the findings of the pilots, an additional Physical Education Workshop was held. The workshop included a number of schools who self-nominated as currently operating successful physical education programs in their schools.

The feedback provided during the workshop supported the outcomes determined within the pilot programs and informed the finalisation of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

The ACT public education system has always maintained a strong focus on physical education as an important element of school education and curriculum. The ACT Education Directorate (ED) Physical Education and Sport Policy (2009) reflects this through the requirement that:

For each student from kindergarten to year 10 there are mandatory times to be devoted within curriculum time to the area of physical education and sport. (1.3)

Schools must provide students from kindergarten to year six with a minimum of 25-30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity as part of planned physical education and sport programs. The policy and associated Implementation Guidelines clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of principals, teachers and external providers when organising and delivering physical education programs.

The Directorate acknowledges that there is variation in teachers’ confidence, skill level and knowledge to deliver structured developmentally appropriate physical education. This action research report comes at a key point in ACT curriculum evolution with full implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education learning area in 2017.

The pilot programs and post-pilot workshops captured the diverse experiences and perspectives of ACT teachers on building teacher capacity to deliver physical education in primary schools. A number of key themes emerged that grouped good practice approaches common to successful physical education programs in primary schools.

The key themes, school leadership, teacher engagement and professional learning, components of physical education programs, resources provided to teachers and risks and issues management form the major section headings within the paper. Each section includes further discussion in the following areas.

- Good Practice Approaches – provides a synthesis of the general feedback identifying the suggested critical factors for success under each theme
- Discussion - elaborates on the findings of the paper in the context of existing research, with a focus on the ACT and broader Australian experience
- Additional Readings – are recommended resources providing concise, salient information for readers interested in further detail on the subject.
I. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

1.1 Good Practice in School Leadership

Four good practice approaches related to school leadership contribute strongly to the ability of teachers to deliver quality physical education in public primary schools. These are that:

- the school’s Strategic and Operational Plan includes an objective that supports opportunities for physical activity across the school and an allocation for physical education resources and maintenance
- schools support and prioritise daily structured, developmentally appropriate physical education for years K to 6 and for all mandated physical activity time
- schools provide opportunities for teachers with expertise in physical education to mentor and support colleagues to develop their capability to deliver physical education
- school leaders demonstrate and model positive attitudes towards and understanding of the benefits of physical activity for student’s academic success, health and long term wellbeing.

1.2 Discussion

**The importance of planning**

The delivery of physical activity in primary schools is most successful when it is part of a whole of school strategic approach that addresses budget, teacher capability, community, stakeholders, equipment, resources and risk management. A goal to promote a physically active school, included in the School Annual Operational Plan, reflects the ACT Government’s and the school’s commitment to the ACT Healthy Weight Initiative and drives action.

Teachers in ACT public primary schools who participated in this pilot highlighted the importance of the school principal’s support for physical education and involvement of all staff. This accords with the findings of similar research in NSW that found, of 189 teachers questioned, 92% of teachers believe that when everyone (including the principal) is committed to teaching physical education, the students are more likely to achieve physical education syllabus outcomes.¹⁷

**Active students learn better**

The national strategic focus on healthy weight has highlighted the importance of quality physical education in the early years of schooling.

There is an ever-increasing body of evidence tying higher levels of physical fitness to improved educational outcomes. Studies exploring the relationship between physical activity, fitness, sports participation and academic achievement among children have been undertaken in Australia and a number of other countries. This research is well summarised and tabulated over six pages in the article *Brain Boost: Sport and physical activity enhance children’s learning.*¹⁶ The evidence is clear that active students are potentially better able to learn, and higher levels of educational achievement are associated with better health.
What is working in schools now?

Experience in ACT public primary schools demonstrates that a range of approaches can be successful in building primary school teachers’ capability to deliver physical education, if supported and implemented consistently.

It is notable that the models discussed in the project workshops were supported by teachers with expertise in delivering physical education. Some strategies currently adopted by schools to deliver high quality programs include employment of secondary school physical education teachers, coaching by experienced physical education teachers within schools, upskilling teachers through professional learning, and accessing expertise from external providers or within the local primary and high school cluster.

Research shows that principals from schools of all sizes and locations who value physical education show a strong preference for employing teachers with expertise in this area who are also interested in and passionate about working with primary aged children.16

The ACT experience represented at the workshops also indicated that, without the support of colleagues, one or two teachers delivering PE across the school cannot spread far enough in a large school population to ensure all physical education programs are effective.

Research demonstrates that physical education teachers in primary schools are often secondary physical education teachers who may not have had the opportunity to develop pedagogy specific to teaching children in the primary school sector.15 Primary physical education teaching experience, applied with the appropriate pedagogy in primary schools is essential in building a successful physical education program.

Parallels to national and international experience

Australia is not alone in working to address any gaps in physical educational outcomes. Some Asian countries and countries such as Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Canada, United States of America and New Zealand are focussing on increasing physical activity in schools.30 These countries are addressing the issue through education programs covering the spectrum from sports based skills, through Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS), to a broader physical literacy focus. They are alike in investing significant funds into their programs from a variety of sources including government, philanthropic and commercial partnerships and lotteries. The study by Keegan et al summarises these different approaches and their academic outcomes.13

Within Australia, there have been several state-led initiatives to promote physical education, sporting participation and fundamental movement skills in childhood. Those that are of most interest provide teachers with structured lesson plans and resources aligned to the Australian Curriculum. Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania have produced a variety of detailed programs based on developing FMS with Tasmania’s program including assessment support materials.

1.3 Additional Readings

The following readings provide a succinct overview of the current research on the impact of various models of physical education, sport and physical activity on student academic achievement.

- A tabulated summary of significant international studies on the relationship of physical activity and sport on academic achievement:
2. TEACHER ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

2.1 Good Practice Supporting Professional Learning

Six good practice approaches relating to positive teacher engagement and professional learning were identified. These were:

- school leaders build and sustain a coaching and mentoring culture at all levels in the school and have a system of peer review and feedback in place
- all teachers delivering physical education programs access professional learning and coaching to update their knowledge of the most current theory and practice for the delivery of physical education
- schools engage in clear and meaningful planning that underpins scheduled, structured, developmentally appropriate programs and lesson plans for all mandated physical activity time
- teachers demonstrate the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education
- confident, experienced physical education teachers provide a leadership role in the planning and management of physical education, and coaching and mentoring colleagues
- new teachers are provided with coaching and mentoring to support delivery of quality physical education.

2.2 Discussion

Feedback from the workshops generally supports current research on the most effective teacher capability profile for the delivery of structured, developmentally appropriate physical education in primary school. There is some debate however, on how to build that capability and apply it in the most effective manner.

What capability is needed to deliver physical education?

Due to the emphasis on the ‘developmentally appropriate’ nature of physical education delivery, primary school pedagogy becomes critically important in ensuring content is delivered effectively. Teachers delivering physical education in primary school settings require a deep knowledge and understanding of the various pedagogies that exist for physical education and the awareness to select the most appropriate for each particular learning experience. This often involves adjusting delivery to include culturally appropriate and socially-just pedagogies, rather than just focussing on more dominant science and performance-based pedagogies for physical education.

Primary teachers by nature of their pre-service training are typically well equipped to adapt an holistic, inclusive and effective approach to the delivery of the physical education.

The Australian Curriculum provides guidance on teaching, assessment and reporting achievement in the health and physical education learning area.

In teaching health and physical education, creating opportunities for practical application will enhance the development of knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of relevant and meaningful health and movement focus areas.

The content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (F–10) enable teachers to develop a variety of learning experiences that are relevant, rigorous and meaningful. Some students will require
additional support to develop their skills in health and physical education. Organisation of the curriculum in bands provides an additional level of flexibility to support teachers to plan and implement learning programs that are developmentally appropriate for all students.

In any given classroom, students may demonstrate a wide range of strengths, abilities and needs. Teachers should plan programs that recognise this diversity and provide students with multiple means of demonstrating their abilities and what they have learnt through the teaching and learning process. The use of flexible groupings when teaching Health and Physical Education and the provision of ongoing assessment are important elements of teaching and learning programs that accommodate a diversity of learning needs.

In the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (F–10), outdoor recreation refers to recreational activities, or the act of engaging in recreational activities. These are typically associated with outdoor, natural or semi-natural settings. These activities are an important part of learning in the health and physical education curriculum as they promote lifelong physical activity. They also contribute to health and wellbeing through direct personal experiences and connections with natural environments. Outdoor activities provide a valid environment for developing movement competence, promoting a sense of wellbeing, enhancing personal and social skills, and developing an understanding of the concept of risk versus challenge (ACARA 2015).

This description provides a national framework for the delivery of high quality physical education programs.

How do teachers gain this capability?

Research conducted by Lynch indicates that universities in Australia are not offering physical education courses specifically tailored to children in the 5 – 11 age range for primary school teachers who want a specialisation in physical education. The courses that are generally available to pre-service primary teachers are quasi primary physical education courses where they may be able to choose electives in general sport, often relating to industry or secondary education. These lack the ‘developmentally appropriate’ disciplines that the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education learning area requires for delivery in primary schools. Teachers taking on a mentoring role for new graduate teachers with physical education electives also report that this university assessed competency does not transfer well to the school setting unless there is coaching and professional learning for delivering physical education available.

There is a growing national demand for university education units on teaching physical education to primary school students. The University of Canberra and La Trobe University have foreshadowed the possible future availability of such courses. 15

What is working in schools now?

Participants at the Better Practice workshops discussed a variety of practical models used by primary schools to apply their physical education resources.

The challenge for primary schools is to leverage their resources to build teacher capability and capacity to deliver physical education over time. The most effective role the experienced physical education teacher can play is to coach their colleagues in physical education and sport to understand and apply specific teaching approaches tailored to physical education.

Successful strategies adopted by schools to provide expert support to teachers delivering physical education included:

• partnering high school physical education teachers and other teachers across local school cluster groups
• employment of teachers with expertise in physical education
• providing schools placements for Australian School Based Apprentices undertaking a Cert II in Sport and Recreation
• providing sport specific expertise through sports development officers
• accessing commercial physical education providers
• partnering teachers with secondary and senior secondary sports leaders.

Coaching and reinforcement
Participant feedback from the Building Teacher Capacity Pilot programs showed that the most successful models were those that incorporated repeated professional learning and in-class coaching. Teachers involved in Pilot Programs reported that, following an initial coaching session for teachers, there was a high degree of enthusiasm and motivation to begin to use new approaches and resources. Their experience was that this enthusiasm declined after about two weeks. Programs that included a second follow-up visit resulted in another two or three week period of enthusiasm and activity. If a second visit did not take place the program was not consistently adopted across the whole school.

Participants at the Evaluation Findings Workshop preferred the approaches where there were repeat visits throughout the pilot and a structured program of coaching for teachers. This was reinforced by feedback from schools at the Better Practice Workshop. Some schools are engaging private sector physical education expertise to develop the capability of their classroom teachers through coaching and professional learning. This is supported by a whole of school approach to planning structured, developmentally appropriate programs and lesson plans.

The development of the PE Pulse initiative provides access to key physical education providers offering tailored programs to suit school and teacher needs and experience.

The need for ongoing development
Leaders and experienced teachers responsible for increasing teacher engagement and professional learning also strongly identify the need for ongoing professional development.

For physical education teachers in primary schools who may not have experience in primary school pedagogy, professional learning can offer the opportunity to acquire current knowledge and understanding of the various pedagogies for effective delivery of physical education and how to apply them.

Importantly, quality professional learning also helps to sustain ongoing enthusiasm and motivation to explore new strategies and innovations to improve outcomes for students.

2.3 Additional Reading
The following research paper discusses the latest research and dialogue on the most appropriate skill set for teachers delivering physical education in primary schools:

3. COMPONENTS FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

3.1 Good Practice for Physical Education Programs

Four good practice approaches that supported effective physical education programs were identified. These were:

- full student participation in physical education classes.
- activities are inclusive, engaging, culturally appropriate and socially just
- the program aligns the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education understanding of structured, developmentally appropriate learning with the key General Capabilities including Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capabilities, Ethical Behaviour and Intercultural Understanding
- developmentally appropriate pedagogies are identified and applied to the delivery of physical education.

3.2 Discussion

The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education learning area provides detail of the required learning for Foundation to Year 10 students. A structured, developmentally appropriate physical education program must link to the Australian Curriculum and be planned and conducted with the same discipline applied to deliver other learning areas in a school.

Physical education programs and the Australian Curriculum

Participants in the workshops gave feedback on differences between the written Australian Curriculum content skills and knowledge for physical education classes and what is often taught in physical education programs in schools.

The lack of alignment between classroom practice in delivering physical education and the Australian Curriculum was often due to the choice of physical activity programs delivered in schools exhibiting the following characteristics:

- a disproportionate amount of time is spent by students on listening and group management, rather than on physical activity
- fundamental movement skills practice is likely to be conducted as large group sessions following the pattern of traditional sports drills rather than a more individualised approach with partner and small group work
- a lack of attention to posture, balance, flexibility, strength and breathing control
- a lack of time spent on assessing and debriefing activities, individual and group discussion on the game, skills development strategies and reflection on learning.

The lack of alignment between formal curriculum and what often occurs in primary schools in the delivery of physical education in the ACT is very similar to that noted in the Senate Report on Physical Education in Australia in 1992 and continues to be highlighted in Australian research over the intervening period.
Structured Lesson Design

To support the alignment between formal curriculum and the delivery of physical education, teachers must develop formal lesson design that align strongly with the Australian Curriculum and is informed by current pedagogy in the area. Quality physical education lessons include:

- each session commencing with the outlining of key learning objectives and the context in terms of relevance such as gameplay or a skills developmental sequence
- activities starting with flexibility, strength and warm-up exercises appropriate to the theme of the session or game being played
- teachers remaining engaged in the physical activity, reinforcing teaching points, giving corrections on technique and demonstrating, or arranging for others to demonstrate, the correct form or technique
- teachers ensuring teaching points align with desired outcomes or success criteria and communicating these to students. For example, some lessons may focus on team behaviours and sportsmanship, therefore teaching points on these elements will be explicit
- sessions ending with a warm down and a period of analysis and reflection.
4. TEACHER RESOURCES

4.1 Good Practice in Teacher Resources

Five good practice approaches to teacher resources that support teachers to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education were identified. These were:

- teaching resources that link to the Australian Curriculum and structure programs according to age/level, skills and understandings
- written instructions on physical education skills are supported by video demonstrations
- appropriate, safe activity areas, including options for wet weather conditions, for the delivery of a range physical education programs
- basic equipment is readily available, maintained and replaced regularly
- teachers are encouraged to collaborate and share resources through local school networks and collaborative tools such as Google Classrooms and other online platforms.

4.2 Discussion

**Physical education equipment and infrastructure**

Significant feedback from the Better Practice workshops indicated that where physical education was scheduled across the whole school, space and resources were used more effectively. There was often strong competition for areas suitable for indoor physical activities such as assembly halls and gyms as these spaces may be booked for dance, band, choir or drama rehearsals at the same time.

Access to appropriate outdoor areas was also cited as an issue for some schools, with many outdoor surfaces not ideal for gameplay and large group activities due to factors such as intermittent plantings of trees, irregular shapes, irregular maintenance, and uneven surfaces. It was noted, that where available, schools did access alternative spaces that were more suitable such as local playing fields.

Maintaining ready access to supplies of physical education equipment also poses a number of challenges in schools. Students are more likely to engage in active play if sporting equipment is readily available at breaks and lunch times. However, this also means that equipment is more likely to wear out and go missing. Schools use a variety of effective approaches to manage and maintain their equipment. Storage of equipment varies from large centralised stores that are securely locked away to scattered smaller stocks that are more easily accessed.

**Information Resources**

Good practice in primary schools is based on well-planned and structured physical education programs that are developmentally appropriate. Many teachers are starting from scratch in developing such programs. Some physical education teachers reported spending up to 12 months developing a program for one year level. Ideally the cost of such resource development should be leveraged as much as possible to provide benefit across all ACT public primary schools.

There is an appetite for sharing these resources across physical education teacher networks. Many physical education teachers are using social media platforms to communicate and share ideas and information among both primary and high school teachers in Canberra and across all sectors. Within schools, teachers are making use of Google Apps to share with other teachers. Examples of resources that teachers are developing include programs based on gymnastics and sport-based development programs.
Recommended basic teaching resources

In 2008, the ACT Education Directorate distributed manuals for teaching Fundamental Movement Skills and DVDs demonstrating the skills. These were sourced from the State of Victoria Department of Education. The resources remain a comprehensive and relevant suite of instructional materials for teaching this component of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. Many physical education teachers still make use of these resources although they are not now generally well known nor readily available in ACT schools.

Ideal Generic Model - equipment and physical resources

Participants at the workshops identified the following school infrastructure features as their ideal for primary school physical education. This would need to be scaled up for larger school populations.

The school hall and gym are separate. There is a covered outdoor area that stays dry when it rains and is sheltered on very hot days. There is a vertical wall against the play space. The surfaces of the play spaces are safe and even, without trees or obstacles. The spaces are suitable shapes for game play.

The school grounds have a mixture of well maintained playing surfaces, ideally 60 m x 20 m or the size of a football field. Cement and rubber or soft fall surfaces are marked out with court markings and grids. Playground templates are recommended to support standard court marking and to extend active play options by including markings such as numbers and letters for physical activities and games.

Adequate physical education and sports equipment is renewed annually and appropriate for the age and size of students and the planned activities for the year. Smaller equipment storage facilities are located convenient to game areas throughout the school.

Natural Play Environments

Primary and pre-schools are making increasing use of natural play environments to replace or supplement playground equipment. These ‘de-sterilised’ environments contain tree logs, native plants and a variety of enrichment opportunities for active play that are accessible to larger numbers of students than are traditional playground equipment sets.

4.3 Additional Reading

The following reading materials provide examples of teacher classroom resources that meet the standards described in the critical success factors:

5. RISK/ISSUE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Good Practice in Risk and Issue Management

Three good practice approaches to managing risks and issues relating to physical education were identified. These were:

• whole of school planning for physical education includes thoughtful risk management with input from experienced physical education teachers
• covered outdoor play spaces are available to support physical education sessions to continue safely in wet weather conditions
• school emergency protocols are in place to support outdoor physical education classes.

5.2 Discussion

In general, physical education teachers make use of the Education Directorate policy and procedural support documents for management of the risks commonly associated with physical education in schools. The following risks were identified as everyday issues that impact on the willingness and ability of teachers in ACT public primary schools to provide opportunities for moderate to vigorous physical activity to students.

Student management

Using outdoor physical education play spaces that are at a distance from other teachers and support staff requires planning to mitigate risk. If a student is injured or leaves the activity the teacher is unable to leave the rest of the class to focus on them. Schools have a variety of contact systems in place to alert other members of staff or the front office to assist. Walkie Talkies, mobile phones and Red Card alerts are examples of risk mitigation strategies that were reported to be effective.

Alternative playing surfaces

Where the school does not have purpose built spaces for physical education, outdoor activity tends to gravitate to whatever open surfaces are available. Teachers report that cement surfaces are too dangerous for most vigorous activity where the risk of injury from falling is higher. Bricked surfaces and those with mosaic tiles are also too hard and often have the added risk of being slippery, especially when wet.

Grassed outdoor playing areas require a lot of maintenance in dry weather and may develop pot holes, raised grass tufts and a dangerously uneven surface.

5.3 Additional Reading

The following reading provides comprehensive identification and guidance on the common risks and issues associated with physical education programs in schools:

REPORT SUMMARY

To build teacher capacity to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate and high quality physical education programs in ACT public primary schools, school leaders and physical education providers are asked to consider identified good practice approaches and how they might improve the provision of physical education in ACT public primary schools. Good practice approaches are identified for the following key areas:

- school leadership
- teacher engagement and professional learning
- components for physical education programs
- resources provided to teachers
- risk and issue management.

This action research report will be supported by a Discussion Paper for educators with discussion and reflection questions under each of the key areas.
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   Victoria Department of Education, Victoria, 1998 Printed June 1998 Updated as a web based resource in
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