

## CASE STORY

### Physical exercise for health\*

Nives Cek, teacher

Every child has the right to play and perform physical exercise. During childhood, imagination and vivacity know no boundaries. This is why it is a good idea to take advantage of the abovementioned fact to encourage the physical activities and skills that each individual child prefers.

In a society and time in which general competition and competitive sports are the only things that count, it is especially important to allow children to get some physical exercise through games. With the help of different kinds of games, children can improve their physical, mental and mobility skills and their natural ways of exercise so that they may grow into healthy, independent and optimistic personalities.

In the school year 2002/2003, the project work, carried out within the framework of a healthy school, was entirely dedicated to the challenge of physical exercise. We are aware that appropriate physical activity increases and preserves many vital characteristics and capabilities and ensures harmony of body and mind. At the same time, this implies healthcare in its broadest sense.

### Project aims

With this project work, we wanted to inform all the participants in the educational process about the advantages of regular physical exercise. Further, we showed how physical exercise positively influences the human organism. With an active approach, we wanted them to become enthusiasts of an active way of life.

### Subprojects

In the classrooms, students and their teachers conducted interesting subprojects. Through the task entitled Zogica Marogica, the first-year children become acquainted with different types of physical exercise that included the use of a ball. The second- and third-year children went on a short school-in-nature trip, a sort of winter camp, during which they got to know various swimming techniques. Further, they became acquainted with all the sports that individual children practice on a regular basis.

The third-year children chose dance as the main subject of their project work. They studied old folk dances. They undertook a survey, discussing dance now and in the past, and conducted research about youth entertainment today, comparing it with youth entertainment in the past. To mark the end of their interesting work, they learned one folk and one modern dance, the latter in the form of a rap performance.

### Student activities in the after-school programme

In the fifth grade, the main preoccupation was traditionally the skiing course. The sixth-grade students confirmed through a poll that they are a sports-orientated class, as more than 70% are members of a club or association, and all get regular physical exercise.

The seventh-grade students found out that they take part in all kinds of organised sports events, ranging from mountain trips to running competitions.

\* Network News: The European Network of Health Promoting Schools, IPC, EC-WHO-CE, 2005.



The eighth-grade students dealt with sports and recreation. It is of note that they carried out their work in English. All watched with interest a performance by one of their schoolmates, a ballet dancer with a promising future.

Children from both satellite primary schools were also an active part of the project. In Vreme, they further reinforced the collective activities with their parents in the project entitled "I live a healthy life – for sports, recreation and fun". In Senozece, children and their parents included in their programmes a new playground. The students also did some research about the games their grandparents used to play.

#### **Family activities**

We are aware of the significance of the family in the development of exercise, body, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual habits, and the experience of the younger generations.

This year's activities included the participation of family members. Some closer communities were joined by grandmothers and grandfathers. A two-kilometre march with an endurance test included the participation of the local doctor and the chief nurse.

#### **Spring classroom**

In autumn, with the help of the Municipality of Divaca, our school got a nice spring classroom situated next to the lime tree. The second part of the plan, the arrangement of playing facilities, fell through for this year, but the spring classroom served its purpose.

#### **School Newspaper**

On the occasion of the Open School day, a themed school newspaper was published. The newspaper was filled with articles about exercise, recreation and sports. Many people were enthusiastic about a real sports calendar, the only colour supplement in the newspaper made by the students from the after-school programme.

#### **Never-ending activity**

We definitely found out that activity is never-ending. This year, physical exercise enriched our lives and has also become a way of life for many. Can a teacher want more?

## CASE STORY

**Health 4 Schools: A schools and community partnership programme for Gloucestershire\***

N. Rees and A. Shepherd

Health 4 Schools supports school communities in Gloucestershire in developing opportunities for pupils to increase knowledge, understanding and participation in activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and sense of wellness. Launched in September 2004 with 24 schools, the programme is currently under way in 50 Gloucestershire schools and will extend to 100 schools in future years. The programme promotes a holistic approach focusing upon learning about food, health and active play and the links between them.

The schools chosen create clusters made up of secondary, primary and special needs schools in Gloucestershire: in the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Stroud, Forest of Dean and Cotswold districts of the county. The programme, funded by Kraft Cares, was developed in partnership with the Local Education Authority and Business in the Community, and is governed by an independent steering group consisting of representatives from the private, public and voluntary sector, in the fields of education, health promotion and physical activity. The diversity and broad knowledge base of the independent steering group also helped drive the acceptance of the programme among the schools and community, encouraging participation.

The programme encourages schools to undertake four steps and focus upon four strands of activity which link diet, activity and health. The four steps are: **Get thinking; Get planning; Get doing; and Get reviewing.** By following these steps, the schools introduce changes that are supported and enjoyed by the whole school community, providing a long-term benefit to those involved. This four-step model is based on feedback from schools over many years, and is an approach that has helped to bring about real benefits to whole school communities. The programme uses this process to take the schools and children through discussing and assessing the opportunities available in school for each of the four strands of activity: Growing and learning about food; Learning to cook; Eating breakfast, and Active play.



Left. *Active play. Activity session: field hockey.*  
Right. *Learning about food. Get doing: girl watering vegetable garden.*

\* REES and SHEPHERD, 2005: Programme evaluation.



Examples of specific projects that resulted from participation in Health 4 Schools:

- **King's Stanley Junior School** embraced all aspects of the Health 4 Schools programme enthusiastically, developing a productive vegetable allotment and introducing regular cookery sessions for pupils. The children have been involved in planning as well as participating in the activities. The school allocated approximately £380 of its Health 4 Schools budget to the provision of new playground equipment, which was chosen by the pupils through the School Council. The pupils enjoy making use of the new hoppers, skipping ropes and other selected equipment, which keeps them active and occupied during break-times. A significant whole school approach to fitness, requiring just a little reorganisation of the timetable, has been adopted. Activity sessions, lasting twenty minutes, are scheduled at the end of the school afternoon, three times a week. All pupils and staff participate in the exercise, which varies from aerobics in the hall to playground circuits or field walking/running. The school is planning to invite parents to join the pupils and staff in their activities before collecting their children at the end of the school day.
- **Pittville School**, which is designated as a Specialist Arts College, decided within the Health 4 Schools programme to look at ways of engaging pupils who are not attracted to mainstream sports in more physical activity. Pupils focused upon performing arts and established a dance club specifically aimed at Year 10 and 11 pupils. A small part of the budget was set aside to provide a CD player and CDs to support the lunchtime dance activity, which has proved very popular with Year 10 girls. The school also invited pupils to participate in an Irish dancing session, run by external experts, which was enthusiastically received. The school now extends access to these activities to other year groups. The school also budgeted for new activity equipment, selected by the School Council, which is available, on a loan system, for pupils' use at break and lunchtimes.