

“Hi there, I’m excited that you are planning to try out the Sports Program process for yourself! I hope you have gone through the pack and enjoyed seeing the videos. “

“I invite you to use this **Quick ‘At a glance’ checklist as a reference** to ensure that you do not miss out on each of the ingredients! It’s really very simple to execute, and here are some things that I keep in mind during the process. **Feel free to innovate, translate and implement the way you want. I would love to know how you have applied it, so do share your experience!**”

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I. Checklist

SET THE TONE:

- o Gather students in a neutral classroom space outside of the traditional sport arena and get students to engage in a task that emphasizes only the attributes requiring speed and strength.
- o After the activity, engage the students in a challenging dialogue around their own participation in the activity. Find out and discuss student assumptions and beliefs about sport.
- o Prepare questions in advance to ask the students based upon the context of your school. For example, in a co-education school, keep in mind that gender based assumptions will likely be important beliefs to challenge and discuss.
- o After breaking down the assumptions and highlighting to students a different vision of sports, have them put forward the words or values that they would like to define their sports curriculum.
- o Make this visible by getting the students to write it on the board. This becomes a contract of shared values that the school sports teacher can refer to throughout the academic year.
- o Test run this experiment with the teacher team to see some of the issues and assumptions that exist in relation to sports.

THE THREE KEYS:

I. COACHING SESSIONS (build Leadership)

- *The first few coaching sessions can be led by the school Sports teacher.*
 - o Establish the theme of the session (for example, Communication, respect or Perseverance etc.) and connect it back to a value that was established in the tone setting session.
 - o Ensure that the students see that the activities as part of the sports session are all relevant to this theme and not just random physical exercises.
 - o Begin with a short ice breaker activity related to the theme, then two small drills that build skills necessary for the final game, before giving students the opportunity to trial these skills within a team based scenario.

- o During the sessions, provide encouragement and appreciation to the students who are exhibiting the qualities stressed in the theme.
- o Discourage aggressive and over-competitive behavior at an early stage.
- o After each drill and particularly before and after the final game, bring the group together for a very quick 1 or 2 minute dialogue. Appreciate the students exhibiting the values of inclusivity and leadership, and encourage other students to appreciate and explain how they noticed another peer demonstrating this behavior.
- o At the end of the session, ask the students to nominate two peers who they think have shown these qualities throughout the session and really tried to improve themselves and others.
- o Once you are convinced by the rationale, ask the nominated students to plan and lead the second session of the week. *All subsequent Coaching sessions can be led by student coaches, along with the support of the teacher.*
- o Meet the two students chosen after the previous session, or at lunchtime the next day to discuss their plans for the upcoming session.
- o Provide the students with the right amount of challenge and support for leading the sessions. Do not plan for them but ensure that the students are helped with the logistics, and they have thought through the overall goals of the session.
- o Ask the two students to complete the planning template for planning a session and post your feedback.
- o For each of the subsequent sessions, all the 4 student coaches (the 2 leaders from the previous session and the two leaders for the upcoming sessions) can sit together to reconnect and plan.
- o Ask the students to plan a session around the theme in the previous session so that there is continuity within the sessions.
- o During the session itself, provide help to the students only when necessary and stay observant for assessing the students regarding their leadership style.
- o Assist them in running the dialogue in between drills and at the end of the game.
- o More scaffolding maybe needed for younger students. The teacher may have to assist with in ensuring that the students have the concentration, attention and respect of their peers.

II. SPECIFIC SPORTS ACTIVITY (build Skills)

- o This is the regular sport sessions that schools usually timetable for, whereby students sign up for specific sports activities in the morning, with coaching from experts.
- o The morning sports and activities period can be a time when students can choose from and play a sport they enjoy the most (e.g., basketball, football, cricket, yoga, Zumba etc.).
- o This also becomes an opportunity for rigor to build excellence and mastery, especially for those students who play competitive sport tournaments.

III. SPORTS DAY (build Inclusion) Key Stage Wide 'Squads' Sports

The 'Squads sports days' is a culmination of the sports program, as an opportunity to celebrate the sense of community and engage in some healthy and fun competition!

□ *Points to remember*

- o Aim for the Sports Day to create an atmosphere of inclusivity by having a wide variety of activities and elements that allow different squads to earn points for their team.
- o Ensure that everyone, including the teachers, is a participant by bringing in their specific skills (artist, dance, costume design, gameplay, author etc.)
- o Traditional games like football, cricket and basketball to be included for students to be happy, but also more innovative and gender balanced games so that students can become more open to other kinds of events.

- o Give points for dance offs, costume design, speech writing, chants, fair play and logo design etc. to ensure that all kind of talent and ability are needed to compete in the sports day, thus making every student valued and included.
- o Announce the names of the captains and managers of each squad at a morning assembly and ensure that this is seen as a big honor and the rationale for each captain chosen should be explained very clearly.
- o The captains then have the opportunity to choose their squads (each of about 20/25 students) that are mixed in terms of grade, age and ability.
- o This picking process is very important as it is critical that each captain gives valid (skill based and interpersonal) reasons why they are choosing each squad member, to help make sure that everyone feels included and valued in the group.
- o Ensure that the squads will be relatively equal by creating categories that the different captains choose from such as 'Brilliant designers', 'most improved team players', 'great speech writers'.
- o Bring all the students together for a group assembly where the tone is set for the entire sports day, and the theme is established (such as 'play to express, not to impress' or cartoon's being the common focus in how teams build identity).
- o Give students time over the coming days to plan for and develop their team's identity, come up with great chants and costumes, and to choose which students will participate in which sports.
- o The purpose of providing this time (two or three hours per day for three/four days) ensures that the team has a chance to bond and also that perhaps the less traditionally sporty people have a chance to shine in the creative activities before the sports themselves have even begun.

□ *On The Day of the event*

- o The entrance of all teams at the opening ceremony is an important moment in the sports day and it allows the tone to be set for the sense of fun and camaraderie that is to be focused on throughout the day.
- o When the sports day finally begins ensure that the energy levels are maintained throughout the day, and also that the values spoken about in the buildup are focused on, appreciated and reiterated throughout the day.
- o The teachers are also included in the squads and should be chosen by the captains for the different qualities they bring to the group.
- o Make sure that the teachers included in the group do not take over but rather act as role models to help to motivate their team and assist their captain in developing leadership qualities.
- o The full participation of female teachers in sporting activities is also critical to help break gender stereotypes in relation to sport.

REFLECTIONS:

- o After every coaching session, help students reflect on what went well in the session and what needs to improve. This goes a long way in making sessions more effective.
- o Throughout the sports day and particularly at the closing ceremony, there should also be opportunities for squads, individual students and teachers to reflect on the day and appreciate people who exhibited the values of inclusivity and fair play.
- o Get the school leader and/or principal to be part of these final dialogues, so that even they can see the students in a new light and bring forward the spirit developed in the sports day.

II. Special Tips

- a. During the Tone Setting session, ensure that the students do not guess that they are part of a 'social experiment' and that the task you choose naturally taps into their competitive instincts so that their natural tendencies emerge.
- b. For the Student led coaching sessions, in the first month, the younger students (who are newly introduced to the coaching sessions) may require mentoring and hands on support before they can lead sessions independently. This can be done by you as the sports teacher, along with a student buddy from an older class, say a grade 11 or 12 student (who already has had a lot of practice with the coaching program over the years).
- c. The central theme of any coaching session needs to be that of fair play, respect, inclusivity and sportsmanship within the team (irrespective of the game played).
- d. During the Student Led coaching sessions, the School sports teacher themselves can be observed in these sessions by a head of department or school leader, to ensure that there is the right balance between student leadership and classroom organization. It is absolutely vital that the sports teacher does not simply see this as an opportunity to do less work, but rather that they seek to build leadership capabilities among their students, and keep productive dialogue at the heart of the sports program.
- e. For the Sports Day, the captains chosen should represent the very best in terms of inclusivity and respect that has been exhibited throughout the year, and should NOT be chosen based solely on sporting ability.