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Department of Noncommunicable Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

PROMOTING ACTIVE LIVING IN AND THROUGH SCHOOLS

Policy Statement and Guidelines for Action

*Report of a WHO Meeting
Esbjerg, Denmark
25-27 May 1998*

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Executive Summary and Follow-up

1. In spite of the great benefits for health and well-being offered by formal physical education and informal physical activities associated with schools, these opportunities cannot be fully used by children and young people. The world has been witnessing a decrease in physical activity and formal physical education programmes in schools, in both developed and developing countries. This development is particularly alarming in poor areas, especially in the densely populated inner cities of large and rapidly growing metropolises. The need to provide children and young people of both sexes, in and out of school, with appropriate physical activity programmes is obvious and urgent.
2. It is in order to meet this emerging challenge that WHO organized a meeting on “Promoting Active Living in and through Schools”. Its main purpose was to examine ways and means to strengthen physical activity programmes for school-age children and young people, in and through schools.
3. The meeting was held in Esbjerg. It was hosted by the Ministry of Culture, Denmark, with the support of the Ministries of Health and Education and in cooperation with Odense University and Ribe County.
4. The meeting brought together 25 participants experienced in school health and physical activity policy making, planning, implementation and related research. They represented (i) several countries, developed and developing, which are fostering active living in and through schools: Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Thailand, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe; (ii) concerned WHO partners, (international institutions and NGOs), especially UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee, the International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education, the International Federation of Physical Education and the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women; (iii) three WHO Collaborating Centres (Finland, Japan, Hong-Kong/China); (iv) three physical education academic institutions: the Universities of Bristol and Manchester (UK) and Odense (Denmark). WHO/HQ and WHO Regional Office for Europe were also represented.
5. Experiences from Brazil, Denmark, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands and Zimbabwe were reviewed and, throughout the discussion, the urgent need to address the alarming worldwide decrease in physical activity among young people in and out of school was continuously stressed. Emphasis was also placed on the fact that physical activity constitutes an essential element of a health-promoting school which, in general, is constantly striving to strengthen its capacity to provide a healthy setting for living, learning and working.
6. The main **outcome** of the meeting comprises:
 - i. a **WHO Policy Statement** which stresses the urgent need for appropriate physical activity/physical education for children and young people in and out of school. The statement emphasizes that schools offer a unique setting to provide physical activity for young people and that the challenge can be met with the involvement of all concerned sectors and actors. It highlights key areas of action, in particular advocacy, policy

development, building partnerships for an active living school and programme development, putting emphasis on the crucial role of the school system and the importance of staff training and action-oriented research. The statement also indicates some possible WHO actions in the context of its coordinating role for the Global Initiative on Active Living, especially advocacy, partnership building and country support.

ii. a ***framework for planning and implementing active living programmes in and through schools***, putting emphasis on the critical steps of planning, obtaining policy and community commitment and support, integration of physical activity in the various components of a health-promoting school, staff training and development and monitoring and evaluation. This framework will facilitate the use of draft document "*Fostering Active Living in Schools: an Essential Element of A Health Promoting School*" to be published as part of a WHO Information Series on School Health.

7. Linkages with related international events (1998 and beyond) - selected examples

The 7th World Congress on the theme of "Sport for All and the Global Educational Challenges" (Barcelona, Spain, 19-22 November 1998), organized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) with the co-sponsorship of WHO, UNESCO and the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF). Among presentations and parallel sessions related to active living and health, a specific session on "Lifelong learning of sports for all through schools and other educational systems" was planned as part of the main topic "Helping people learn sport for all: making the inactive active".

The findings of the meeting, along with other relevant documents on the subject, will be made available to the worldwide networks of health promoting schools and healthy cities/communities, to all actual and potential WHO partners on active living, to WHO Regional and Country Offices, to Member States and to concerned WHO collaborating centres.

The findings will also be used in other forums on the subject, especially policy meetings, such as possible future meetings on physical activity/physical education which could be organized by UNESCO, IOC, ICSSPE and other concerned WHO partners.

8. Follow-up

- worldwide dissemination of the meeting findings (see paragraph 6 above). Selection and worldwide dissemination of successful examples of active living programmes in and through schools;
- strengthening and/or development of relevant policies and programmes on active living in and through schools in interested developing countries (two or more), in cooperation with WHO partners;
- supporting the organization of regional and/or national intersectoral workshops (2 or 3), to promote physical activity in and through schools.

Introduction

1. The Need for Strengthening Physical Activity* in and Through Schools

Convincing evidence shows numerous short- and long-term benefits of physical activity on the physical, social and mental health and general well-being of people of all ages, male and female, throughout their life span.

Regular physical activity is an essential support for young people's optimal growth and maturation, sufficient physical fitness and mental vigour, and for building a basis to resist the development of chronic diseases. Participation in a variety of sports and physical activities at an early age is important also to promote the adoption of an active life style and to sustain it in later life.

Despite the obvious benefits, sedentary lifestyle is increasing not only among adults but also among children and young people. We witness worldwide alarming trends of a decrease in physical activity among young people. Very important also is the fact that physical education and other school-based physical activities are decreasing. This development is seen in most countries of the world, developed and developing, and it is most alarming in poor areas, especially in densely populated and rapidly growing cities

Concern about the insufficient amount of appropriate physical activity by young people has been expressed in the statements of several major organisations including WHO, UNESCO, IOC and ICSSPE as well as of other concerned institutions and in many international health promotion meetings and conferences such as the 4th International Conference (Jakarta, July 1997) and the 1997

meetings on Active Living held at WHO/HQ (February and December 1997) and in Finland (August 1997).

2. Objectives

- To review and analyze the status and trends of physical education and physical activity in school-age children and young people as well as factors influencing them worldwide.
- To propose effective measures and means of action which would facilitate the development of physical activity in and through schools, including formal physical education programmes and out-of-school physical activities.

3. Programme of Work

(See Annexe 1)

4. Participants

The meeting was held in Esbjerg. It was hosted by the Ministry of Culture, Denmark, with the support of the Ministries of Health and Education and in cooperation with Odense University and Ribe County. The meeting brought together 25 participants experienced in school health and physical activity policy making, planning, implementation and related research. They represented in particular (i) several countries, developed and developing, which are fostering active living in and through schools: Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Thailand, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe; (ii) concerned WHO partners (international institutions and NGOs), especially UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee, the

* The term "Active Living/Physical Activity" is considered in its broadest sense and refers to the entire spectrum of "bodily movements" resulting in energy expenditure that each person can undertake in daily life, ranging from normal active living conditions to "intentional" moderate physical activities, physical exercises, physical fitness and training sessions and sport for all activities, especially leisure and recreational sports.

International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education, the International Federation of Physical Education and the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women; (iii) three WHO Collaborating Centres (Finland, Japan, Hong-Kong/China); iv) three physical education academic institutions: the Universities of Bristol and Manchester (UK) and Odense (Denmark).

The list of participants is given in Annex 2.

5. Opening

The opening programme began on Sunday evening in Ribe. Participants were welcomed by the host, Mr Laurits Tornæs, Mayor of Ribe County, Mr Mogens Horder, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southern Denmark-Odense University, Mr Stein Nygaard, Director of Health Promotion and Prevention, Ribe County and Mr Soren Riiskær representing the Ministry of Culture.

The opening session (Monday morning), was also attended by representatives from the field of physical activity and health promotion in Denmark. Mr Soren Riiskær, representing the Ministry of Culture, welcomed participants and the audience and emphasized the values of physical activity and sport and their development in Denmark as an integrated part of the culture, education and health of its citizens. The need for a concerted partnership action to develop physical activity in schools as part of overall health promotion and of health-promoting schools was highlighted by the representative of WHO/EURO (Dr Cees Goos) and WHO/HQ (Mr Hamadi Benaziza and Professor Ilkka Vuori).

6. About the Report

Besides the Executive Summary and Introduction, this report is composed of two main parts:

Part I: WHO Policy Statement on Promoting Physical Activity in and through Schools

Part II: Framework for Planning the Promotion of Physical Activity in and through Schools

Each part is formulated in such a way as to be used independently from the other part and sections of the report.

Part I Proposed WHO Policy Statement on Promoting Physical Activity

CONTEXT

The WHO Global Initiative on Active Living* calls among its priority actions for appropriate use of the school setting to enhance physical activity among school-age children and young people, boys and girls, in all parts of the world. Schools provide a particularly favourable setting for the promotion of active living because the great majority of every young generation attends school and schools have the mandate, responsibility and resources to offer physical activity as part of the school curriculum.

Promoting physical activity in and through schools is a realistic goal which can be achieved by each country and every community. It is a sound investment in education, health and sport. It needs to be pursued as an essential element of the WHO "Health-Promoting School" initiative in the framework of integrated health promotion policies, programmes and interventions as highlighted in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) and the Jakarta Declaration on Health Promotion (1997).

The proposed statement takes into account the WHO Health Promotion Policy and the aims of the WHO Health Promoting School Initiative as well as suggestions, recommendation and comments made by participants during the Meeting on Promoting Physical Activity in and through Schools.

RATIONALE

The Invaluable Health and Social Benefits of Physical Activity for Young People Throughout Their Life Span

Physical activity is an essential lifelong stimulus for every individual to reach his or her full potential of growth and development, as well as to maintain optimal health and functional capacity. It also counteracts disabilities and diseases common to ageing. Regular practice of physical activity helps children and young people to develop strong muscles and bones, normal body weight and efficient function of the heart and lungs and to learn to master the skills of movement.

Engagement in play and sports gives young people opportunities for natural self-expression, relief of tension, achievement, social interaction and integration as well as for learning the spirit and the rules of fair play in human relations. These positive effects are important to counteract the risks and harm caused by the demanding, competitive, stressful and sedentary way of life that is so common in present society.

Participation in a variety of physical activities early in life is essential for acquiring the willingness, necessary skills and favourable experiences to maintain a regular exercise habit throughout life, or to adopt it later in life. Furthermore, this participation helps to maintain the acquired health capital through adult years and contribute to healthy ageing.

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Involvement in properly guided physical activity and sports can also foster the adoption of other health-enhancing behaviour including avoidance or reduction of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. It can also foster better safety practices, focus on adequate rest and a preference for a healthy diet.

Based on the significant and partly unique benefits of health through physical activity,

WHO strongly affirms that opportunities for physical activity must be an essential right of every child and young person; their provision is the responsibility of parents, the local community, the educational system and society as a whole.

Alarming Decrease in Physical Activity Among School-Age Children and Young People

A sedentary lifestyle has increased rapidly in most countries around the world, developed and developing, among both adults and young people. Less physical activity is required in daily life, e.g. in household chores and commuting to school. There is a decline in physically active transport, e.g. fewer children walk or cycle to school. Interesting sedentary pursuits such as computer activities are occupying an increasing share of young people's leisure time. It is estimated that in a great number of countries, both industrialised and developing, less than one third of young people are sufficiently active to benefit their present and future health and well-being.

The low level of physical activity is particularly common in teenage girls and the problem is most acute in poor areas, especially in the densely populated inner cities of large and rapidly growing cities. Very importantly,

physical education and other school-based physical activities are decreasing. Only a few countries offer at least two hours per week of physical education in both primary and secondary schools. These negative trends are likely to continue and spread to an increasing number of countries.

The Low Status of Physical Education in Schools

The goals of physical education in schools are (1) to lay the foundations for lifelong active living, (2) to develop and enhance the health and well-being of the students, (3) to offer enjoyment, fun and social interaction and (4) to help to prevent/reduce future health problems. Currently, most schools in most countries around the world cannot meet these goals because the time in the curriculum and the resources for adequate teaching of physical education are inadequate. The increasing under-utilisation of the opportunities offered by schools to provide adequate physical education and physical activity is caused by several factors. The basic reason is the ignorance of the importance of physical activity for young people. This, in turn, is largely due to the fact that policy and decision-makers, teachers, other professionals, parents, and various other concerned groups and organisations have no adequate knowledge of the need for physical activity and its benefits for the present and future health and well-being of young people.

An International Concern Expressed

The need for appropriate status and adequate resources for school physical education has been expressed repeatedly by major international organisations, high level policy and decision-makers and experts in the research and practice of various fields of education. These include UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee and the International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education as well as several regional

sports organisations, among many others. The International Charter of Physical Education and Sport adopted by UNESCO states that “The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all.” Despite these pleas, the status of and resources for physical education and other physical activities in and through schools have continuously decreased in most countries around the world.

The Indispensable Role of Schools in Promoting Physical Activity Among School-Age Children and Young People

Schools can and should (i) allow each child and young person to take part in a structured physical education curriculum and in physical activity sessions of moderate to vigorous levels regularly, several times each week and (ii) offer a range of physical activities outside the school system, i.e. in the community with the support of parents, peers, community leaders and local sports and social organisations.

An active role of schools in promoting physical activity can greatly increase the potential of physical activity to influence favourably the social environment of the school and consequently the spirit and behaviour that are important for the successful work and well-being of both students and teachers.

An “active school” is a healthier and better performing school and a better place to work!

Schools have unique opportunities to provide adequate physical activity for young people because:

- schools have the mandate and responsibility for enhancing all aspects of the development and maturation of children and young people;

- schools offer physical activity for all on an equal basis;
- in most countries, through physical education programmes, schools offer the only compulsory opportunity for young people to take part in and learn about physical activity. Physical education is also the only subject in the school curriculum whose main concern is physical activity;
- physical activity in schools also reaches inactive young people;
- school age is the optimal time of life to benefit from regular activity and to adopt physical activity as a habit;
- schools can provide adequately structured and supervised physical education and physical activity sessions on a regular basis;
- physical education is taught and supervised by teachers who know the students and are responsible for their total development and well-being;
- physical activity is a popular subject in school, especially among younger students;
- schools are valuable entry points for the promotion of physical activity within the entire community; and
- schools can use physical activity to build cooperation between families, communities, and sports clubs and to create additional resources and opportunities for physical activity.

THE CHALLENGE CAN BE MET: SOME POSSIBLE PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following selected actions are required at international, national and local levels to ensure optimum development and implementation of active living in and through schools.

Advocacy

Concise, consistent and accessible evidence-based information providing essential health, social, economic and sports-related arguments in support of physical activity in schools is essential for successful advocacy and policy development.

Documentation on the meaning, scope, principles, values and benefits of physical activity in and through schools, based on research findings and scientific facts, should be urgently produced and disseminated through a range of relevant channels, key networks and events particularly to:

- key policy and decision-makers from national and local governments, mainly from the health, education and sports sectors;
- professional bodies as well as sports and other non-governmental organisations;
- parents and community groups;
- the media;
- key players in the private sector, e.g. business leaders, service organisations.

Policy Development

Governments and Public Authorities are expected to develop inter-sectoral, partnership-based policies and strategies on promoting physical

To ensure a co-ordinated strategy, these policies have to encourage a broad approach towards physical activity and sport for children and youth. The development of such policies requires a national leadership and a key institution in which a central role is expected especially from the health sector, supported by a multi-sectoral alliance. To that end, it is crucial that national governments, local authorities and concerned partners identify and provide the appropriate resources: human, financial and/or material, to support physical activity policies and programmes in and through schools.

Building Partnerships for an Active Living School

It is essential to identify and involve concerned partners in the development and implementation of policies and programmes promoting physical activity at all levels, especially those targeting school-age children and young people.

Major partners would specifically be: the school system, professional organisations, parents and their associations, the local community with its leadership and potential support and sports clubs and organisations, as well as the health, environmental, social, cultural, recreational and transport services, the local media and the business community. The roles and responsibilities of each partner should be clearly identified.

Programme Development

Responsibility of the education sector, the school system and local providers

The education sector or department plays an important role in developing and implementing physical activity policies and programmes in and through schools. It should assume continuing responsibility for developing physical education curricula, with special emphasis on stimulating participation of young people in health-promoting physical activity.

Schools should work together with a range of local partners to increase opportunities for participation in physical activity both in and out of school. In this process, schools are expected to allow wider access to their facilities for all young people in their local community. The local providers (e.g., local government, leaders and relevant education, health, sports, youth and socio-cultural authorities and organisations) are in a key position to provide stimulating environments and adequate facilities and to design programmes that provide opportunities for a broad range of health-enhancing physical activities for children and young people.

Training

Appropriate professional training and development opportunities should be provided for all those involved in organising physical activities in and through schools, including teachers, local leaders, coaches, and recreation and healthcare personnel. The aim is to increase their capacity in programme planning and in educating, motivating, guiding and building the confidence of young people.

Research

It is urgent to collect evidence-based knowledge related to young people's involvement in physical activity that covers

all countries. The data should reveal in particular:

- levels of physical activity that are required for the development and maintenance of good health in different developmental stages;
- determinants and levels of practice and participation in physical activity of children living in various socio-economic conditions;
- reliable and accurate baseline levels of physical activity and inactivity among young people
- examples of good practice;
- effectiveness of school-based and other programmes promoting physical activity among young people.

Adequate achievement of these tasks also requires the development of new research and evaluation methodologies that are sensitive to cultural differences, programme goals and the needs of decision-makers.

WHO ACTION

In the framework of implementation of the Global Initiative on Active Living and in cooperation with concerned partners and collaboration centers, WHO will in particular:

- advocate the case of active living in favour of school-age children and youth among its member states through its regional and country offices, as well as through relevant meetings, events, and publications;
- ensure that active living becomes an integral part of the health promoting school in the context of the development of networks of healthy schools and of other life settings (e.g. healthy communities, healthy cities);

-
- collate and disseminate current knowledge related to active living in and through schools and foster the sharing of experiences among member countries;
 - support the development of intersectoral national policies and programmes on active living in and through schools and help to mobilize the resources required for their launch and sustainability;
 - develop international support and partnerships and act as the international focal point of active living for school-age children and young people as part of its coordinating role for the Global Initiative on Active Living.

Part II Framework for Planning the Promotion of Physical Activity in and Through Schools

INTRODUCTION

A framework for planning physical activity in and through schools was prepared as a background document for the meeting held on that topic in Esbjerg, Denmark, from 25 to 27 May 1998. It is based on the draft text of the WHO document entitled "Fostering Active Living in Schools: An Essential Element of a Health Promoting School". The purpose of the document is to facilitate discussion and to provide a basis for elaborating a WHO policy statement on the topic. The summary framework presented in Part II incorporates the comments and recommendations made by the participants of the Esbjerg Meeting. Like Part I, Part II is designed to be read and used independently from other parts of the Report. That is why some paragraphs might be repeated here.

THE ISSUE

Convincing evidence shows the numerous short- and long-term benefits of physical activity on the physical, social and mental health as well as the general well-being of people of all ages, male and female.

For young people, regular physical activity is essential for optimal growth and maturation. It is also essential for adequate physical fitness and mental vigour and for building resistance against the development of chronic diseases. Participation in a variety of sports and exercises at an early age is important also for acquiring the necessary skills and favourable experiences to enhance the maintenance of a regular exercise habit or its adoption in later life. The

psychological and social benefits attainable by regular physical activity are especially timely and valuable for young people, e.g. relief of stress and anxiety, counterbalancing the burden and effects of quiet sitting and mental concentration, and favourable influences on self-image and social relations.

Worldwide trends make it important to focus seriously on the need for sufficient regular physical activity among young people. Sedentary lifestyles are increasing not only among adults but also among young people. Less physical activity is required in daily life; there is a decline in active transport, e.g. fewer children walk or cycle to school and interesting sedentary pursuits, such as computer activities, are taking up an increasing portion of young people's leisure time.

Very importantly, physical education and other school-based physical activities are decreasing. This has resulted in a decrease in the total amount of physical activity among large numbers of young people. This development is seen in most countries of the world, developed and developing, and it is most alarming in poor areas, especially in the densely populated inner areas of large and rapidly growing cities.

The current situation and the prevailing trends regarding the physical activity of young people and physical education in schools are a great challenge for all those interested in and responsible for the health and well-being of young people. WHO recognizes this alarming problem and is responding to it by promoting physical activity in and through schools as part of its Active Living Initiative and Global School Health Initiative.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, ACTIVE LIVING AND HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOLS

Physical activity is considered here in its broadest sense and refers to the entire spectrum

of “bodily movements“ that each person can undertake in daily life, ranging from normal active living conditions to “intentional“ moderate physical activities, physical exercises, physical fitness and training sessions and sport for all activities, especially leisure and recreational sports.

Active living refers in particular to a way of life in which individuals make useful, pleasurable and satisfying physical activities an integral part of their daily lives. Active living has the potential of being conducive, depending on its content, to the physiological, emotional, mental, spiritual, aesthetic, moral and social benefits of physical activity reflected in better health, increased life energy and an improved physical and social environment of the community.

A health-promoting school can be characterized as a school constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working for students and staff. The functional components of health-promoting schools include the creation and implementation of policies and practices supporting health, the inclusion of health education in the curriculum, the creation of a healthy school environment, the organization of health services for students and staff, the serving of healthy food, cooperation between the schools and the communities, the involvement of the whole school personnel in health-promoting activities and the organization of extracurricular activities that promote physical, mental and social health and well-being.

THE RATIONALE

The promotion of physical activity in and through schools is justified and feasible, because the students, as well as the schools as institutions, benefit from physical activity, and because schools provide a favourable setting for the promotion of physical activity.

The potential benefits of physical activity for students and schools include the following:

- improvement in fitness and health;
- decrease in future health risks;
- enhancement of self-esteem and psycho-social well-being;
- decrease in the risks and harm inflicted due to the large amount of time spent in sedentary work;
- possibilities for open and natural communication and interaction between students as well as between students and staff;
- possibilities to enhance teaching and learning of other school subjects.

Schools provide a favourable setting for the promotion of physical activity for the following reasons:

- schools have the mandate and responsibility for enhancing all aspects of the development and maturation of children and young people;
- schools offer physical activity for all on an equal basis;
- in most countries, through physical education programmes, schools offer the only compulsory opportunity for young people to take part in and learn about physical activity. Physical education is also the only subject in the school curriculum whose main concern is physical activity;
- physical activity in schools also reaches inactive young people;
- school age is the optimal time of life to benefit from regular activity and to adopt physical activity as a habit;

- schools can provide adequately structured and supervised physical education and physical activity sessions on a regular basis;
- physical activity is taught and supervised by teachers who know the students and are responsible for their total development and well-being;
- physical activity is a popular subject in school, especially among younger students;
- schools are valuable entry points for the promotion of physical activity within the entire community; and
- schools can use physical activity to build collaboration between families, sports clubs and communities and to create additional resources and opportunities for physical activity.

THE REALIZATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN AND THROUGH SCHOOLS

The promotion of physical activity in and through schools includes planning, obtaining community commitment and support, integrating physical activity in various components of a health-promoting school and monitoring and evaluation.

Planning

Planning includes essentially conducting a situation analysis and setting goals and objectives.

A situation analysis is conducted to reveal the pertinent data for the promotion of and prerequisites for physical and health education and out-of-school activities. This information is essential for further planning, follow-up and evaluation as well as for winning the support and commitment of policy and decision-makers.

The main goals of physical activity in and through schools are:

- to lay foundations for lifelong active living;
- to develop and enhance the health and well-being of the students;
- to offer enjoyment, fun and social interaction;
- to help prevent/reduce future health problems.

These goals can be attained only through physical activity that meets several criteria in terms of modes, frequency, intensity, spirit, respect of rules and moral conduct, etc. The necessary qualities can best be met by activities that are instructed and supervised by trained teachers.

The recommendations based on the best available evidence to achieve the attainable fitness and health benefits by physical activity read as follows (Biddle S., Sallis J., Cavill N., Young and Active?, Health Education Authority, London 1998):

Primary recommendations

- all young people should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for *one hour per day*.

- young people who currently perform little activity should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for *at least half an hour per day*.

Secondary recommendation

- *at least twice a week*, some of these activities should help to enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility and bone health.

The goal should be that a substantial part of the recommended physical activity takes place in connection with schools and especially as part of the physical education curriculum. In this

regard, quantitative objectives can be set corresponding to national and local possibilities.

Obtaining Commitment and Support

Realization of adequate physical activity in and through schools calls for the commitment, support and involvement of many parties at national, regional and local levels.

At policy level, commitment and support are required through, e.g.:

- public acknowledgement, at the highest political level, of the value of and need for regular physical activity;
- legislation and other statutory measures in favour of the status and resourcing of physical activity in schools;
- allocation of adequate time (i) for physical education in the school curriculum and as part of the school sport and leisure activities and (ii) for unstructured physical activities;
- designation of an administrator at state level with responsibility for supervising the planning and implementation of physical education in schools;
- a system for training competent physical education teachers;
- training of teachers and other school personnel to foster active living;
- provision of opportunities for physical activity for school faculty and staff;
- sustained and co-ordinated involvement of key sectors (health, sport, education, culture, transport and environment) and actors (various partners, public and private).

At community level, the commitment is required through, e.g.:

- employment of appropriately qualified teachers and community workers;
- provision of necessary facilities and equipment;
- active support by the local government and authorities for measures increasing opportunities for physical activity;
- involvement and support of parents/families, community members and local sports organizations;
- use of media and effective communication.

Integrating Physical Activity into the Various Components of Health-Promoting School

The success of efforts to promote physical activity in and through schools depends largely on how effectively the various functional components of health-promoting schools can be used to support the adoption and maintenance of physical activity. The functional components include, e.g., the creation and implementation of supporting policies and practices, the inclusion of health education in the curriculum, the creation of a healthy school environment, the provision of healthy nutrition and adequate health services, the involvement of families, especially in extracurricular physical activities, co-operation between the schools and the communities, health promotion for the school staff and the organization of extracurricular activities (socio-cultural, leisure and physical activities).

The content of the policies, practices and measures supporting physical activity in and through schools has to be elaborated on the basis of national and local conditions, traditions, needs, and possibilities. Many issues are, however, common to many countries. One set

of policies and practices to promote physical activity in schools and communities is presented in the annex as an example.

Staff Training and Development

All staff involved in physical education and other physical activities in and through schools need to acquire the appropriate knowledge and understanding of the value, benefits and roles, as well as the risks, of physical activity and how to assess the requirements for enjoyable and safe participation in various activities. Special attention should be given to the adequate training of teachers and planners of physical education courses. In addition to technical knowledge and skills, all persons involved in teaching and instruction should understand children's development and maturation processes and the psychological and social aspects of physical activity in order to provide positive experiences for the students.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Promoting physical activity in and through schools is an important and highly accountable task. It is essential to know to what extent the goals are met, how satisfactory the results are from the school's, students', teachers' and parents' point of view, how adequate the resources are and how effectively they are used. It is important to collect information systematically and repeatedly of both the processes of implementation (process evaluation) and the outcomes (outcome evaluation). Thorough evaluation is a demanding task both methodologically and in terms of required resources. However, useful information can also be obtained by simple and inexpensive methods.

The results of the evaluation are useful for the policy-makers, planners, administrators and teachers as well as for parents and various community members and groups involved in the planning and implementation of physical activity programmes and facilities. The

information gathered can be used to make necessary adjustments and improvements. In order to serve this purpose, the evaluation results have to be reported without delay and in an interesting and concrete way.

Part II Appendix

USA Recommendations for School and Community Programmes Promoting Physical Activity Among Young People (adapted from US Guidelines for School and Community Programmes to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People, US Department of Health and Human Services, MMWR 1997).

Policy

- Establish policies that promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity among young people.
- Require comprehensive, daily physical education for students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- Require comprehensive health education for students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- Require that adequate resources, including budget and facilities, be committed for physical activity instruction and programmes.
- Require the hiring of physical education specialists to teach physical education in kindergarten through grade 12, elementary school teachers trained to teach health education, health education specialists to teach health education in middle and senior high schools and qualified people to direct school and community physical activity programmes and to coach young people in sports and recreation programmes.
- Require that physical activity instruction and programmes meet the needs and interests of all students.

Environment

- Provide physical and social environments that encourage and enable safe and enjoyable physical activity.
- Provide access to safe spaces and facilities for physical activity in the school and the community.
- Establish and enforce measures to prevent physical activity-related injuries and illnesses.
- Provide time within the school day for unstructured physical activity.
- Discourage the use or withholding of physical activity as a punishment.
- Provide health promotion programmes for school faculty and staff.

Physical Education

- Implement physical education curricula and instruction that emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activity and that help students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, behavioural skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles.
- Provide planned and sequential physical education curricula from kindergarten through grade 12 that promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity.
- Use physical education curricula consistent with the national standards for physical education.
- Use active learning strategies and emphasize enjoyable participation in physical education classes.
- Develop students' knowledge of and positive attitudes toward physical activity.

- Develop students' mastery of and confidence in motor and behavioural skills for participating in physical activity.
- Provide a substantial percentage of each student's recommended weekly amount of physical activity in physical education classes.
- Promote participation in enjoyable physical activity in school, community and home.

Health Education

- Implement health education curricula and instruction that help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, behavioural skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles.
- Provide planned and sequential health education curricula from kindergarten through grade 12 that promote lifelong participation in physical activity.
- Use health education curricula consistent with the national standards for health education.
- Promote collaboration among physical education, health education, and classroom teachers, as well as teachers in related disciplines who plan and implement physical activity instruction.
- Use active learning strategies to emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activity in the school, community and home.
- Develop students' knowledge of and positive attitudes toward healthy behaviour, particularly physical activity.
- Develop students' mastery of and confidence in the behavioural skills needed to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity.

Extracurricular Activities

- Provide extracurricular physical activity programmes that meet the needs and interests of all students.
- Provide a diversity of developmentally appropriate competitive and non-competitive physical activity programmes for all students.
- Link students to community physical activity programmes and use community resources to support extracurricular physical activity programmes.

Parental Involvement

- Include parents and guardians in physical activity instruction and in extracurricular and community physical activity programmes and encourage them to support their children's participation in enjoyable physical activities.
- Encourage parents to advocate for quality physical activity instruction and programmes for their children.
- Encourage parents to support their children's participation in appropriate, enjoyable physical activities.
- Encourage parents to be physically active role models and to plan and participate in family activities that include physical activity.

Personnel Training

- Provide training for education, coaching, recreation, health-care and other school and community personnel that imparts the knowledge and skills needed to effectively promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity among young people.
- Train teachers to deliver physical education

that provides a substantial percentage of each student's recommended weekly amount of physical activity.

- Train teachers to use active learning strategies needed to develop students' knowledge about, attitudes toward, skills and confidence in engaging in physical activity.
- Train school and community personnel how to create psychosocial environments that enable young people to enjoy physical activity instruction and programmes.
- Train schools and community personnel how to involve parents and the community in physical activity instruction and programmes.
- Train volunteers who coach sports and recreation programmes for young people.

Health Services

- Assess physical activity patterns among young people, counsel them about physical activity, refer them to appropriate programmes and advocate for physical activity instruction and programmes for young people.
- Regularly assess the physical activity patterns of young people, reinforce physical activity among active young people, counsel inactive young people about physical activity and refer young people to appropriate physical activity.
- Advocate for school and community physical activity instruction and programmes that meet the needs of young people.

Community Programmes

- Provide a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and

recreation programmes that are attractive to all young people.

- Provide a diversity of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programmes for all young people.
- Provide access to community sports and recreation programmes for young people.

Evaluation

Regularly evaluate school and community physical activity instruction, programmes and facilities.

- Evaluate the implementation and quality of physical activity policies, curricula, instruction, programmes and personnel training.
- Measure students' attainment of physical activity knowledge, achievement of motor skills and behavioural skills and adoption of healthy behaviour.

Annex I Programme of Work

A welcome social event for participants is planned by the Danish host Organizing Committee on Sunday 24 May 1998 from 17:00.

Monday, 25 May 1998

09:30 - 11:00	Item 1: Official opening of the meeting
11:00 - 11:30	Break
11:30 - 11:45	Item 2: Introduction of participants and adoption of the provisional programme of work
11:45 - 12:00	Item 3: Purpose and method of work
12:00 - 13:00	Item 4: Presentation of the role of Active Living in the Healthy School Setting and the need to integrate physical activity into the components of a Health-Promoting School
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:45	Item 5: Discussion of the worldwide status and trends of physical activity and physical education in school-age children and youth, including the factors influencing them in different contexts. The discussion will be based on an outline illustrated with 1 or 2 examples from 1 or 2 countries (Denmark, the host country and one developing country)
15:45 - 16:00	Break
16:00 - 18:00	Item 5: Continued
18:00 - 19:00	Physical activity session/recreation

Tuesday, 26 May 1998

08:30 - 10:30	Field visit and observation of physical activity/education programmes / actions in two community schools
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 12:30	Item 6i: Review of guidelines for the development and/or strengthening of relevant operational policies and strategies to improve the status of

promoting active living in and through schools in developed and developing countries

- 12:30 - 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 - 15:45 Item 6ii: Review of guidelines for the formulation of physical activity programmes in schools adapted to local conditions and cultures
- 15:45 - 16:00 Break
- 16:00 - 16:45 Item 6: Continued
- 16:45 - 18:00 Item 7: Identification of priority actions at international and national levels which would facilitate the promotion, development and the implementation of active living policies and programmes in and through schools
- 19:00 Walk to the school gym - entertainment by gymnastic team

Wednesday, 27 May 1998

- 09:00 - 09:45 Item 7: Continued
- 09:45 - 10:30 Item 8: Proposal of selected follow-up actions particularly at country level
- 10:30 - 11:00 Break
- 11:00 - 12:00 Item 8: Continued
- 12:00 Closure of the meeting

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