**P.L.A.Y. Peer Led Recess Program**

**Program Summary**

"P.L.A.Y." (Peer Leaders for Active Youth) Recess Program

**Description:**

The P.L.A.Y. Program is a recess physical activity and games program for use during the noon-hour recess at elementary schools. Initially developed in response to one school’s ongoing concerns around boredom, lack of structured activities, bullying and vandalism during recess. Its goal is to create a safer, more organized, and fun playground environment through a program that trains youth leaders, and provides ongoing resources and support for both its leaders and participants.

Youth leaders participate in a training workshop and ongoing “trouble-shooting” meetings that addresses problem-solving, safety, fair play, communication, leadership and commitment. Trained and committed parent and/or teacher facilitators are on hand at every “P.L.A.Y.” recess to act as mentors, role models, and supports for all involved. Program facilitators teach four or five new “Games of the Month” at the beginning of each month, and over time, the peer leaders develop an extensive repertoire of fun games and activities that they engage younger students in over the recess period. A foundational resource used in the initial development and implementation of this program was the CIRA Publication: Playground Leadership Program. An Implementation binder and diskette which is comprised of “templates” for all the written organizational material necessary for developing and implementing this program at any school or organization will be available in July 2003.

This pilot program has now successfully run for three years at an elementary school in London Ontario. Evaluation by all participants has indicated that the overall climate of the playground during “P.L.A.Y.” recesses is improved. Even after the program formally ends (i.e. during the month of June), students continue to engage in the games and physical activities that they have learned over the course of the year through the P.L.A.Y. Program.
Important Considerations:

- There must be interest, commitment, and enthusiasm for this program by school administration and staff before it is even considered for implementation.
- Parent volunteers are vital to the success and sustainability of this program.
- The Public Health Nurse acts as a resource support.
- Direct availability and continued involvement of the parent and/or staff facilitators are critical.
- Marketing and communication about the program is also important so as many participants as possible are able to be a part of it.
- Recognition of leaders and celebration of the program success is critical to sustain enthusiasm and momentum; e.g. Leader of the Week certificates, end of year pizza party, Corporate sponsored T-shirts, caps etc.
- Evaluations and student feedback/input are necessary, and student suggestions should be used to tailor the program as appropriate. This empowers the students to take ownership for the program, and motivates them to offer excellent ideas that shape its future.
- It may be necessary to rotate leaders half way through the year in order to allow them to work with different age groups and peer leaders.

Overall, the program has been a great success, and is now in the process of being implemented in other schools in the Middlesex-London area.

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