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Comprehensive School Health Promotion and Daily Physical Activity

- Results of a Research Study Funded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario in Partnership with Ophea -



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“Daily Physical Activity is likely to be more fully implemented in schools that have adopted a comprehensive approach to health promotion.”

- *Getting to DPA: Springboards and Hurdles*, by Martin Shan, S.J.D



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Living School: A Comprehensive School Health Model

What is Living School?

- Living School is an innovative, evidenced-based approach to comprehensive school health
- Living School brings together entire communities – students, parents, teachers, boards of education, public health, sport & recreation organizations, community coalitions, local businesses, and municipal governments – to work together to support and enhance active, healthy living for children and youth
- Living School instills a value of partnerships and shared responsibility



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Living School – Risk Factors & Action Areas

- Living School addresses the 4 primary chronic disease risk factors:
 - Physical Inactivity
 - Unhealthy Eating
 - Tobacco Use
 - Alcohol and Substance Use and Abuse
- Living Schools plan and implement activities in the following Action Areas:
 - Health Policies and Guidelines
 - Health and Physical Education Curriculum
 - Healthy and Supportive Environments
 - Health Promoting Community Programs and Services

**Best results are achieved when activities link comprehensively across the action areas.*

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Living School involves the following fundamental comprehensive health principles:

- Based on thinking about *physical, mental and social health* as interdependent
- Underlying belief that *good health and capacity to learn* are closely linked
- *Participative* – students, teachers, parents, partners are involved in planning and carrying out plans to promote health
- Strong on *personal choice about health* and supporting that choice with *good information about health!*

So.....

- It approaches health from a *systems* perspective, dealing with the school *environment* of the student as well as with the student as an *individual*
- Environment is both *physical and psychosocial*
- Living School involves modifications to *how the school is run and how education is done*

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Living School & DPA Research: What We Wanted to Know

Questions:

1. *How are schools doing with regard to the implementation of Daily Physical Activity (DPA)?*
2. *Do Living Schools have an advantage over non-Living Schools?*

Methodology:

- Conducted interviews with school principals
- Conducted surveys of students in Living Schools
- Examined 13 Living Schools and 10 Matched Comparison Non-Living Schools

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Living School & DPA Research: Results of Principal Interviews

In Spring 2006, principals were asked if they were on target to meet the Ministry's DPA requirements for September 2006.

The response:

- 62% of Living Schools were on target for Fall 2006
- 20% of Comparison Schools were on target for Fall 2006

So... it looks as though Living Schools may have had an initial advantage in terms of their capacity and readiness to implement DPA

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Testimonials... To what extent is the LS philosophy consistent with that of DPA?

- "LS laid down the necessary infrastructure for DPA in that it root-feeds the health culture of the school. Without this, DPA is like a graft that may or may not take."
- "DPA is a natural progression from LS."
- "LS inspires enormous creativity with regard to how to achieve DPA for all: this is partly a result of the highly participative philosophy of LS which means that students, teachers, parents and partners are all involved in trying to make the process work for everyone, including the so-called hard-to-reach."
- "DPA in LS environments is more likely to produce sustainably higher levels of activity because LS provides the cultural support."
- "With LS you don't have to hoist the DPA flag, you just have to keep it flying."

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Living School & DPA Research: Results of Principal Interviews

Living Schools appear more likely to:

- Involve students in planning and executing DPA
- Train specialist and generalist teachers to implement DPA

Both Living Schools and Comparison Schools report:

- Stress on teachers
- Lack of time in timetable

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Living School & DPA Research: Results of Student Surveys

Question:

1. *What percentage of students in Living Schools report participating in 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity in school time?*

Response:

- 2 schools – 87.5% of students
- 2 schools – 75% of students
- 4 schools – 62.5% of students
- 2 schools – 50%
- 1 school – 37.5%

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Living School & DPA Research: Results of Student Surveys

Question:

2. *What percentage of students in Living Schools report participating in 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity outside of school time?*

Response:

- 2 schools – 100% of students
- 1 school – 90% of students
- 6 schools – 80% of students
- 3 schools – 60%

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Some Issues and the Future of DPA

- “The Bystander Problem”**
 - inevitable group of students that will not participate in physical activity
- “Big Bodies and No Showers”**
 - comfort and safety issues
- DPA: A priority set for schools remotely**
 - schools may have other priority areas such as safety or nutrition
 - Living School allows a school to follow its own priorities and adopt a ‘hierarchy of needs’ approach to health
- School Health Promotion & Workplace Health Promotion**
 - link between health of students and health of staff needs to be examined further



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Evidence from this study shows...

- The speed with which DPA is being implemented in Living Schools varies according to the degree to which individual schools have adopted the philosophy and practice guidelines of Living School.
- Living Schools as a whole currently have a head start over Comparison Schools with regard to implementation of DPA.
- Living School is credited with this superior ability by Living School principals themselves.
- More students in LS environments report that they are voluntarily active, not only in H&PE classes and other settings within the school, but also in a variety of non-school settings.
- Levels of, and enthusiasm for, physical activity in Living Schools are associated with sense of belonging and perception of safety and fairness.



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Implications and Recommendations

- Living School emerges from this study as a potent vehicle for the sustainable promotion of well-being among students.
- Living School has an important role to play in the promotion of healthy habits among children and youth, that will serve them well as adults
- Living Schools appear to make it a high priority to implement and evaluate ways of engaging the "bystander" group of students.
- There are still many questions surrounding the process by which Living School achieves its results
- Need to better understand the total school system in order to determine how health is affected by organizational dynamics, such as interactions between staff members, principals and students.