

ACTIVELY ENGAGING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Recommendations for Educators and School Administrators

Physical education and school-based sport and physical activity can provide valuable opportunities for girls and young women to develop physical literacy and a foundation for life-long participation. Physical education specialists, generalists, school administrators and other school staff all play an important role in creating a positive environment that actively promotes the full engagement and leadership of female students.

Research by Gibbons, Humbert and Temple (2010) examined the motivational processes that determine whether female students find meaning and become engaged in their physical education experience, or find the experience irrelevant and choose to disengage. Findings suggest that quality physical education experiences emphasize the development of female students' **autonomy** (having a sense of choice), **competence** (a sense of efficacy), and **relatedness** (sense of social attachment).

Autonomy:

1. Survey female students about physical activity preferences, and use the information to plan the physical education program.
2. Use available community resources (e.g. instructors, indoor and outdoor facilities).
3. Allocate some of the Physical Education budget to non-traditional equipment (e.g. yoga mats, steps, current music, instructional DVDs).
4. Promote the value of choice to students and administrators through establishing a strong and ongoing communication process.
5. Continually nurture relationships with community organizations to address ongoing logistical challenges of using community facilities (e.g. transportation, cost, liability).

Competence:

6. Ensure female students are developing physical literacy and the fundamental movement and sport skills. Check for scope and sequence across grade levels and work toward mastery.
7. Include activities to improve health-related fitness.
8. Provide opportunities for students to teach others.
9. Be an active role model.

Relatedness:

10. Include cooperative games and teambuilding activities. Friends and peers play a very important role in the lives of girls and young women.

11. Create a safe and respectful environment so female students feel emotionally secure and comfortable, and protected from physical harm (including preventable injuries and any form of abuse).
12. Explore physical activity opportunities in the community.

ACTION IS ALSO NEEDED OUTSIDE THE GYM AND CLASSROOM:

13. Provide professional development for all staff to increase their awareness and understanding of the psycho-social factors affecting female students' participation and leadership, and how to reduce the barriers to their full engagement.
14. Establish policies that identify girls and young women as a priority group for programming, resources and recognition. Identify and address gender inequities in facility allocation practices and usage patterns, award and recognition programs, and program budgets and staffing.
15. Recruit and hire female physical education specialists and certified community partners to be involved in the school's physical education program, providing positive female role models for everyone.
16. Work collaboratively with all members of the school community (students, parents, community members, school administrators and other staff) to develop and integrate school-based Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learn to Train, and Active for Life programs with community-based programs to increase opportunities for girls and young women to participate on a regular basis.

This resource was adapted from Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors – A Supplement to Canadian Sport for Life. Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) is a movement to improve the quality of sport and physical activity in Canada. To download the full publication visit www.caaws.ca or contact CAAWS to request a hardcopy.

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