

Leisure Education In the Schools: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles for All Children and Youth

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**Perhaps the most deep-seated antithesis
which has shown itself in education history is that between
education in preparation for useful labor and education for a life of leisure**

- John Dewey (1939)

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BACKGROUND

This project was undertaken by the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR; formerly the American Association for Leisure and Recreation [AALR] and the American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness [AAALF]) to promote a continuing discussion on leisure education and provide a frame of reference for AAPAR constituents: (a) policy-making bodies, such as local boards and state legislatures; (b) public school administrators and K-12 teachers; (c) faculty and students in professional preparation programs; (d) parks and recreation practitioners who are involved directly in the educational enterprise; (e) parents and others with personal interest in the quality of education; and (f) the tax-paying public.

This effort included reviewing the three previous position papers developed by the Association in 1986, 1991, and 2002, as well as the leisure-related literature theory and practice models published since then. Direct involvement and scholarly input were requested from researchers and practitioners in the allied fields of parks and recreation. Revisions and comments were collected over a five-month time period and 30 leisure-service professionals participated in the review. The goal of this project was to (re)affirm the importance of leisure education in the schools, to make policy recommendations, to gain support for leisure education in the schools, and to develop direction for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Over 50 years ago, leisure and play experts in the U.S. asserted that “no educational system in the world has such a unique role in education for leisure as the American schools” (AAHPER, 1961, p. 24). In addition, Charles K. Brightbill's book, *Educating for Leisure-Centered Living*, originally published in 1966 and revised and updated by Dr. Tony Mobley in 1977, provided a strong philosophical foundation and practical guidelines for educators and leisure-service practitioners to meet the needs of an ever-changing society. While the predictions concerning the evolution of a leisure-centered society have not been borne out entirely, leisure and recreation are clearly a very important part of individual, family, and community life. Indeed, much of what Brightbill and Mobley (1977) discussed is still applicable and of value today.

Of the various institutional influences on leisure and recreation, public education may have the greatest potential of all. The educational community remains the most critical setting for providing learning experiences that can translate into and ultimately form a young person's

leisure experiences for a lifetime. But whether done in school or outside of it, the goal of leisure education is to enable individuals to enhance the quality of their lives through leisure (Mundy, 1998).

The inclusion of leisure education in child care programs, school curricula, afterschool programs, and partnerships with community recreation agencies is influenced by student and parent interest and by social lifestyle changes. Infusing leisure education concepts into the school environment and school-sponsored activities provides some youth with their first taste of lifelong healthy leisure experiences. Introduction of lifelong recreational physical activity and cultivation of interest in the arts, culture, fitness, and other forms of leisure experience are still relatively common in public schools, as well as alternative, charter, and private schools. This is in spite of budget cuts in recent years that have reduced attention to these subjects. In some respects, the approach to these subjects has actually been expanded; health, wellness, and fitness are now nurtured through avenues other than competitive sports, including: the arts (especially dance), cultural activities, non-traditional recreational pursuits (e.g., disc golf, fly fishing), and outdoor adventure/challenge education activities. Social and coping skills that are transferable to other areas of daily life are shaped and reinforced in these contexts as well.

The 21st century has seen a resurgence of interest in recreational leisure skills as a valued part of school-based strategies. The success of such endeavors has been defined in terms of enhanced “resiliency” in coping with peer pressure, preventing conflict and bullying, gaining confidence, and facilitating active lifestyles. These outcomes serve as the principle rationale for recreational activities in current afterschool programs and related learning experiences. Schools are often establishing partnerships with leisure educators to engage the learner through leisure activities that enhance the educational process during and beyond the traditional school day.

Leisure Education Defined

Over the last 20 years, numerous definitions of leisure education have been provided by various organizations and individuals in the profession. The World Leisure Commission on Education provided an important foundation for leisure education in the World Leisure International Charter for Leisure Education (World Leisure and Recreation Association, 1993, 1994, p. 41). The Commission explains that “leisure education aims to assist children, youth and adults, to reach the good life and the best usage of leisure through the cultivation of their personal intellectual, emotional, physical and social development.” Ruskin describes leisure education as:

. . . a conscious and systematic education for and/or in leisure which aims to bring certain desirable changes in the use of leisure. These changes may be stated in terms of beliefs, feelings, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behavior, and may take place in formal

and informal educational and recreational settings for children, youth, and adults (Ruskin & Sivan, 1995, p. 147).

Mundy explains that leisure education “can best be viewed as a total developmental process through which individuals develop an understanding of leisure, of self in relation to leisure, and of the relationships among leisure, their own lifestyle, and society” (1998, p. 5). Dattilo states that “leisure education provides individuals the opportunity to enhance the quality of their lives in leisure; understand opportunities, potentials, and challenges in leisure; understand the impact of leisure on the quality of their lives; and gain knowledge, skills, and appreciation enabling broad leisure skills” (2002, p. 211). Thus, leisure education is a process whereby individuals (a) gain an appreciation for leisure and how it affects their quality of life, (b) learn leisure-related skills (e.g., recreational activities and related skills such as social and problem-solving skills), and (c) become aware of and learn how to access leisure resources. Through leisure education, individuals increase their leisure repertoire and gain the benefits of participating in healthy, satisfying, and enjoyable leisure activities.

The various definitions, meanings, and contexts of leisure suggest a similar diversity in understanding leisure education. The words themselves suggest two fundamental approaches: (a) leisure as the *subject* of education and (b) leisure as the *context* of education. Leisure as the *subject* of education involves education for and about leisure through leisure activities such as: play, recreation, the arts, culture, sports, festivals, celebrations, health enhancement, fitness development, travel and tourism, and includes variations in meanings, context and opportunities for leisure. Leisure as the *context* of education involves education through leisure, and includes informal and non-formal learning settings such as: classrooms, playgrounds, afterschool programs, summer camps, and community education programs. It also includes the infusion of leisure concepts, benefits, and skills into academic curricula.

Earlier leisure education programs sought to integrate a personal “leisure ethic” into the school curriculum, while teaching the recreational skills necessary to enjoy one’s leisure (Lancaster & Odum, 1976). Recognizing (a) the array of valuable opportunities available during leisure, (b) understanding the significant impact that leisure has on society, and (c) learning to make decisions regarding one’s own use of discretionary time that leads to personal satisfaction, health, and enrichment are critical goals that are valued today. Tying these goals into emerging strategies for prevention of youth-related problems makes leisure education an important social and community concern as well. Historically, a change has occurred in extracurricular school programming, from a focus on recreational activity for its own sake to including it as a modality and strategy that can help youth to develop self-confidence, social skills and resiliency for coping with today’s societal pressures, as well as living healthy and active lives.

Leisure education is not just an issue in the U.S. and Canada. “Leisure expressions are becoming common universal features and are regarded as desirable and essential for the

development of both the individual and society” throughout the world (World Leisure Organization, 2011, par. 3). Thus, the World Leisure Organization created a Commission on Leisure Education (set out to develop an international platform for leisure education upon which professionals could build leisure education programs). This platform is presented through a series of position statements on community development (World Leisure Organization, 2000a), people with special needs (World Leisure Organization, 2000b), serious leisure (World Leisure Organization, 2000c), and casual leisure (World Leisure Organization, n.d.a), prevention of violence (World Leisure Organization, n.d.b), outdoor leisure education (World Leisure Organization, n.d.c), and physical fitness and activity (World Leisure Organization, n.d.d).

HISTORY OF LEISURE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

History of the School Play Movement

As early as the 1890s, and much before leisure education was a concept, urban school boards initiated afterschool and vacation play programs. This trend continued into the 20th century in cities like Rochester (1907), Milwaukee (1911), and Los Angeles (1914). Pioneering efforts, both social and political, were strongly supported by the National Education Association (NEA), which recommended the use of public buildings for community recreation and social activities. Between 1910 and 1930, thousands of school systems established extensive extracurricular activities and programs, including sports, hobbies, social, and academic-related experiences. School facilities included: assembly rooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, music and art studios, and outdoor areas for sports and gardening (Kraus, 2000). In 1918, the NEA set forth its Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education that listed seven objectives of education, including the “worthy use of leisure.” Thus, historically, this was supported as an important goal for secondary schools in the U.S. and was later adopted by AAPAR (formerly AALR) (AALR, 1986).

AAPAR (formerly AALR) has been dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for Americans through the promotion of creative and meaningful leisure and recreation experiences. Since 1938, it has seen its mission as the promotion of the above in K-12 settings. This organization has featured a book (1961) and three position statements mentioned earlier (in 1986, 1991, and 2002) regarding leisure education in public schools.

Lighted Schoolhouse Projects

In 1911, a referendum was put forth in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that would allow schools to be used as locations for community members to gather and participate in supervised recreation. This referendum was initiated in reaction to corrupt government, and youth gangs with nowhere to go. The idea was proposed among Milwaukee’s German, Irish, and Italian cultures that enjoyed physical games, dance, art, and socializing. Dorothy Enderis advocated for this referendum, and schoolhouses were lit afterhours throughout Milwaukee. Thus, the

concept of “The Lighted Schoolhouse” came into being. The Milwaukee school-based program grew steadily for many decades (Coffey Stanat, 1998). This early concept was the impetus for many Lighted Schoolhouse Projects which were introduced in a number of cities and states over the decades which followed (e.g., Chicago, Los Angeles, Michigan, and Texas).

The Lighted Schoolhouse Project in Texas was based on the Milwaukee model and was developed in 1989-1991. It was carried out with two community-based agencies providing afterschool supervision - a YMCA Afterschool Program and an alternative education program at a shelter for homeless children. The program staff and teachers perceived the opportunities during the 3:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. period to benefit the students in these ways: (a) providing a “home” setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night; (b) interaction with much needed role models; (c) a safe alternative to going home or being on the streets in the neighborhoods where the children could be hurt physically and mentally; (d) a place where participants could do homework; (e) opportunities to do activities and be involved in organizations which they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do; and (f) a loving, caring environment for those who have an air of hopelessness in their lives (Stevens, Tullis, Sanchez, & Gonzalez, 1990-1991).

The current afterschool and extended summer programs from the 1990s through 2011 have continued to support the underlying value and concepts from the Lighted Schoolhouse Projects. This has also reinforced the success of academic activities combined with leisure education activities (Terzian, Moore, & Hamilton, 2009).

Play and Playground Safety

In the 1980s concerns about playground safety resulted in the creation of standards for playground safety by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (in 1981, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2008 and 2010). AAPAR (formerly AALR) conducted surveys of elementary school (1988), community park (1989) and child care (1990) playgrounds. In 1992, the National Playground Safety Institute created a playground inspector’s program that still exists today. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) created standards for home playground equipment (1988), playground surfacing (1991), public use playgrounds (1993), and fencing (2000). Those standards have all been revised since their original editions. In 1995, the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) was created at the University of Northern Iowa, funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NPPS’s purpose is to raise awareness of playground safety and to assist the public in creating safe and developmentally appropriate play environments for children (Thompson, Hudson, & Olsen, 2007). More information on playground safety can be found at <http://www.playgroundsafety.org/>.

In 2009, the first Summit on the Value of Play took place at Clemson University. The summit resulted in the creation of the U.S. Play Coalition, an advocacy group that provides

research and communication about the need for play as a necessary part of a healthy and productive life. Partners in this advocacy project include researchers from Clemson University and other academic institutions, the International Playground Safety Institute, commercial playground equipment companies, and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) (Clemson University, n.d.). More information about the U.S. Play Coalition can be found at <http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/index.php>.

Leisure education in the schools has expanded and contracted with various curricula and philosophical changes over time. AAPAR (formerly AALR)'s involvement has supported expansion through the outdoor education movement of the 1960s, Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP) in the 1970s (Lancaster & Odum, 1976), Project Adventure in the 1980s (Project Adventure, n.d.), Texas' Lighted Schoolhouse Project in the 1990s (Stevens, Tullis, Sanchez, & Gonzalez, 1990-91), 21st Century School Community Learning Centers (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.) and Kids at Hope Project in the 2000s (Baker, 2001). Through partnerships with parks and recreation departments and non-profit agencies, playground safety standards, and the resurgence of the value of play, leisure education school programs have continued to focus on the needs of children and youth as part of the preventive strategies of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers as well as the need for a learner-based method of experiential education. After a discussion of theories of leisure and leisure education, these and other projects will be presented.

THEORY AND LEISURE EDUCATION

The Value of Theory to Leisure Education

A theoretical understanding of leisure, and how it relates to human behavior, may help the reader to better understand the need for leisure education in the schools. The value of theories relevant to the leisure experience lies in how they give order and insight through explanations of what leisure is, what it can be, and how it is influenced. Theory provides a road map. Much of what people know about leisure has evolved from other disciplines that use concepts applied to leisure. For example, psychological theories of motivation are often used to explain why children and adults play and recreate. As another example, sociological theories such as social action have been used to explain the values and conflicts resulting from leisure involvement.

As editors of *Leisure Sciences*, Henderson, Presley and Bialeschki (2004) provided a descriptive analysis of literature and journal data, to examine the status of theory associated with research on leisure, and made several conclusions. One conclusion was that efforts have begun to acknowledge that context has important implications for theory about leisure. In addition, many approaches might be used to examine and critique leisure and how it is facilitated that may lead to deeper understanding. It is helpful to consider that explanatory frameworks are constructed from limited perspectives, are relative and socially constructed, and

always in a state of theory development (Kelly, 1997). Finally, Henderson and colleagues suggested that leisure is a special aspect of human behavior and needs to be examined theoretically from a variety of dimensions.

Understanding Leisure and Related Concepts

Leisure is a complex concept that contains many dimensions. One dimension is associated with time - when people feel they have the knowledge and skills to participate and are free from responsibilities and obligations. Another dimension involves types of activities or particular contexts in which people engage. Further, many activities and contexts that are identified in a particular culture as “recreation” often are conducive to encouraging positive emotions. Typically leisure is associated with positive emotions such as happiness, excitement, relaxation, and joy that lead to intrinsic motivation to participate. The perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of an individual during a certain time, and within a particular context or activity, influence the leisure experience. Since perceptions are culturally influenced, roles and meanings associated with gender, race, ethnicity, class, and ability affect the experience of leisure. In addition, leisure involvement can satisfy a variety of needs including an expression of autonomy, connectedness, and competence. There is a particular kind of leisure expression that involves spontaneity, purposelessness, creation of an imaginary world, pleasure, and self-expression, and can range from fairly aimless disorganized activity to very complex involvement can be identified as “play.”

Leisure education has been influenced by numerous psychological and sociological theories. The following is a description of some theories that have been and can be influential in the development and implementation of various leisure education programs.

Flow Theory

Achieving a balance between the degree of challenge and skill required for an activity is referred to as *flow* by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). During flow, time passes quickly and one is absorbed and engaged fully with the activity. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997, p. 29), “the metaphor of flow is one that many people have used to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives.” Typically, flow experiences do not occur in periods of relaxation; rather flow occurs when the activity requires the individual to *stretch* his or her physical and mental abilities. In addition to the need to be challenged and having skills to meet the challenge, conditions that set the stage for flow include clearly identified goals and specific feedback associated with success. Therefore, Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that an activity is conducive to flow if it: (a) presents a set of challenges matched to the person's level of skills, (b) has rules, (c) has clear goals, and (d) provides immediate feedback. In recent years, professionals have examined ways to maximize the link between their knowledge of flow and delivering leisure services that facilitate absorbing flow experiences (Voelkl, Ellis, & Walker, 2003). Given the connection of flow to leisure experiences, it may be

useful for professionals developing and implementing leisure education programs to consider this theory.

“Games are obvious flow activities, and play is the flow experience par excellence” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; p. 12). Those activities that create flow, such as games and play, often result in the narrowing of a person's attention on a clearly defined goal. The focusing of an individual's attention creates a state of deep concentration and loss of conscious attention to the surrounding environment and one's own actions; thus, the person is able to focus attention exclusively on the task at hand. If people engage in activities that produce flow they concentrate, expend effort, and take control of the situation. A result of getting into the flow is that people experience intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Although the word *enjoyment* is often used colloquially as the equivalent of fun or simple positive effect, in this usage it involves a considerable degree of psychological involvement as well. Participants' desire to repeat an activity is closely tied to whether they experienced flow during their participation. In addition to enhancing people's intrinsic motivation and enjoyment, flow can result in improved cognition associated with complex thinking, self-actualization, and satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1997). Given the positive emotions associated with the flow experience and its connection to intrinsic motivation, there is support for using their theory to understand and influence the creation of leisure education programs.

Self-Determination Theory

Over decades of research, Deci and Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) developed the self-determination theory. Self-determination theory has been the foundation for development of educational and leisure interventions (e.g., Caldwell, 2004; Ryan, Patrick, Deci, & Williams, 2008) and it is helpful in understanding leisure behavior. Self-determination results in having control over our lives in valued contexts, making decisions without interference from others, and having the freedom to live as we choose (within cultural contexts and mores). Self-determined people exert some level of control over what happens to them, when and where it occurs, and with whom it takes place. Self-determination is a construct that seems applicable cross-culturally. For example, a cross-cultural analysis by Chirkov (2009) concluded that the benefits of self-determination are supported by numerous empirical results from educational researchers from diverse educational settings around the world.

Because leisure is a time or activity in which people experience relative freedom, self-determination is inextricably bound up with their leisure. Given the apparent universality of the need for self-determination and important connection to freedom of choice, there is support for considering the theory when examining leisure education programs.

According to the self-determination theory, three fundamental psychological needs are the basis for motivation and characterize self-determination: (a) autonomy, (b) competence, and (c) relatedness (Ryan, Lynch, Vansteenkiste, & Deci, 2010). *Autonomy* involves the perception of

having the opportunity and capacity to make choices and decisions based on needs, preferences, and interests. Autonomy is not synonymous with independence, since one can be autonomously dependent by consenting to be reliant on or cared for by others or one can be forced into independence. Research supports the contention that autonomy is a salient issue across development, life domains, and cultures and is critical to wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2006). The ability or skill to successfully perform a task or do something proficiently compared to a standard of performance is termed *competence*. The notion of *relatedness* involves the feeling of connecting with other people or experiencing a sense of belonging with a group. Given the connection of leisure participation to fulfilling needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, there is merit in considering this theory when developing and implementing leisure education services. Leisure has also been linked to numerous other theories and phenomena related to human behavior, such as development, prevention, and constraints.

Development and Prevention Theories

To the extent that leisure is a context for self-expression, it is inherently linked to development. Development implies permanent, systemic change, and it can be at least partially self-directed (Kleiber, 1999). Development is an active process and not just something that happens to someone. There is a great deal of literature that links participation in leisure and recreation with adolescent development (e.g., Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Larson & Verma (1999) observed that each activity context

. . . is associated with a distinctive matrix of socialization experiences, positive and negative, and the amount of time a population of children spends in that activity provides a rough index of their degree of exposure to, engagement with, and absorption of those experiences. (p. 702)

At the same time, as a context of relative freedom, decreased direct parental control and increased importance of and access to peers, leisure also affords opportunities to engage in risk behaviors such as vandalism, sexual risk, and substance misuse.

From a developmental perspective, positive leisure is likely to contribute to adolescent identity and autonomy development, academic achievement, and development of competence and initiative (Coatsworth, Palen, Sharp, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2006; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Haggard & Williams, 1992; Jacobs, Vernon, & Eccles, 2005; Larson & Walker, 2005; Mahoney, Harris, & Eccles, 2006). It is also a context to promote physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being.

Prevention theory has also been related to leisure in its application to youth, in particular. Personal harm to young people is prevented through the identification of risk and cultivation of “developmental assets” (Search Institute, 2010). Prevention science is a relatively young science; the journal *Prevention Science* celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2010.

Prevention focuses on both the promotion of health and well-being and prevention of risk, and thus naturally provides a framework in which to address the paradox of leisure. The concept of risk prevention and harm reduction has emerged over the past two decades as the preferred perspective for dealing with problem behaviors. Prevention is geared toward preventing or lessening the possibility that something negative will happen in an adolescent's life. Preventing something from occurring is preferable to fixing it after it happens (e.g., addictions and suicide attempts). Prevention also can focus on mitigating further complications, if something has already happened (e.g., depression leading to attempted suicide). Equally important, however, is that prevention is also concerned with promoting things that will counteract risk factors and enhance an adolescent's development and living situation. Thus, the positive benefits of participating in leisure contribute to preventing risk behaviors (e.g., substance use) and promoting health and academic success.

A prevention perspective to adolescent leisure suggests that adolescents can be taught the importance of making healthy choices to reap the benefits of leisure and avoid potentially risky behaviors. Typically, prevention focuses on helping individuals, systems (e.g., school systems or community-based systems), and policies change in a direction that promotes health and well-being. In addition, it prevents the start of, or mitigates existing, health risk behaviors (e.g., cigarette smoking or substance misuse). Thus many prevention programs are based on some type of intervention.

One promising leisure-related intervention for adolescents is leisure education. Leisure education is the process of educating individuals about healthy use of leisure time and serves to promote self-awareness of the need to gain healthy benefits from leisure, understand the value of leisure (in particular intrinsically motivated leisure), develop interests, find leisure resources, understand how to plan for and make good decisions about leisure, and overcome constraints that may impede participation and positive experience. Described in subsequent sections of this paper, the *TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time* (Caldwell, 2004) program was developed as a prevention intervention.

The potential that leisure has for providing adult support through organized programs, for empowerment through effective participation in activities, and for teaching the constructive use of time gives leisure a prominent place in prevention theory. Youth can benefit from reducing or relieving risks and from adding strengths or assets, through participation in leisure and recreational activities.

Constraints Theory

If leisure, recreation, and play are beneficial, understanding what prevents or constrains some children and youth from experiencing leisure is critical. Leisure constraints are any factors that affect leisure participation negatively by preventing participation, reducing the frequency, intensity, or duration of participation, or reducing the quality of experience or satisfaction gained from the activity (Jackson & Scott, 1999). Therefore, constraints do not just affect what a child does, but also how a child might feel. Various models have been developed to conceptualize and understand leisure constraints. Examples of constraints include: a lack of interest in particular activities because of lack of exposure or due to family or cultural upbringing; the influence of relationships with others (e.g., peer pressure); daily influences such as lack of time, money, transportation or facilities; and structural constraints such as stereotyping of activities and a lack of funding for activities for some of the population.

An emerging area of research on constraints deals with the subject of “constraint negotiation.” Some people seem effective at finding ways around the constraints they face. Understanding how children and youth make leisure-based choices/decisions and how they seek to overcome obstacles may be useful in enhancing the quality of life for some. A balance between the perceived benefits, opportunities that exist, and the ways that constraints can be negotiated all combine to influence the values associated with leisure and leisure education.

Knowledge of theories can assist practitioners in understanding general principles associated with a particular topic and, subsequently, improve their knowledge and skills to deliver effective services. Specifically, consideration of relevant theories can stimulate thoughts about ways to facilitate leisure as well as develop strategies to provide leisure education. To begin the process of awareness and understanding, this section of the paper has provided information on the merits of examining theoretical underpinnings of leisure. In addition, some examples of theories that can be helpful to consider in development and delivery of leisure education services are described. These services are explained in further detail in the subsequent sections of this paper.

THE NEED FOR LEISURE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

It is sometimes difficult to understand why so many people hold differing opinions on the value and the necessity for creating successful experiences for school-age children through leisure education. Developing social, economic, and community capital through physical leisure activity can be effective in enhancing and extending the lives of healthy younger children and adolescents. Current efforts to educate the public by “reinventing” the fields of leisure, arts,

culture, physical education, recreation, and sport in order to make them more beneficial, relevant and fun have been somewhat successful over the years. Quality leisure education programming should be fostered and fiscally supported to help every child maximize their potential (Pesavento & Bushey, 2008).

Lack of Opportunities

For many children the lack of learning opportunities in their homes, schools, and communities hinders their full human development. Many in the allied leisure professions cannot ignore the chance to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. All American children – not just the athletically elite, the so-called intellectually gifted or the economically privileged – should know the self-empowerment and satisfaction that are possible through lifetime activities such as moving one’s body confidently, striking a ball well, drawing for fun, appreciating nature, and playing cooperatively with others. The positive influence that leisure educators can have on the leisure lives of all youth – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, social strata, or ability – is important and should not be overlooked. Moreover, these experiences also lead to potential work and education-related opportunities that help young adults to achieve and succeed (Pesavento, 2001; Pesavento, Ego & Woodard, 1992). Therefore, all that can be done to ensure these rights through leisure education should be supported.

Equal play models are only recently evolving (Women’s Sports Foundation, n.d.). Concerted efforts to study, connect issues, and provide programming information that is culturally relevant and based on girls’ needs in their communities have been successful (Sabo & Ward, 2006). A national programming example is Project Destiny. Project Destiny solicits the participation of nonathletic preteen girls and targets change that is related to their participation in physical activity and sport modules, fine arts projects, a health curriculum, and weekly field trips in a public summer camp setting. This project demonstrates that nonathletic girls can be recruited to physical activity and sport programs and that their experiences facilitate interest in future participation (Kyles & Lounsbery, 2004).

Societal Changes

Overall, researchers such as Sabo and Ward (2006) and Kraus (2000), remind us that leisure and play in the lives of children has changed dramatically in the US. The prevalence of divorce and separation, unmarried single parents, and an economy where multiple sources of income are needed to maintain a family have resulted in latchkey children with unsupervised free time. Children from families with two working parents are also left home alone when their parents’ work schedules do not align with school release times and holidays. Less stability seems to exist in the family basis of child and adult life; leisure may intensify change or serve as a social space for stability (Bialeschki, Kelly, & Pesavento Raymond, 1996).

Affluent homes tend to produce over-scheduled children and disadvantaged homes result in fewer resources for constructive play, toys, games, books, and trips to the zoo or beach and little access to vacation camps and special classes. In addition, many less affluent children suffer from the enforced boredom of being locked into an apartment or subjected to “street roulette” (chances taken by exposure to gang violence, drive-by shootings, and/or drug dealing). Kraus (2000) and Thompson et al. (2007) also suggest that there are a lack of settings for play, and that many municipal playgrounds are unsafe, poorly supervised, vandalized, and run by drug dealers or gangs. Parents worry especially about the safety of their young children who attend afterschool exercise or sport programs (Pesavento, Gronbeck, McGovern, & Schlatter, 1998; Sabo, Miller, Melnick, & Heywood, 2004).

In spite of federal playground safety standards, dangerous playground equipment and surfacing are also a problem. Furthermore, in our litigious society equipment is removed and the remaining equipment is “dumbed down” and not creative. Families with financial means go to private play ventures and fitness centers like Gymboree, Discovery Zone, and kids-only gyms with ‘drop-off’ fitness centers for children (Kraus, 2000).

Back-to-Basics Curricula

Other factors influencing leisure education are the “back to basics” curriculum movement and No Child Left Behind mandates, with emphasis on math and reading. Calls for accountability and standardized testing in public education are perhaps higher than ever before. There is much criticism of public schools and proposed solutions for reform are abundant. Unfortunately, the movement has frequently resulted in administrative and financial reductions of intra and extramural afterschool activities, cutbacks on schoolyard play, and even the elimination of recess. This has restricted the growth of quality outdoor leisure education programming. Competition for inclusion in the curriculum is high; everybody seems to be able to identify a social problem that they think the schools can solve, but there are limits to what can be squeezed into already crowded school schedules. Vouchers, charter schools, home schooling, testing, accountability, and shortened school days and weeks, as well as dwindling resources, are all issues that tend to further compromise the emphasis on leisure education for all youth.

In times of economic stress, public schools may be politically compelled to focus on preparation for the world of work, often at the expense of a more liberal education. Leisure activities, including extracurricular activities in the public schools, can be justified as (a) complementary to preparation for the world of work, (b) restorative for participants to be more effective students (and ultimately more productive employees), and (c) engaging the support of the community. However, the continuing evolution of technology has made change constant in the world of work and requires that employees be educated to become lifelong learners. This provides a role for a more liberal education in preparation for the world of work, which can be facilitated through leisure education. Interests and perspectives developed through a liberal education may begin in the context of education early in life, but continue primarily in the

context of leisure beyond school and often throughout the remaining years of the lifespan. A liberal education should not be left behind following graduation, but should continue throughout the lifespan in the context of leisure, facilitated by leisure education in child care programs and in the schools.

Sedentary Lifestyles

There is a great and continued need for quality leisure education in child care programs, schools, and school parks. To complicate matters, physical fitness levels of American youth are deplorable. Without a safe environment in which to play, underserved youth become less physically active than their middle- and upper-class peers. Long-term inactivity increases the risk of obesity (Galvan, 2010). Participating in physical activity is important for children and teens as it may have beneficial effects not only on body weight, but also on blood pressure and bone strength. Physically active children are also more likely to remain physically active throughout adolescence and possibly into adulthood. Children may be spending less time engaged in physical activity during school. Daily participation in school physical education among adolescents dropped 14 percentage points over a 13 year period - from 42% in 1991 to 28% in 2003. In addition, less than one-third (28%) of high school students meet currently recommended levels of physical activity (Centers for Disease Control, 2010).

Forms of play like video games and television may have contributed to the percentage of overweight children doubling in the past 30 years (Centers for Disease Control, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2001). Adding to this is the influence of commercial media and the proliferation of extreme violence and sex in movies, television, music, and video games. Reality shows such as *Survivor*, *The Amazing Race*, and *A Minute to Win It* provide children and adolescents with vicarious sedentary recreation and resultant refusal to get off the sofa and do it themselves. Other problems include: a lack of active leisure and social skill development, experimentation with illegal drugs, teenage gambling, thrill-seeking actions which include violence, early and frequent unprotected sex, deadly bullying, clashes between different racial/ethnic groups, and drug and alcohol-fueled accidents. Many of these problems are attributable to the lack of healthy leisure alternatives and resources, knowledge of those alternatives and resources, and the increase in athletics for selected children.

With the epidemic of sedentary lifestyle diseases, rapidly rising health care costs and the need for continuing health care reform, leisure education is critical to extending health and physical education throughout the lifespan. The increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyle diseases in children and youth suggests the inability of school-based health and physical education curricula, in isolation, to promote healthy and active lifestyles that can be sustained through life. A compelling political argument should be made that leisure education can make health and physical education more effective, sustain health and physical education in the schools, and put into practice health and physical activity throughout the lifespan. The public health benefits of such a relationship between leisure education and health and physical

education would include reductions in the prevalence of sedentary lifestyle diseases, reductions in the burden of health care costs, and a politically viable strategy for health care reform.

The challenges for leisure education, technology, and lifestyles in the new millennium were also addressed at the Sixth World Leisure Congress. At this event it was explained that many people have entered the new millennium busy, stressed, and sedentary; working more hours, performing little or no physical activity, with fewer opportunities for leisure, and challenged by an epidemic of what have come to be called sedentary lifestyle diseases (Albrechtsen, 2001). These problems have expanded in the first decade of the new millennium throughout the lifespan - from young children through the Baby Boom generation to the oldest generations, despite advances in medicine that offer hope for a longer lifespan and a higher quality of life. Leisure education solutions to these problems have been addressed in the international position statements of the World Leisure Commission on Education concerning Physical Fitness and Activity in the Context of Leisure Education (2001a), and Promotion of Health, Wellness and Leisure: Major Components of Quality of Life (2003).

The Important Role of Play and Leisure in Development

In society today, work and leisure are polarized and the public school system is expected to educate for both. The educational system reflects a social belief that work and leisure are separate and hierarchically arranged so that leisure, as an opposite of work, is diminished. There is a strong link between play and an individualized way of learning, not only about the world, but also about self and autonomy. However, society has cheapened and trivialized play. In our current system, children and youth are not encouraged to be creative in their play as many “play objects” are pre-packaged and commercialized. Unfortunately, formal schooling often sees play as lacking value and tells children the only way to survive is to learn prescribed subject matter that prepares them for a job (Carter & Nelson, 1992; Teeters, 1992).

Historically, governmental calls for public action like *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (1991) had none of the familiar professional concepts such as *leisure*, *recreation*, *physical education* and *play* mentioned in its plan. Only limited and weak use of the term “recreational” appears in the *Healthy People 2010* report, while the term “leisure-time” appears in the proposed *Healthy People 2020* report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.) The system should be changed, fundamentally restructured, so as not to focus only on a higher standard in core school subjects. Physical education should be recognized as a core subject with learning outcomes, statewide achievement data analyses, and alignment with national education standards. Leisure education as a core subject should follow.

Since the public school system has the longest and closest contact with children, it may be the key to educating for leisure and through leisure. Although politicized, as the “control institution” in the learning process, schools should provide the “playground” where children can safely learn to test themselves, explore, embrace challenges, and play without failure (Teeters,

1992). Partnering with local and neighborhood parks and recreation departments can be a creative and economical means of providing leisure education that extends beyond the school day.

Human growth and development do not take place in a vacuum. People, including family, friends, teachers and society at large, as well as physical, social and intellectual activities and experiences contribute positively and negatively to individual growth and development. Henderson, Bialeschki, Hemingway, Hodges, and Sessoms state,

. . . the original goal of many youth programs was to be diversionary and give young people something positive and structured to do to get them off the streets after school. Over the years, however, these programs have changed their focus toward developmental outcomes such as physical, cognitive, and emotional growth. (2001, p. 223)

In 1996, the Search Institute (2010) identified building blocks for healthy development for each stage of youth development. The stages are early childhood (3-5 years), middle childhood (5-11 years) and adolescence (12-18 years). There remains an even greater need for recreation professionals to design programs that address these building blocks which include 40 “developmental assets”, thus providing youth with a more holistic set of programs vital to their development.

As mentioned earlier, developmental theory also suggests several recommendations for guiding play intervention and leisure education for children and youth (Kleiber, 2001). These include feeling secure and belonging, feeling capable, defining ourselves in relation to others, and creating meaning in their lives. This is especially true for children who may feel destabilized through threat (e.g., loss or injury). In such cases, leisure can be a context for developing that sense of security and belonging, as well as recovery. Children can also learn a sense of cooperation. The notion of becoming secure should be incorporated into teacher education, as well as parent education. For example, in a continuing effort to combat the alarming physical and psychological health hazards affecting girls in the U.S., the Women’s Sports Foundation (2008) launched *GoGirlGo!* in 2001. The initiative aims to get one million inactive girls to participate in regular physical activity and keep another one million currently active girls ages 8-18 from dropping out of physical activity. This national education and awareness campaign provides tools for teachers and mentors to enable girls to live an active lifestyle and educate others in their neighborhood schools, parks, and community centers (Women’s Sport Foundation). More information about *GoGirlsGo!* can be found at <http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/GoGirlGo.aspx/>.

Through play, children can establish competence and be recognized by others as having skills or being skilled—they can become capable. Through *GoGirlGo!* Chicago, girls have made positive changes in their attitudes toward physical inactivity and health-risk behaviors such as:

smoking, drinking, drug use, sexual activity, and eating disorders. Successful pilot community projects have also been launched in Atlanta, Boston, and San Antonio; each girl receives her own *GoGirls! Guide to Life*, in which champion female athletes deliver messages on sports, fitness, nutrition, and the ways in which they have confronted health-risk situations. These tools provide the basis for weekly discussions during the sport season on risk behavior topics, as well as team-building and role-modeling activities that encourage personal responsibility to self, teammates and their community.

Within the context of play, a child constructs and reconstructs her/himself, and can learn how to define themselves in relation to others. Thus, it is essential to provide opportunities for decision-making and activity control through play. Developmental theory also recommends that play environments facilitate opportunities for children to connect with others. Love and companionship are powerful needs in early and late adolescence and play allows for joint involvement in enjoyable activities.

Through play, children can learn assertiveness - not aggressiveness. Through play, a child can play a part in something bigger than oneself. Play environments offer opportunities for volunteer service and commitment to others. Examples range from coaching younger children and leading Girl/Boy Scouts to community and environmental action. For example, the purpose of the Peaceful Playground Program is to introduce children and school staff to the many choices of activities available on playgrounds and field areas. Playground blueprints, or stencils, are designed to assist with measurements, layout, spacing, and game placement, as well as to provide an overall picture of the final design outcome of a Peaceful Playground (Peaceful Playgrounds, n.d.). More information about Peaceful Playgrounds can be found at <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/>.

Also within the context of play, children can create meaning. Through play, peaceful and serene activities can be cultivated so that children may be able to put their own lives into perspective with the rest of the world. Finally, developmental theory recommends that play serve as a catalyst for children to become healthy. Play opportunities help children develop their spirits, minds, and bodies in ways that can help them appreciate the importance of health and wellness (Kleiber, 2001; Pesavento, 2001). Wynns (2008) states, "delivering social services is raising the profile of public parks and recreation, changing our image from fun and games to a provider of socially relevant, essential tools for our community's well-being" (p. 77). Ultimately, the overall goal is to help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Due to recreation/leisure agencies increasingly being faced with the responsibility of providing programs designed to encompass youth enrichment and development, versus traditional recreation programming focusing on youth sports, employers are also hard pressed to recruit individuals to the management team and support staff. Front-line leisure service professionals who are experienced in areas that encompass arts, sport and general recreational programming, as well as areas that support educational components, career education, social

development initiatives and programs that are multi-culturally diverse are invaluable in assisting children to discover competency, relatedness, self-determination, efficacy (self-worth) and healthy development.

The Need for a Paradigm Shift from Competitive Activity Models to Youth Development and Healthy Lifestyle Models

Quality leisure education programming should be fostered and fiscally supported to assist every child to maximize his or her potential. Unfortunately, school budgets continue to cut art, music, physical education, and extracurricular activities; placing less emphasis on the development of the whole child through leisure. Time constraints and poorly managed curricula also result in fewer opportunities for leisure education. For example, to make time for a school assembly, physical education is canceled. Though the class behavior of school children is better when they have a daily recess period at school, frequently if class work is not finished, recess is cut (JOPERD, May/June 2009).

In addition, only one state in 50, Illinois, requires five-day a week physical education in K-12 programs. California mandated weekly minutes for physical education. However, there is not enough gymnasium space so there are monstrous class sizes. On paper, daily physical education looks good, but in all practicality – it is not doing what it should (California State Board of Education, 2010).

Curricular trends have been slow to change and many physical and leisure education programs have been discontinued, based on their inability to stay current. Unfortunately, the play which is predominantly encouraged in physical education classes, recreation and afterschool programs is sports and athletics, and only recently has the emphasis begun to shift to cooperative play and lifetime-carryover activities, such as golf, tennis, outdoor recreation, and challenge education. All too often, many aggressive “Hall of Shame” elimination games (e.g., dodgeball, bombardment, murder ball), exclusive and punitive practices such as children picking teams, and exercise as punishment, continue to frustrate and hurt even the most competitive children (Williams, 1996). Dodgeball is the most recognized form of human target game and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2006) has a position statement against it.

However, there are many excellent contemporary leisure education initiatives, approaches, and models which have been developed and improved over the past 10 years such as: *Afterschool Alliance Programs* (2009), *TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time* (Caldwell, 2004), *Head Start Body Start* (AAPHERD, 2011), *Five for Life* (Focused Fitness, 2009), *Physical Best* (NASPE, n.d.), *CATCH* (University of California, n.d.), *GoGirlGo!* (Women’s Sport Foundation, 2008), *SPARK* (2009), *Let’s Move in School* (AAHPERD, 2011), and *Imagination Playground* (2008) to name a few. A number of these models are interdisciplinary, interactive, and field-tested.

Research has also caught up by documenting successes, collecting longitudinal data, publishing and disseminating evidence-driven benefits as well as advocating for educational and governmental reforms.

CURRENT TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICE MODELS

The Foundation of Best Practice Models

Fundamentally, the importance of leisure education in the schools is connected directly to the outcomes associated with leisure education programs. Numerous programs and models of leisure education can be found in the literature. Each of these models or programs is geared to a certain population, at certain grade levels, and each of them has different outcomes associated with them. It is important that the outcomes associated with these programs connect with: (a) educational standards set forth by states, provinces, nations, or other governing bodies and (b) goals that are important to healthy human development and well-being. Whether as a stand-alone curriculum, infused (integrated) into the existing curricula, or conducted in an afterschool context, the leisure education program should support and connect with educational standards. In today's educational climate and with today's needs, additional curricula that do not meet these standards will not be sustained.

As mentioned previously, the key to attaining leisure education outcomes is to intentionally plan for them. Thus, program planning skills and techniques must be employed to implement best practices models in leisure education, regardless of setting. One method of intentional planning is through the Program Development Cycle (Rossman & Schlatter, 2008) which consists of four stages: (a) identifying the agency culture, (b) engaging in targeted program development, (c) developing operational strategies, and (d) conducting follow-up analysis. Within these stages are nine specific program planning steps. In the first phase, programmers must understand the organization's mission and vision, with the goal of developing programs that directly enhance the mission. Phase two, targeted program development, consists of seeking participant input on programs and subsequent development of program outcomes and design. Program plans are written and implemented in the operational strategies phase. Finally, programs are evaluated and disposition decisions are made to continue, modify, or discontinue programs in the follow-up analysis phase.

Logic models are very useful tools to assist developers of leisure education programs. First, they force the developer to be very clear what the targeted leisure education outcomes are. So for example, one leisure education program may be aimed at ultimately encouraging the development of social skills among a particular population. Keeping that goal in mind allows the developers to target specific short term outcomes that are thought to produce the long term, ultimate outcome. Other programs may have "larger" outcomes such as reducing substance use and other risky behavior among youth. Again, knowing that is the ultimate goal, the leisure

education program can be designed to produce short term outcomes, such as learning how to develop interests and overcoming boredom, that are thought to lessen risky behavior.

Another important reason logic models are useful is that they serve as communication devices. As previously mentioned in the Program Development Cycle, working with all stakeholders is important to the sustainability of the program. Using a logic model clearly identifies for everyone involved what the short and long term goals are, as well as the strategies and activities to meet those goals.

A third reason to use logic models is that they serve as a guide for planning and programming, as well as evaluation of outcomes. Logic models build in what process and outcome evaluation targets are needed. Having clearly identified short and long term outcomes drives the evaluation. Furthermore, assuming success, these results then can be used to advocate for more funding. On the other hand, if there is moderate or little success, the logic model and evaluation outcomes can be used to determine where to make changes and tweak the system.

Developmentally Appropriate Leisure Education

The developmental age and stage of the individuals receiving the program must be considered when developing leisure education programs. In addition, appropriate content based on other individual characteristics such as disability, learning ability, and/or being at risk for certain problem behaviors is critical. Thus age, maturity, and individual or group characteristics are significant influences on leisure education program design.

Another important consideration is whether the program is provided to all students, or whether it is targeted at those who display characteristics of being at risk for certain problems. It is sometimes preferable to both give the program to all students and provide additional time and resources to students identified as having further needs. By implementing the program in this way, the developmental needs of the largest number of students are addressed. This includes the fact that children need to be safe in the settings in which they are learning and playing. For example, playground equipment is developed for age appropriate settings (ages 6 months-23 months; ages 2-5 [child care]; ages 5-12 [school age]). Children from the other age groups should not play on equipment not developed for their own age setting. Finally, it is important to understand the goal and context of the leisure education program.

Examples of Best Practice Models

A few school-based leisure education programs will be presented below (in chronological order): (a) Florida State University's Scope and Sequence Model (Mundy, 1998), (b) NRPA's Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP) (American Association of Leisure and Recreation, 1986; Lancaster & Odum, 1976; Mundy, 1998) (c) Israel's Leisure Education Curriculum (Ruskin &

Sivan, 1995), (d) the Elementary and Secondary Education's Act (ESEA) 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Afterschool Alliance, n.d) and NRPA's Afterschool Alliance (National Recreation and Parks Association, 2001), (e) AAPAR (formerly AALR)'s Kids at Hope Project (Baker, 2001), and (f) *TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time* (Caldwell, 2004).

Florida State University's Scope and Sequence Model

The Scope and Sequence Model was developed by leisure service faculty at Florida State University, in cooperation with Florida State Department of Education personnel, in the 1970s. The curriculum model extended beyond the traditional school-age group to encompass various periods throughout one's life and incorporated objectives according to individual needs and appropriate learning strategies. It was developed by taking advantage of the advances in instructional design whereas in order to formulate any comprehensive educational program, the goals of the program must first be identified in terms of terminal objectives or behaviors. The National Policy Statement on Leisure Education (Society of Park and Recreation Educators, 1972) served as the foundation upon which the goals were developed. The curriculum contained a set of objectives for an infused (integrated) leisure education program, pre-kindergarten through high school, prearranged under six categories: (a) self-awareness, (b) leisure awareness, (c) attitudes, (d) decision making, (e) social interaction skills, and (f) leisure activity skills. It served as a catalyst for facilitating leisure education as a lifelong process (Mundy, 1998).

NRPA'S Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP)

One of the most comprehensive curriculum models (K-12) was developed as a part of the Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP) of the National Recreation and Park Association. The curriculum was designed to be infused into the school curriculum, no matter what the grade level or subject matter, with two general purposes: (a) to identify, understand, and evaluate leisure resources available in the community, state, and nation; and (b) to develop an appreciation for various ways that people have of using these resources (Mundy, 1998). More specific objectives of the leisure education process were for children to: (a) recognize the use of leisure as an avenue for personal satisfaction and enrichment; (b) know the array of valuable opportunities available in leisure time; (c) understand the significant impact that leisure time has and will have on society; (d) appreciate natural resources and their relationship to discretionary time; and (e) be able to make decisions regarding their own leisure behavior (Lancaster & Odum, 1976; American Association of Leisure and Recreation, 1986). LEAP's tenets of the 1970s are part of the educational partnerships with recreation and parks agencies' focus in school curriculum and afterschool programs, even today.

Israel's Leisure Education Curriculum Model

Internationally, Israel has been a leader in getting leisure education introduced into the regular public school curriculum, but there may be few followers, and it is not known how widespread it is in Israel and other countries. The latest contemporary curriculum model was developed by the National Curriculum Development Commission for the school system in Israel (Ruskin & Sivan, 1995). The Leisure Education Curriculum is a K-12 framework for leisure education within its educational systems. It is organized around three clusters of objectives: (a) knowledge, understanding and awareness; (b) behavior, habits and skills; and (c) emotions and value-oriented attitudes. Its developers recommend that leisure education be taught as an independent subject, as well as infused into different subjects that are a part of the total school curriculum.

The Leisure Education Curriculum proposes several strategies for implementation, such as: (a) using teachable moments with potential for leisure education; planned integration of leisure concepts and contents to as many school subjects as possible; (b) learning by means of recreation activities; (c) studying leisure as a subject of study in itself; (d) experimenting with leisure; (e) counseling students about leisure; (f) focusing learning by several school disciplines on leisure activities; (g) building a school leisure program with the involvement of parents and community institutions and facilities at large; and (h) appointing a leisure education coordinator or a consultant with responsibility over all leisure education activities and curricula in each school. Since the publication of the curricula, (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1994), a Commissioner of Leisure Education and a Supervisor General of Leisure Education were appointed and numerous training courses for School Leisure Education Coordinators/Consultants were implemented, with hundreds of them already in K-12 settings in many parts of the country.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

In 1998, the federal government launched the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to support afterschool programs that serve low-income youth. The purpose of the program is to enrich academic performance and to support programs such as drug and violence prevention, art, music, recreation, technology education, and literacy that promote academic success. With an initial appropriation of \$40 million in 1998, the program's budget reached \$1.16 billion in 2011. It continues to be the only federal program dedicated exclusively to afterschool programs (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.). More information on the Afterschool Alliance can be found at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm>.

NRPA's Youth Strategies Initiative and government educational grant opportunities created partnerships between schools and local recreation and park agencies to create

Community Learning Centers, whose goals continue to reflect the Lighted Schoolhouse Project and LEAP traditions. With these funds the Afterschool Alliance was introduced (National Recreation and Parks Association, 2001). Its principle goal was to ensure that all children have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs by 2010. The Alliance is a growing coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations committed to raising awareness and resources for afterschool programs. Crime prevention, resiliency and coping skills, ability to make decisions about personal discretionary-time activities, and interaction with caring adults through organized afterschool programs for youth are the focus of these “youth strategies.” Thus, a goal of universal access to afterschool programs is to strengthen every child’s opportunity for a quality leisure education program in an afterschool setting.

AAPAR (formerly AALR)’s Kids at Hope Project

In 2001, AAPAR (formerly AALR) initiated a partnership with the *Kids at Hope* Project to provide training for teachers and recreation professionals. *Kids at Hope* is based on the premise that “all children are capable of success, no exceptions” (Baker, 2001, p. 18). The philosophy of the project is to assist schools and youth organizations in developing program strategies that infuse four basic elements into curricular or after-school programs: (a) an anchor in each child’s life; (b) other caring adults; (c) high, positive expectations for all children; and (d) creating opportunities for success. The *Kids at Hope* report card lists each child’s individual strengths and also links the child’s talents to home and family, community service, hobbies and recreation, and education and careers (Baker).

TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time

A new leisure education program with a slightly different set of outcomes than those previously mentioned is *TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time*. This program was designed initially as a substance abuse prevention program for middle school youth, but it is easily adaptable to serve as a prevention program for many unhealthy behaviors such as over-eating, violence, substance abuse, and risky sexual behavior. While prevention of unhealthy behavior is important, fundamentally *TimeWise* helps youth develop healthy lifelong leisure interests. It is comprised of six theoretically grounded lessons designed to teach students to: (a) determine personally satisfying and meaningful leisure activities, (b) understand the benefits of participating in healthy leisure, (c) understand how a youth’s motivation affects her/his experience and participation in healthy behaviors, (d) alleviate boredom and increase optimal experience in leisure time, (e) learn how to take responsible action to participate in desired activities, and (f) identify and overcome constraints that get in the way of participation in desired activities (Caldwell, 2004).

While these examples of contemporary leisure education programs share much in common with their predecessors, they differ in that they are built on broader theoretical foundations. This is important because these broad theoretical frameworks foster the

integration of leisure education into important societal goals: promotion of healthy and sustainable communities, prevention of risk behaviors, and promotion of healthy activity. Amid competition for resources, it is important that any current leisure education program connects to broader societal goals. This in no way suggests that leisure as an organizing concept should be absent or relegated to a less important position. Rather, as demonstrated by the successful programs just discussed, leisure as a context for education to promote health and human development, as well as community sustainability, is vital.

Other collaborative efforts presently in operation could be useful models for leisure education programs. Three nationally-based examples, *ArtsBridge*, *Meeting the Masters*, and Chicago-based *The New Communities Programs*, promote arts opportunities in the schools (Carpenter, 2011). More information about these programs can be found at <http://www.artsbridgeamerica.com/>, <http://www.meetthemasters.com/>, and <http://www.newcommunities.org/>.

There are practical considerations that are important when infusing leisure education into schools. These include placement of the program within the school day, afterschool day, training of leisure educators, format of program, context of program, and budget. As ideally specified in a logic model, plans for a leisure education program should include details that identify how the leisure education program will be effective in relation to each of these considerations.

In an ideal world, leisure education models would allow students to be involved in strategic leisure experiences focused on a broad range of activities such as: music, theater, sport, outdoor pursuits, visual arts, etc., that involve creativity, strategy and much more. These topics would be experienced in a variety of social contexts - with friends, with acquaintances, through team competitions, as individuals at rest, and with taking on self-directed challenges. Leisure education programs that are stand-alone curricula are often placed in physical education, health, or special education classes, although those are clearly not the only suitable places for such programs.

CONTEXTS FOR LEISURE EDUCATION

A rationale for leisure as the context of education is that leisure as free time is a *crucible* for a lot of the problems of today's youth including delinquency, violence, alcohol and drug use and abuse, and sexual promiscuity (World Leisure Commission on Education, 1998c). Indeed, much of the motivation for such activities is tied to sensation seeking and excitement and even competence and belonging. The boredom that leads to health-compromising behaviors may be the result of a limited leisure repertoire and thus may be remedied by leisure education. A vocal and influential consensus on this point seems to be emerging, and it may ultimately win the day for the cause of leisure education. However, persuading a skeptical and fiscally conservative public on the issue remains a daunting challenge.

A variety of settings are conducive to implementing leisure education programs, and each of these has pros and cons. School-based programs are popular because they have the greatest likelihood of reaching the most youth. These programs may be most effective due to the structure of the school day, thus allowing for the curriculum to be taught in a systematic manner. English classes, for example, could be excellent contexts for programs to be offered because many leisure education programs are based on reflection, written and oral communication, and self-expression (e.g., poetry reading and writing). Both low and high program levels would be available for all ages of school children. Through these experiences, youth would grow and develop, expanding their abilities to make choices as older youth, and maturing their leisure repertoire as they enter adulthood. In order to implement any model of leisure education in the educational systems of today, connection to educational standards is essential.

Teaching health and physical education in combination with leisure education offers important opportunities to create healthy and active lifestyles. Appropriate leisure decisions are necessary to achieve healthy and active lifestyles. Beyond the facts of health education, healthy lifestyles require decisions to eat healthy foods, to dine in healthy restaurants, to order healthy items from restaurant menus, not to smoke, not to engage in risky behaviors, etc., which typically involve leisure choices. Everyone knows from physical education that they should exercise, but choosing an active lifestyle typically involves leisure choices that too few people are willing and/or able to make. Leisure education is needed to support health and physical education in turning facts into appropriate leisure decisions to achieve healthy and active lifestyles throughout the lifespan.

However, there are challenges in working within the confines of the school day. Already stressed to provide mandated physical activity and health curricula, as well as math, science, and other courses, it is often difficult for teachers to find time to systematically address leisure education in the school. Those who can, however, seem to reap important benefits. Another issue with in-class leisure education programs is that it becomes difficult to “activate” the lessons through real-life experiences. It is one thing for students to identify personal interests, but another thing for them to be actually exposed to the activity and have a chance to practice it to see if it is something they really would like to do. Yet another issue with in-class leisure education programs that are left to teachers to implement is that classroom teachers are not trained on the importance of leisure education, leisure education curricula, or how to implement leisure education programs.

In combination with in-school programs, or programs that stand alone, the afterschool environment is also conducive for leisure education programs. These types of leisure education programs can be formal in nature and include the programs previously discussed (and others), or they can be informal in nature. For example, the C.S. Mott Foundation (Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force, 2007) issued a report from the “Time, Learning and Afterschool Task

Force” that provides numerous examples, data, and testimonies of the importance of the various types of learning that take place outside the classroom. Moreover, many innovative schools are incorporating multiple avenues to learning that are typically called recreational activities. For example, in Peekskill, New York, education includes an extended day, with opportunities to learn leadership through activities such as being an art museum docent or by volunteering. Students also learn by performing in the community and participating in the community “poets’ café.” Since the inception of the extended day program, the school district reported that every year there has been an increase in English/language arts proficiency scores, as well as fewer reported behavioral problems. Another example is the Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment. This academy, and other smaller schools in New York City, takes education out of the classroom into places like botanical gardens, museums, and other cultural treasures. Some programs, such as *TimeWise* (Caldwell, 2004), can be given as an in-school curriculum and then “activated” in the afterschool context. This provides students a hands-on opportunity to learn skills and develop interests.

There are other, non-school contexts that are also ideally suited for leisure education. These include youth who are home-schooled, which is an ideal environment for providing leisure education due to the combination of structure and flexibility built into home schooling. Parks and recreation departments and other agencies that offer recreation programming – such as YW/YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, non-profit arts organizations, and so on – are excellent vehicles to provide both formal and informal leisure education.

This type of informal learning, whether it is associated with formal schooling or taking place outside of the school context, is effective because most students are more engaged in these contexts than with typical academic classroom instruction. Having choices and being exposed to different opportunities is not only developmentally appropriate, but it also stimulates passions and allows students to become intensely involved in a project (Chung & Hillsman, 2005; Dahl, 2004).

The key to these programs, as with others, however, is that the programming has to be intentionally developed with clear “leisure education” goals in mind for these to be successful. These types of programs cannot just be ad hoc to get the types of results needed through best practice models.

The interdisciplinary approach to curriculum subjects and the focus on learner-directed problem solving, with the additional influence of computer technology, is opening up the doors for schools to include parks, museums, cultural centers, and similar leisure-based settings. These leisure-based resources are linked to the educational setting in both low and high-tech ways to expose students to other cultures, historical events, and natural environments. The classroom learner can even use virtual tours and interactive media to visit sites and interact with professionals prior to the traditional field experience. Technology takes the classroom possibilities beyond the community by opening the leisure possibilities up to learning.

Leisure education programs can be formally structured, such as some of those described above, or informal in nature. Perhaps more training is needed to successfully incorporate informal leisure education into the curriculum, as it requires a solid understanding of why, how, when, and for whom leisure is important. In either case, leisure educators can be: (a) teachers who have been trained to incorporate leisure education into existing courses and curricula or (b) leisure specialists hired by the school district to deliver programs during or after school. A few non-traditional contexts for leisure education are presented below.

Experiential and Outdoor Leisure Education

Outdoor leisure education includes the domains of outdoor education, environmental education, youth camping, outdoor pursuits, heritage interpretation, outdoor arts, eco-tourism, adventure education, outdoor experiential education, and all those educational efforts undertaken to improve the relationship between humans and the natural world. The purpose is to foster understanding of and appreciation for outdoor leisure choices and pursuits, and to promote a sustainable environment in concert with mental, physical, social, spiritual, and economic well being. It is also an essential part of human growth and a key component of sustainable and healthy communities. Thus, through outdoor leisure education, school systems and other educational institutions can create a force for social development, environmental protection, economic development, and alleviation of social problems (World Leisure Organization, 2001b).

The modern concept of nature deficit disorder, as described in Richard Louv's (2005) book, *Last Child in the Woods*, provides very good research and resources for understanding outdoor leisure education. The data are based on a survey of more than 60,000 Americans, covering 114 different outdoor activities; it represents a collaborative effort by The Outdoor Foundation, Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association, and other outdoor recreation groups. Among its findings is that adult participation is up slightly - very slightly. But the survey also found a decline of more than 11% of participation in outdoor activities among young people ages 6 to 17, with the sharpest decline among youngsters ages 6 to 12. Children have become more disconnected from nature in the recent decade, but that is an additional 11% decline in a single year.

Experiential education and outdoor leisure education methods in the U.S. are based on the premise that there should be linking of the real world with the classroom, and exploration by the learner of her or his world. In 1999-2001 the *Rails-to-Trails: A Living Laboratory Project* in Michigan worked with K-12 teachers to develop educational web sites, based on mathematics and science projects, which explored the appreciation of the natural environment. The program took place within the corridor of the White Pine Trail, part of a 50-plus mile rails-to-trails corridor, running through the local communities and in some places within walking distance of the schools. Final sites had students studying impacts of recreation on the trail, doing wildlife

inventories, and creating information flyers on estimated times it would take to do different recreational activities over a mile for rollerblading, running, and walking (Hastings-Bishop, 2001).

The interaction between the learner and the environment provides the foundation for experiential and outdoor education methods. These interactions have been linked to improved academic success, enhanced personal and social attributes, and a lasting commitment to service and conservation. In a review of resident outdoor education programs in California, the American Institutes of Research reported improvements in conflict resolution, self-esteem, peer-to-peer relationships, problem solving, motivation for learning, and teacher-reported behavior in 6th grade students exposed to a one-week outdoor education program. Additionally, these students demonstrated a 27% improvement in science scores following the experience. The strength of such programs, combined with the physical activity and obesity trends of our youth led to the call to action by First Lady Michelle Obama for the Let's Move Outside Initiative in June of 2010 (American Recreation Coalition, 2010). This initiative provides incentives and resources for teachers, parents, and students to engage in outdoor physical activity and learning experiences. Following the announcement, Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI) introduced the Moving Outdoors in Nature Act that targeted increasing physical activity, service, and conservation (National Wildlife Foundation, 2010). Unfortunately, this bill never became a law; however the Senate established the Outdoor Recreation Caucus (Udall, 2010) in support of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative. To keep the national attention on the benefits of outdoor experiences, effective outdoor education and leisure programs must be identified and replicated, as well as findings disseminated.

One such program occurs at the IslandWood Environmental Education Camp (IslandWood, 2011) in Bainbridge Island, Washington. The site offers a four-day residence based program for 4th through 6th grade students and day programming for kindergarten through 3rd grade students in the Puget Sound area. The program integrates science, art, and technology while immersing students in the outdoors. Targeting primarily inner-city youth, the program exposes youth to nature hikes, resource management strategies, and an inquiry-based study of science. Teacher training programs and graduate education programs are conducted through a partnership with the University of Washington.

Programs from outdoor education and non-profit organizations are also bringing outdoor education experiences to youth across the country. The Building Bridges and Inner City Outings (Sierra Club, 2010) programs, through the Sierra Club, target opportunities to engage students in the outdoors. With pilot projects in California, Washington, and New Mexico, the Building Bridges to the Outdoors program has a long-term commitment to providing opportunities for youth to have outdoor experiences. Non-profit organizations like the Outdoor Alliance for Kids (OAK) (2010) are creating partnerships to expand the opportunities for youth to connect with the outdoors. Founded in July of 2010, OAK believes that every child should have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to engage in outdoor experiences. Physical educators and

outdoor professionals can also turn to educational organizations like AAHPERD, NRPA and WLO for curricular development and resources for linking learning to outdoor experiences.

As part of AAHPERD, AAPAR (formerly AALR) provides leadership in outdoor and adventure education with initiatives for fishing, boating, bicycling, and adventure education for school children. AAPAR, in partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), is developing a national bicycle safety curriculum to promote bicycle education programs in schools. AAPAR has also created the Paddle-Smart-Paddle-Safe boating curriculum, with the American Canoe Association (2008), and worked with the Wilderness Education Association (WEA) to offer wilderness education training programs designed for public school teachers. All of these programs are designed to help teachers transfer newly found skills into classroom and field experiences for their own students. Similar educational programs are being offered by the National Fishing in School Program (n.d.) (Cast a Fly...Catch a Student) and the National Archery in the Schools Program (2011) to promote outdoor opportunities for learning and leisure-related physical activity.

The recent advocacy of environmental education by federal and state education agencies has created an important opportunity for outdoor leisure education to teach about the outdoor environment and to teach about the environment in outdoor settings. The traditional delivery of environmental education through science education would be more effective if combined with parallel delivery through outdoor leisure education, and would make environmental education more relevant to lifestyles and leisure. Barak (2009) advocated for developing partnerships between schools and camps to enhance such outdoor leisure education opportunities.

Organized Camps

Organized camps have a long and rich history of providing leisure education to school-aged youth and more recently to younger children, families, and adults. The American Camp Association (ACA), founded in 1910, focuses on enriching the lives of children and adults through quality camp experiences (American Camp Association, 2010). ACA estimates that 10 million children and youth attend camp annually. Organized camps come in various forms – for-profit/private, non-profit/agency, and public (often affiliated with parks and recreation departments or park systems/services, and at times public colleges/universities and museums); religious and non-religious; gender-specific and co-ed; resident and day; sessions of one week to summer-long and school vacation; and school-camp partnerships. Camps may serve specific populations (e.g., individuals with disabilities or medical conditions, youth from at-risk communities) and may focus on general or specific skill areas (e.g., sports, arts). The American Camp Association, via their accreditation program, sets the stage for best practices for organized camps.

In the 2000s, the ACA undertook a series of research studies to explore the impact of organized accredited camps on school-aged youth, and identify means to improve the

outcomes. The first study, entitled *Directions* (2005), examined camper outcomes for campers aged 8-14 at a variety of organized ACA accredited camps via multi-data collection means. The results of the study indicated that campers developed increased confidence, self-esteem, social skills (particularly related to making new friends), independence, and leadership qualities. Additionally, campers were found to have become more adventurous and more willing to try new things, along with spiritual growth, especially if they attended a camp emphasizing spiritual development.

The second study entitled *Inspirations* (2006b) investigated the contribution of organized accredited camps to the healthy development of adolescents, ages 10-18. This study was done in conjunction with Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (YDSI) and explored four critical developmental domains, as identified by YDSI: supportive relationships, safety, youth involvement, and skill building. Results found that supportive relationships (i.e., “the quality of relationships between youth [campers] and adult staff” [p. 1]) was the highest camper outcome. It was significantly higher than in any other youth setting outside of the family, including schools. Campers experienced a higher level of skill-building experiences compared to other youth settings. Additionally, campers also experienced positive outcomes in the other two areas, but to a lesser extent. Outcomes varied to a degree by camper and camp characteristics. Factors most positively affecting supportive relationships were: resident camp, longer camp sessions, and campers being white. Factors most positively influencing the perceptions of safety were: camp being a religious, independent for-profit, or agency camp rather than being an independent nonprofit camp; youth at camp being all male; campers having attended camp for multiple years; and campers being white. Factors most positively affecting skill building were resident camp (rather than day camp); being female, with males at all-boys camps coming in second; and camp being a religious, independent for-profit, or agency camp rather than being an independent nonprofit camp. Additionally, the youngest campers (ages 10-11) had a higher outcome in the skill building area. In terms of youth involvement, the following factors appeared to positively influence this outcome: older campers (ages 16-18) and attending camp for four or more weeks.

As a result of the above two studies, ACA and YDSI worked with 23 of the 80 day and residential ACA camps from the second study to learn how to improve outcomes for campers. The four areas targeted for change were (a) youth involvement, (b) skill building, (c) supportive relationships, and (d) safety. The majority of the camps in the study focused on youth involvement and skill building. The results of the study demonstrated that, with intentional assessment and planning, better camper experiences could be obtained especially if changes took place in all three areas of organizational practice (i.e., camp structure, camp policies, and camp activities) (*American Camp Association, 2006a*).

Special Education

What does the term leisure education mean and look like from a special education standpoint? With the passage of P.L. 94-142: Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the landmark legislation ensuring a free and appropriate education for all children, recreation was identified as an allowable related service, like physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy for students receiving special education. In the subsequent regulations for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, leisure education was identified as one component of recreation, as a related service. As such, leisure education within the realm of special education has been conceived as a specific program (discipline) within the domain of recreation rather than as material and techniques to be infused within the general education or special education program (curriculum). P.L. 94-142 was re-authorized as P.L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA). Through subsequent amendments and regulations, the latest one being the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 (P.L. 108-446), leisure education has remained a part of recreation as a related service for students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. Like all related services, recreation and therapeutic recreation is only available to students when it may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, as described in the individualized education program (IEP) of the student (Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004).

Until the most recent re-authorization of this act effective July 1, 2005, leisure education was specifically defined as:

. . . instruction to improve the leisure participation and leisure lifestyle of students with disabilities through the development of positive attitudes toward leisure, the development of skills necessary for recreation participation, knowledge of recreational resources, and recognition of the benefits of recreation involvement. (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990)

As of IDEIA (signed on December 3, 2004 by President George W. Bush) recreation as a related service is defined as recreation including therapeutic recreation, without identification of its components or operational definitions for either recreation or therapeutic recreation.

Models of Leisure Education in Special Education

Beginning in the 1970s, therapeutic recreation attempted to put a face to the term “leisure education.” Within the realm of therapeutic recreation, leisure education is viewed as facilitating the development of a leisure lifestyle (c. f., Dattilo, 2000a & b; Howe-Murphy & Charboneau, 1987; Peterson & Stumbo, 2000, Stumbo & Peterson, 2009) and the leisure education “process can and does have an impact on [people with disabilities] overall lifestyle”

(Bullock, Mahon & Killingsworth, 2010, p. 412). As such, “person-centered leisure education is an individualized and contextualized educational process through which a person develops an understanding of self and leisure and identifies and learns. . . skills necessary to. . . an optimally satisfying life” (Bullock et al., p. 412). Thus, leisure education tends to address leisure and self-awareness, decision-making, self-determination, community skills, social/communication skills, leisure activity skills, personal, community and leisure resources, self-regulation, and leisure planning and participation via a wide array of educational techniques.

In most instances, leisure education is conceptualized as much more than the development of specific leisure activity skills or even a single non-activity related leisure skill (e.g., decision-making). A number of models for leisure education within the framework of special education have been put forth since the late 1970s. The vast majority of these models, a few of which are identified below, conceptualize leisure education as a unique program to be implemented with the involvement of a therapeutic recreation specialist while incorporating leisure philosophy and theory as the foundation.

Bullock and colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill created three models. The first was the *Wake Leisure Education Project* developed for high school students, ages 17-22, with mental retardation (Bedini, Bullock & Driscoll, 1993; Bedini & Bullock, 1988). It was designed to be implemented as a 10 unit/week program on an individual or small group basis. The second was the *School-Community Leisure Link (S.C.L.L.) Program* designed for students in special education, from elementary through high school, to facilitate leisure participation in the community (Bullock, Morris, Mahon, & Jones, 1992). It used curriculum-based measures (also known as performance measures or behavioral objectives) to evaluate the student’s progress toward specific goals. Third, was the *Leisure Education in Compensatory Education Model* developed for use by the North Carolina Compensatory Education Program of Study to increase independence during leisure among young adults with disabilities (Bullock & McCann, 1993). It was designed to be implemented via a post-high school educational experience through local community colleges.

Coyle at Temple University built on the S.C.L.L. model, adding social learning theory and behavioral approaches, to form Project S.T.A.R.T. (Ashton-Shaeffer, Bullock, Shelton & Stone, 1995). In addition, Dattilo and colleagues from the University of Georgia developed Project T.R.A.I.L. (Dattilo, 2000b). This model utilized leisure education with leisure coaching, family and friend support, and follow-up to help students in special education to become active participants in inclusive community-based leisure. Models have also been developed by parks and recreation departments such as *Therapeutic Recreation Activities in the Classroom (T.R.A.C.)*, which was designed by Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Department for their therapeutic recreation specialists to implement in special education classes in Arlington County, VA (Ashton-Shaeffer et al.).

Research related to leisure education in the schools where students receive special education services has reported psychosocial and leisure-specific outcomes such as: increases in perceived control, self-esteem, choice-making, self-determination, perceived freedom in leisure, affect, leisure awareness, activity initiation, leisure-related planning and resource knowledge, personal competence, quality of life, and recreation participation (c.f. Bedini, Bullock, & Driscoll, 1993; Cory, Dattilo & Williams, 2006; Dattilo, 2000b). Additionally, there is increasing evidence that leisure education helps prepare students for the transition from school to community and adulthood (Bedini et al., 1993; Mahon, 1994; Mahon & Bullock, 1992).

The profession of therapeutic recreation has recognized the significance of leisure education with the identification of committees and publications at the national level. The American Therapeutic Recreation Association's (ATRA) School Systems Treatment network frequently identifies therapy outcomes of school-based leisure education through its newsletter and conference presentations, while a 2002 ATRA publication reported on IDEA in the schools (Lawson, Coyle, & Ashton-Shaeffer, 2001).

BROADER APPLICATIONS OF LEISURE EDUCATION

Recent research has substantiated the broader application of leisure education curricula and experiences as interventions to promote positive behavior, while reducing risky behavior among youth (Caldwell, Bradley, & Coffman, 2009; Yang & Chun, 2007). As previously mentioned, Caldwell and colleagues developed *TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time* (Caldwell, 2004) as a substance abuse prevention program for middle school students. The theoretical context of the curriculum emanates from the positive youth development movement in the 1990s, developmental systems theory, and prevention science (Caldwell et al., 2009). Research outcomes suggest that youth who are intrinsically motivated and active producers of their own leisure experiences are less likely to engage in socially maladaptive and unhealthy behaviors like substance abuse, earlier sexual onset, cigarette smoking, physical inactivity, and vandalism (Caldwell, 2004; Caldwell, et al., 2009).

Yang and Chun (2007) also suggest leisure education is an effective intervention strategy with common problems of bullies. Collaboration with family, teachers, and community professionals addresses such issues as lack of social skills, appropriate leisure lifestyle, sensation-seeking personality, low self-esteem, and needs for cognitive restructuring.

Children, Obesity, and Physical Activity

The first step in encouraging obese youth to exercise may be to increase their confidence in their abilities to be physically active, which in turn may lead to an increase in regular physical activity, an improvement in body composition and, hopefully, exposure to a form of exercise that can be carried over into adulthood. In spite of the amount of focus, time, energy, and resources used over the past 20+ years to address the growing problem of childhood obesity and

the different health conditions that stem from obesity, it has continued to be a major health problem in the U.S. and other countries (Lindstrom, Isacson, & Meelo, 2003). According to WebMD's e-medicine "Obesity is the most prevalent nutritional disorder among children and adolescents in the United States" (Schwartz & Freemark, 2010, p. 1). The article continues: "Using BMI criteria, the most recent national surveys demonstrate that 21-24% of American children and adolescents are overweight and that another 16-18% are obese" (Schwartz & Freemark, p. 3). This is a 50-60% increase in those considered overweight in a single generation, and a doubling of obesity. For many ethnic minorities it is 10-40% higher than whites (Swartz & Freemark).

Numerous studies have focused upon the causes of the increased prevalence of overweight and obese children and adults. It would be tempting to blame the "Information Age" and its related technology for these health problems, and they are a contributing factor. Although, as with so many issues of the "human condition," the overweight and obesity problem is multi-faceted with many contributing factors (West Virginia Division of Health Promotion, 2002). These factors include family history, environment, food consumption, and physical inactivity for children. For adults the additional factors of sedentary jobs and leisure inactivity are also contributors to an increasing obesity problem nationwide.

Considering each of these factors as they relate to obesity in children, all of them can be addressed through a comprehensive leisure education effort. We must keep in mind that leisure education is not just the schools' responsibility, especially when dealing with the issue of obesity. The problem must be addressed through a collaborative endeavor between the schools, parents/guardians, and community (parks and recreation, and other leisure service and children's service organizations) (Arnold & Auxter, 2004).

Several articles have been written addressing obesity prevention, but the problem of increasing obesity in school children seems to still be a major health issue (Brandes, 2007; Galson, 2008; Godin, Amireault, Bélanger-Gravel, Vohl, & Pérusse, 2009; Fals, 2009; Mayo Clinic, 2010; McManus, 2009; Vandelanotte, Sugiyama, Gardiner, Owen, 2009; Weight Realities Division, 2003). The 2006 Shape of the Nation - jointly conducted by the American Heart Association (AHA) and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting high quality physical education - concluded that most states are failing to provide students with adequate physical education requirements. Unfortunately, the percentage of students who attend a daily physical education class has dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 2003. Meanwhile, some 41 million American children participate in organized, extracurricular youth sports like soccer, baseball, and football, which can balance the reported drop in physical activity at school. But, proponents of increased physical activity contend that not every child is able to take part in the sometimes-expensive organized play, making physical education in schools essential (Trickey, 2006). High-quality physical education programming, meeting each day and combined with brain-igniting recess

opportunities, should assist all students to prioritize fitness and healthy activity into their everyday leisure lives.

In the area of programming, models, and guidelines for prevention of obesity in children, many have been developed and implemented for schools, parents, and at all levels of government (e.g., Arnold & Auxter, 2004; Calgary Health Region, 2004; Casper, 2006; Cool, 2010; Surgeon General of the U.S., n.d.; Weight Realities Division, 2003). With so much focus on this problem one would think that the issue of childhood obesity was being solved instead of becoming worse.

There are three nationally distributed programs of particular note. The first two come from a partnership between the Sājai Foundation (2011a & b) and the National Recreation and Park Association: Wise Kids Outdoors (WKO) and Wise Kids (WK). Both programs follow a “learn, do, and play” format. WK is focused on teaching children energy balance and basic wellness. WKO teaches kids about eating right and being physically active, particularly in the out-of-doors. A number of pilot studies have been conducted on WK and WKO in a variety of settings and the results are very promising.

The second program is the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program. CATCH is based in elementary schools and helps children improve their knowledge and practice of healthful eating and physical activity habits. It is successful because it truly coordinates schools, families, and communities (Heath & Coleman, 2002). More information about CATCH can be found at <http://www.catchinfo.org/> and <http://www.catchtexas.org>.

Diversity and Cultural Competence

Denboba (1993) defined cultural competence as a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program, or among individuals that enables them to work effectively cross-culturally. Cultural competence also refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles, and behaviors of individuals. Cultural competence recognizes, affirms, fosters, and values the strengths of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the worth and dignity of each. Striving to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long-term commitment. One excellent avenue to begin such a long-term commitment is through the provision of leisure education in public schools.

Because our society has and will continue to become more culturally diverse, leisure education in public schools provides an excellent opportunity to enhance the cultural competence of students. Leisure education in public schools has the potential to address the complexity of issues and knowledge in the real world and encourage people to work together (Kahalakau, Fox, & Dieser, 2002).

As discussed earlier, historically leisure education curriculum models address categories such as self-awareness, leisure awareness, decision-making, social interaction, and leisure activity skills. These categories of leisure education provide opportunities for students to become more culturally competent by helping students integrate and transform awareness of assumptions, values, biases, and knowledge about themselves and others to respond respectfully and effectively across diverse cultures. Through leisure education in public schools, students will have the ability to value diversity and similarities among all people and understand and effectively respond to cultural differences. Students in public schools can learn the values, expectations, attitudes, and beliefs of those of different gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion, ability level, sexual orientation, language, customs, rituals, food, music, literature, art, religion, and leisure. However, the question becomes: How can cultural competence be incorporated into leisure education curricula?

Leisure education instructors may employ a variety of classroom teaching strategies to enhance their students' cultural competence. For example, students (depending on age and grade level) can explore their own cultural background, advantages and disadvantages of belonging to certain diverse groups, and their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. Students might also construct family histories, share cultural symbols, food, and leisure pursuits with other students. Teachers might also wish to assign students to complete oral presentations on cultural leisure assessments of a family and/or its neighborhood. Leisure education instructors could also use culturally diverse guest presenters to discuss their different leisure pursuits. According to Ruskin (1987), social development can occur through participation in team games, school clubs, and community service.

Instructors could conduct guided fieldtrips to churches, synagogues, mosques, museums, festivals and events representative of culturally diverse groups. They might also use role playing to help students better understand leisure from the unique perspectives of those who come from culturally diverse backgrounds. In addition, leisure education instructors could host events that celebrate cultural and religious holidays, display multicultural artwork, listen to and appreciate music from other cultures, as well as observe and appreciate dance from diverse cultures. Leisure is embedded in one's culture – it is learned through socialization and experience. Therefore, in order to provide leisure education to the increasing number of diverse groups in the US, an understanding of the cultures of the different groups is necessary.

Moreover, there is increasing interest in not only youth from immigrant families, but also mixed-race families, and youth who are considered "third culture kids" or TCKs. TCKs are born in one country (often to parents who come from two different ethnic or racial groups), and then are raised in another country. TCKs are said to have more in common with each other than to anyone else from their racial or ethnic group, or youth from the culture in which they live. These cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds provide distinct challenges for leisure education program development or adaptation of existing programs.

One example comes from the phenomenon that some ethnic and racial groups are socialized to view leisure in a distinct and culturally inclusive or racialized manner. Brookfield states, “To take a racialized view of something is to view it through the distinctive lens of a racial group’s experience of the world, and to view that experience of racial membership as a positive constitutive element of a person’s identity” (2003, p. 5). For example, in the European-American culture, swimming is a popular leisure activity and the vast majority of European-American children learn to swim before the age of 10. In contrast, in the African-American community, swimming and water activities are feared and the majority of children do not learn to swim (Ito, 2008; Mael, 1995, 1999). Most African-American children learn water is dangerous and are rarely encouraged or even allowed to learn to swim (Ito; Saluja, et al., 2006; Mogharabi, 2005a & b). This is the racialized view of swimming to many African Americans. Given this specific but significant example of diverse cultural practices and cultural views of leisure, it becomes evident that leisure education must address and incorporate the various cultural practices of groups and their racialized views to be meaningful. How each culture views leisure and how the culture views different leisure activities will impact the implementation of successful leisure education programs, as well as recreation programs in general (Ito, 2006).

The racialized view may also be extended to other racial or ethnic groups, whether or not they have been born and raised in their country of residence, or whether they are immigrants to the country in which they live. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully grapple with this issue, but it is one that must be considered when providing leisure education services to any group. This perspective becomes complicated even further when taking into account TCKs, a growing worldwide phenomenon.

The goal here is to have students immerse themselves in culturally different leisure interests and activities in order to broaden their leisure horizons. Leisure education to enhance the cultural competence of students in public schools should be designed for students to become well-rounded with multicultural attitudes, interests, motivations, habits, knowledge, appreciation, and skills that will be useful throughout their lives.

CONCLUSION

Leisure education should be viewed as an instructional process that stretches across everyone’s life. It can also help all children maximize their full potential; therefore, the profession should foster and support leisure education programs in whatever ways are possible. According to the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports,

. . . The school is an ideal setting to increase physical activity through physical education, free-play activity during recess and in before- and after- school activity programs . . . [and] [r]ecent studies have shown that physical activity has a positive effect on academic performance. (Howe & Freedson, 2008, par. 2 & 3)

Since leisure education is important across the entire lifespan, leisure educators must consider a variety of developmental transitions and cultural contexts when planning appropriate interventions. While the conditions for offering leisure education in school settings are becoming more compelling, until now educators and leisure service personnel have not established a truly effective position on this important topic. Leisure educators also must recognize varying perceptions, often held by policy and decision-makers, which negatively influence support for leisure education programs. Consequently, this project was undertaken to begin to establish an ongoing frame of reference and recommendations for a number of AAPAR constituents including: policy makers; community college and university faculty, administrators and students; K-12 teachers; parks and recreation practitioners; parents; and the general public.

This paper advocates and delivers a clear message from professionals in the allied fields of leisure education, and parks and recreation. Leisure education as shared in a child care, school, and/or park setting can be invaluable in helping children and youth to develop a full repertoire of leisure activities that will be useful throughout their lifetime. However, without a foundation of understanding, the implementation of leisure education programs will not likely achieve its full potential.

Because the benefits of leisure, recreation, and play are critically important, researchers and practitioners should continue to explore and respond to the constraints and barriers that restrict leisure. The recreation and leisure profession as a whole must find a way to open the door for leisure education so that more students may benefit. This is particularly important in light of current trends: (a) the delivery of special education services in inclusive settings; (b) the otherwise small numbers of students who are able to access leisure education; (c) the changing nature of education within the U.S. today; (d) negative issues confronting youth; (e) the potential negative outcomes of leisure as well as its positive outcomes; (f) the importance of safe areas; and (g) the overall impact of leisure education on an individual's well-being and quality of life.

Planning effective leisure education programs requires attention to such matters as the placement of programs in the overall curriculum, the format of such programs, uses of technology, and the preparation and qualifications of those who will provide services. In addition, AAPAR should continue to recognize the relationship of leisure education to therapeutic recreation, and should support the efforts of professionals in this field.

In her keynote speech at the World Leisure High Level Forum held in Hangzhou, China in 2006, Madame Wu Yi, Vice Premier of the State Council of China, expressed her belief “that developed or under-developed countries, government or non-government organizations, enterprises, academic associations, all should be creative thinkers in exploring workable measures to bring leisure to the majority of our people and advocate for civilized and healthy lifestyles.” Madame Wu went on to explain that in China

. . . we still value hard work and the Chinese tradition of frugality, but at the same time, we encourage our people to spend their earnings from hard work on civilized and healthy leisure for holistic life fulfillment. In recent years, leisure-related industries in China have assumed strong momentum for growth. They are playing an increasingly important role in improving leisure services and quality of life.

Whether locally, nationally, or internationally, leisure is heavily influenced by politics. To effectively promote and implement leisure education in the schools and beyond, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD); National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA); World Leisure Organization (WLO) and other professional organizations must assume the role of advocacy for leisure education.

Generally, leisure education for all children seems largely missing from the “radar screen” of public school reform agendas in most places in the U.S. Nevertheless, as Witt (2001) suggests, being creative, vocal and politically active will help others to know that “education for a life of leisure” is important.

In conclusion, we are continuing to encourage: (a) plans by educators and leisure professionals to maximize leisure education in child care centers and schools; (b) public displays and media publications identifying model leisure education programs; and (c) preparation and dissemination of information to the schools regarding strategies, techniques, materials, and resources for leisure education. The dialogue, curricular action, theory building, and resulting policy development must continue!

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education should provide the foundation for appreciating leisure and learning leisure skills that will facilitate healthy leisure engagement throughout the lifespan.
2. Inclusive leisure education programs are needed that embrace all human beings, especially individuals and groups who have been oppressed and encounter leisure constraints relative to their gender, race, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, income, living situation, religion, and other salient characteristics.
3. Schools should build school leisure programs with the involvement of parents and community institutions, facilitated through the appointment of a leisure education coordinator or a consultant with responsibility over all leisure education activities and curricula in each school.

4. Leisure education concepts should be used to make health and physical education curricula more effective, to strengthen health and physical education programming in the schools, and to support health and physical activity throughout the lifespan.
5. Quality leisure education programming should be fostered and fiscally supported to assist every child to maximize their potential.
6. There is a need to conduct systematic research investigations that examine effects of leisure education programs on participants' psychological and physical health and their overall quality of life.
7. Leisure education interventions are needed that are based on sound theories and are tested relative to their effects.
8. The education system should be changed, fundamentally restructured, so as not to focus only on a higher standard in core school subjects. Health and physical education should be recognized as core subjects with learning outcomes, statewide achievement data analyses, and alignment with national education standards. Leisure education as a core subject should follow.
9. Schools should partner with local neighborhood parks and recreation departments, with organized camps, colleges/universities, libraries, and museums and programs should be expanded as a creative and economical means of providing leisure education that extends beyond the school day.
10. More training is needed to successfully incorporate informal leisure education in the school curriculum as it requires a solid understanding of why, how, when, and for whom leisure is important.
11. Outdoor educators and researchers should identify and replicate effective outdoor leisure education programs and disseminate their findings.
12. Physical educators should encourage high-quality daily physical education programming, combined with brain-igniting recess opportunities. They should help all students to prioritize fitness and healthy activity into their everyday lives, as well as gain skills and attitudes for lifelong physical activity as part of their leisure lifestyle.
13. Leisure education programs should be designed to enhance the cultural competence of students in public schools, so that students become well-rounded with multicultural attitudes, interests, motivations, habits, knowledge, appreciation, and skills that will be useful throughout their lives.

14. Since leisure education is important across the entire lifespan, leisure educators must consider a variety of developmental transitions and cultural contexts when planning appropriate interventions.
15. Schools should add planned integration of leisure concepts and contents to as many school subjects as possible and should enhance learning by means of recreation activities.
16. To effectively promote and implement leisure education in the schools and beyond, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD); National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA); World Leisure Organization (WLO) and other professional organizations must assume the role of advocacy for leisure education.
17. The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD); National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA); World Leisure Organization (WLO) and other professional organizations must assume a stronger advocacy role for leisure education by effectively promoting college curricula that prepare K-12 teachers with leisure concepts.

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