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Physical Activity and Transition

Supporting students from yr6 - yr7
using sport and physical activity

Background

With traditional transition processes & activities unlikely to take place, there will be a need to support young people (YP) when they move to their new school. We know that transition can be stressful and with this year's disrupted Y6 experience, this may well be increased despite work that both primary & high schools are doing.

Transition is universally challenging with concerns about changes in friendship groups, new environments & adapting to a new workload & associated organisation, with deprived communities & those facing inequality more likely to continue to be at a disadvantage through the transition phase.

With the disrupted second half of the academic year, there are additional challenges such as increased levels of anxiety, pupils unused to working collaboratively & a deterioration of ability to cope with setbacks (resilience).

We know that physical activity levels during the transition phase drop, with girls particularly at risk. There are also less competitive sports opportunities for YP when they move from primary to secondary school & in general YP are more positive about sports competitions in primary school compared to secondary school.

Why physical activity and sport?

Sport and activity can develop YP's physical, social, & cognitive skills, which arguably are key skills to support a positive transition from primary to secondary school

We know that by definition PE, physical activity & sport enable YP to develop & apply motor skills in a range of environments. But we also know that we can use these to develop the whole child. In particular, activity can be planned to learn, practice & refine skills & qualities such as personal skills of resilience & communication, & social skills such as teamwork & friendships as well as cognitive & creative skills.

So the aim here is to use the physical medium to help YP develop these wider skills & qualities in order to support their transition to high school.

In practice

Last year Youth Sport Trust ran a national pilot to look at how adapted competition can help young people adapt to the changed environment, rhythm of the day and expectations.

Two High Schools from Herefordshire took part. Following the national format, the pilots at Earl Mortimer College and Lady Hawkins High School focused on changes in friendship group, familiarisation with a new environment and / or adapting to a new workload and organisation requirements.

With only the autumn term part of the plan completed, their experiences do mirror some of the situation that schools will face this year.

Earl Mortimer College

Using Y10 leaders, non-traditional games were played. Using a Sport Ed model, the YP had time to plan for the activity as well as review performance. This enabled the YP to get to know new people in the tutor group, work as a team (involving negotiation and discussion) and the development of organisational skills. The inclusion of 'qualities' to add to points, appealed to YP who were not engaged through the physical medium - all could contribute.

Lady Hawkins High School

Using PE lessons a non-traditional sport (handball) was delivered with the YP responsible for some of the planning and preparation for matches. Points were added for organisation, teamwork as well as game performance. This enabled the YP to develop new friendships as well as demonstrate their wider abilities. This work was run in conjunction with the Head of Y7 who picked up YP who were struggling to settle, were finding the organisation needed difficult or were not making friends.

Wider findings of the national pilot

Adapted competitions in the early part of the new academic year could help YP with organisational issues through 'extra points' being awarded e.g. bringing the required equipment to lessons, on time for registration or completed homework. The challenge with these approaches will be to support YP whose outside life makes it difficult for them to meet the standards. Conversely, working towards a tutor group goal might motivate and inspire them to achieve.

Orienteering: As well as setting tasks for small groups of YP to find important places within the school, tasks that involve them finding out information of group members can be set & form part of the activity e.g. names of the pop groups that they all like, group member's birthdays, the combined height of the group.

One of the most powerful elements was engaging wider staff. Though working with key people involved in transition e.g. tutors, year group leads, the needs of the young people were put at the centre & ensured a joined up approach to their progression from primary to high school.

Top Tips

- Ensure that activities and competition are accessible to all, with the young person's motivation, competence & confidence are at the centre of the competition.
- Start with the end in mind. Identify what you want the activity or competition to change or develop eg friendships, organisational skills, communication etc
- Engage wider staff such as transition leads, tutors and senior staff
- If possible use young leaders to run activities and act as role models
- Make sure that it is fun - maybe think about using some of the reframe competition ideas
- Know how you will measure success

Next Steps

We have applied to be part of a pilot that looks at how schools can maintain more YP in physical activity as they enter Y7. The data shows a big drop off and we are keen to work with schools to look how to provide opportunities for a wider range of young people to engage with physical activity.

More information

If you would like more information about anything in this document, please contact Peter Knight at peter@strideactive.org.

Other documents that you might find useful:

[Competition to Support Transition Toolkit](#)

[Competition to Support Transition Planning Process Guide](#)



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