

ACTIVATE AURORA: Starting from Scratch

By Ron Weese

The phrase "starting from scratch" has its origins in sport history as the "scratch-line", scratched in the road to identify the start line of a race. I think it is an apt phrase when considering our Activate Aurora project because we need to "start from scratch".

What do I mean by this? Starting from scratch is required because most people have missed the important first step in participating in physical activity. They have missed physical literacy.

There is widespread misunderstanding about physical literacy and therefore people mistake it for physical activity or fitness. The terms are not the same. Physical literacy, as defined by Canadian Sport for Life, is the "motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life."

Physical literacy precedes physical activity because the ability to move competently in fundamental skills such as running, throwing, catching and jumping are prerequisites to engaging in physical activity. If a person isn't a competent "mover", they lack confidence and therefore the motivation to participate. Hence the addition in the definition above that they "take responsibility" for engagement in physical activity. It follows then that if you don't know how to move well, you not only don't want to participate in activity, but you also can't attain levels of fitness you need for everyday living and certainly can't acquire physical activity-related health benefits. It is the reason we have an epidemic of Obesity and Type-2 diabetes.

According to the Canadian Sport for Life Society, a generation of Canadians have missed physical literacy. It used to be taught daily in every school during mandatory physical education classes. Every student learned how to move. Each gained confidence in movement and then continued to participate in physical activity of some kind. Then cuts to the school day, cuts to physical education and the reduction of physical education specialists in each school occurred and the slow spiral downward in physical activity followed. The Journal of Physical Activity and Health just recently (November, 2016) graded Canada with a D- for overall physical activity of kids in school.

It doesn't have to be this way. At Activate Aurora we are working with both our local school boards, local school principals and teachers to help make the changes necessary to bring physical literacy back to the classroom so that meaningful, skill-based play activities are taught in Daily Physical Activity (DPA) classes. We are helping teachers who don't have a physical education background to deliver physical literacy to the kids in school. The teachers are eager and the kids of course just want to learn and become competent movers. And of course they want to have fun.

If you want your school to learn how to become an "Activate Aurora School" contact us at info@activateaurora.com. To learn more about Activate Aurora go to www.activateaurora.com and "Join Us!"