

Rick Hansen School gets moving for Activate Aurora's Play Day

By Jake Courtepatte

Though Ontario winters may be known as stale and inactive, the Aurora Sports Dome was hopping last Monday with kids getting active, and more importantly, involved.

Over 300 students and teachers from Rick Hansen Public School took part in Activate Aurora's PLAY Day, designed to get kids active and improve physical literacy in today's youth.

With parents invited to watch and participate, kids had the opportunity to hop, skip, and jump through stations set up throughout the dome, in a unique chance to learn outside of the classroom.

Rick Hansen Public School is the first Activate Aurora ? designated school to deliver consistent physical literacy programming through its before and after school programs, instructor training, and PLAY Days.

?They're fully engaged,? said Laurie Mueller, program manager for Sport Aurora, the parent organization of Activate Aurora. ?We call them physically-literate activities. Running, jumping, balance, those kinds of things?those are the fundamentals of physical literacy.?

The initiative is a collaborative effort amongst the Town of Aurora, York Region District School Board and Activate Aurora.

Activities are designed to engage students and teachers in skill-based play for children under the age of ten and to help deliver/explore interesting play options that can be used in and out of the classroom.

?It's just play, but they're learning,? said Mueller. ?It's the fundamentals of movement. If they can master a proper throw, for example, or how to get up, it builds confidence. By the time they go and say 'mom, I want to skate,' they've got the fundamentals and the confidence to do so.?

Students' current physical literacy skills were evaluated by teachers and Sport Aurora's trained staff, and will be re-evaluated during a June PLAY Day to have their improvement assessed.

Teachers and staff leaders at Rick Hansen are in the process of training to run the PLAY Day on their own, involving the entire elementary school.

?What Activate Aurora has done is train leaders, which Rick Hansen has provided,? said Mueller. ?These volunteers are trained in physical literacy. What we're hoping is these leaders get a really good understanding of the importance of physical literacy, and allow them to run their own PLAY Days when they want to in the future.?

PLAY Days are one of many activities designed to help children build competence and confidence in movement delivered through the Activate Aurora initiative to make Aurora ?Canada's Most Active Community.?

Activate Aurora is an Ontario Trillium Foundation-funded project of Sport Aurora supported by the Mayor's Task Force on Physical Literacy. Additional funding for PLAY Days is provided through the Healthy Kids Community Challenge partnership.

More information on the program, and how to get your school involved, can be found at www.activateaurora.com.