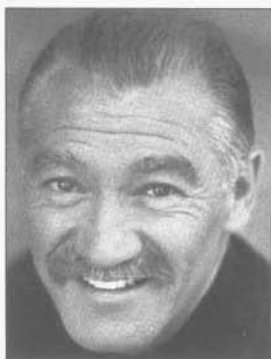


Kids see, kids do

BY DR. COLIN D. STURDY



Recently, there has been a tremendous amount of media attention on the fitness levels and obesity rates of Canadian children and youth. There's both good news and bad news.

The bad news is that only 30 per cent of students six to 17 years of age meet the minimum standards for cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, and strength. The good news is that, as teachers and educators, we can help.

Most of us remember the proverbial phrase "Do as I say, not as I do." The reality for us all, regardless of age, is that actions speak louder than words. There is no greater influence than role modeling. When students see us living out what we preach, it has a lasting impact.

Walk, bike or rollerblade to school. This isn't always practical, but, for days when it's practical, this not only makes for a great workout for you, it's also great modeling.

Bring healthy lunches to school. We need to be eating healthy lunches ourselves and not just talking about the value of healthy eating. Again, modeling for colleagues, as well as students, will create a domino effect. As more and more staff members eat healthy, nutritious lunches, they too, will find themselves preach-

ing the value of nutrition to their students.

Establish a running and/or walking club. There are many students and staff who will get involved in this if someone takes the initiative to get it started.

It is a very simple program that can be established in every school with very little planning.

Start off by creating a buzz. Add it to your next staff meeting agenda, after discussing it with your administration. Outline the benefits to staff and suggest they motivate their students to join. It's best to start with the simplest form; a walking club at noon hour that involves walking around the playground. Take the first 15 or 20 minutes of the lunch break to eat lunch, then finish with the walk. Rotate lunch supervision with other staff.

You can also establish a running club that runs either before school, at lunch or after school.

Lastly, think (and act) about getting outside with students at recess and playing games with them – especially when it's not your supervision day or time.

Dr. Colin D. Sturdy is a professional speaker in Toronto, and teacher for more than 27 years, including 10 as a school principal.
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