

Community

Improved through Service Learning Activities



With an emphasis on the school's role in supporting community wellness and health initiatives, two IUPUI physical education instructors designed unique programs to assist Indianapolis community schools.

Lisa Angermeier, Ph.D., CHES, clinical assistant professor in health education, used to lecture her students about the various facets of coordinating a school health program. Now she shows them.

Utilizing existing structures within the school systems (e.g. nursing, physical education, counseling), students in her community health course recently exchanged the traditional 'reports in binders' for live health fairs at Indianapolis area schools.

Last semester, Angermeier's students completely planned and executed a health fair at Howe Community High School, interacting fully with administrators and faculty. "I wanted to give my students the freedom to be creative and the freedom to learn by doing," she says.

Students divided into groups and developed activities in accordance with their portion of the fair:

- The physical-education team utilized Howe's climbing wall and played activity games with younger students.
- The stress-management crew utilized stress balls and taught exercise/dance for relaxation.
- The health-education group distributed pedometers and approximated body-fat measurements.
- The nutrition students compared fast-food meals from local restaurants.
- The marketing participants organized the event and gave prizes to attendees.

"Each team was responsible for finding ways to communicate a specific health message," says Dr. Angermeier. "They had to go out in the community themselves and find what resources were available."

She adds they also got a taste of working with a big school corporation.

"Understanding things like politics, miscommunications, and so forth are all realistic pieces of the process," she says. "That was a big part of our post-fair discussion, and very much an important aspect of the whole learning experience. It's one thing to hear about it in theory; it's another thing to see it in action."

Health



Mark Urtel, Ed.D., assistant professor of physical education, is civically engaged in a few campus-community partnerships, most recently with Lumen Christi Catholic School. The collaboration started with an inquiry from building administrator Steve Noone, who emailed the IUPUI Department of Physical Education and asked for help. Despite a rigorous academic curriculum, this private school lacked a formal physical education program.

What resulted is an exemplary campus-community collaboration in which pre-service teachers from IUPUI provide kindergarten through eighth-grade (K-8) students with a physical education curriculum that they otherwise would not be receiving. Simultaneously, the K-8 kids provided their collegiate counterparts with real-life experience. "This is the epitome of a 'win-win' situation," says Urtel.

"The key to what we can provide Lumen Christi lies within our area of expertise: physical education for youth. It is imperative we expose these students to lifetime fitness activities while at the same time instilling motor skills competence.

"It appeared before we became partners that the students participated in 'glorified recess.' The end result is that only the most athletic or fit kids participated. In essence, social Darwinism; and that goes counter to what we know as best practice," says Urtel.

Urtel indicates it is gratifying that community agencies seek the school's expertise while at the same time understand the teaching process involved for IUPUI students.

"This understanding makes it a truly mutually beneficial experience. We both have realistic expectations and are very communicative in what we can be doing to ensure we deliver a meaningful and intentional program to the students."

About 13 undergraduate students engaged in this experience over the last academic year. Urtel believes the process anchors classroom learning for the IUPUI students in a unique way and shows the pre-service teachers that the most fundamental element of youth fitness is to keep it simple and enjoyable.

"Kids love technology as simple as pedometers. We had second and third graders who acquired a love of running because they just wanted to put on pedometers and gather steps. No games, no rules, no winning. Just moving," he says. "The simplicity of that is awe-inspiring."

— *Lynnell Nixon-Knight*