

# Leisure Education In the Schools

Taskforce on Leisure Education in the Schools

A Position Statement  
Presented to



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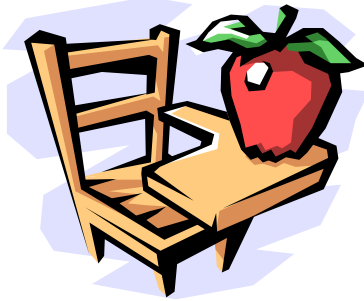
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# Leisure Education In the Schools



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**Perhaps the most deep-seated antithesis which has shown itself in education history is that between education in preparation for useful labor and education for a life of leisure**

**- John Dewey (1939)**

## BACKGROUND

This project was undertaken by the American Association for Leisure and Recreation (AALR) to promote a continuing discussion on leisure education and provide a frame of reference for AALR constituents: (a) policy-making bodies, such as local boards and state legislatures; (b) public school administrators and K-12 teachers; (c) faculty and students in professional preparation programs; (d) park and recreation practitioners who are involved directly in the educational enterprise; (e) parents and others with personal interest in the quality of education; and (f) the tax-paying public.

This effort included reviewing the two previous position statements developed by AALR in 1986 and 1991 as well as the leisure-related literature and theory completed since then. Direct involvement and scholarly input was requested from a 500+ person electronic-mail listserve of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE); the World Leisure and Recreation Association (WLRA)'s Commission on Education (1993, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002), and other researchers and practitioners in the field of parks and recreation. Revisions and comments were collected over a yearlong period and eighteen leisure service professionals participated in the review. The goal of this project was to (re) affirm the importance of leisure education in the schools and to develop direction for the future.

## INTRODUCTION

Over forty years ago, leisure and play experts in the U.S. asserted that "no educational system in the world has such a unique role in education for leisure as the American schools" (AAHPER, 1961, p. 24). In addition, Charles K. Brightbill's book, *Educating for Leisure-Centered Living*, originally published in 1966 and revised and updated by Tony Mobley in 1977, provided a strong philosophical foundation and practical guidelines for educators and leisure service practitioners to meet the needs of an ever-changing society. While the predictions concerning the evolution of a leisure-centered society have not been borne out entirely, leisure and recreation are clearly a very important part of individual, family and community life. Indeed, much of what Brightbill and Mobley (1977) discussed is still applicable and of value today.

Of the various influences on leisure and recreation, public education may have the greatest potential of all. The educational community remains the most critical setting for providing learning experiences that can translate into and ultimately form a young person's leisure experience for a lifetime. But whether done in school or outside of it, the goal of leisure education is to enable individuals to enhance the quality of their lives through leisure (Mundy, 1998).

The inclusion of leisure education in school curricula is influenced by student and parent interest and by social lifestyle changes. Infusing leisure education concepts into the school environment and in school camps provides some youth with their first taste of lifelong leisure experiences. Introduction of lifelong recreational physical activity and cultivation of interest in the arts, fitness, and other forms of leisure experience are still relatively common in public schools, in spite of budget cuts in recent years that have reduced attention to these subjects. In some respects, the approach to these subjects has actually been expanded; health, wellness and fitness are now nurtured through avenues other than competitive sports, including outdoor adventure/challenge education activities. Social and coping skills that are transferable to other areas of daily life are also shaped in such contexts.

The 1990s have seen a resurgence of interest in recreational leisure skills as a valued part of school-based strategies for working with youth. Success of such endeavors has been defined in terms of enhanced "resiliency" in coping with peer pressure, managing conflict, and gaining confidence. These outcomes serve as the principle rationale for current afterschool programs and related learning experiences. Schools are thus establishing partnerships with leisure educators to engage the learner through leisure activities that enhance the educational process during and beyond the traditional school day.

Earlier leisure education programs sought to integrate a personal "leisure ethic" into the school curriculum while teaching the recreational skills necessary to enjoy one's leisure (e.g., Lancaster & Odum, 1976). Recognizing the array of valuable opportunities available during leisure time - and understanding the significant impact that leisure has on society are two of the two critical goals of leisure education; learning to make decisions regarding one's own use of discretionary time that lead to personal satisfaction, health and enrichment is still another. Tying these goals into emerging strategies for prevention of youth-related problems makes leisure

education an important social and community concern as well. Historically, a change has occurred in extracurricular school programming, from a focus on recreational activity for its own sake to using it as a modality and strategy that can help youth to develop self-confidence, social skills and resiliency for coping with today's societal pressures.

## **HISTORY OF LEISURE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS**

### **History of School Play Movement**

As early as the 1890s and much before leisure education was a concept, urban school boards initiated afterschool and vacation play programs. This trend continued until the 20<sup>th</sup> century in cities like Rochester (1907), Milwaukee (1911), and Los Angeles (1914). Pioneering efforts, both social and political, were strongly supported by the National Education Association (NEA), which recommended the use of public buildings for community recreation and social activities. Between 1910 and 1930, thousands of school systems established extensive extracurricular activities and programs, including sports, publications, hobbies, social and academic-related experiences. School facilities included assembly rooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, music and art studios, and outdoor areas for sports and gardening (Kraus, 2000). In 1918, the NEA set forth its Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education that listed seven objectives of education, including the "worthy use of leisure." Thus, historically, this was supported as an important goal for secondary schools in the U.S. and was later adopted by AALR in the 1980s (AALR, 1986).

AALR has been dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for Americans through the promotion of creative and meaningful leisure and recreation experiences. Since 1938, it has seen as its mission the promotion of the above in K-12 settings. The organization has featured a book (1961) and two position statements (in 1986 and 1991) regarding Leisure Education in the Public Schools.

Leisure education in the schools has expanded and contracted with various curriculum changes over time. AALR involvement has supported expansion through the outdoor education movement of the 1960s, Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP) in the 1970s, Project Adventure in

the 1980s, Texas' Lighted Schoolhouse Project in the 1990s, and more recently the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Community Learning Centers and *Kids at Hope* Project, which will be discussed shortly. Through partnerships with the parks and recreation departments and non-profit agencies, leisure education school programs have continued to focus on elementary, middle and high school youth as part of the preventive strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the need for a learner-based method of experiential education. The following are a few examples of where leisure education has taken the profession and where it continues to develop.

### ***Milwaukee's Lighted Schoolhouse Project***

In 1911, a referendum was put forth in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that would allow schools to be used as locations for community members to gather and participate in supervised recreation. This referendum was initiated in reaction to corrupt government and youth gangs with nowhere to go. The idea was proposed among Milwaukee's German, Irish, and Italian cultures that enjoyed physical games, dance, art, and socializing. Dorothy Enderis advocated for this referendum, and schoolhouses were lit throughout Milwaukee. Thus, the concept of "The Lighted Schoolhouse" came into being. The Milwaukee school-based program grew steadily for many decades (Coffey Stanat, 1998). This early concept was the impetus for many Lighted Schoolhouse Projects which were introduced in a number of cities and states over the decades which followed (e.g., Chicago, Los Angeles, Michigan).

### ***Florida State University's Scope and Sequence Model***

The Scope and Sequence Model was developed by leisure service faculty at Florida State University in cooperation with Florida State Department of Education personnel in the 1970s. The curriculum model extended beyond the traditional school-age group to encompass various periods throughout one's life and to incorporate objectives according to individual needs and appropriate learning strategies. It was developed by taking advantage of the advances in instructional design whereas in order to formulate any comprehensive educational program, the goals of the program must first be identified in terms of terminal objectives or behaviors. The National Policy Statement on Leisure Education (SPRE, 1972) served as the foundation upon which the goals were developed. Thus, the curriculum

contained a set of objectives for an infused (integrated) leisure education program, pre-kindergarten through high school, prearranged under six categories: 1) self-awareness, 2) leisure awareness, 3) attitudes, 4) decision making, 5) social interaction skills, and 6) leisure activity skills. It served as a catalyst for facilitating leisure education as a lifelong process (Mundy, 1998, p. 50-53).

### ***NRPA'S Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP)***

One of the most comprehensive curriculum models (K-12) was developed as a part of the Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP) of the National Recreation and Park Association. The curriculum was designed to be infused into the school curriculum, no matter what the grade level or subject matter, with two general purposes: 1) to identify, understand, and evaluate leisure resources available in the community, state and nation; and 2) to develop an appreciation for various ways that people have of using these resources (Mundy, 1998). More specific objectives of the leisure education process were for children to: 1) recognize the use of leisure as an avenue for personal satisfaction and enrichment; 2) know the array of valuable opportunities available in leisure time; 3) understand the significant impact that leisure time has and will have on society; 4) appreciate natural resources and their relationship to discretionary time; and 5) be able to make decisions regarding their own leisure behavior (Lancaster & Odum, 1976, p. 47; AALR, 1986). LEAP's tenets of the 1970s are part of the educational partnerships with recreation and parks agencies' focus in school curriculum and afterschool programs even today.

### ***Texas' Lighted Schoolhouse Project***

The Lighted Schoolhouse Project in Texas was based on the Milwaukee model and was developed in 1989-1991. It was carried out with two community-based agencies providing afterschool supervision -- a YMCA Afterschool Program and an alternative education program shelter for homeless children. The program staff and teachers perceived the benefits of the opportunities during the 3:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. period to the students to be: 1) a "home" setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night; 2) much needed role models; 3) a safe alternative to going home or being on the streets in the neighborhoods where the

children could be hurt physically and mentally; 4) a place where participants could do homework; 5) opportunities to do activities and be involved in organizations which they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do, and; 6) a loving, caring environment for those who have an air of hopelessness in their lives (Stevens, Tullis, Sanchez & Gonzalez, 1991).

Thus, leisure education's relationship with the public schools has progressed from one of facility sharing, to infusion in the curriculum, to the revival of after-school programs linking leisure opportunities with individual growth and facilitation of family, community and societal needs. Today's leisure education efforts continue to be recognized as an intricate part of personal development and the lifelong learning process. Curriculum content uses objectives that incorporate attitudes, decision making, self-awareness and social interaction skills from such models as the LEAP and Scope and Sequence Models. Recent afterschool programs have been designed with recreation and leisure skill-related activities to enhance the learning process while the school setting continues to play a major role in an individual's leisure awareness development.

## **LEISURE THEORY**

### **What Is Leisure Theory?**

A theoretical understanding of leisure and how it relates to human behavior may help to better understand the need for leisure education in the schools. The value of leisure theory lies in how it gives order and insight through explanations of what leisure is, what it can be, and how it is influenced. Theory provides a road map. Much of what people know about leisure has evolved from other disciplines that use concepts applied to leisure. For example, psychological theories of motivation are often used to explain why children and adults play and recreate. Sociological theories such as social action have been used to explain the values and conflicts resulting from leisure involvement.

### **Definitions of Leisure, Recreation and Related Concepts**

The concept of leisure is difficult to limit to a single definition. As an experience interpreted by individuals within varied contexts, the study of leisure has evolved into four basic approaches: time, activity, state of mind,

and cultural context (Henderson, Bialeschki, Hemingway, Hodges, Kivel, & Sessoms, 2001).

Some individuals view leisure as a period of time they call free time. Other people see leisure as a set of activities that generally occur outside of work or school activities. Other people see leisure as an attitude toward existence or a state of mind. In this view, time and type of activity have little to do with the experience achieved (Kelly, 1982).

Leisure as a state of mind is philosophical in nature while leisure as time or activity is easily measured (e.g., number of activities or time spent) and based in scientific theory and practice.

The cultural approach to defining leisure focuses attention most directly on leisure's social contexts. These contexts influence children and youths' expectations about leisure and how they structure their leisure to fulfill their expectations. The cultural meanings of activity, experience, and time all shape leisure expectations. Culture expressed in such forms as gender, race, ethnicity, class, and ability provide characteristic behaviors or actions that children and adults use in deciding how to act in different situations. Leisure does not occur in a separate life and space unrelated to other roles and meanings.

Leisure and recreation are frequently used interchangeably, especially when defined as free-time experiences or something done for pleasure in one's free time. For most people, the difference between leisure and recreation is seldom an issue. Yet leisure and recreation are not necessarily synonymous. Both are seen as experiences that are undertaken because of the end results; however, recreation is also seen as a means to an end. Generally, we understand recreation to be activity that is voluntary, organized, socially redeeming, fun, and occurs during free time.

Most people connect characteristics like spontaneity, purposelessness, and the creation of an imaginary world with play. Play is almost always pleasurable, self-expressive, and can range from fairly aimless, disorganized activity to very complex involvement. Almost everyone links play to children. However, we know that adults also like to be spontaneous and find "childlike play" a refreshing break from the structure and reality of the everyday world.

In sum, the critical components of leisure are choice and intrinsic motivation. Recreation falls under the umbrella of leisure because it includes those organized activities engaged in during free time to pursue

personal and social benefits. Play is the expression of recreation and leisure.

### **The Relationship of Leisure to Development and Prevention**

To the extent that leisure is a context for self-expression, it is inherently linked to development as well. Development implies permanent, systemic change, but it can be at least partially self-directed (Kleiber, 1999). It is an active process and not just something that happens to someone. Leisure can be linked to development through the notion of freedom and responsible choices. Most leisure advocates see principles of human development in the ways leisure is used for promoting positive growth and personal transformation.

Prevention theory has also been related to leisure in its application to youth in particular. Personal harm in young people is prevented through the identification of risk and cultivation of "developmental assets." The potential that leisure has for providing adult support through organized programs, for empowerment through effective participation in activities, and for teaching the constructive use of time give leisure a prominent place in prevention theory. Youth can benefit from reducing or relieving risks and from adding strengths or assets through participation in leisure and recreational activities.

### **Constraints/Barriers to Leisure for Children and Youth**

If leisure, recreation, and play are beneficial, then we want to understand what prevents some children and youth from experiencing leisure. Leisure constraints are any factors that affect leisure participation negatively by preventing participation, reducing the frequency, intensity, or duration of participation, or reducing the quality of experience or satisfaction gained from the activity (Jackson & Scott, 1999). Therefore, constraints do not just affect what a child does, but also how a child might feel. Various models have been developed to conceptualize and understand leisure constraints. Examples of constraints might include a lack of interest in particular activities because of lack of exposure or due to family or cultural upbringing; the influence of relationships with others; daily influences such as lack of time, money, transportation or facilities; and

structural constraints such as stereotyping of activities and a lack of funding for activities for some of the population.

An emerging area of research on constraints deals with the subject of "constraint negotiation." Some people seem effective at finding ways around the constraints they face. Understanding how children and youth make leisure-based choices/decisions and how they seek to overcome obstacles may be useful in enhancing the quality of life for some. A balance between the perceived benefits, opportunities that exist, and the ways that constraints can be negotiated all combine to influence the values associated with leisure and leisure education.

## LEISURE EDUCATION

### What is Leisure Education?

In spite of all the work that has been done in the name of leisure education to this point, the various meanings of leisure suggest different ways to understand leisure education as well. The words themselves suggest several possibilities, which reflect some of the ambiguity: 1) leisure as the *subject* of education (education for and about leisure) -- traditional leisure activities, such as - sports, games, arts, orienteering and variations in leisure per se in terms of - leisure meanings and opportunities; and 2) leisure as the *context* of education (education through leisure), e.g., in informal and non-formal learning settings (community education); and recess, afterschool, summer camps, etc. Most of the attention in the written work on leisure education has been devoted to leisure as the subject of education, but by not considering the second adequately along with the first, perhaps we are limiting the scope and potential of leisure education as a professional endeavor. Outdoor education offers a parallel concept that can be considered in these ways. We can learn about the outdoors or about something else (e.g., courage, in the course of facing the elements) in the context of being outdoors.

### The Meaning of Leisure Education at Different Ages in the Lifespan

What are the *possibilities* for leisure education across the lifespan? This question was addressed at the World Leisure and Recreation Association (WLRA) conference in Bilbao, Spain in 2000 (Kleiber, 2000). By

taking into account developmental tasks and significant life events, associated with a particular age, leisure education may be tailored for purposes of developmental intervention appropriate to a wide variety of developmental transitions. However, it is important to take cultural context and cultural requirements into account when doing so, to avoid being narrowly prescriptive in a normative way. For example, everybody goes through life a little differently, and people also differ as a result of their socio-cultural histories. Nevertheless, age is an important factor to take into consideration. Leisure education for an adolescent living in the inner city would need to likely be defined and developed very differently from that designed for a middle-aged person approaching retirement in a suburban town.

### **The Politics of Leisure Education**

The interests in leisure education of AALR, SPRE, NRPA, WLRA and other organizations, must be recognized as political as well. Leisure advocates understand that the rationale for public school education remains largely limited to preparation for the world of work in most societies, especially to those who pay taxes. Extracurricular activities are primarily justified in being a complement to that purpose, i.e., as restorative for participants to be more effective students and as engaging the support of the community. One would think that leisure education would be closely tied to liberal education in the classical sense, but unfortunately, leisure is not generally trusted as a valuable state in and of itself (even for learning!). And there is even the view that, at least in the U.S., leisure is a matter of personal freedom and ought to be protected from the institutional grip of the school once a person is out of the school setting.

A better rationale for leisure education these days is that leisure as a context, e.g., as free time, is a *crucible* for a lot of the problems of youth (delinquency, violence, alcohol and drug use and abuse, sexual promiscuity) and of adults as well (WLRA, Youth At Risk and Leisure Education Position Statement, 1998). Indeed, much of motivation for such activities is tied to sensation seeking and excitement and even competence and belonging. The boredom that leads to health-compromising behavior may be the result of a limited leisure repertoire and thus may be remedied by leisure education. A vocal and influential consensus on this point seems to be emerging, and it

may ultimately win the day for the cause of leisure education; but persuading a skeptical and conservative public on the issue remains a daunting challenge.

Leisure education has been well developed in its use in therapeutic recreation contexts, both for children and adults with disabilities (e.g., Dattilo, 2000a, 2002), but while those working with special populations argue for the generic nature of their leisure education models (Dattilo, 1999, 2000b) applications to "normal" populations have been few, at least in the U.S. The major breakthroughs in that regard may be occurring in programs for substance abusers and youth in at-risk environments, but we do not have adequate documentation of the programs that exist in those areas nor of their effectiveness. Generally, leisure education for all children seems largely missing from the "radar screen" of public school reform agendas in most places in the U.S. Where it has been introduced, it has been largely confined to special education classes, curriculum and settings. Nevertheless, as Witt (2001) suggests, being creative, vocal and politically active will help others to know that "education for a life of leisure" is important. The following section identifies programmatic initiatives that are moving in that direction.

## **LEISURE EDUCATION - CURRENT SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

### **Importance of Leisure Education in the Schools and in School/Park Partnerships**

As we know, for many children the lack of learning opportunities in their homes, schools and communities hinders their full human development. Those of us in the allied professions cannot ignore the chances to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. All American children - not just the athletically elite, the so-called intellectually gifted or the economically privileged - should know the self-empowerment and satisfaction that is possible through lifetime activities such as moving one's body confidently, striking a ball well, drawing for fun, appreciating nature, and playing cooperatively with others. The positive influence that health, physical, leisure, and dance educators can have on the leisure lifestyles of youth as well as underserved populations is important and should not be overlooked. Moreover, these experiences also lead to potential work and

education-related opportunities that assist young adults to achieve and succeed (Pesavento, Ego & Woodard, 1992). Therefore, all that can be done to ensure these rights through leisure education can and should be supported.

However, Kraus (2000) reminds us that play in the lives of children has changed in the U.S. The decline of the family structure with the divorce and separation rate has resulted in latchkey children with unsupervised free time. There are also children home alone resulting from intact families where both parents work. Affluent homes tend to produce over-scheduled children and disadvantaged homes result in fewer resources for constructive play, toys, and games, books, and trips to the zoo or beach. There is little access to vacation camps and special classes while many children suffer from the enforced boredom of being locked into an apartment or subjected to "street roulette."

Kraus also suggests that there is a lack of settings for play, and that many municipal playgrounds are unsafe, poorly supervised, vandalized, and run by drug leaders or gangs. Dangerous playground equipment and surfacing are also a problem, whereas in our litigious society equipment is removed and the remaining equipment is "dumbed down" and not creative. Families with financial means go to private play ventures like Gymboree and Discovery Zone (Kraus, 2000).

Another factor influencing leisure education is the "Back to Basics" movement, with its emphasis on math, reading, and science. It is a very complicated factor today with interest in public education perhaps higher than ever before. There is much criticism of public schools and proposed solutions for reform are abundant. Unfortunately, the movement has frequently resulted in administrative and financial reductions of intra and extramural afterschool activities, cutbacks on schoolyard play, and even the elimination of recess. This has restricted the growth of quality outdoor leisure education programming in places like Atlanta and Chicago. Competition for attention in the curriculum is high; everybody seems to be able to identify a social problem that they think the schools can solve, but there are limits to what can be crammed into already crowded school schedules. Vouchers, charter schools, home schooling, testing and accountability, and extending school terms are all topics of discussion that tend to further compromise the emphasis for leisure education.

Thus, there is a great and continued need for quality leisure education in schools and parks. To complicate matters, the physical fitness level of

American youth is deplorable. Passive forms of play like video games and television have caused the percentage of overweight children to double in the past thirty years (O'Sullivan, 2001). Adding to this is the influence of commercial media and the proliferation of violence and sex in movies, videos, television, and music. Other problems include a lack of active leisure and social skill development, experimentation with illicit drugs, teenage gambling, thrill-seeking actions with violence, early and frequent unprotected intimacy, clashes between different ethnic groups, and drug and alcohol-fueled accidents. Many of these problems are attributable to the lack of healthy leisure alternatives or the failure to recognize those leisure education programs that are available.

### ***Important Role of Play and Leisure in Education***

In society today, work and leisure are polarized and the public school system is expected to educate for both. The educational system reflects a social belief that work and leisure are separate and hierarchically arranged so that leisure, as an opposite of work, is diminished. There is a strong link between play and an individualized way of learning, not only about the world, but also about the self and autonomy. However, society has cheapened and trivialized play. In our current system, children and youth are not encouraged to be creative in their play as many "play objects" are pre-packaged and commercialized. Unfortunately, formal schooling often sees play as not valuable and tells children the only way to survive is to learn prescribed subject matter that prepares them for a job (Carter & Nelson, 1992; Teeters, 1992).

Historically, *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (1991) had none of the familiar professional concepts mentioned in its plan, such as *leisure, recreation, physical education and play*. The system should be changed, fundamentally restructured, so as not to focus only on a higher standard in core subjects. Since the public school system has the longest and closest contact with all children, it may be the key to educating for leisure. Although politicized, as the "control institution" in the learning process, schools should provide the "playground" where children can safely learn to test themselves, explore, learn to take risks, and play without failure (Teeters, 1992). Partnering with local and neighborhood parks and recreation departments can be a creative and economical means of providing leisure education that extends beyond the school day.

## ***Important Role of Play and Leisure in Development***

Developmental theory suggests several recommendations for guiding play intervention and leisure education for children and youth (Kleiber, 2001). The first recommendation is for children to feel a sense of security and belonging. This is especially true for those who may feel destabilized through threat (e.g., loss or injury). In such cases, leisure can be a context for recovery. The notion of becoming secure should be incorporated into teacher education as well as parent education. A second recommendation is for children to become capable. That is, through play, children should be able to establish competence and be recognized by others as having skill or being skilled. Another recommendation is for children to be able to define self in relation to others. In this context, play can be used by a child to reconstruct her/himself. Thus, it is essential to provide opportunities for decision-making and activity control through play.

It is also recommended that play environments facilitate opportunities for children to connect intimately with others. Love and companionship are powerful needs in early and late adolescence and play allows for joint involvement in enjoyable activities. Through play, children can learn assertiveness - not aggressiveness. Through play, a child can play a part in something bigger than oneself. Play environments offer opportunities for volunteer service and commitment to others. Examples range from coaching younger children and leading Girl/Boy Scouts to community and environmental action.

Another recommendation is that play should create meaning. Through play, peaceful and serene activities can be cultivated such that children may be able to put their own lives into perspective with the rest of the world. Finally, it is recommended that play serve as a catalyst for children to becoming healthy. Play opportunities help children develop their spirits, minds and bodies in ways that can help them appreciate the importance of health and wellness (Kleiber, 2001).

### **Need for a Paradigm Shift from Competitive Activity Model to a Development and Healthy Lifestyle Model**

Quality leisure education programming should be fostered and fiscally supported to assist every child to maximize his or her potential. Unfortunately, school budgets continue to be cut for art, music, physical

education and extracurricular activity placing less emphasis on the development of the whole child through leisure. Time constraints and poorly managed curricula also result in fewer opportunities for leisure education. For instance, to make time for a school assembly, physical education is canceled. If students do not finish class work, recess is cut.

In addition, only one state in fifty, Illinois, requires five-day a week physical education in K-12 programs. Curricular trends have been slow to change and many physical education programs have been discontinued based on their inability to stay current. Unfortunately, the play which is predominantly encouraged in physical education classes and afterschool programs is sports and athletics, and only recently has the emphasis begun to shift to cooperative play and lifetime-carryover activities, such as golf, tennis, outdoor recreation and challenge education. All too often, many aggressive "Hall of Shame" activities have not been stopped and continue to frustrate and hurt even the most competitive children (e.g., bombardment; murder ball; king/queen of the mats; duck, duck, goose; musical chairs; children picking teams; and exercise as punishment) (Williams, 1996).

### **Newer Approaches to Leisure Education**

Leisure education may be provided as a separate course or infused into existing subjects. The following are examples of contemporary approaches to leisure education programming.

#### ***Israel's Leisure Education Curriculum Model***

Israel has been a leader in getting leisure education introduced into the regular public school curriculum but there may be few followers, and we do not know how widespread it is in Israel and other countries. The latest contemporary curriculum model was developed by the National Curriculum Development Commission for the school system in Israel (Ruskin & Sivan, 1995). The Leisure Education Curriculum is a K-12 framework for leisure education within its educational systems. It is organized around three clusters of objectives: 1) knowledge, understanding and awareness; 2) behavior, habits and skills; and 3) emotions and value-oriented attitudes. Its developers recommended that leisure education be taught as an independent subject as well as infused into different subjects that are a part of the total school curriculum.

The Leisure Education Curriculum proposes several strategies for implementation, such as using teachable moments with potential for leisure education; planned integration of leisure concepts and contents to as many as possible school subjects; learning by means of recreation activities; leisure as a subject of study in itself; leisure experimentation; teacher-pupils leisure counseling; focusing learning by several school disciplines on leisure activities; building a school leisure program with the involvement of parents and community institutions and facilities at large; and appointing a leisure education coordinator or a consultant with responsibility over all leisure education activities and curricula in each school. Since the publication of the curricula, (Ministry of Education & Culture, Israel 1994), a Commissioner of Leisure Education and a Supervisor General of Leisure Education were appointed and numerous training courses for School Leisure Education Coordinators/Consultants were implemented with hundreds of them already in K-12 settings in many parts of the country.

### *Experiential and Outdoor Leisure Education*

Outdoor leisure education includes the domains of outdoor education, environmental education, youth camping, outdoor pursuits, heritage interpretation, eco-tourism, adventure education, outdoor experimental education, and all those educational efforts undertaken to improve the relationship between humans and the natural world. The purpose is to foster understanding of and appreciation for outdoor leisure choices and pursuits, and to promote a sustainable environment in concert with mental, physical, social, spiritual, and economic well being. It is also an essential part of human growth and a key component of sustainable and healthy communities. Thus, through outdoor leisure education, school systems and other educational institutions can create a force for social development, environmental protection, economic development and alleviation of social problems (WLRA Commission on Education, Position Statement on Outdoor Leisure Education 2001).

Experiential education and outdoor leisure education methods in the U.S. are based on the premise that there should be linking of the real world with the classroom and exploration by the learner of her or his world. In 1999-2001, the Rails-to-Trails: A Living Laboratory Project in Michigan worked with K-12 teachers to develop educational web sites based on math and science projects that explored the appreciation of the natural

environment. The program took place within the corridor of the White Pine Trail, part of a 50 plus mile rails-to-trails corridor, running through the local communities and in some cases within walking distance of the actual schools. Final sites had students studying impacts of recreation on the trail, doing wildlife inventories, and creating information flyers on estimated times it would take to do different recreational activities over a mile for roller blading, running, and walking (Hastings-Bishop, 2001).

Presently, the American Association for Leisure and Recreation (AALR) and the Wilderness Education Association (WEA) are teaming up to offer wilderness education training programs designed for public school teachers. More specifically, AALR's Council on Outdoor Adventure/Education/Recreation is working with WEA to promote the need for short-term wilderness education training programs conducted by certified WEA leaders. The AALR/WEA teacher-training field-based workshops are designed for elementary and secondary physical education teachers. Once trained in wilderness education concepts and skills, the teachers will be able to transfer their newly found wilderness skills into classroom and field experiences for their own students. The goal of the AALR/WEA wilderness education courses is for teachers to learn how to lead groups beyond the trailhead and how to teach leadership, judgment and decision-making along with wilderness living and travel skills. Elements of the WEA national curriculum are covered in the training, including leadership, judgment and decision-making through wilderness activities such as backpacking, rock climbing, and canoeing.

The WEA mission is to promote the professionalism of outdoor leadership and to thereby improve the safety of outdoor trips and to enhance the conservation of the wild outdoors. In addition to the training mentioned above, WEA offers national certifications - Workshops, Steward, Leader, and Instructor certificates. The WEA curriculum covers the following elements: decision-making and problem solving; leadership; group dynamics and expedition behavior; environmental ethics; basic camping skills; nutrition and ration planning; equipment selection and use; weather; health and sanitation; travel techniques; navigation; safety and risk management; wilderness emergency procedures; natural and cultural history; specialized travel/adventure activity; communication skills; trip planning; and teaching, processing, and transference.

The jointly sponsored AALR/WEA workshops are modified to cover curriculum elements mentioned above and focus on how to introduce them

into school curriculums and programs. More information on AALR/WEA jointly sponsored workshops and training programs can be obtained by contacting the Wilderness Education Association at 900 East 7th Street Bloomington IN, 47405; general E-mail: wea@indiana.edu; WEA Web page: <http://www.ebl.org/wea/>.

### ***High School Dual Enrollment or Advance Placement Course Work with Regional Institutions of Higher Education***

Many states provide high school students the opportunity to take college level credit as electives for high school credit. Advance Placement course work for these students can then be transferred into their higher educational institutions as general education or elective credits toward their first degree at the associate and bachelor levels. Students are taking advantage of the opportunity to take adventure-based physical education courses as credit for high school education and with the availability of educational credit over the web, the door is open to other possibilities for leisure education as well. Thus, a wide variety of lifetime leisure learning opportunities are available to these students through higher education programs in physical education, as well as academic curricula in recreation and park administration, leisure studies, and the like.

### ***21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers***

In the mid 1990s, the NRPA Youth Strategies Initiative and government educational grant opportunities created partnerships between schools and local recreation and park agencies to create the Community Learning Centers whose goals continue to reflect the Lighted Schoolhouse Project and LEAP traditions. Four years ago, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program was launched with a \$40 million federal appropriation. In the coming year, the program's budget will reach \$1 billion, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will lay out the roadmap to increase federal support to \$2.5 billion by 2007 (Samuelson, 2001).

With these funds, and as noted recently in *Parks and Recreation* (September, 2001), the Afterschool Alliance was introduced; its principle goal was "to ensure that all children have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs by 2010." The Alliance is a growing coalition of public,

private and nonprofit organizations committed to raising awareness and resources for afterschool programs. Crime prevention, resiliency and coping skills, ability to make decisions about personal discretionary-time activities, and interaction with caring adults through organized afterschool programs for youth are the focus of these "youth strategies." Thus, a goal of universal access to afterschool programs is to strengthen every child's opportunity for a quality leisure education program in an afterschool setting.

### *Kids at Hope Project*

In 2001, AALR initiated a partnership with the *Kids at Hope Project* to provide training for teachers and recreation professionals. *Kids at Hope* is based on the premise that "all children are capable of success, no exceptions." The philosophy of the project is to assist schools and youth organizations in developing program strategies that infuse four basic elements into curricular or after-school programs: 1) an anchor in each child's life; 2) other caring adults; 3) high, positive expectations for all children; and 4) creating opportunities for success (Baker, 2001, p. 18). The use of the *Kids at Hope* report card lists each child's individual strengths and also links the child's talents to home & family, community service, hobbies and recreation, and education and careers (Baker, 2001, p. 19.)

### *Timewise: Learning Lifelong Leisure Skills*

A new leisure education program with a slightly different set of outcomes than those previously mentioned is *TimeWise: Learning Lifelong Leisure Skills*. This program was designed initially as a substance abuse prevention program for middle school youth, but it is easily adaptable to serve as a prevention program for many unhealthy behaviors such as over-eating, violence, substance abuse, and risky sexual behavior. While prevention of unhealthy behavior is important, fundamentally *TimeWise* helps youth develop healthy lifelong leisure interests. It is comprised of six theoretically grounded lessons designed to teach students to: 1) determine personally satisfying and meaningful leisure activities, 2) understand the benefits of participating in healthy leisure, 3) understand how a youth's motivation affects her/his experience and participation in healthy behaviors, 4) alleviate boredom and increase optimal experience in leisure time, 5) learn

how to take responsible action to participate in desired activities, and 6) identify and overcome constraints that get in the way of participation in desired activities (Caldwell, 2000).

While these examples of contemporary leisure education programs share much in common with their predecessors, they differ in that they are built on broader theoretical foundations. This is important because these broad theoretical frameworks foster the integration of leisure education into important societal goals: promotion of healthy and sustainable communities, prevention of risk behaviors, and promotion of healthy activity. Amid competing for resources, it is important that any current leisure education program connects to broader societal goals. This in no way suggests that leisure as an organizing concept should be absent or relegated to a less important position. Rather, as demonstrated by the successful programs just discussed, leisure as a context for education to promote health and human development, as well as community sustainability, is vital.

## **LEISURE EDUCATION AS SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THERAPEUTIC RECREATION**

### **Leisure Education Within the Realm of Special Education**

What does the term leisure education mean and look like from a special education standpoint? With the passage of P.L. 94-142: Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the landmark legislation ensuring a free and appropriate education for all "handicapped children," leisure education was identified as one component of recreation as a related service for students receiving special education services. As such, leisure education within the realm of special education has been conceived as a specific program (discipline) within the domain of recreation rather than as material and techniques to be infused within the general education or special education program (curriculum). When P.L. 94-142 was re-authorized as P.L. 101-476: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) and through subsequent revisions/amendments, leisure education remained a part of related services for students ages 3-21. Like all related services, recreation and therapeutic recreation is only available to students when it "may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education" [P.L. 105-17, Part A, Sec 602(22)] and provided it is so stated in the youngster's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (P.L. 105-17).

Until the most recent re-authorization and amendment of IDEA (P.L. 105-17: IDEA 1997), leisure education was specifically defined as: instruction to improve the leisure participation and leisure lifestyle of students with disabilities through the development of positive attitudes toward leisure, the development of skills necessary for recreation participation, knowledge of recreational resources, and recognition of the benefits of recreation involvement (P.L. 94-142, P.L. 101-476).

As of IDEA 1997, the components of recreation as a related service, including leisure education, are listed without any operational definitions.

### **Leisure Education Within the Realm of Therapeutic Recreation**

Beginning in the 1970s, therapeutic recreation attempted to put a face to the term "leisure education." Within the realm of therapeutic recreation, leisure education is viewed as facilitating the development of a leisure lifestyle (Dattilo, 2000a; Howe-Murphy & Charboneau, 1987; Peterson & Stumbo, 2000) and the learning of leisure and life skills with "the potential to impact not only one's leisure lifestyle but life in general" (Bullock & Mahon, 2000, p. 334). As such, leisure education tends to address leisure and self-awareness, decision-making, self-determination, community skills, social skills, leisure activity skills, leisure resources, and leisure planning and participation via a wide array of educational techniques.

In most instances, leisure education is conceptualized as much more than the development of specific leisure activity skills or even a single non-activity related leisure skill (e.g., decision-making). A number of models for leisure education within the framework of special education have been put forth in the last two decades. The vast majority of these models, a few of which are identified below, conceptualize leisure education as a unique program to be implemented with the involvement of a therapeutic recreation specialist while incorporating leisure philosophy and theory as the foundation.

Bullock and his colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill created three models. The first was the *Wake Leisure Education Project* developed for high school students, ages 17-22, with mental retardation (Bedini, Bullock & Driscoll, 1993; Bedini & Bullock, 1988). It was designed to be implemented as a 10 unit/week program on an individual or small group basis. The second was the *School-Community Leisure Link*

*(S.C.L.L.) Program* designed for students in special education from elementary through high school to facilitate leisure participation in the community (Bullock, Morris, Mahon, & Jones, 1992). It used curriculum-based measures (also known as performance measures or behavioral objectives) to evaluate the student's progress toward specific goals. Third, was the *Leisure Education in Compensatory Education Model* developed for use by the North Carolina Compensatory Education Program of Study to increase independence during leisure among young adults with disabilities (Bullock & McCann, 1993). It was designed to be implemented via a post-high school educational experience through local community colleges.

Coyle at Temple University built on the S.C.L.L. model, adding social learning theory and behavioral approaches, to form Project S.T.A.R.T. (Ashton-Shaeffer, Bullock, Shelton & Stone, 1995). In addition, Dattilo and his colleagues at the University of Georgia developed Project T.R.A.I.L. (Dattilo, 2000b). This model utilized leisure education with leisure coaching, family and friend support, and follow-up to assist students in special education to become active participants in inclusive community-based leisure. Models have also been developed by parks and recreation departments such as *Therapeutic Recreation Activities in the Classroom (T.R.A.C.)*, which was designed by Arlington Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Department (Arlington, VA) for their therapeutic recreation specialists to implement in special education classes in Arlington County, VA. (Ashton-Shaeffer, et. al., 1995).

Research related to leisure education in the schools with students receiving special education services has reported psychosocial and leisure specific outcomes such as: increases in perceived control, self-esteem, choice-making, self-determination, perceived freedom in leisure, affect, leisure awareness, activity initiation, leisure related planning and resource knowledge, and recreation participation (Bedini, Bullock, & Driscoll, 1993; Dattilo, 2000b). Additionally, there is evidence that leisure education helps prepare students for the transition from school to community and adulthood (Bedini, Bullock, & Driscoll, 1993; Mahon, 1994; Mahon & Bullock, 1992). Both of the therapeutic recreation national professional organizations, the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) and the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS), have active committees concerned with therapeutic recreation in the schools (ATRA - School Systems Treatment Network; NTRS - TR in Schools Committee). Additionally, in

2002, ATRA published a book dedicated exclusively to recreation under IDEA in schools (Lawson, Coyle, & Ashton-Shaeffer).

## **LEISURE EDUCATION – BEST PRACTICES AND FUTURE MODELS**

### **“Best Practice” Models**

Fundamentally, the importance of leisure education in the schools is connected directly to the outcomes associated with leisure education programs. This position statement has already described a few school-based leisure education programs: Dattilo's model for youth with disabilities (2000a, 2002) and for all citizens (1999, 2000b), Caldwell's *Timewise: Learning Lifelong Leisure Skills Model* (Caldwell, 2000), ESEA's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers (Afterschool Alliance, 2001), Florida State University's *Scope and Sequence Model*, NRPA's Leisure Education Advancement Project (LEAP), and Israel's Leisure Education Curriculum. Each of those models or programs is geared to a certain population, at certain grade levels, and each of them has different outcomes associated with them. It is important that the outcomes associated with these programs connect with: 1) educational standards set forth by states, provinces, nations, or other governing bodies and 2) goals that are important to healthy human development and well-being. Whether it is a stand-alone curriculum or infused (integrated) into the existing curricula, the leisure education program should support and connect with educational standards. In today's educational climate and with today's needs, additional curricula that do not meet these standards will not be sustained.

### **Developmentally Appropriate Interventions**

The programs previously mentioned in this document have implemented content appropriate for the developmental age and stage of the individuals receiving the program. Content is also appropriate for other individual characteristics such as disability, learning ability, and/or being at risk for certain problem behaviors. Thus, age, maturity, and individual or group characteristics are significant influences on leisure education program design. Another important consideration is whether the program is provided

to all students, or whether it is targeted at those who display characteristics of being at risk for certain problems. It is sometimes preferable to both give the program to all students and provide additional time and resources to students identified as having further needs. By implementing the program in this way, the developmental needs of the largest number of students are addressed.

### **Future Considerations for "Best Practice" Models**

There are a few practical considerations that are important when infusing leisure education into schools. These include placement of the program within the school day, training of leisure educators, format of program, context of program, and budget. Plans for a leisure education program should include details that identify how the leisure education program will be effective in relation to each of the components. In an ideal world, leisure education models would allow students to be involved in strategic leisure experiences focused on a broad range of activities such as music, theater, sport, outdoor pursuits, etc., that involve creativity, strategy and much more. These topics would be experienced in a variety of social contexts -- with friends, with acquaintances, through team competitions, as individuals at rest, and with taking on self-directed challenges. Leisure education programs that are stand-alone curricula are often placed in physical education, health or special education classes, although those are clearly not the only suitable places for such a program. With the passage of IDEA '97 and its emphasis on inclusion, students in classrooms with students who are designated to receive leisure education services may now be indirect recipients of such services. Specifically, IDEA 1997 allows for the provision of services beyond the "target child" if the target child is included with classmates.

English classes could be excellent contexts for programs to be offered because many leisure education programs are based on reflection, written and oral communication, and self-expression (e.g., poetry reading and writing). Both low and high program levels would be available for all ages of school children. Through these experiences, youth would grow and develop, expanding their abilities to make choices as older youth, and maturing their leisure repertoire as they enter adulthood. In order to implement any model of leisure education in the educational systems of today, connection to educational standards is essential.

Other contexts for leisure education programs are in the after-school hours. Some programs, such as *TimeWise*, can be given as an in-school curriculum and then "activated" in the after school context. This provides students a hands-on opportunity to learn skills and develop interests.

The interdisciplinary approach to curriculum subjects and the focus on learner-directed problem solving learning with the additional influence of computer technology is opening up the doors for schools to include parks, museums, cultural centers, and similar leisure-based settings. These leisure-based resources are linked to the educational setting in both low and high-tech ways to expose students to other cultures, historical events, and natural environments. The classroom learner can even use virtual tours and interactive media to visit sites and interact with professionals prior to the traditional field experience. Technology takes the classroom possibilities beyond the community by opening the leisure possibilities up to learning.

Leisure education programs can be formally structured, such as some of those described above, or informal in nature. Perhaps more training is needed to successfully incorporate informal leisure education in the curriculum as it requires a solid understanding of why, how, when, and for whom leisure is important. In either case, leisure educators can be: 1) teachers who have been trained to incorporate leisure education into existing courses and curricula or 2) leisure specialists hired by the school district to deliver programs during or after school.

## Conclusion

Leisure education should be viewed as an instructional process that stretches across everyone's life. It can also help all children maximize their full potential; therefore, the profession should foster and support such programs in whatever ways are possible.

Since leisure education is important across the entire lifespan, leisure educators must consider a variety of developmental transitions and cultural contexts when planning appropriate interventions. While the conditions for offering leisure education in school settings are becoming more compelling, educators and leisure service personnel have not yet established a truly effective position on this important topic. Leisure educators also must recognize varying perceptions, often held by policy and decision-makers, that negatively influence support for leisure education programs. Consequently, this project was undertaken to begin to establish an ongoing frame of

reference for a number of AALR constituents including: policy makers, university faculty and students, K-12 teachers, park and recreation practitioners, parents, and the general public.

This document advocates and delivers a clear message from professionals in the field of parks and recreation. Leisure education as shared in a school and/or park setting can be invaluable in helping children and youth to develop a full repertoire of leisure activities that will be useful throughout their lifetime. However, without a foundation of understanding, the implementation of leisure education programs will not likely achieve its full potential.

Because the benefits of recreation and play are critically important, researchers and practitioners should continue to explore and respond to the constraints and barriers that restrict leisure. The recreation and leisure profession as a whole must find a way to open the door for leisure education so that more students may benefit. This is particularly important in light of current trends: 1) the delivery of special education services in inclusive settings; 2) the otherwise small numbers of students who are able to access leisure education; 3) the changing nature of education within the U.S. today; 4) the issues confronting our youth; 5) the potential negative outcomes of leisure as well as its positive outcomes; and 6) the overall impact of leisure education on an individual's well-being and quality of life. Planning effective leisure education programs requires attention to such matters as the placement of programs in the overall curriculum, the format of such programs, uses of technology, and the preparation and qualifications of those who will provide services. In addition, AALR should continue to recognize the relationship of leisure education to therapeutic recreation, and should support the efforts of professionals in this field.

In conclusion, we are continuing to encourage: 1) plans by educators and leisure professionals to maximize leisure education in the public schools, 2) public displays and media publications identifying model leisure education programs, and 3) preparation and dissemination of information to the schools regarding strategies, techniques, materials and resources for leisure education. The dialogue, curricular action, theory building and resulting policy development must continue!

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