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Column Editor

summary

A high school-based strength and conditioning program can accomplish more than just training athletes. This column illustrates how one school developed programs for elementary and junior high students and faculty members, in addition to athletes, and developed research and internship partnerships with a local college.

A High School Cocurricular Strength and Conditioning Program

The mission of the strength and conditioning program presented in this column is to offer athletic development and fitness enhancement programs to the Hillsborough Township students, families, faculty, and staff. The foundation for the program is based on allowing all students the opportunity to experience a comprehensive training regimen. There is a working partnership

A School District-Wide Strength and Conditioning Program: A Growing Community Offering for Fitness and Athletic Development

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between the Athletic Department, Health/Physical Education (HPE) Department, and a school-based extracurricular Strength and Conditioning Club. The 3,000 square foot Strength and Conditioning Center has many training modalities, including its placement adjacent to the athletic complex and track, to accommodate the range of participants.

The 50-minute health/physical education elective (30-minute workout) could fulfill a student athlete's in-season training needs for his or her sport, or any student's plan for maintaining or increasing his or her level of fitness. The high school HPE curriculum also has a mandatory physical education prerequisite class and a mandatory health education class for each student per year; each class encompasses 1 marking period. The requirements are structured by grade level and state standards.

A no-cost after school program allows any high school student, including in-season athletes during their official practices, to have access to an expanded offering of conditioning techniques and resistance training activities during a 90-minute structured session overseen by 2 paid certified instructors. Another option offered through our Strength and Conditioning

Club is a before school workout session for those who have scheduling conflicts after school. This program is staffed by the Strength and Conditioning Club supervisor and mirrors the 30-minute HPE class. This supervisory position is a yearly position and involves a number of program promotions and informational Web site facilitation.

Youth Camps/Programs

Elementary programming is offered 1 day per week during the school year and 2 days per week during the summer program, which uses the high school facility. This year's pilot program only involves fourth grade students. The 6 elementary schools have a schedule of participation that allows 2 groups of 3 schools to attend 1 session per week. There is a fee per 8-week session for this program to cover staffing and insurance requirements.

Intermediate School (Fifth and Sixth Grade) "Young Champions"

Our intermediate grade programming is a 2 days per week, 1- to 1.5-hour, year-round offering, which also takes place at the high school facility. The 6 elementary schools feed into this 1 intermediate school, and it is expected that the fourth grade program will promote more stu-

dent involvement. At this level we will start to build technique progressions for the student's potential involvement in sports, weightlifting, powerlifting, and fitness and bodybuilding competitions. There is also a fee for this program.

Junior High School Program (Seventh and Eighth Grade)

Our seventh and eighth grade program is now seeing the benefit of the fifth and sixth grade program. An average of 30 participants per 11-week session completes a 90-minute program. A more comprehensive program involving education, conditioning progressions, and increased exercise volume is incorporated. There is no cost to the participants of this program. The principal of the junior high has recognized the increased enrollment and the performance enhancement of the students within the program by making the program a part of his school's intramural budget in terms of staff salary for 2 supervisors per session.

Summer Camps

Each level, grades 4 through 12, is extended through the summer for an 8-week session. There is an established fee for grades 4 through 8.

Faculty/Staff Fitness

The program includes a once per month staff fitness clinic and a once per week staff workout. This program addresses strength training, home fitness, and individualized fitness plan formation and promotion. We offer a guide on our Web site that can help the staff track fitness activities every marking period, and we are now working on an incentives program.

Goal Setting/Testing/ Assessment

Pre- and posttesting activities will utilize a 4-level testing profile sheet that outlines our own athletic development testing series, the President's Challenge Physical Fitness battery, 4-level technique indicators for USA Weightlifting (USAW)/USA Powerlifting (USAPL), and the National Athletic Testing Program (NATP) battery.

Goal-setting activities utilize athletic nutrition guidelines, national qualifying totals for USAW/USAPL, and bigger, faster, stronger performance standards. The NATP testing is sponsored and executed by an outside company for the high school level program and utilizes a national database to compare each athlete's results to national norms. The NATP testing process yields individualized reports sent home to each participant, and team reports are generated for the strength and conditioning coach and sport coaches.

Program Enhancement/ Research

Program Initiatives and Objectives

Each year a set of initiatives are addressed or revised from a 5-year plan to enhance our program and its offerings to enhance student fitness, athletic development, and community awareness. Our latest initiatives include an expansion of our school-based Web site to be more interactive and a youth fitness and conditioning summit to allow for promotion of current research and trends using a panel discussion format open to the community.

Research and Collegiate Intern/Student Teaching Program

The most recent initiative involves the partnership with The College of New Jersey, which allows for sharing of ideas, techniques, and trends utilizing an exercise science intern or health/physical education teacher. Opportunities to explore exercise science topics involving youth conditioning research studies will begin in spring 2005. We are excited about the opportunity to contribute to youth conditioning research.

Jim McFarland is currently an HPE teacher and coach in the Hillsborough Township Public School District (NJ). He is the Vice President of USAW in New Jersey.

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