



Calgary Board of Education
MEMORANDUM

Date: January 16, 2002

To: School Principals
CLC Directors
System Coordinator, Duty of Care
Manager, Insurance/Risk Management

Re: Gymnastics – Questions and Answers

Several questions have arisen from the recent email message from the Superintendent (Acting) of School Support Services John Drysdale regarding gymnastics, stunting and tumbling.

In any type of gymnastics, aerial moves in which students are dependent upon others for their movement, trajectory, balance or weight placement should no longer be allowed, effective immediately, at any grade level. These aerial moves include any movements in which one student is off the ground for any amount of time and dependent upon the support and balance of another student. (January 7, 2002)

This information is offered to alleviate some of the concerns raised by teachers.

Q: How are “aerial moves” defined and what does this mean?

An “aerial move” is defined as one in which a student is airborne for a period of time either as a result of their own movement or that of another. An **aerial salto (somersault)** is a rotation in mid-air that is accomplished without weight bearing on hands. This has not been allowed in Alberta since 1988. An extended **dive roll** for distance is defined as a forward roll where your feet leave the ground before your hands reach the ground. This is not permitted however, a front roll from the standing position is acceptable. An example of an **aerial trajectory** would be a basket toss whereby a group of students are responsible for launching another student into the air and allowing to the flier to execute spins, flips, and kicks. **Forward and backward handsprings** are also not allowed. Check the

Safety Guidelines for Physical Activities in Alberta Schools (2000), pages 9 and 34 for further clarification.

Q: Are double balances and pyramids included in aerial moves that are no longer allowed?

The following criteria are used in determining whether an activity is acceptable: The balance position must remain stationary. Contact between supporting students and balancing students must be maintained. The supporting student may not balance another student on or above the height of the shoulders. Teachers must make sure that proper progressions have been provided to ensure safety.

Q: Is any part of Stuntastics acceptable to include?

There are many aspects to the Stuntastics program that are acceptable provided students are not balanced, carried or thrown above shoulder height. No students should be thrown in the air at any time.

Q: How are wrestling, track and field, dance and some co-operative games affected?

This directive is primarily focused toward **gymnastics moves** as the opening sentence states. Although there are moves in many other activities that are of an aerial nature, the teaching progressions, skills and outcomes are different. Consult the Safety Guidelines for Physical Activities in Alberta Schools (2000) for the appropriate safety guidelines for specific sports.

Q: If students belong to gymnastics clubs or dancing programs, are they able to present their expertise to other students if they include some of these moves?

Students who belong to specific activity clubs often ask to perform various restricted activities for their peers. They may be permitted to do so *as long as they are representing their particular club* and not being asked to demonstrate moves for the purpose of teaching other students.

Students who are performing for talent shows should invite their coaches to be present and have their parents give permission to the school for them to participate in such a demonstration. The school principal must be fully apprized of the activity in question. For further clarification, please check with the Manager of Insurance/Risk Management.

Q: How do you make PE risk free?

Because of its nature, there will always be some risk of accidental injury associated with physical education. The school and teacher are responsible for minimizing the possibility of mishaps occurring. There is inherent risk of injury in

most physical education settings, therefore PE teachers must be careful not to breach the standard of care owed to their student. It is only if a student is injured after being exposed to unreasonable risk that physical educators can be considered negligent. Check pages 10-12 in the Safety Guidelines for Physical Activities in Alberta Schools (2000) for further details.

The Calgary Board of Education is always concerned with the safety of all of its students and reserves the right, as guaranteed in the *School Act*, to exercise its prerogative in setting policy and guidelines towards this end. This practice will continue as required.

Q: Does this mean that one student cannot piggyback another student?

Piggybacking is not an activity recommended by the CBE. It has very little educational value and is often associated with injuries or activity leading to injury.

Q: Are students allowed to spot for other students doing aerial activities?

The Safety Guidelines for Physical Activities in Alberta Schools (2000) expressly contains the phrase that "spotting is not recommended in the educational setting" (p. 35). Starting points and progressions are dependent upon individual participants and should best suit the needs of each student. Some educators feel that if spotting is necessary, the students are not ready to perform the activity. Teachers must use extreme discretion in using students, other than themselves, to spot.

Q: Will team-building activities be affected?

There are many activities to choose from to promote team building other than aforementioned restricted aerial moves. Teachers should consult PE resources for examples and adapt them to their students to ensure they are age appropriate.

Q: Does this not restrict the creative component of students working together?

This directive should not compromise or prevent students from either working together or being creative. There are many other movements that students can learn to choreograph and perform together other than the restricted activities.

Q: If we cannot do aerial moves, how can we teach gymnastics?

There are many different kinds of gymnastics than the Olympic-style we are familiar with from television. In elementary schools, gymnastics is taught using a movement approach in conjunction with the Canadian Climber. Some schools have moved towards Rhythmic Gymnastics and modern dance approach. Other schools have incorporated an agility and balance activity called Mission

Impossible. There are lots of safe activities, but the real question lies in the comfort of the teachers, their expertise and their ability to teach in a progressive manner based on the developmental levels of their students.

Q: By not being able to teach gymnastics, how can we meet the learning outcomes of the new PE curriculum?

The Safety Guidelines along with CBE policies and regulations do not restrict the teaching of gymnastics in any school. The new Physical Education Program of Studies (K-12) outlines four learning outcomes that may be met through the use of activities in five different dimensions. Physical education teachers are free to choose any dimension from which to meet those learning outcomes. Each physical education program in schools is unique as result of the setting, resources, students and expertise of the teachers. However, each must follow *Alberta Learning* curriculum and safety considerations. PE teachers may choose to guide their students toward meeting the learning outcomes in a myriad of different ways, limited only by their resources, knowledge, expertise and choice. The choice to teach gymnastics or the skills inherent in gymnastics activities is a school-based decision.

Q: What resources are there to help teachers plan and teach their gymnastics units to meet PE learning outcomes?

There are excellent resources offered through the Learning Resources Center (<http://www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>). of resources approved for use in Alberta schools. It may be accessed from the *Alberta Learning* website (http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/physed/default.asp) There are also excellent suggestions from Physical Education Online (<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/physicaleducationonline/>) as well as the CBE websites (<http://www.cbe.ab.ca/SSS/physed/> and <http://projects.cbe.ab.ca/ict/PE.htm>).

Teachers must always choose activities that are in compliance with their school board's policies and regulations, regardless of where they find the activities. Each school jurisdiction has the option of setting their own guidelines and limitations.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the above items, please call or email

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