

## **Playdates: Parent involvement in Physical Education is key to a quality program**

In Park Ridge-Niles School District 64, the Physical Education (PE) Department welcomes and strongly encourages parent and community involvement in their curriculum throughout the school year. Keeping open lines of communication with parents and community members is an important goal of the department. To demonstrate appreciation for continued support, district physical educators have developed creative ways to share their knowledge and innovative activities.

The district's five elementary schools (Field, Washington, Roosevelt, Carpenter, Franklin) take part in a unique program called *Parent Playdates*. Retired District 64 physical education teacher, Holly Gansz, started this award-winning program. These playdates were designed to allow parents and community members the opportunity to observe and participate along with their children during PE classes. The playdate activities vary per visit, by grade, and by school. The first grade playdate activity, at Field School, is participation in a challenging obstacle course while the fourth grade playdate activity has parents line dancing and moving to salsa music. Doubles yoga has also been a successful, stress relieving playdate at Field School. Washington School invites parents and community members to play volleyball with their fifth grade students. The other elementary schools also participate in *Parent Playdates* incorporating a variety of interesting, interactive activities for parents and community members.

At the middle school level, parents and community members are involved in several ways. During Open House, Emerson Middle School students perform their choreographed routines to demonstrate the skills mastered during the Rhythmic Gymnastics Unit. In addition to Open House, there are Open Gym Nights where students and parents engage on a social, emotional, and physical level participating in sports like badminton, volleyball, and archery. Both Emerson and Lincoln Middle School are fortunate to host guest speakers who provide students with information on topics such as self-defense, sports injuries, and illegal drug use. Lastly, a group of athletes from the Maine South Advanced Dance Class perform for students to promote the continuation of physical education and dance beyond middle school.

It is evident that the Physical Educators of District 64 work diligently to involve parents and community members. PTO Volleyball (Field), Teambuilding (Franklin), and Track-A-Thons (Carpenter) are additional activities that promote the physical education curriculum throughout the district. For further information, please contact the PE Department at the school of your choice or check the district web site.

-This article was prepared by Ms Lisa Nelson