

Picking Teams?

Every school year should start off with a fun intramural activity that will promote lots of spirit and participation and yet be relatively simple to organize. One of the biggest decisions to be made about this activity is how to group the students for participation, that is, how to pick the teams.

This may seem simple enough to people who like to play with their friends but consider the following questions:

1. How does a new student get on a team?
2. How can you be sure the teams will be equal?
3. Can school team members play on the same team?
4. Can Teachers Play? On which team?
5. Are all students eligible for all activities?
6. Should the teams be co-ed?

1. The School Profile

As you can see, forming teams is not that simple. When determining appropriate methods of picking teams for participation, you should first study the profile of your school and assess the situation. When you have gathered information relative to the following items, your decision making can proceed and units of competition formed.

- a. Number of boys and girls at each grade level and total school population.
- b. Number of home rooms per grade level.
- c. Does a house system exist?
- d. When is the gym field available for intramurals?
- e. What are the school policies regarding intramurals?
- f. Busing problems (for rural areas).
- g. Other school activities that may conflict or compliment intramurals.
- h. Is there staff and community support?

2. Basic Principles of Grouping Students Into Units of Competition

When grouping the students into teams you must consider the following:

- a. Teams should have relatively equal ability and leadership
- b. If unforeseen problems arise which affect your teams you must reorganize activities as needed.
- c. Units of competition may change from one activity to another (e.g. The "house system" may not be the best for all activities.)

3. Methods of Organizing Units of Competition

Home Room System

Each home room acts as a unit of competition. It works best in a larger school where there are at least two rooms at grade level.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. It encourages all student to register for an activity and enjoy participation;
- ii. Communication concerning the intramural program is easier;
- iii. The class develops strong bonds due to studying and playing together.
- iv. Teachers become more involved.
- v. House organization can be utilized for other school activities.
- vi. It is an easy system to complete.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Lack of inter grade mixing in intramurals;
- ii. Deciding whether or not to form two teams for one home room if there is a great interest in a particular activity.

House System

In this system, the entire school population is divided into equal houses or groups. This may be done according to many criteria, for example.

- i. Alphabetically by surname;
- ii. Birth date;
- iii. Home rooms (9A, 10A, 11A, 12A, in one house);
- iv. General physical activity abilities based on observations in physical education classes by teachers.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. Promotes a feeling of belonging to a large group instead of a small one;
- ii. Grades are intermixed in each house so each year you add new freshman to your team as the seniors graduate. Thus, the teams are constantly changing and the students get to interact with boys and girls in other grades.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Stacked teams are inevitable;
- ii. Staff advisors are needed for each house;
- iii. Students may not want to make the effort to approach other students from other home rooms to join their team, even though they were in the same house;
- iv. In a large school, students do not know each other well enough to develop a loyalty to each house;
- v. Much administrative work is needed to keep track of points.

Team Registrations

Students form their own teams with original names (Stingers, Slam Dunkers, etc.) The Intramural Director then slots them into the schedule.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. Students can participate with their friends, not just their home room. This usually increases participation;
- ii. Students in a club may want to enter a team as a unit. This increases school spirit and unity.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Stacked teams may have to be evened out by the Intramural Director to promote equitable competition.
- ii. Space and time can create problems if more teams entered than planned.

All Comers Sign Up

Everyone who is interested in participating in the activity signs up, by the entry deadline by:

- i. Signing their names on a posted list;
- ii. Giving their names to the home room teacher.

Following the entry deadline, the participants are organized into groups or teams. Team lists are then posted.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. Equal teams, thus better competition;
- ii. All players are on a team
- iii. Students get to know other than their friends.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Students may feel uncomfortable playing with students they don't know;
- ii. More work for the Intramural Council (making teams).

The Draft

This can be employed in a school where a house system or room system exists. The draft takes place before a sport or game with three members from each house/home room attending. A list of the students who signed up is given to each house/home room for selection. This first pick is given to the house/home room, which finished with the least number of points in the last physical event.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. Good student motivator.
- ii. Equalized teams.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- In a large school, students may not know all the individuals who have signed.

Spontaneous Sign Ups

On special event days individuals can simply join in the activities as they get caught up in the excitement of the events.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. More participation.
- ii. Highly motivated participants.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Hard to plan the activity when the number of participants is unknown.
- ii. Students may not be in their gym strip.

Organized Free Play

The Gym is open for intramural time. There are no specific teams, no leagues or schedules; the students just show up, organize scrub teams and play.

The benefits of this system are:

- i. Participants play simply for the fun of playing.
- ii. Teams can be made up from a group.

The drawbacks of this system are:

- i. Weaker players may feel too inhibited to join in if the “jocks” are playing;
- ii. Does not promote group togetherness or a feeling of belonging.

I cannot recommend to you which system will work best in your school. If the method that is currently being used in your school is working reasonably well, then perhaps it need not be changed. However, you might want to consider some of the above systems as ways to add variety to your existing program. If your present system is causing intramurals to die, and teams to default games, then it is indeed time for a change.

Examine your institution profile, weight out the pros and cons of each system presented and then choose a system for organizing your teams. Keep in mind that you want to choose a method that will give you maximum participation, minimum defaults and fun for all. In addition you want to minimize the organizational work your council must do, to give yourself a break and try to keep it simple.

Source: Sandra Harazny, O'Neill High School, Regina, Saskatchewan.