

August 10, 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that everyone is enjoying this summer break! I know I speak for all of the Fitness and Health teachers when I say that they are eagerly awaiting seeing your children in our Fitness classes this fall! We all want your children to have a *positive* experience in our classes as we promote the importance of daily physical activity and healthy habits. I am writing to inform and remind you of some of our Departmental policies in our Fitness classes. These policies and practices help us to maintain the highest level of instruction and interaction with your children, and hold us accountable to the professional standards under which we were trained.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

1. On the days students have Fitness class, appropriate dress such as loose clothing, shorts, t-shirts, or warm-up suits/sweatpants are required. Dresses and skirts are not appropriate for movement. Jewelry and watches also present a safety hazard and should not be worn. Hoop earrings, particularly large ones, can be dislodged and injury to the ear is a possibility. If your child has long hair it is best to have their hair tied back so that they may fully participate in all of the activities. Additionally we have had it happen that many times students run into each other because they cannot see where they are going, so securing long hair back into a ponytail or braids is recommended.

2. Sneakers must be worn to class. There are so many styles of athletic footwear on the market that what constitutes appropriate footwear for Physical Education classes can be confusing. We ask that students come to class with **TIE OR VELCRO SNEAKERS WITH FULL FOOT COVERAGE**. Slip-ons and backless sneakers frequently fall off, particularly when children are engaged in activities requiring kicking and agility. Athletic sandals and platform sneakers do not provide enough ankle support and injuries do occur. While we appreciate the popularity of Merrells, Crocs and “Mary Jane” type sneakers as an all-purpose walking shoe, we do not allow them to be worn in our Physical Education classes. We require our students to move in many ways, which require good ankle support; pivoting, sliding, jumping, kicking, landing to name a few. We do not like to ask any student to “sit out”, however, safety is the primary concern and we cannot allow students without appropriate footwear to participate. We appreciate your help in making sure your child is prepared on the day of class.

3. If your child should be injured and not able to participate, please send a note or medical excuse *through the school nurse*. A Doctor’s note is required when a child is not able to participate for an extended period of time. A Doctor’s note is also required upon re-entry to class from that excused time period.

CURRICULUM

Our fitness and health (physical education) curriculum is based on skills and concepts that emphasize the importance of healthy active lifestyles. We teach these concepts through a variety of sports skills, games and fitness activities. For example:

- Children may learn to strike a ball with a bat, a racket, a paddle or the hand.
- They may learn about heart rates by using a pulse meter or a heart-rate monitor, or just by placing their hand over their heart.
- Cooperation and trust may be taught by using a traverse-climbing wall.
- Sports skills may be introduced for carry over to the playground, home or after school sports.
- Perceptual motor skills and bilateral coordination may be enhanced through juggling, cup stacking and rope jumping.

Variety and fun, with an *emphasis* on fitness, is at the core of our teaching. The activity planned for the lesson, schedule, and weather determine whether or not classes are held inside or outside. Generally we think being outside is better and healthier, however it does not always make sense considering time and schedule constraints. We use our best judgment determining what is the most conducive learning environment.

FITNESS AND KIDS

Daily we are reminded that both children and adults in this country are in the midst of an “obesity crisis”. Poor nutritional choices and lack of physical activity are two of the culprits. In our program we focus our instruction on a variety of skills, knowledge, and activities that will enable your children to be active. We realize that their time with us is not enough to meet their full physical activity needs, thus it is recommended that elementary age children get at least one hour of physical activity per day! We are strongly encouraging students to be active after school. As an extension of our program there are different kinds of “clubs” that students can pursue with their families and friends at home and be recognized for their participation. The focus of the “Exercise Across Massachusetts Program” is to promote any and all kinds of activity: dancing, swimming, walking, biking, skating, running, and participation in team sports. The “Strive for 5” (5 a day) club promotes eating a combination of 5 fruits and vegetables a day. We hope you will reinforce our emphasis on daily activity and good nutrition at home.

WALK YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL DAYS

Once again Wellesley elementary schools will be participating in monthly, or quarterly “Walk to School” Days. The reason for this Departmental initiative is to highlight the healthy benefits of walking and how to do so safely. Each school will recognize the participants in a different way but it should be fun for everyone. We hope you will join us on these days even if it is a short walk from the corner of the street! These miles count for the Exercise Across Massachusetts Program.

As we look forward to the start of a new school year, I’d like to thank you for all of your support of our programs and curricular efforts. Adhering to the practices we’ve outlined above will allow us to provide optimal instruction and help your sons and daughters prepare to have a *successful* year in our Fitness classes. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding our policies. Enjoy these last few weeks of summer!

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