Director’s Welcome!

In 2012, we officially established the Physical Activity and Life Skills (PALS) Group at NIU. We believe quality physical activity programs can help to address the developmental needs of children and youth in our diverse multicultural society, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalized groups.

The PALS Group was established with support from the NIU Collaborative on Early Adolescence (NIU-CEA) and is located in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KNPE). Through outreach programs, research, and consulting, we enact our commitment to promoting healthy development and teaching life skills through sport and physical activity.

In the following paragraphs, you can find highlights from 2012 and learn more about our partner programs, our faculty affiliates, the students working with us, and more. We appreciate your interest hope to hear from you in 2013!

Sincerely, Paul M. Wright

www.niu.edu/cea/PALS/
Partnership Spotlight:

*Camp Play-A-Lot Year 2 is a success!*

PALS Group Assistant Director, **Jenn MacKenzie**, had another great year with her summer youth program on the Chicago’s north side. Camp Play-A-Lot’s mission is to develop life skills such as personal and social responsibility through promoting an active lifestyle, respect for self and others, and psychosocial growth. The summer schedule was packed with many fun activities such as a World Cup style soccer tournament, a scavenger hunt at Lincoln Park Zoo, and building an entire model city using recyclable goods from around the house. To the right is a picture of the PAL World Cup soccer winners!

Camp Play-A-Lot campers celebrating a big win!

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**Student Spotlight:**

*Youth Development in Action!*

During the fall semester, NIU master’s student **Yara Santillan**, worked in the North and South Lawndale neighborhoods of Chicago at an after school program called Play Streets. Play Streets, in partnership with Beyond the Ball, closed down a local street and created a play area for three hours a night. Beyond the Ball’s mission is to use the power of sport to change lives, give hope, reclaim space and develop a culture of opportunities for youth and families in Chicago. Play Streets gave many kids in the neighborhood an opportunity to play in the streets safely, which is not an option often times. The games played included flag football, soccer, basketball, jump rope, art activities, mini-marathons, and glow dodge ball.

Yara Santillan at Beyond the Ball, Chicago
2012 Funded Projects:

First year doctoral student, Jenn MacKenzie, received the Collaborative on Early Adolescence Graduate Research Fellowship for the 2012-2013 academic year. This fellowship is awarded to graduate students with an interest in researching early adolescent development. Under the direction of her faculty mentor, Dr. Paul Wright, Jenn’s research centers on the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model.

Dr. Paul Wright received a $1,600 Cobb International Research Travel Fellowship from NIU’s Division of International Affairs to support his ongoing collaboration with researchers and practitioners in Valencia, Spain who are interested in the TPSR model.

Dr. Jim Ressler and Dr. Jenny Parker have secured a total of $21,953 to support the Physical Education Professional Development School (PDS) at Clinton Rosette Middle School. This includes external support from the DeKalb Education Foundation ($2,770) and the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance ($1,483). Internal support ($17,700) has come from the NIU’s Partnership Office, KNPE Department, and Center for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education.

Dr. Jin Jung was awarded $7,800 through the Research & Artistry Grant at Northern Illinois University for his project on “Using E-journals in Blackboard to Promote Pre-service Teachers’ Reflections during Elementary Physical Education Field Experience.”

Dr. Paul Wright and Dr. Jim Ressler have been awarded a $5,000 grant from the C. Charles Jackson Foundation to support an after-school program for students at a local middle school who have been identified as having trouble with academic performance and/or behavioral issues. The C. Charles Jackson Foundation grant will fund a student-led health promotion project for the school community as well as a summer-time adventure education experience at the Loredo Taft field campus for youth participants.

In September 2012, Drs. Paul Wright, Clersida Garcia, and Laurie Zittel completed a $164,000 contract from the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD) to evaluate Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play.

Current/Upcoming Research Projects:

Youth Fit for Leadership Project (YFLP)

In spring 2013, PALS executive staff will be using an integrated model of Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) and Adventure Based Learning (ABL) to design, implement, and evaluate a weekly afterschool program with middle school students in DeKalb, IL. The major components of the YFLP will be: 1) a martial arts/fitness program highlighting the leadership aspect of the TPSR model during the academic year; 2) student-led project/campaign to promote fitness in the school community; 3) two-day leadership retreat highlighting the ABL
model in the summer at an outdoor education campus; and 4) opportunities for youth leaders to present and share their experiences and perspectives on leadership with audiences of their peers and adults. We are very excited about working with students in the DeKalb community and hope this program will be a great success!

**Alumni Notes:**

Karen Cerveny developed an after school fitness program for middle school girls.

As an independent project working under Paul Wright, Karen Cerveny helped develop an after-school fitness program encouraging positive youth development through physical activity. Her program was designed specifically for middle school girls to increase their physical activity, learn healthy nutritional practices, and address their social and emotional needs. The program spanned 15 weeks and included a physical activity component, opportunities for small group discussions, and peer coaching. The girls specifically worked on increasing their physical activity levels, making good decisions related to nutrition, and developing communication skills that helped them lead a healthy lifestyle. The philosophy guiding this program design was that if girls are given opportunities to participate in structured physical activity, nutrition, and emotional wellness activities that give them choice, are relevant to their lives, and take place in a supportive environment with positive mentors, they will enjoy being physically active and will develop lifelong wellness habits. Currently, Karen is a physical education teacher at Lisle Jr. High School in Illinois and will be implementing this program with her own students next year.

**Faculty Spotlight:**

*Physical Education Professional Development School (PDS) at Clinton Rosette Middle School*

During fall 2012, Dr. Jim Ressler and Dr. Jenny Parker announced the initiation of a PDS model in physical education at Clinton Rosette Middle School (CRMS) in DeKalb District 428 and the Department of KNPE at NIU. After 12 months of extensive planning (e.g. development of materials to implement three instructional models, scheduling logistics, grant proposals, and meetings), the project started in August 2012. Ressler and Parker began co-teaching one 7th grade PE class daily in collaboration with Jen Montavon (CRMS PE).

During the fall, the project resulted in a state level presentation (Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance), as well as an accepted proposal for a National Professional Development School (PDS) Conference in February 2013.

The planning and implementation of this professional development relationship between CRMS and NIU in physical education continues to be made possible through the generosity of time, funds and support from District 428, CRMS Teachers and Administration, the NIU Partnership Office, the University Office of Teacher Certification, and, KNPE chair Paul Carpenter.
2012 Publications


Jung, J. & Wright, P. M. (2012). Application of Hellison's Responsibility Model in South Korea: A Multiple Case Study of 'At-Risk' Middle School Students in Physical Education. *Agora for Physical Education and Sport, 14*, 140-160.


Wright, P. M. (2012). Offering a TPSR Physical Activity Club to Adolescent Boys Labeled “At Risk” in Partnership with a Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Serving Program. *Agora for Physical Education and Sport, 14*, 94-114.

Thank you to our affiliates & advisory board!

Gloria Balague, Ph.D.
University of Illinois at Chicago

Sheila Barrett, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Aaron Beighle, Ph.D.
University of Kentucky

Jeff Blezien, B.S.
Northern Illinois University

Robert and Amy Casteneda
Co-Founders of Beyond the Ball Chicago

Brian Culp, Ph.D.
Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis

Nick Cutforth, Ph.D.
University of Denver

Sarah Doolittle, Ph.D.
Adelphi University

Clersida Garcia, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Tawanda Gipson, M.A.
Northern Illinois University

Ethel Gregory, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Kelly Hagmeyer
YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids, MI

Don Hellison, Ph.D.
University of Illinois at Chicago

Jin Jung, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Paul Kelter, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

So-Yeun Kim, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Tom Martinek, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Kevin Munday
Principal, Xenomedia, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois

Nina Mounts, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Jenny Parker, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Bill Pitney, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Yara Santillan, B.S.
Northern Illinois University

Jeff Sunderlin
YMCA OF THE USA at Springfield, Illinois

Thomas J. Templin, Ph.D.
Purdue University

David Valentiner, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Carolyn Vander Schee, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Dave Walsh, Ph.D.
San Francisco State University

Ken Ward, Ph.D.
University of Memphis

Doris Watson, Ph.D.
University of Nevada at Las Vegas

Francesca Zavacky, M.Ed.
National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)