Director’s Welcome!

Well, 2013 was the second year of operation for the PALS Group at NIU and we couldn’t be happier with our activity and accomplishments to date. We continue to provide and support physical activity programs that address the developmental needs of children and youth, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalized groups. Our activity this year was supported by the NIU Collaborative on Early Adolescence, the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, several internal grants as well as funding from the C. Charles Jackson Foundation.

In the past year we continued to offer local programs that promote healthy development and teach life skills through sport and physical activity. We also continued to expand our advisory board, provide leadership within the TPSR Alliance, and solidify community partnerships with groups like Beyond the Ball in Chicago.

In the following paragraphs, learn about our featured guests this year, including Fulbright Scholar Barrie Gordon, as well as new funding to conduct an international training program in Belize. Thanks for your interest and keep in touch!

Paul M. Wright
Fulbright Scholar Barrie Gordon visits NIU from New Zealand!

In August, NIU welcomed Dr. Barrie Gordon, a Senior Lecturer from Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Barrie received a Fulbright Award to conduct research with Dr. Paul Wright on the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR). Barrie says, “There were a number of memorable aspects to the 3 month stay including working with like-minded academics, the opportunity to be involved with students in local schools and to work with students at NIU. The support and warmth of the NIU staff and their families was also appreciated greatly by both me and my wife Shona.” During Barrie’s time at NIU, a number of projects and ideas were initiated that will constitute ongoing collaborative projects. For example, an outgrowth of this visit will be an international study of TPSR programs in New Zealand, Canada and the USA that will look at the preparation of teachers implementing TPSR into practice.

CRMS Summer Leadership Retreat to NIU’s Lorado Taft Adventure Campus

Summer was an exciting time for members of the Clinton Rosette Middle School (CRMS) Fit for Leadership Club as they accompanied Dr. Paul Wright to NIU’s Lorado Taft Outdoor Education Campus. The trip was designed to be an experience for club members to transfer skills they had learned in the club such as respect, self-control, and teamwork in a new and exciting environment. The club members participated in a ropes course, roasted marshmallows around a bonfire, and stayed overnight in the facility’s cabins. Another important aspect of this leadership retreat was discussion of projects the club members could take charge of during the school-year to benefit the entire school community. This experience was designed to share authentic responsibility with the students and give them the opportunity to apply life skills like communication, decision making, and helping others. This retreat was supported by funding from the C. Charles Jackson Foundation.
Student Spotlight:  
Youth Development in Action!

Chanel Barksdale, a senior in the NIU KNPE department, was awarded an undergraduate research assistantship this year to assist in the Fit for Leadership Project at Clinton Rosette Middle School. Chanel says this about her experiences at the club so far: "I enjoy observing and interacting with the boys in the club. It is a privilege to be able to teach leadership, respect. I've only been working in the club for over a month and I have seen tremendous improvements in all the boys. I am grateful for this opportunity to be involved and I hope to transfer the skills that I have gained here to my future career". She is also learning valuable research skills transcribing interviews, taking field notes, and evaluating youth programs that use the TPSR model. Chanel will be returning as an undergraduate research assistant in 2014 and hopes to assist in developing new ways to teach life skills through the use of physical activity.

Faculty Spotlight:  
An international TPSR educator!

Dr. Jinhong Jung is an Associate Professor in the Department of KNPE at NIU. Prior to pursuing a career in higher education, he taught physical education over 10 years in South Korean public schools where he implemented innovative curriculum models in his physical education classes. In particular, he introduced Hellison’s Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model for the first time to South Korean physical education classes. Through Dr. Jung’s 20-years of teaching experience in public schools and in higher education, he has realized that the quality of student learning is greatly dependent on the quality of their teachers. Dr. Jung believes a teacher’s reflection plays a critical role in that teacher’s continued growth and development. He has conducted several case studies which explored the nature of experienced physical education teachers’ reflection.
2013 Funded Projects & Awards:

Dr. Paul Wright was named to the Elizabeth C. Lane, Ph.D., and M. Nadine Zimmerman, Ph.D., Endowed Kinesiology and Physical Education Professorship – the first endowed professorship in the College of Education at NIU. Dr. Wright will use this opportunity to continue his focus on scholarship related to positive youth development through physical activity.

Second year doctoral student, Jenn (MacKenzie) Jacobs, received the Great Journeys Graduate Research Fellowship for the 2013-2014 academic year. This fellowship is awarded to graduate students as a way to provide rich research experiences to students with a focused interest. Under the direction of her faculty mentor, Dr. Paul Wright, Jenn’s research focuses on the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model.

Chanel Barksdale, an undergraduate student in the department of Kinesiology was awarded an Undergraduate Research Assistantship for Fall, 2013 in the amount of $1,500. Chanel will be assisting in the Clinton Rosete Middle School Leadership Club under the direction of Paul Wright.

The PALS group was awarded a grant from the US Department of State to start a Belizean Sport Youth Coalition. Please see p. 5 for a spotlight story on this project!

PALS Speakers 2013:

With the support of NIU’s Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, the PALS group hosted numerous individuals speaking on relevant issues in the field. Guest lecturers included: Hans van der Mars, Aaron Beighle, and Ben Dyson). In addition, the Collaborative on Early Adolescence sponsored Tom Martinek and Barrie Gordon as colloquium speakers. All of these individuals are members of the PALS advisory board. We are grateful for the continued support and devotion to knowledge dissemination of both the CEA and KNPE Department.

Barrie Gordon (right) pictured with Paul Wright (left) and Don Hellison, the founder of the TPSR model (center)

New TPSR Alliance Website:

The TPSR Alliance, a partner of the PALS group, is undergoing a complete website overhaul to expand the information available to researchers and practitioners who work with the TPSR model. The original website was created with support from the C. Charles Jackson foundation and the new version will provide an even more user-friendly experience. Information about the upcoming TPSR conference in summer of 2014 will be posted as well. Please visit http://www.tpsr-alliance.org/ to check out the new website!
Partnership Spotlight:

Beyond the Ball (BtB) is a youth organization that uses sport to change lives, give hope, and reclaim the neighborhood for families in the southwest side of Chicago. This past year, NIU grad students Yara Santillan and Jenn Jacobs had the opportunity to intern at the agency to expand their practical skills in the field of youth development. Yara served as a coach in the organization’s Biddy Ball program for young children teaching them how basketball can build teamwork, perseverance, respect, and responsibility. Jenn observed Beyond the Ball’s Neighborhood Sports Little Village youth leagues and developed and a tool to assess BtB staff on their knowledge of teaching personal and social responsibility. Rob Castañeda, the founder and director of BtB is also involved as a consultant in the Belizean Sport Youth Coalition and will showcase youth programs at BtB when the Belizean delegates visit in January 2014. We thank BtB for their willingness to collaborate with PALs on many projects!

Upcoming Research Projects:

Belizean Youth Sport Coalition (BYSC)

The Physical Activity and Life Skills (PALS) Group was recently awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This grant will fund a three year project, to support youth sport organizations in Belize to integrate youth development into their programs and coaching practices.

The Belizean Youth Sport Coalition (BYSC) Project will involve two-way exchange, training for program directors and coaches, as well as ongoing consulting and evaluation. Each year, a delegation of program directors from Belize will come to NIU for training, site visits, and meetings with numerous community partners. Also, a delegation of trainers from NIU will travel to Belize to work directly with youth coaches, sharing specific strategies for promoting youth development and transferable life skills through the sport experience.

Dr. Paul Wright, Director of the PALS Group, is the project director. His co-directors are Drs. Jim Ressler and Bill Pitney from the KNPE Department as well as Dr. Lina Ong from NIU’s Office of International Affairs.
2013 Publications


Spencer, K. & Wright, P. M. (in press). Quality Outdoor Play Spaces for Young Children. *Young Children*.


Thank you to our affiliates & advisory board!

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