

Start a Running Club on Your Campus

Starting a running club is easy ~ and with the right support, maintaining it is a lot of fun!

Here are a few tips for getting started:

- Ask your principal for permission to use the campus after school. Plan for approximately 1.5 hours after school ~ One hour of program time with the kids and thirty minutes for sign out and clean up.
- Estimate how many students will participate. It will be hard to predict what your initial turnout might be, so give yourself a "cut off" number to keep the group manageable.
- Solicit volunteers to help you. You can invite more children to participate if you have the help of parent volunteers.
- Identify your running location. A ¼ mile track or course is best because it makes mileage tracking simpler. Decide if you want to keep your runners on campus or allow them to run off-site. (Of course, there will be special considerations if children are running on the street.)
- Develop or buy materials for your program. You may want to purchase a program or design one of your own. Check out Kids Run the Nation (www.rcca.org), Mileage Club (www.fitnessfinders.net), and Kids Running (www.kidsrunning.com) for ideas.
- Ask your principal, PTA, and others for financial support. Program materials (mileage cards, posters, etc.), incentive prizes, and snacks/water bottles cost money. In order to keep the program free for the students, you will need outside support.
- Set a date for your first meeting. Decide upon the length of your program (8-week, 10-week, 12-week, etc.), how often you will meet, and a date when you will begin.
- Spread the word. Create a flier for students to take home, including a permission slip for children to participate.

Your first meeting and beyond...

- Establish the ground rules. Collect permission slips. Explain the mission of the program and establish expectations of participants. Children should understand that they will have more fun if they are well behaved and courteous because there will be more time for activities.
- Focus on personal goals. A running program for children should be focused on personal goal setting, rather than competition. Consider handing out a slip of paper for students to write down their goal (eg. Run a mile without stopping or run faster in soccer). They can keep this slip or place it in a "wishing well" bucket, where it will remain private.
- Take your first run! Do some safe stretching, walk for 5-10 minutes, and then run. Run for 25-30 minutes. Have a great time!

- Be prepared. Recognize that some children will run more than others. Some may only walk at first. Have volunteers available at different paces so that students can find them if they need anything.
- Include an activity that reinforces a theme. If you are talking with the Kids about strength training, for example, play a game like leap frog or wheel barrow which uses leg and arm muscles.
- Gather your runners for water and a healthy snack. Make sure students are well hydrated and provide a nutritious snack after they are done running. Take the opportunity to discuss healthy food choices. Ask parents to sign up for snacks and water.
- Sign them out. Have a sign-in and sign-out sheet for students and know where they go after they are done running. Do they go home with parents? Do they walk? Do they go to ASES/Boys & Girls Club?
- Clean up. Wipe down tables and toss water bottles into the recycler. Your running program should be an asset to the school, not a problem.

Other considerations...

- You may want to collect email addresses for communicating with families. It is an easy, environmentally friendly alternative to weekly newsletters.
- Look for events to participate in as a team. The Beaumont Spirit Run is a great chance for your runners to put their training to the test.