



Kite and Leaf...

The good news
email from TCS!

Physical Wellness at TCS: So much more than just "Gym Class!"

Physical Wellness class (PW) at The Children's School is a celebration of movement and fun that helps students reach their own personal best in coordination, team play, and individual physical accomplishment.

At TCS we turn all those gym class nightmares from previous generations upside down by focusing on inclusion, encouragement, a mix of both competitive and non-competitive sports, as well as individual and group activities. Everyone in PW class has their own chance to shine and feel successful, experiencing joy in motion and joy in what they can do through physical activity. We set kids up for finding lifelong fun in fitness and physical activity, and we often invent our own games that become incredibly popular during both indoor and outdoor recess.

What kind of activities do we do that make Physical Wellness so fun at The Children's School? Here's a sample in the video below:

(NOTE: This video is set to "unlisted" in YouTube and we ask that parents/families not share the video on social networks.)



Focus on Kindness, Safety, Confidence, and Physical Skills Make Our PW Awesome!

Our all-school teacher for Physical Wellness, and the creator and facilitator of our program, is Mr. Ricky Halle-Podell — Mr. H-P for short.

"It is important to me that all students learn basic movement skills," says Mr. H-P. "If you notice, a high percentage of our students can throw and catch with great proficiency. These are basic skills that enable them to participate in most sports. I also focus on long and short-handled implements, i.e. handling hockey sticks, or racket sports like badminton and pickleball."

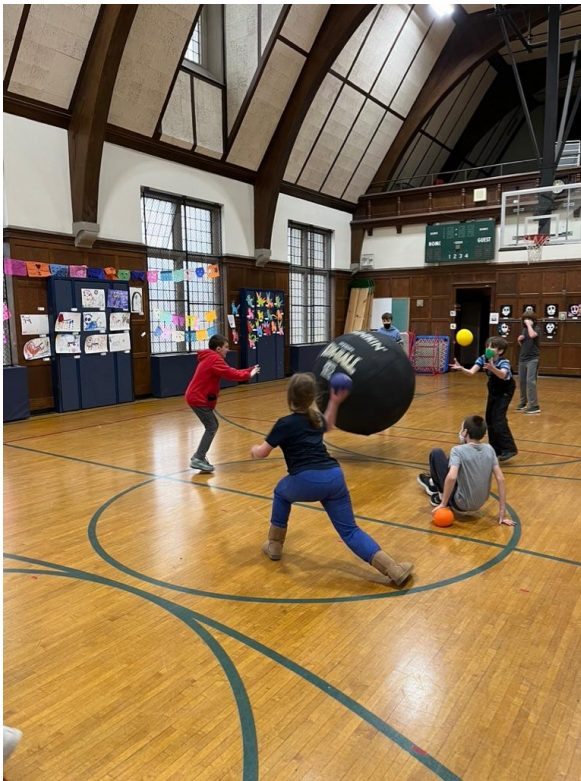


Something that is also unique is that social-emotional learning is the top priority in Mr. H-P's class: " I have two rules: **Be Safe** and **Be Kind.**"

Mr. H-P also tries to inspire kids with the confidence that they can learn and do anything with practice. "I can't stand when students say, 'I'm no good at this' or 'I can't do this.' My response is, 'You can't do it YET.' Then I have them say it with me, 'I'm not good at this YET.'"

"When I see a student struggle, we work together, break things down, and when they get it and there is that look of accomplishment on their face, that is 'it' for me. I often feel better than they do," says Mr. H-P.

Balancing Competition and Cooperation so Everyone Can Feel Successful



In any group of children, there are individual and developmental differences in skill, strength, size, and ability. That's why our PW classes include such a wide range of activities, an emphasis on fun over competition, and plenty of personal attention and instruction so that every student has the chance to feel successful through practice.

"4th and 5th grade seems to be a pivotal time where students tend to hit an interesting milestone. I find more conflict crops up as students assert their independence. At this point, teambuilding and non-traditional sports become even more important," says Mr. H-P.

"I tend to focus on games that can balance competitiveness with sportsmanship and really focus on the understanding that it is okay to be competitive as long as it does not detract from the 'spirit of the game'. Tchoukball is a perfect example of this. It is a nontraditional sport that involves throwing and catching: The only way to score is to catch the ball before it hits the ground after bouncing off a rebounder. Players of all abilities can actively engage."

"Unlike other sports, defenders are not allowed to block a pass or shot. The only defense is catching the ball before it hits the ground. This allows for a low-pressure scenario where students are responsible for each teammate being successful. If a teammate doesn't catch your pass, it may be that you didn't

throw the ball gently enough."

Such examples highlight why Physical Wellness is so much more than just exercise and play. Games are a chance to build social skills, collaboration, and teamwork skills, and learn how to resolve conflicts in productive and considerate ways, often using democratic process skills stressed across our curriculum.

"Students' experiences in Physical Wellness are important for their own sake, and they also support other key components of our philosophy, such as caring for the whole child, living and working in community with others, and honoring children's developmental needs for movement and play," says TCS Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Christina Martin.

Meet Our Physical Wellness Teacher, Mr. Ricky Halle-Podell:



After graduating from the University of Illinois with a B.A. in Psychology, Mr. H-P spent 4 years working in group homes with kids 8-21 who had been taken out of their homes by the state.

"I transitioned to another helping profession by merging my background in mental health with physical and emotional well-being." Toward this end, he graduated from the Chicago School of Massage Therapy in 1996 and started his own business: Massage Therapy of Oak Park." In 2009, I went back to school and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), with a certification in physical education, health education, and driver's ed."

"TCS was the perfect match for my personality and teaching style. it encouraged my concentration on social-emotional learning in an environment where I could use the medium of physical activities, sports, fitness and non-traditional games to help students become their best selves. This is one of the main reasons I call my class Physical Wellness as opposed to traditional physical education."



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