



Pathways to sport – Success story

Western Sydney MTB Club, Hawkesbury Hornets BMX Club and Colo Heights Public School

This document demonstrates the pathways to community sport and physical activity made available through the Australian Government's Active After-school Communities (AASC) program.

Sport: Cycling

Organisation: Western Sydney MTB Club, Hawkesbury Hornets BMX Club and Colo Heights Public School

Location: Hawkesbury, NSW

Date/Year: December 2012

Transitions: 6

Summary

This initiative was developed after the newly appointed Regional Coordinator for the Active After-school Communities (AASC) program, Rebecca Webb, met with the principal and students of Colo Heights Public School to discuss what sports they would like to participate in as part of the AASC program. BMX and mountain biking were by far the most popular choice.

The principal of the school indicated that he would be interested in getting the program off the ground for 2011, especially since the children had requested a BMX or mountain bike program on a number of occasions.

Due to the remote location of the site, the principal and the regional coordinator felt it was essential for the focus of the program to be on bike safety, incorporating both cycling disciplines. This was the first time a site in the Hawkesbury region had run a bike program. The success of the program can be attributed to the fact that the principal listened to the strong interest and demand from the children rather than selecting a sport himself.

Planning

The planning involved in establishing this pathway included:

- Coordinating the acquisition of new bikes and promoting the program to members of the Colo Heights community.
- The principal constantly worked to promote the program to the parents via the school's newsletter. To ensure that the children's bikes were in good condition and to minimise inconvenience to parents, the school provided parents with the option of leaving their bikes on-site in a secure location for the full program, or else they could bring their child's bikes to the school on a weekly basis.
- Providing the children with an opportunity to further extend their skills in the AASC program by setting up a 'track active day'.
- Due to the strong interest in the program from both the children and their parents, the principal and regional coordinator wanted to take the pathways action plan one step further and give the children the ultimate experience of riding on a BMX track. A Special Initiatives Grant (SIG) was utilised to cover the school's expenses for the inaugural Hawkesbury 'track active day'.
- Establishing links and relationships with Western Sydney Mountain Bike Club and the Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club have been crucial to the success of the program. Western Sydney Mountain Bike club currently has four registered community coaches available to deliver in the region while the Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club do not have the same resources to deliver the AASC program throughout the seven weeks. It is important to recognise this as an opportunity for cross club promotion by getting the two clubs working together, rather than a barrier.
- By utilising role model examples such as Caroline Buchanan and Jared Graves (who have competed at an international level in both BMX and mountain biking) a powerful message that the rider does not have to be limited to one discipline. There are membership options available for riders who are not interested in both BMX and mountain bike racing. Both clubs were provided with equal opportunity to showcase their sports and work with children on the track active day.
- Newsletter inserts in the AASC regional newsletter and the school newsletter were used to keep parents and the clubs up to date on the status of the program and the 'track active day' initiative.

Implementation

Although the Western Sydney Mountain Bike club was delivering the seven week program at the school, the community coaches were willing to work with the Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club for the track active day. The 'track active day' was initially planned as a two hour event but grew to three hours with a number of junior riders in the Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club volunteering to come down to the track to represent their club and showcase their talents to the children from Colo Heights Public School. The response from the children of Colo Heights Public School was

very positive with many of them commenting that this was 'awesome' and 'cool'. The children also reported liking the exhibition because the children were their age.

The Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club approved the proposal put forward by the regional coordinator to offer all of the participating children a voucher to claim a free three ride permit. A three month ride permit is an introductory club licence which allows the rider to attend three club meetings and participate in racing and training opportunities. If the student joins the club they will receive \$30 off the cost of a membership. A copy of the club's meeting calendar was provided in each child's show bag and key dates were included on the voucher in case the calendar was misplaced. Both of the clubs were willing to work together to promote participation and took up the opportunity to showcase their respective disciplines to the children at the 'track active day.'

Outcome

- At this stage it is not known if the pathway is successful in transitioning the children into sports clubs as this is an ongoing initiative.
- One of the students in kindergarten who did not know how to ride a bike can now ride a bike and told the regional coordinator that he had been practicing regularly at home.
- Parent engagement was also very successful for this program and the 'track active day' initiative, with many reporting they have never seen their children so excited about sport and coming to the school with their bikes. As a result of this, many of the parents would arrive at the school early to watch the AASC session. In addition, there was a very strong parental presence at the track active day.
- The school is looking at purchasing additional bikes and setting up a track onsite for the children to use during lunch times.

Learnings

The success of this program can be attributed to the fact the principal listened to the strong interest and demand from the children rather than just choosing a sport he thought the children would enjoy participating in as part of the AASC program. The biggest success learning though was the importance of working closely with local clubs and getting them engaged and involved.

AASC Regional Coordinator Rebecca Webb worked to establish this pathway for children in NSW into cycling.