

Rethinking School Golf

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Aim

Finnish Golf Union started its new school program in August 2016. Aim has been to change the perspective of teachers and students towards golf, increase physical activity at schools, and attract more juniors to golf.

Purpose and Background

Golf clubs have introduced golf to schools traditionally for more than 30 years. Either school classes have been asked to visit golf course for an introduction lesson or clubs have visited schools and introduced golf with traditional format (iron golf clubs, soft golf ball replicas). In spite of good intention and good effort, this has not worked. Junior memberships at Finnish golf clubs have been declining last six years.

Finnish Golf Union (FGU) wanted to build a new school program and approached stakeholders at the Finnish board of education and the Finnish schools on the move program and asked their help. With launch of a new physical education curriculum (autumn 2016) and goals of Finnish schools on the move program FGU created Drive at school program to support both of these. Main goals for Drive at school program are to increase physical activity in a school day, change teachers and pupils perspective towards golf and, eventually, see an increase in junior memberships at golf clubs. Promise to a teacher is that if they implement Drive at school program in they will implement the new physical education curriculum.

Design and Implementation

From the first moment Drive at school was teacher centered. FGU copied the idea of easy golf equipment from the German Golf Union and their school program Abchlag Schule. FGU chose Short golf equipment that have big club heads and balls that are tennis ball sized. Balls stick to targets where they are hit. From the start golf was just one part of the program. Drive at school followed the principles of new physical education curriculum for Finnish schools. New curriculum was the rock we leaned on when planning drills for the program. In spring 2016 FGU worked with six teachers and their classes around Finland for a pilot version and tested drills and program's philosophy. Simultaneously drills were developed and and filmed for teacher platform. To make programme attractive and as easy as possible to use for teachers became a strategy for the program. Therefore, a web-based platform was created to support teachers in designing Drive at school classes.

Practicing physical functional capacity is one of the key elements in Drive at school - program. Multiple skills are key elements of the programme, including drills to support Move! tests. Move! is a national physical functional capacity monitoring and feedback system for Finnish 5th and 8th grade pupils.

Teacher centered approach has been the key principle of the program. Teacher is the owner and specialist in the program, not fe. golf pro. FGU gets constant feedback and best practices from teachers. Teacher who delivers Drive at school program doesn't have to be a golfer. He/she can use ready-made plans and practice sessions from our free platform for planning classes.

Pupils / students participation is also vital part of the new PE curriculum in Finland. With Drive at school planning program pupils / students can easily plan PE sessions with or without their teacher.

In addition to drills in different functional capacities we have included competition for classes, Olympic education and the game version of school golf: Park golf. A park golf course can be easily set up to a park, school yard, sports facility or golf course.

The first year of the program (2016-17) was aimed at lower level comprehensive schools. FGU recruited 19 teachers to deliver Drive at school workshops for school teachers. On the fall of 2017 program expanded to upper comprehensive schools and high schools and vocational schools.

Results

More than 2500 teachers and golf club instructors have participated to more than 220 workshops for throughout the country. The amount of teacher trainers has reached 28. More than 400 schools and institutions have Drive at school equipment.

Conclusion and Implications

Adjustment is the key in bringing sports to schools in Finland. Instead of pushing sport to school it needs to be adjusted by the teacher and school to fit in. Drive at school is a free service for teachers in Finnish schools (also available in Swedish). It is a way to change people's perspective towards golf and make it more a sport for everybody.

Drive at school program has succeeded in early stages and is expanding to youth organisations, confirmation schools and parishes, and early childhood education. To make golf clubs in Finland understand the importance of versatile physical activity is another story and problem for us to solve.

References

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