



Project Number: 557089 EPP1-2014-IT-SPO-SC

# HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO BALANCE SPORT AND STUDY AT SCHOOL

*A Toolkit for School directors*

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## Introduction

Students often have to make a choice: dropping the sport that interests them and/or for which they are gifted, if they want to dedicate more time to studies, or commit to their favourite sport to the detriment of their general training.

These guidelines addressed to school directors aim to create a school environment in which athlete students do not have to make this choice. Each step addresses a different aspect of the problem. They do not have to be followed in a specific order.



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## Avoid competition between the two areas. Sport and school can add value to each other

Not all athlete students aspire to a career in sport. Some see in the daily practice of a sport a way to acquire some living hygiene as well as a strict and rigorous discipline.

Many students find in sport the motivation they need in their studies. The students who practice sports on a top level often are disciplined and take a serious responsibility in both studies and sports activities. Their daily rhythm with practices, lessons and homework is balanced and supervised by the students themselves.

Because it is related to a more concrete effort than the intellectual effort, sport can often be used to explain students the meaning of homework or the need to persevere even when you do not understand at once: "like a football or basketball player needs to exercise shooting every day in order to do it during a game, likewise a student needs to do their homework carefully every day if they hope to have a good mark when they do the task in class".

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 1 is to help school directors and teachers understand the nature of top sports and how this can be used as a support for the studies by showing the similarities between the two areas (such as time management and serious work).

### Online Resources

- [Case studies on "Not Only Fair Play"](#)

A collection of interviews with students who explain how they manage to balance sport and education, what support they receive, especially from their parents.

- [Premiere Sports](#)

In 2013 Premiere Sport launched the Inspire Programme, an initiative delivered by qualified sports professionals. It offers schools tailor made suites of sport and activity options targeted towards achieving curriculum outcomes. It is designed to be inclusive, with complete activity structures to engage all pupils, from those not normally inspired by sport, through to the budding stars of the future.

- [Dundee Academy of Sport](#)

The Dundee Academy of Sport works alongside colleagues in partner schools to develop a programme of learning opportunities, which link the participation in sport/physical activity to other areas across the school curriculum. Sport can be a vehicle for developing an active learning approach.

### Online Resources

- [Knowing Your Land – Environmental Heritage – Trekking Activity](#)

Knowing the cultural and natural beauty of the territory of Prato, Tuscany and Italy, planning and carrying out a trekking activity at school, with an experienced guide and the teachers in an interdisciplinary work.

- [Sports and science](#)

Giving ideas of science projects related to sports this initiative gives students notions on how to use their science knowledge to be better in sports while promoting the importance of sports in terms of health.

- [Sports Science Fair Project Ideas](#)

The initiative offers science fair projects ideas related to various sport disciplines. It shows there are many interesting ways to apply science to sports. It shows the importance of science knowledge in sports and shows sports as an activity that has a lot to do with how school students learn. The initiative promotes also the importance of sports in terms of health.

- [Combining Sports and Learning](#) (only in Finnish)

A Finnish survey of how to balance elite sports career and studies by Timo Manninen.



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## Open a sports studies section for the students who have achieved an elite status

It is a good compromise with parents, who often fear their children will stop their studies to focus on a career in sport and it is a guarantee that students can choose another curriculum if the sport career is compromised.

By integrating considerable time dedicated to the practice of sport in a school, this type of section offers students the possibility to enhance their physical talents and to make links between their activity and common core lessons that may appear under a new light.

The main goal is to keep in “friendly relationships with the school” and in sufficient conditions for success, young people to whom ordinary curricula do not offer enough possibilities of movement and physical activity.

It is necessary that sport activities have a specific “educational perspective” that will make it possible to focus more on educational objectives than on the exclusive search for physical and technical performances. Sport activities and studies should thus create a balanced combination that is approved and appreciated by the student, by the school and by the sport club alike.

Whatever the sport chosen as the main activity of the section, the learning contents proposed to the students will need to be focused on two main topics. On the one hand, the student should develop an in-depth knowledge of the internal logics, physical preparation techniques and work that are specific to this sport. On the other hand, the student needs to receive the theoretical references and knowledge necessary to become increasingly autonomous in their physical activity. These two sides of the training should be constantly interrelated. Students need to perceive the direct links between their sport practice and theoretical or scientific inputs addressed in the option.

The following should be included in the lessons: health education, security education, expression education, sport education. This is often possible by integrating the subjects into other teaching subjects. However, this means a close cooperation between teachers. Furthermore, some individual training should be recognised as part of the vocational training, since the coaching received in the sport clubs is normally tailor-made and thus helps students develop better than in big classes.

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 2 is to introduce options for schools in order to organise studies and special sport paths for the athletes of the top level. It helps develop individual learning paths and create choices for mass and traditional study programs.



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### Online Resources

- [“Sport élite” section at Collège Sainte-Véronique](#)

Collège Sainte-Véronique in Liège, Belgium, offers students the possibility to combine a curriculum in their chosen option (Latin, mathematics, sciences, economics...) and the intensive practice of their sport thanks to an adapted timetable to follow all the courses.

- [“Sports-studies” section at Athénée Royal Liège Atlas](#)  
(only in French)

This secondary school in Liège, Belgium, offers three sports-studies sections: basketball, football and physical education. While respecting educational criteria, these sections propose eight hours per week of sport (besides the regular two hours of physical education).

### Online Resources

- [“Individual sport learning path” in Omnia](#) (only in Finnish)

How a young athlete can choose a special learning pathway in vocational education and training.

- [Athletes' training and vocational qualification](#)

Individual sport learning paths and related information in Salpaus vocational college, Lahti, Finland

- [Balancing sports and studies](#) (only in Finnish)

Web pages for the support of elite athletes: studies, elite sports, career and finishing the sport career

- [Sport.fi](#)

Website for giving information about the studying possibilities for athletes, presentation of sport schools, etc.

- [Programme “Sport-études” curriculum in French-speaking Belgium](#) (only in French)

Detailed curriculum of the “Sport-études” section in Catholic secondary schools of French-speaking Belgium.



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## Individually support the elite student in the absence of a sports studies section

Several countries have a legal framework for young elite and/or promising athletes who are still at school. Depending on the country's legislation, this can entail an adapted course calendar for the student (such as optional classes or physical education classes replaced by hours of training). Be aware of the legislation in your country and provide information to athlete students who may not know how to obtain the status of elite or promising athlete.

Adapt the timetable of the courses and exams to the requirements related to training and competitions, implement individual support of the student, communicate and speak with the sport coaches for achieving a common understanding. Name a specific study counsellor or PE teacher who will serve as a link between students, sport clubs, parents and other teachers. Give the counsellor(s) enough time resources for the communication and guidance which is often individual and tailor-made for each student's needs.

Start the conversation and interaction with the student's sport team and coach. Try to find together the most convenient periods and times for exams and for practices. Morning practices have proved to be a good solution in many cases: it increases the effectivity and performance also at school afterwards.

If the student has educational difficulties, find possibilities of remedial classes that fit the student's schedule. There are sometimes homework clubs specifically addressed to athlete students. Some sport clubs also offer premises at the sport halls for homework support and homework clubs. Make sure that the teaching staff of your school is aware of this opportunity and encourage the students to make use of this help.

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 3 is to remind school directors of the possible status that an elite athlete may have according to the national legislation. It also reminds of the importance of cooperation between the school and sport clubs as a means of support for a student. Individual options, personal guidance and support are very important all along the study time..



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### Online Resources

- [Morning practices for the juniors](#)

Special practices in the mornings before school for talented juniors. Schools will give students free time for morning practices, which helps them concentrate on practices and after that they have time for studying.

- [Winning Students](#)

A scholarship to: support talented student athletes to progress along the performance pathway in their sport; enhance the levels of success of talented student athletes in international competitions; enhance the extent and quality of partnership working between governing bodies of sport and education sectors; enhance the capability of the education sectors to support and cater for the needs of talented student athletes as flexibly as possible.

[Circulaire n°4951 du 18/08/2014 - Sport et études dans l'enseignement secondaire ordinaire](#) *(only in French)*

Memorandum by the Ministry of education in French-speaking Belgium presenting the measures provided for students with a status of elite athlete, promising athlete or training partner. These students can replace some of their lessons by hours of training.

### Online Resources

- [Maison des sportifs](#) *(only in French)*

Initiative by the Province of Liège, Belgium, to support athlete students who have school difficulties: remedial classes, resource person entirely dedicated to the student, support to the organisation of sport competitions in and outside school.

- [Example of good practice: Morning practices for junior students in Finland](#) *(only in Finnish)*

An example of the of the cooperation in sport activities between different school levels and The Metropolitan NOC Elite Sports Academy in Finland

- [Example of good practice: Morning practices for junior students in Finland](#) *(only in Finnish)*

An example of the cooperation in basketball between schools and The Metropolitan NOC Elite Sports Academy in Finland



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## Implement a genuine collaboration between sport leaders and sport federations and schools

Negotiate with the coach the work calendar and leaves to competitions, create contact tools and make the students use a learning diary for sports and studies: this helps communication and provides transparency of the students' activities. Invite the coaches to the school for a common planning session for the schedule of the next semester. Some exam dates can be negotiated and planned together with the sport clubs. Work on creating a good atmosphere for common understanding and interaction. Give the study counsellor's contact information and introduce him/her to the coaches: knowing the person always helps interaction.

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 4 is to show new ways for interaction and cooperation between schools and sport clubs/coaches. Common planning that takes into consideration the schedules of practices and games may help when planning the schedule for exams and tests and thus reduce the number of absences.

## Online Resources

- ["Sport elite " section at Collège Sainte-Véronique](#)  
Collège Sainte-Véronique in Liège, Belgium, offers students the possibility to combine a curriculum in their chosen option (Latin, mathematics, sciences, economics...) and the intensive practice of their sport thanks to an adapted timetable to follow all the courses.
- [Premiere Sports](#)  
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- [How clubs can add cooperation with schools?](#) *(only in Finnish)*  
Suggestions on how to improve the cooperation between schools and sport clubs, case Vantaa, Finland
- [Benefits of the cooperation between schools and sport clubs](#) *(only in Finnish)*  
A video clip and case Leppävaara, Espoo (Finland) made by young students for the main TV channel in Finland.



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## Include parents

Parents need to take part in their children's project.

Explain to the parents the reasons behind the students' behaviour and choices (e.g. sleep, nutrition, schedules, time spent on school and on sports, parents' involvement, etc.). Create an open and confident relationship between parents, students and school.

Discussions with the parents could address the following topics:

- **Organising the student's schedule**  
A sport activity in complement to the regular school path is for children a factor of intellectual and psychological balance. The sport activity needs to find its place in the child's schedule, it needs to be perceived by the child as leisure time, not as an additional duty in an already busy schedule.
- **Clarifying the stakes of both education and sport**  
Not all athletes can make a living from sport, it is therefore dangerous to make it the focus of regular education. Explain to the student that only being in the service of one's school studies the sport they practice will be useful. As long as the child cannot be a professional athlete, parents should give priority to their school path, congratulating the child on their good marks or encouraging them to give priority to school.
- **Downplaying the consequences of failure**  
In case of a bad result in sport, remind the child that practice makes perfect, as long as they do not let go.
- **Making links between sport training and intellectual activities**  
Sport can often be used to explain students the meaning of homework or the need to persevere even when you do not understand at once (see examples in Step 1).

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 5 is to make sure that the parents are invited to the common communication that aims at supporting the student's progress and success both at school and in sports. Sometimes school teachers and directors take it for granted that parents follow very closely their children's progress, but there has to be common interaction so that everybody knows that the student is going in the right direction and that they can help and intervene if problems arise.

### Online Resources

- [Case studies on "Not Only Fair Play"](#)  
A collection of interviews with students who explain how they manage to balance sport and education, what support they receive, especially from their parents,
- [Etudes et sport: comment aider son enfant à concilier les deux?](#) (only in French)  
A French article addressed to parents on how to help their child balance sport and education.

### Online Resources

- [Home-school cooperation in basic education](#) (only in Finnish)  
Official recommendations for the cooperation between school and parents made by the National Board of Education in Finland
- [Example of home-school cooperation in Tornio](#) (only in Finnish)  
A case example of the cooperation between school and parents in Tornio, Finland, with supporting documents





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## Obtain recognition and financial support from educational authorities (Ministry of Education and Sports)

Search different ways of funding to develop the sport-study section; organise individual lessons and support for the students who are active and goal-oriented in sports.

Many countries have a legal framework for elite and/or promising athletes who are still at school. Depending on the country's legislation, this can involve an adapted curriculum (such as optional classes or physical education classes replaced by training sessions). Be aware of the legislation in your country and provide information to athlete students who may not know how to obtain the status of elite or promising athlete. There also may be school-specific scholarships and grants from the sport associations. Help your students find out these options for funding. Are there also sponsors among companies that would be willing to support the athletes' career?

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 6 is to remind school directors of the potential opportunities for funding or scholarships for young athlete students. The legislation varies from one country to another, but it is important that the school direction is aware of the possibilities that are offered for their students or schools.

### Online Resources

#### ● [Get Set to Make a Change](#)

Access to rewards and recognition in return for commitment to the programme, including: Meeting an Olympian and a Paralympian - Certificates for your young people - An invitation to an event at the end of the programme - Visits from athletes or invitations to exclusive Olympic and Paralympic events.

#### ● [Mon club mon école](#)

Within the framework of the operation "Mon club mon école", the French-speaking Community of Belgium offers grants to school. It encourages sport clubs to promote their discipline among students, to stimulate new passions and maybe to discover new talents.

### Online Resources

#### ● [Winning Students](#)

A scholarship to: support talented student athletes to progress along the performance pathway in their sport; enhance the levels of success of talented student athletes in international competitions; enhance the extent and quality of partnership working between governing bodies of sport and education sectors; enhance the capability of the education sectors to support and cater for the needs of talented student athletes as flexibly as possible.

#### ● [Circulaire n°4951 du 18/08/2014 - Sport et études dans l'enseignement secondaire ordinaire](#) (only in French)

Memorandum by the Ministry of education in French-speaking Belgium presenting the measures provided for students with a status of "elite athlete", "promising athlete" or "training partner". These students can replace some of their lessons by hours of training



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## Galvanise the practice of sport in the whole school

Because sport activities are a factor of intellectual and emotional balance and help prevent early school leaving, because beyond elites, every student needs to be brought to a good physical condition, because few families have the financial resources to pay for sport club fees, equipment or transports to competitions. Offer various sports to try and practice at school: this could get some students interested in starting a new hobby – even though they would not aim at the top level.

Improve the image of physical education lessons. In collaboration with physical education teachers, organise sport competitions at school or with other schools, focusing on activities in which most or all students can participate, regardless of their physical conditions or socio-economic background. You could use the opportunity of national and international events and awareness campaigns dedicated to the promotion of sports, such as the European week of sport or other sport-related national celebrations, to involve your school in a sport event.

Promote physical activities in everyday life, such as walking or cycling as a means to go to and from school. Associate it with other sport-related issues such as health and good nutrition, fair play, addictions. Open up challenges and games for the students for counting walking and biking kilometres, etc.

Help teachers invent and pilot new ways of learning in the classrooms – and outside the classrooms. Do the students have to sit on their chairs for the whole day or could they learn by doing and moving? What could be done outside the classroom and the school itself? How physical movement could enhance and support learning?

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 7 is to remind school directors of the importance of physical education and physical activities on a general level at schools. Not only athletes on a top level have to be taken into consideration but physical activities have to be offered for all students. Cooperation between vocational teachers and PE teachers may be fruitful and it may offer new ways of integrating PE into other subjects and also of organising sport events, competitions and other happenings that are targeted in the whole school



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## Online Resources

### ● [European week of sport](#)

The European Week of Sport aims to promote sport and physical activities across Europe. It is for everyone, regardless of age, background or fitness level.

### ● [Active Schools](#)

A programme designed to encourage children and young people to get active and stay active. A network of managers and coordinators work in every local authority area to increase the number of good quality opportunities for young people to get active.

### ● [Get Set to Make a Change](#)

Access to rewards and recognition in return for commitment to the programme, including: Meeting an Olympian and a Paralympian - Certificates for your young people - Invitation to an event at the end of the programme - Visits from athletes or invitations to exclusive Olympic and Paralympic events.

### ● [Mon club mon école](#)

Within the framework of the operation "Mon club mon école", the French-speaking Community of Belgium offers grants to school. It encourages sport clubs to promote their discipline among students, to stimulate new passions and to discover new talents.

### ● [National Sport Day at School](#)

This French initiative gathered students, teachers and parents and consisted in sporting and playful activities. The National Sport Day at school paved the way to an entire week dedicated to sport, in association with academic sport federations, sport in firms and the entire sport organisations.

## Online Resources

### ● [Sportez-vous bien](#)

Event organised by the city of Brussels at the National stadium ("King Baudouin Stadium") addressed to 6th primary school (11-12 years old) pupils and aimed to tight sport and healthy nutrition. 1440 pupils participate in sport activities and visit a "health village". They are informed about various topics such as the importance of healthy nutrition, how to brush one's teeth, the danger of smoking, fair play...

### ● [Promotion of sports in Finnish VET](#)

Cultural and Sports Association of Finnish Vocational Education and Training: The promotion of sports in vocational training in Finland is the major task of SAKY Ry. It gives useful advice and concrete examples as well as event for the use of VET teachers and students.

### ● [Finnish Schools on the Move](#)

Increasing physical activity and decreasing sedentary time among school-aged children

### ● [Research at LIKES](#)

Research Center for Sport and Health Sciences provides scientific information in order to enhance physical activity

### ● [Expertise in the promotion of Health enhancing physical activity](#)

A set of recommendations for physical activities for children and young people; by UKK Institute in Finland



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## Make use of the recognition of learning outside classroom

There are certainly ways of proving some outside classroom learning via sports (e.g. teamwork, social skills, language skills, etc.). Make vocational teachers and study counsellors plan and discuss together about the possibilities for recognition of the informal or non-formal learning outcomes. Give the students opportunities for skills tests and exams according to their sports activities schedules – sometimes it might be impossible to join the group exams or tests. Sport activities may here be in an important position as athletes may travel to other countries, speak foreign languages and acquire other important skills, including lifelong learning skills that should be a part of all studies.

Thanks to sport activities, students achieve different learnings, not only in sport but also on ethical, emotional, behavioural and relational issues. They also help develop personal commitment in the training process. Create – together with the student – an individual study plan with individual goals and steps of how to reach these goals.

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 8 is to introduce the principles of recognition of prior learning or of learning outcomes acquired via informal or non-formal learning. It is advisable that the teachers and study counsellors get to know deeply the student's background and the nature of the sport activities, e.g. are there travels abroad, possibilities for the use of foreign languages, special vocabulary related to the sports, etc.

### Online Resources

#### ● [Dundee Academy of Sport](#)

The Dundee Academy of Sport works alongside colleagues in partner schools to develop a programme of learning opportunities, which link the participation in sport/physical activity to other areas across the school curriculum. Sport can be a vehicle for developing an active learning approach.

#### ● [Game On Scotland](#)

Using the 2014 Commonwealth Games as a context for learning, the website helped practitioners create engaging learning opportunities for children and young people across Scotland and beyond.

#### ● [Knowing Your Land – Environmental Heritage – Trekking Activity](#)

Knowing the cultural and natural beauty of the territory of Prato, Tuscany and Italy, planning and carrying out a trekking activity at school, with an experienced guide and the teachers in an interdisciplinary work

### Online Resources

#### ● [Sports Science Fair Project Ideas](#)

The initiative offers science fair projects ideas related to various sport disciplines. It shows there are many interesting ways to apply science to sports. It shows the importance of science knowledge in sports and shows sports as an activity that has a lot to do with how school students learn. The initiative promotes also the importance of sports in terms of health.

#### ● [Opin Ovi projects for developing training](#)

A portal of a set of 30 Finnish training projects including guidelines for recognition of prior learning in a Finnish context.

#### ● [Vocational education and training credit system \(only in Finnish\)](#)

An article of the ECVET system published in the website of Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture

#### ● [Education and Training](#)

The European Commission's official website





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## Give options for the student

There are certainly many different ways of acquiring the information and knowledge taught at school. It is not always necessary to attend the school lessons, but a student may also show their competences and skills in other ways. By providing for the students these options for different ways of learning, the teacher may also vary his / her work contents and get new perspectives for teaching and learning. It may raise the motivation for teaching and also provide new and modern teaching methods. However, the school direction should give time resources for the planning – it is sometimes more fruitful to plan on new teaching methods in a group of teachers. Sometimes it is also recommendable and useful to invite the students themselves to plan the new ways of learning. Students should be heard and their suggestions should be taken into account in all curriculum work and development.

Physical and sport activities could be mixed with curriculum content (discovering the geography, flora and fauna of the region during a trekking activity, effects of sport on the body for the biology course...). Sport can also be used to enhance soft and relational skills (teamwork, interpersonal relationships, etc.) among all students (not only athletes).

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 9 is to motivate teachers to plan and organize their teaching in different ways thinking of different learning styles, different learners and different skills the students have. It is also recommended to get students themselves to participate in the planning of the lessons.



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- [Knowing Your Land – Environmental Heritage – Trekking Activity](#)

Knowing the cultural and natural beauty of the territory of Prato, Tuscany and Italy, planning and carrying out a trekking activity at school, with an experienced guide and the teachers in an interdisciplinary

- [How to promote health and wellbeing in vocational training](#)

Levels of student participation in VET.

### Online Resources

- [Sports and science](#)

Giving ideas of science projects related to sports this initiative gives students notions on how to use their science knowledge to be better in sports while promoting the importance of sports in terms of health.

- [Sports Science Fair Project Ideas](#)

The initiative offers science fair projects ideas related to various sport disciplines. It shows there are many interesting ways to apply science to sports. It shows the importance of science knowledge in sports and shows sports as an activity that has a lot to do with how school students learn. The initiative promotes also the importance of sports in terms of health.

- [Students' right for participation](#) *(only in Finnish)*

Participation of the students in curriculum work is a legally based right for all students in Finland.

- [Good practices in everyday school life](#) *(only in Finnish)*

A database and materials for promoting students' active participation and involvement in schools





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## Make a mapping of the conditions for practicing sports nearby your school

Are there sports fields, sports halls, etc. nearby? Local authorities may also provide information on sport facilities and their availability. How can students get there easily? Could the school perhaps provide some bikes for the students? Any possibilities to negotiate a sponsoring contract with some local company to provide for example bikes? Would this be helpful also when promoting sports for all students at school?

Wherever possible, cooperate with other schools of the area to share infrastructure (your school may have a swimming pool while another has an athletics track). Share also the possibilities and resources for morning practices in different sports – it saves resources, both human and financial, and strengthens also the cooperation between local schools.

You can also invite students to develop different ways of improving the conditions in schools, outside schools and in the surroundings. Students are the key actors to tell what kind of activities they would like to have at school and close to it. Try to convince the municipal decision-makers to cooperate with schools in this issue. Look for national or European funding programs for developing the infrastructure to be more encouraging for practicing sports and other ways of physical activities.

## Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 10 is to activate the school directors to think of the possibilities for practicing sports and for physical activities around school. Cooperation with local authorities and with other schools may be helpful and they may save resources and still offer a larger variety of option for physical activities for the students.

## Online Resources

- [MultiSport](#)  
The idea of MultiSport Project is to organise and conduct systematic, free after-school activities for children and youth from grades 4-6 elementary school (age 10-13 years).
- [Wellbeing in schools in Finland, slide presentation](#) *(only in Finnish)*  
Hietanen-Peltola: healthy and safe school environment and the well-being of the school community
- [Safe and welcoming school](#) *(only in Finnish)*  
From a European project to an everyday work for improving the school conditions in Mikkeli, Finland



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