

SPORTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING ENTER BOARD ASSESSMENT

CISCE makes physical education count

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Calcutta: Senior students may no longer be able to skip the sports field, and an excuse such as an allergy may not be enough to spare them from physical drills.

From 2028, students will be graded in Health and Physical Education, similar to SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work), with the grade reflected on the board marksheets issued by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE).

The component will cover areas such as sports and physical activities, mental, emotional and social well-being, physical literacy and active living, yoga and mindfulness, inclusion, leadership and sportspersonship.

"It is quite common for senior students to want to excuse themselves from sports. But once something is ratified by the board, the attitude and approach of students and parents change, and they start taking it more seriously," said Terence Ireland, principal of St James' School.

Once students enter Class IX, and particularly the board classes, many give up co-curricular activities, either voluntarily or under pressure from parents.

Participation in the annual sports day is often seen as a waste of time. Over the years, several schools, faced with a steady stream of applications from parents, have chosen to keep board-class students away from such events.

Children who remain physically



A sports day event at The Heritage School. File picture

active and participate in sports and games tend to have more productive study hours, said Seema Sapru, principal of The Heritage School.

"Work efficiency should be measured by how much work is completed in a given period, and not by how many hours a student sits with books," Sapru said.

Health and Physical Education at the ICSE and ISC levels will place equal emphasis on physical activity, health awareness and responsible living, the council said in a circular issued last week.

Several school heads said the council's endorsement would make it easier for schools to implement the programme.

"The circular can be used as a tool by schools to make parents and students realise the importance of sporting activities in life," said Terence John, director of education and development, Julien Day Schools.

Parents would also be easier to convince because many understand

the language of marks more than anything else, John said. "It would raise awareness among parents and children about the importance of a healthy body," he added.

The board marksheets will carry a grade for the subject.

Applications seeking exemption from sports, particularly the annual sports day, are common across schools.

"We receive applications from parents requesting that their children be excused from sports because they have dust or heat allergies," Sapru said.

Some cases are genuine, but not all, she added.

The skills developed on the sports field can last a lifetime, teachers said. "It inculcates discipline and resilience in children," Ireland said. Competition, learning to accept failure and working as part of a team are among the skills students acquire on the field.

"Academic excellence is not the only yardstick when students

appear for college interviews. Later in life, too, many skills beyond high marks make them job-ready," Ireland said.

High marks and examination performance may help a student secure admission to a course, but life does not stop there, Sapru said.

"Life begins after admission to a reputed college, when students have to survive in different and sometimes adverse circumstances for three or four years," she said.

The responsibility, however, will not rest with students alone, principals said.

"Schools will also have to be more proactive in organising sporting activities. One annual sports day may not be enough," John said.

The council has given schools flexibility in introducing physical activities in different ways.

"There is also the option of yoga, which students can take up for a healthy mind and body," said Mousumi Saha, principal of National English School.

With physical activity becoming part of the assessment framework, the role of counsellors is also expected to become more integral.

School counsellors may have to engage with every child, rather than only those who seek help, a principal said. The council has asked schools to remain vigilant for signs of stress and anxiety among students.

"The counsellor will meet each child, if not always individually, then in groups," said Sujoy Biswas, principal of Rammohan Mission High School.