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Forum to Discuss Issues in Middle Level Sports

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Selected News Releases

Forum to Discuss Issues in Middle Level Sports

ORONO, Maine -- Middle school kids are causing a lot of conversation and controversy in the sports arena. Not because of their behavior, but because they are caught in the middle of competing interests shaped by tradition, policy, parents and the desire to do what's best for youngsters going through tremendous life changes - physically, emotionally and socially.

Issues swirling around middle level sports range from competition and cutting to overzealous parents and untrained coaches and from diverse grade configurations in K-8 and 6-8 schools to scheduling barriers. But all stem from the basic question: What are developmentally appropriate athletic programs for young adolescents, broadly defined as ages 10 to 15?

These issues and concerns will be aired by experts at the Forum on Middle Level Athletics, a special session of the 2001 Middle Level Education Institute taking place this week at the University of Maine. The forum runs from 8 a.m. to noon on Thursday, July 12 in the D.P. Corbett Business Building.

The forum is sponsored by the Middle Level Athletics Task Force, a subcommittee of the Maine Center for Coaching Education. The major goals of the task force are to promote dialogue and raise awareness about all aspects of middle level sports - their purposes, benefits and limitations - and to provide information and resources on related issues and concerns.

Jim Walsh, principal of Saco Middle School, chairs the task force and will be among the panel members at the forum. Other panelists for Thursday's presentation include: John Swaim, professor at Otterbein College (Ohio) and a national middle level consultant; John Parola, recently retired assistant principal and athletic director at Dexter Middle School; James Russell, athletic director at Central Middle School in East Corinth; Marilyn Rice, retired Bangor middle level teacher/coach, now a graduate student at UMaine; and Keith Lancaster, director of the Maine Center for Coaching Education.

Following the panel discussion from 8-9 a.m. in Room 218 D.P. Corbett, concurrent break-out session will run from 9:15-10:15 a.m. and be repeated from 10:30-11:30 a.m., with final comments scheduled from 11:30-noon.

Break-out session topics and locations are:

- Developing an athletic philosophy ~ 217 D.P. Corbett Business Building
- Role of parents in middle school sports ~ 218 C.P. Corbett Business Building
- Current Issues and Concerns 219 ~ D.P. Corbett Business Building

About 160 educators from across Maine, as well as from Louisiana, Arkansas, Colorado and Florida, are attending the Middle Level Institute to work with national consultants, learn about the latest educational research and strategies and develop team projects to improve education for students at their individual schools.

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