

BLEEKES, Barbara.

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Barbara 'moving on'

Students 'must be active every day' for lifelong benefit says retiring fitness buff

By Henry Bury
The Intelligencer

Barbara Bleeks has been in the business of getting children 'moving' at an early age.

The fitness buff has been, appropriately enough, a physical education teacher over much of her 24-year career.

"Physical education is extremely important today because of our inactive living style," she acknowledged. "Our job in physical education is to promote a healthy active lifestyle."

And the younger the age group, the better, she added.

"In the primary grades, we're setting up the right attitude toward physical activity. It's best to get them when they're young. It's important for them to know that they must be active every day and active means getting the heart rate up."

Bleeks, 54, is retiring from the Hastings County Board of Education at the end of June.

She said she's fortunate in taking time out to raise a family and being in education.

The Bowmanville native began teaching in that city in 1961 after graduating from Peterborough Teacher's College. She spent two years there, teaching a Grade 2 class.

Bleeks married and moved to Ottawa where she taught Grade 3/4 students and later, an intermediate girls physical education program for four years.

"Ottawa was heavily oriented toward physical fitness and basic skills at that time," she said.

Bleeks moved to Kapuskasing and taught the intermediate physical education program. In 1971, she moved 'south' and began raising a family. Her husband, Barry, also taught for the Hastings school board and retired two years ago.

In 1983, Bleeks began supply teaching for the Hastings board. She's been on contract for the board over the past eight years.

In those eight years, she's been at D.R. Atkins, Harmony (where her husband was) and, for the past year, at Harry J. Clarke.

Bleeks spent those eight years in primary physical education.

"My big job at Harmony and Harry J. Clarke has been to implement the Quality Daily Physical Education program."

That program, she explained, requires students to complete 30 minutes of structured physical activity every day.



Intelligencer photo by Henry Bury

Barbara Bleeks...rolling along into retirement.

"The Hastings school board has been very proactive in implementing that program throughout the schools," she said.

Bleeks' role has been to demonstrate and give teachers ideas on how they can put the program into place throughout the school day. As well, she's produced resources that are "teacher friendly."

"Teachers have to provide the role model so that the students see physical education as a vital part of their curriculum."

Bleeks said fitness will remain important to her in retirement.

"It'll be part of my life."

One retirement project that will keep her and husband active will be construction of the family's retirement home near Bon Echo Provincial Park.