



Cross Country Alternatives

Proposal to the Educational Council – 02.2023

Pupils' Committee of European School Luxembourg 1

Introduction:

The well-being of our students is of utmost importance to us, and it is with this in mind that we present this proposal as a solution to a long-standing issue within our school community. For years, students have voiced their objections to the Cross Country Run, verbalizing negative experiences and the impact it has had on their mental health. Through a comprehensive survey, we have collected evidence to support these concerns. In light of the results, it is our goal to provide alternatives to the Cross Country that still promote sports and physical activity, but without compromising the mental health and well-being of our students.

In the final Educational Council of the previous school year, when faced with the exceedingly negative results of the student-wide survey of the Cross Country, the entire council came to a conclusion, in which all parties agreed that the Cross Country should be changed or replaced. This issue was then left as a responsibility of the physical education teachers to discuss and come to a solution together with the students.

Our proposal aims to find a solution and provide alternatives to the Cross Country that will be embraced by both students and teachers and to achieve our common goal of promoting sports and well-being in a healthy and positive environment.

Students' Mental Health

The Cross Country has had a considerably negative effect on the mental well-being of students throughout all the secondary year groups. These effects, such as immense stress and anxiety, are not only present on the day and week of the Cross Country, but for many, months prior to the run.

In the previous Educational Council, which took place at the end of the last school year in 2022, the results of the Cross-Country survey, filled out by more than 600 students, were examined, which the council found disturbing. Multiple comments made by the students described uncomfortable situations of emotional distress due to the Cross Country, with students experiencing panic attacks as a result of the upcoming run. A big part of this is the pressure which students feel to perform well in front of a large number of students watching the run.

Some students described having to run the Cross Country while feeling unwell or being injured in fear of receiving a bad grade. After the Cross Country, many students reported feeling extremely physically unwell, with some vomiting and fainting, as well as many feeling dizzy, being unable to walk or even stand up. Feeling so physically ill after a school event is very displeasing, but a reality which many students stress over months prior.

Alternative A: Charity Run

The first alternative we propose is a non-graded charity run, similar to events such as "Relais pour la vie" or the charity runs in primary school.

In this way students would have the opportunity to run for a charitable cause, supported by individual sponsors. This shift in focus would eliminate the pressure associated with the traditional Cross Country and encourage students to run for a meaningful purpose. Thus, this alternative would promote physical activity and well-being while also fostering important social and civic values such as empathy and compassion.

Alternative B: Sports day

Apart from the charity run, the Pupils Committee proposes the organisation of a sports day/week event featuring a variety of different sports options. We believe that hosting this type of event will have a multitude of benefits: it will not only promote physical health and friendly competitiveness but will also provide opportunities for students to develop teamwork and cooperation skills - skills that are valuable in both personal and professional settings. Additionally, a sports day provides the opportunity to acknowledge the abilities of all participants, whereas the Cross Country primarily focuses on recognizing the abilities of runners. Finally, such an event will foster a sense of community, where students can socialise, interact and enhance their social and emotional well-being.

Grade Harmonization

Additionally, there is no reason why the harmonization of the tests cannot be done within the respective classes. If the sports teachers really want to have at least one harmonized test per year, they can set up clear rules and procedures and give them to each teacher to be carried out. Since all the teachers should be capable of organizing such a test, this should be no problem, and the teachers will still be able to receive harmonized results and even see what the best students are in each class, which can be used to recruit students for Eurosport. In any case, students who participate in Eurosport are often already practising a sport in a club, and therefore, it cannot be concluded that the Cross Country has a direct effect on the success of our school at Eurosport.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from the results and arguments that have been presented, as the students' representatives, we believe that these alternatives promote both the students' mental health as well as their physical well-being. Furthermore, these alternatives also encourage a sense of community among the students, which is harder to achieve with the current Cross Country. Taking into consideration the best interests of the students, we regard these modifications necessary, notably due to the overwhelmingly negative responses from the students.