

Baldy: A Physical Education Adventure to Remember

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Physical Education is not always an easy subject to plan for when one works in a small, one room school without the luxury of a gymnasium. Larger establishments with gyms can move the students indoors whenever the weather turns foul. Students can play floor hockey, basketball, volleyball, etc. Students at small schools can play soccer in the snow, baseball in the rain or 7-up in the classroom, the latter being the most likely scenario since teachers, being the responsible people that they are, know that parents do not want their children playing in the rain. Of course we can play in the snow, build an igloo or a slide, but how does one explain this activity in terms of physical development? Where are projects such as these addressed in the curriculum guides? This can be very frustrating for children and teachers alike. During the winter months especially, the inner being suffers from dreary days. A feeling of depression can infiltrate the classroom. What could be more appropriate at a time such as this than a trip to the mountains. AND, if you are going to head for the hills in the winter, you might just as well plan to go skiing. The following was my impression of a recent trip to the local ski hill, just 35 kms from our small "gymless", school.



Had I been there a thousand times, I would still stare in awe at the breath-taking view from the summit of the Mount Baldy ski hill. Low cloud blocks the sun's brilliance as the chair lift sways gently on its way to the top. The fog thins and of a sudden one finds themselves in a wonderland of snow and frost. Branches are heavy laden with their crisp white burdens, everywhere the hillsides are blanketed in immaculate purity. Resting beside the small chalet before launching oneself down the steepness the eye feasts upon a giant mara of cloud, several mountain tops appearing as islands in the deceptive white vapour. Poling along the Baldy Trail one passes relics of years gone by, dead trees, weathered gray, stunningly beautiful in their simplicity. These sentinels stand artistically contrasted, as they cling to globs of passing snow. The snow itself as if to catch a foothold, grabs onto every passing tree and rock and although tenacious in its intention, the wind - there can be very intense winds on the top of Baldy - picks and tugs and sculpts, leaving the leading side smooth while the leeward appears misshapen, sharp and layered.



After a fresh fall of snow the slopes are spotless. Then come the skis and boards. There is a remarkable sense of adventure as one carves original patterns on freshly fallen snow. In a way it is like the Star Trek line of having gone "where no one has gone before", except this is better, because it is not fiction. No one has traversed this snow cover before you. The cold mountain air is clean and invigorating both as it whistles by and as you suck it deep into your lungs. The sun is warm upon your face. The fact that you can actually ski down the hill without injury brings a sense of personal accomplishment. All thoughts of sore muscles or joints are postponed for the days that follow. The trees, bushes and rocks are a constant blur, as you press on to the valley beckoning below.

When the sun finally burns its way through to the lower levels and the entire resort area becomes visible,

as the sun's reflection glistens from every flake of snow, it is then that one beholds the beauty of the random patterns etched on the runs not unlike the giant insects and animals carved into the tops of the Andes mountains. What a view! What an adventure! What a day! I can tell you truthfully, that I and each of my students returned home full of fresh air, exhausted from a 5 hour workout, but more importantly, refreshed and inspired, ready for more. How wonderful to be able to make such use of His creation, for God invented snow!

