**SAFETY IN ATHLETICS: Sandy Robertson, DPE, DCE, Master Coach.**

**S**- SENSE **A**- ADVICE **F**- FACILITIES **E**- EQUIPMENT/ ETIQUETTE **T**- THROWS **Y**- YOU SHOULD NOW BE SAFE/ YEEOW!

**SENSE:** Children should understand that attending to safety is sensible for themselves and for everyone else; no one should be hurt during P. E., even though sports activities are intrinsically exciting because of their inherent risks. The class should co-operate by having sensible footwear, and having it tightly secured; long hair should be tied back, and jewellery removed.

**ADVICE:** The class should be aware of the other safety rules before they start, be prepared to follow instructions to the letter and take advice at all times, including advice suddenly given in an emergency e.g. ‘Track!’ or ‘Stand still!’

**FACILITIES:** As teachers, you will be more familiar with your school facilities than most, so will know if the track/ sandpit/ throwing area is suitable on any particular day, including after rain, or in the early morning after heavy dew.

**EQUIPMENT:** In Primaries, soft equipment is recommended, and the Elevating Athletics manual illustrates the use of footballs for shot/ hoops for discus/ foam javelins for spears/ ball-in-a-bag or ring-on-a-rope for hammer. On a non-windy day, large cardboard boxes from a local store can be opened and turned on their sides to make hurdles. Early years in the Secondaries can also benefit from learning on simple equipment in a non-threatening environment.

**ETIQUETTE:** Track etiquette consists of running in the approved direction, clearing the track when a shout of ‘Track!’ is heard and looking both ways as if crossing a road before crossing the track. Hurdling should be in one direction only, and this is crucial where manufactured hurdles are concerned. It’s difficult to get the earlier classes to run in lanes, since they tend to head for the teacher standing at the finish, but it’s part of the later and ongoing learning process. In jumping, the next person, whilst not delaying, should be taught to wait until the mat, bed or pit is clear before starting. Mats may move, so alertness is needed. If a sandpit needs raked, it doesn’t have to be done after every jump, but use of the rake needs to be controlled. In high jumping, it may be easier to have children take turns at holding a bungee [a foam bar] rather than have stands which topple over; and a fibreglass bar can intimidate.

**THROWS:** In throwing, special care must be taken, and Mosston’s Command style employed when non-soft equipment is used. Working with a partner works best, with the commands given as:- ‘Ready’, ‘Throw’, ‘Stand Still’, ‘Reverse’,’ Partner collects’. Good eye contact and use of voice is important here, and on windy days, or for a large group, a whistle blast can be used singly and doubly to indicate ‘Throw’ and ‘Collect’. Throwers need to be well spaced out from side to side on a line; in the case of discus throwing, a diagonal line is used so that the right handed thrower releasing early doesn’t threaten his classmate: left handers are to the left. A throwing square can be used with soft apparatus, with a different throw on each side, and partners within the square waiting to collect on a signal.

**YOU SHOULD NOW BE SAFE:** You will know the class better than anyone, so you will know their capabilities. You’ll be able to patiently teach the safety aspects of the activities without fussing, and give the class a positive athletics experience; the class will now be safe.

**YEEOW!** The alternative – ‘Yeeow!’ is not to be contemplated.