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THE QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION ON HEALTHY LIVING

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ABSTRACT

A quality physical education program provides learning opportunities, appropriate instruction, meaningful and challenging content, and student and program assessment. In addition, a quality physical education improves mental alertness, academic performance, and readiness and enthusiasm for learning in our nation's youth. The public is generally aware that being healthy is important. However, the public may not know, or understand, the importance of physical education. Opinions regarding past physical education experiences in school often distort the link between quality physical education and personal health. Central to the association between physical education and health is the teacher. Teachers trained as physical educators exhibit higher levels of effective teacher behaviors (Constantinides et al., 2013) and create quality physical education programs. Trained physical education teachers can achieve, for example, greater physical fitness improvement in children than physical education teachers who lack appropriate training (Starc&Strel, 2012). According to the latest Shape of the Nation Report (NASPE, 2012), both the National Association of Sport and Physical Education and the American Heart Association believe physical activity achieved through participation in physical education improves one's overall well-being and is one of the best preventers of significant health problems linked to many chronic diseases (e.g., obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol). No other school subject has the potential to fulfill these health needs. If schools are to make a positive impact on our children's' health now and in the future, physical education must be present in schools, be taught by qualified teachers, and focus on healthy behaviors.



KEYWORDS : Components of a High-Quality PE, Quality PE Important, Teacher education, supply and development, 10 Reasons for Quality PE.

INTRODUCTION

Regular participation in physical activity has a significant positive effect on people's health and well-being. In turn, improved health and well-being positively influence quality of life and society as a whole. Organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the allied health community emphasize the importance of lifelong physical activity to good health. This is true for all people, including those with physical and mental challenges, the sedentary population, and even elite athletes.



DEFINING QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

Physical education is at the core of a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity through schools. All children, from prekindergarten through grade 12, should participate in quality physical education classes every school day. Physical education helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life, while providing an opportunity for students to be active during the school day (Appendix 9). Leading professionals in the field of physical education have developed a new kind of physical education that is fundamentally different from the stereotypical “roll out the balls and play” classes of decades past that featured little meaningful instruction and lots of humiliation for students who were not athletically coordinated. Professional associations, academic experts, and many teachers across the country are promoting and implementing quality physical education programs (Appendix 10) that emphasize participation in lifelong physical activity among all students.

The Four Components of a High-Quality Physical Education Program

1. Opportunity to Learn

- All students are required to take physical education.
- Instructional periods total 150 minutes per week (elementary) and 225 minutes per week (middle and secondary school).
- Physical education class size consistent with that of other subject areas.
- Qualified physical education specialist provides a developmentally appropriate program.
- Adequate and safe equipment and facilities.

2. Meaningful Content

- Written, sequential curriculum for grades P-12, based on state and/or national standards for physical education.
- Instruction in a variety of motor skills designed to enhance the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of every child.
- Fitness education and assessment to help children understand, improve and/or maintain physical well-being.
- Development of cognitive concepts about motor skill and fitness.

3. Appropriate Instruction

- Full inclusion of all students.
- Maximum practice opportunities for class activities.
- Well-designed lessons that facilitate student learning.
- Out of school assignments that support learning and practice.
- Physical activity not assigned as or withheld as punishment.

4. Student and Program Assessment

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- Assessment is an ongoing, vital part of the physical education program.
 - Formative and summative assessment of student progress.
 - Assessment of program elements that support quality physical education.
 - Stakeholders periodically evaluate the total physical education program effectiveness.

Quality Physical Education Important

Quality Physical Education Programs help all Students Develop:

- Health-Related Fitness.
- Physical Competence.
- Cognitive Understanding.
- Positive Attitudes about Physical Activity so that they can adopt Healthy and Physically Active Lifestyles.

TEACHER EDUCATION, SUPPLY AND DEVELOPMENT

As the provision of QPE depends on wellqualified educators, responsible authorities should undertake punctual reviews of systems of QPETE as a policy priority.

Reviews should be undertaken with due regard to improvements in both the initial and continuing education of physical education teachers. Particular focus must be placed on those responsible for physical education in primary/elementary schools. High-quality pre- and in-service training for teachers, based on respect for human rights and the principles of inclusive education, is an essential element for supporting teacher effectiveness.

Government, or a well-established coordinating body, should take responsibility for the coordination and provision of a CPD framework which aims to raise and protect professional standards. The responsible agency should play a significant role in providing leadership for QPE and its practitioners; particularly in the improvement and safeguarding of standards, and in the development of accreditation systems to ensure appropriate preparation, experience and qualification as well as safe and ethical delivery.

CPD opportunities should involve internal and external experts, and should deepen and extend teacher knowledge and skills. Moreover, international collaboration between physical education professionals is essential to the development of QPE and should be promoted through exchange programmes for physical education professionals.

FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

The provision of QPE requires material resources, and appropriate technical support, to ensure access to physical education for all pupils, including those with disabilities, and those with specific religious requirements.

Where circumstances allow, the scope of technology should be more fully exploited. In this regard, physical education is an almost unique educational experience where learners receive objective feedback as they engage in activities.

In order to secure the place of physical education within the school curriculum, provision should not be marginalized in favour of other subjects and/or events which require resourcing. Where this is unavoidable efforts must be made to provide physical education using alternative, appropriate facilities. In this regard, partnerships with communitysports organizations should extend to use of community facilities to reduce costs and encourage young people to engage in extracurricular sport and physical activity, beyond the school day. This can be a two-way process, ensuring that the school facilities are also made available to the community at evenings and weekends.

10 Reasons for Quality Physical Education

1. Regular Physical Activity Helps Prevent Disease

The Surgeon General's report on physical activity and health documented the importance of regular physical activity in reducing the risk of the major chronic diseases that plague our society (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1996). A similar document (U.K. Department of Health, 2004), produced by Britain's Chief Medical Officer, supports the findings of the U.S. Surgeon General. It is now clear that the risks of major chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some forms of cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis are increased by sedentary living. In addition there is evidence that regular physical activity can improve immune function and help relieve symptoms of arthritis, asthma, and fibromyalgia for some people (summarized in Corbin, Welk, Corbin, & Welk, 2006).

2. Regular Physical Activity Promotes Lifetime Wellness

In the 1940s the World Health Organization declared that health was more than freedom from disease (Corbin & Pangrazi, 2001). Quality of life and a sense of well-being were considered to be equally important to good health. This positive component of good health is now referred to as wellness. In recent years, evidence has accumulated demonstrating that physical activity can promote wellness in adults as well as youths.

3. Quality Physical Education Can Help Fight Obesity

The high incidence of obesity in our society has been characterized as an "obesity epidemic" by some experts (Lohman, Going, & Metcalf, 2004; Mokdad et al., 1999). Among the American adult population, 66 percent are overweight and 32 percent are obese. Approximately 19 percent of children and 17 percent of adolescents are overweight, and 37 percent of children and 34 percent of teens are either overweight or at risk of being overweight. There has been a three-fold increase in overweight conditions among children and adolescents over the last two decades (Lohman et al., 2004; Ogden et al., 2006; Troiano, Flegal, Kuczmarski, Campbell, & Johnson, 1995).

5. Quality Physical Education Can Help Promote Lifelong Physical Fitness

Physical fitness, as it relates to good health, has been categorized into five components (cardiovascular fitness, strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition) since the 1980s (Corbin & Pangrazi, 2000). "Health-related fitness" is the descriptor commonly used by health professionals (including physical educators). A strong body of evidence indicates that low cardiovascular fitness is related to higher risk of chronic disease and that high cardiovascular fitness has a protective effect for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, high blood lipid levels, diabetes and some forms of cancer (U.K. Department of Health, 2004; USDHHS, 1996). Strength and muscular endurance are associated with lower risk of osteoporosis and higher functional capacity (USDHHS, 1996, 2004).

5. Quality Physical Education Provides Unique Opportunities for Activity

As outlined in the previous four reasons, physical activity is a common denominator for health. The scientific evidence for providing youths with physical activity for healthy growth and development is unequivocal (Fletcher et al., 1992; Pate et al., 1995; USDHHS, 1996). Physical activity helps reduce the risk of disease, promotes wellness, contributes to energy balance and maintenance of healthy body composition, and promotes fitness development.

6. Quality Physical Education Teaches Self-Management and Motor Skills

The goals of English and mathematics are to provide students with necessary skills they will apply in the "real world." Quality physical education provides students with many real-world skills in addition to providing regular physical activity in the school day. Among the most important of these skills are self-management skills that help youths adopt healthy living practices and manage their day-to-day activities. Self-management skills are an especially important part of a quality secondary physical education.

7. Physical Activity and Physical Education Promote Learning

The principal reasons for the reductions in physical education programs over the past 20 years include scarcity of resources and lack of time. When budget constraints become problematic in schools, physical education programs (and physical education teachers) are often among the first to go. With recent efforts to improve scores on “high stakes” testing in areas such as reading, English, math, and science, competition for time during the school day has become intense. Again, time for physical education is often reduced based on the notion that youths will do better on “academic” tests if time is diverted from physical education and recess to other areas. However, research does not support this contention.

8. Regular Physical Activity Participation Makes Economic Sense

In the ten years from 1990 to 2000, there was a 29 percent decrease in the number of schools requiring high school physical education (Grunbaum et al., 2004; Grunbaum et al., 2002). While many public school educators struggle with large class sizes, insufficient equipment, and limited facilities, physical educators endure the additional stress of having to continually defend the importance of their program and fight for its survival. As noted in the previous section, one major reason for cutting physical education in recent years is budget constraints. The evidence suggests that cutting physical education to save money is shortsighted. In fact, over the long haul, cutting physical education can be quite costly.

9. Physical Education Is Widely Endorsed

Given the fact that physical education programs are sometimes cut because of economic reasons, one might think that public support for physical education is weak. In fact, support from parents, professional groups, and some government departments is quite strong. Our national health goals reflect the priority given to physical activity promotion for youths and the need for quality physical education in the schools.

10. Quality Physical Education Helps to Educate the Total Child

Empty heads devoid of bodies do not come to school to be filled. Nor is school a place where we build bodies at the expense of the head. A central tenant of a sound educational philosophy is to educate the whole child. The famous quote, *mens sana in corpore sano*, attributed to an early Roman poet, is often translated from Latin as “a sound mind in a sound body.” A more literal translation suggests that the phrase means, “to pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body.”

Physical education is the only subject in school in which children have the opportunity to learn the motor skills and acquire the knowledge to participate in a variety of physical activities (Sallis & McKenzie, 1991). It is the only subject in which physical activity is a primary means of accomplishing educational objectives. Additionally, quality physical education is unique in providing adolescents with self-management skills to become independently physically active as adults. Physical education is critical to the education of the total person and requires a quality program taught by physical education specialists.

CONCLUSION

Ask a parent what is important. Perhaps more than anything, they would wish for good health for their children and their loved ones. This is no doubt one reason why support for physical education is so strong. However, this support is not always reflected when critical decisions about children’s education are made. In order to survive, physical educators must accept the responsibility of promoting their quality physical education programs to children, parents, colleagues, administrators, and the general public.

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