Summary Article: Physical Education
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The explosion of personal technology at the turn of the 21st century has been attended by increases in sedentary lifestyles and unprecedented levels of obesity in our nation's youth (17% of U.S. children aged 6-19 are obese). In response, physical educators at all levels across the country are again heeding the call to return to the profession's historical roots, which were originally grounded in the fields of medicine and public health. Founded in 1885 by physicians concerned with the ill effects of urbanization and industrialization, the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education (AAAPE, the forerunner of the contemporary American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, AAHPERD), was led by prominent physicians of the time, including Drs. William Anderson, Edward Hitchcock, and Dudley A. Sargent. Warning of the health risks associated with the transformation of America from a rural-agrarian land to urban-industrial country at the turn of the 19th century, Sargent, in 1904, wrote that “the problem is to retain our acquired health, strength, and power under the conditions imposed by modern progress ... this advancement has resulted in the fact that it is possible to earn a living at the present time by the use of a very few muscles and faculties” (p. 6).

Prophetic indeed was Sargent, whose voice has been heard anew by modern-day physical educators and other professionals concerned with the health and fitness of the nation's youth. In returning to the founders' intent, three recent major reform efforts are providing students with increased opportunities for education both of and through the physical, which, in view of the national epidemic of obesity and sedentary lifestyles, are more essential now than at any point in history. The purpose of this entry is to identify, describe, and delineate those reform efforts and their impact on the field of physical education at the beginning of the 21st century.

Reform No. 1: Standards-Based Physical Education
Published first in 1995 and then revised in 2004 by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, an association of AAHPERD), Moving Into the Future: National Standards for Physical Education provided physical education professionals with their first nationally endorsed and coherent content standards and guidelines for assessment. A consensus document reflecting the collective expertise and experience of a group of the nation's most highly regarded physical education professionals from higher education and the public schools, the standards outline developmentally appropriate learning outcomes and assessment strategies from the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains across all grade levels (K-12). Utilized by physical educators, school district...
boards and administrators, members of the professoriate, and state organizations to guide the development and/or adaptation of innovative curricula, expert pedagogy, and authentic assessment, the standards are based on the most recent research on physical activity and best practices in physical education pedagogy. Identifying specifically what students need to know and should be able to do in the form of outcomes and benchmarks related to high-quality physical education programs, the NASPE National Standards for Physical Education continue to catalyze reform across the nation: 49 states now have content standards-based curricula.

Summarized below are the philosophical, operational-definitional components of the 2004 NASPE standards as well as the actual standards themselves.

**Philosophical Underpinnings**

The National Standards for Physical Education are intended to provide a framework from which students may learn the skills and practices required to live healthy, physically active lifestyles for a lifetime. The standards set guidelines for the acquisition and promotion of knowledge and skills necessary for students to be able to make informed decisions for participation in all forms of physical activity, including rhythms, dance, games, sports, gymnastics, and fitness activities focusing on all aspects of health-related fitness (i.e., cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition) as well as the components of motor skill development (i.e., agility, coordination, reaction time, speed, power, and balance). Optimally, students benefiting from high-quality physical education guided by the National Standards will be physically fit and possess positive dispositions that value and pursue opportunities to be physically active for a lifetime.

**Operational Definitions**

High-quality physical education programs ensure that students receive the following:

- Opportunities to learn in the form of instructional periods totaling a minimum of 150 minutes per week at the elementary level and 225 minutes per week at the middle and secondary levels.

- Appropriate instruction featuring (a) full inclusion of all students, (b) maximum practice opportunities for class activities, (c) well-designed lessons facilitating student learning, (d) out-of-school assignments that support learning, practice, and the establishment of lifelong habits, (e) regular and authentic assessment to monitor, reinforce, and plan for instruction, and (f) instruction free of the use of physical activity as punishment.

- Content delivered by qualified physical education specialists providing a developmentally appropriate program.

- Meaningful content via instruction across 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 their physical well-being.

- Development of cognitive concepts about motor skills and fitness.

- Opportunities to improve their emerging social and cooperative skills and gain a multicultural perspective. (NASPE, 2004b)

**NASPE Content Standards**

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Standard 1. Demonstrates competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.

Standard 2. Demonstrates understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.

Standard 3. Participates regularly in physical activity.

Standard 4. Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.

Standard 5. Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.

Standard 6. Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction. (NASPE, 2004b)

Reform No. 2: Promotion and Proliferation of Sport Education

First introduced in the United States in 1995 by Daryl Siedentop of the Ohio State University, the sport education curriculum model (SEM) has contributed significantly to the preservation and improvement of physical education programs where a traditional sport-based culture is prevalent. Originally developed out of Siedentop’s frustration at witnessing sport and physical education being taught insufficiently, the SEM provides students with sport and physical activity experiences that are more realistic, context specific, challenging, and enjoyable than those presented via conventional curricula. Resembling more realistically the actual essence of experiences in sport/physical activity by delivering content seasons/sessions of longer duration vis-à-vis units, allowing for continuous team/group affiliation rather than assignment to squads, and allowing for full student participation as players/athletes and also as coaches, officials, statisticians, choreographers, trainers, and so forth, the SEM is an all-inclusive and entirely student-centered approach to teaching physical education, aimed at reform and change but capable of preserving the best aspects of a school program’s existing sport culture.

Based on the 2004 original work of Siedentop, Hastie, and van der Mars, the objectives of sport education follow. Students will

- Develop skills and fitness specific to particular sports
- Appreciate and be able to execute strategic play in sports
- Participate at a level appropriate for their stage of development
- Share in the planning and administration of sport experiences
- Provide responsible leadership
- Work effectively within a group toward common goals
- Appreciate the rituals and conventions that give particular sports their unique meanings
- Develop the capacity to make reasoned decisions about sport issues
- Develop and apply knowledge about umpiring, refereeing, and training
- Decide voluntarily to become involved in after-school sports
Research seeking to demonstrate the efficacy of curriculum reform efforts featuring sport education has been conducted in diverse settings and generated favorable results. Implementation of sport education has successfully promoted both content and pedagogical practices consistent with those delineated in all six NASPE Physical Education Content Standards (2004), particularly in the cultivation of responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings and in teaching students to value physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction. Sport education research has also been shown to (a) ameliorate the effects of—and in some cases, reverse—teacher burnout, (b) promote higher levels of physical activity, (c) enhance student learning of subject matter content, and (d) provide a teaching-learning environment more conducive to gender equity, personal and social responsibility, and enjoyment for all participants.

Reform No. 3: Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Through Physical Activity

The lifelong pursuit of Don Hellison, of the University of Illinois of Chicago, whose work with underserved youth in urban areas has earned international acclaim over the span of 3 decades, has been physical-education reform featuring his teaching personal and social responsibility model (TPSR). Having gained widespread acceptance in physical-education programs, teacher-education programs and school districts across the country, Hellison's work has consistently demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing high-quality standards-based physical activity to promote personal and social responsibility, classically known as education through the physical. Research conducted by Hellison, his colleagues, and others has shown that students guided by his TPSR model in school as well as in community-based settings, and in academic as well as physical activity settings, facilitated (a) increased levels of participation, (b) improved attendance, (c) anger management and conflict resolution, and (d) improved group dynamics and community building.

Based on Hellison's (2003) original work, the TPSR model appears below in synthesis.

- **Level 0—Irresponsibility.** Students operating at Level Zero make excuses, blame others for their behavior, and deny personal responsibility for what they do or fail to do.

- **Level 1—Respect.** Students at Level 1 may not participate in the day's activities or show much mastery or improvement, but they are able to control their behavior enough so that they do not interfere with other students' right to learn or teachers' right to teach. They do this without much prompting by the teacher and without constant supervision.

- **Level 2—Participation.** Students at Level 2 not only show at least minimal respect for others but also willingly play, accept challenges, practice motor skills, and train for fitness under the teacher's supervision.

- **Level 3—Self-Direction.** Students at Level 3 not only show respect and participate, but they are also able to work without direct supervision. They can identify their own needs and begin to plan and carry out their own physical education programs.

- **Level 4—Helping-Caring.** In addition to respecting others, participating, and being self-directed, students are motivated to extend their sense of responsibility beyond themselves by cooperating, giving support, showing concern, and helping.

- **Level 5—Outside the Gym-Classroom.** Students transfer the concepts learned in the first four levels and apply them at home, on the playground, and/or in the community. In doing so, they become role models for their peers.

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Conclusion

In returning to the profession's historical mission to provide education of and through the physical, the reformers whose work has been featured in this entry have successfully presented viable options to combat the epidemic of obesity and the pervasiveness of sedentary lifestyles affecting our nation's youth. Resulting in research demonstrating the efficacy of standards-based physical education, sport education, and teaching personal and social responsibility, the curricular reforms described herein are indeed worthy of continued embrace and implementation.

See also

Ability Grouping, Assessment, Co-Curricular Activities, Coeducation, Differentiated Instruction, Experiential Learning, Extracurricular Activities, Performance-Based Assessment

Further Readings


Paul DeMarco, George Mario

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

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