

Role and significance of physical education in student's life

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Abstract

This paper aims to emphasize on the importance of physical education in life of students. Students must have a fundamental knowledge of anatomy and physiology of human body. This fundamental knowledge enables students to understand physical fitness. Physical fitness is the capacity of a person to function steadily and smoothly when a situation arises. Physical fitness makes students mentally sharper, physically comfortable and more with their body and better able to cope with the demands that everyday life makes upon you. Increased physical fitness not only improves health but improves ones performance at work. In this paper, the authors have discussed the importance of physical education in student life.

Keywords: physical education, students, health, fitness, sports, elementary, middle school, high school

Introduction

Physical education plays a critical role in educating the whole student. Research supports the importance of movement in educating both mind and body. Physical education contributes directly to development of physical competence and fitness. It also helps students to make informed choices and understand the value of leading a physically active lifestyle. The benefits of physical education can affect both academic learning and physical activity patterns of students. The healthy, physically active student is more likely to be academically motivated, alert, and successful. In the preschool and primary years, active play may be positively related to motor abilities and cognitive development. As children grow older and enter adolescence, physical activity may enhance the development of a positive self-concept as well as the ability to pursue intellectual, social and emotional challenges. Throughout the school years, quality physical education can promote social, cooperative and problem solving competencies. Quality physical education programs in our nation's schools are essential in developing motor skills, physical fitness and understanding of concepts that foster lifelong healthy lifestyles. For decades, physical education has been a school curricula component. These days, however, a lot of schools have had to cut back on physical education due to financial constraints. Other schools have eliminated or shortened their requirements for physical education to raise the test scores of students by spending less time in the gymnasium and more time in the classroom.

Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life and with a lower risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. i Current recommendations are for children to engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Children spend over half their day in school, so it is reasonable to require that they should get at least 30 minutes of that time in school. Physical education should be an important part of that requirement and does more than provide some minutes of moderate-vigorous activity. It also exposes students to lifetime activities and teaches students how to integrate exercise into their lives. Since childhood obesity rates continue to rise across the

country, there is public support for more physical education in schools. A study conducted by Opinion Research Corporation International for the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) in 2003 indicated that 81% of adults believe that daily physical education should be mandatory in schools. ii In a systematic review of physical education programs that increased the amount of time that students were physically active, students' aerobic and physical fitness increased. Additionally, modifying the school physical education curricula was effective across diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, among boys and girls, elementary- and highschool students, and in urban and rural settings. iii Recent research shows that regular exercise can restore blood vessel function and improve cardiovascular risk factors in obese children. iv A six-month exercise program reduced body mass index, diabetes risk factors and low-degree inflammation. v Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study published in 2004 showed that physical education programs do have an impact in combating childhood obesity, especially in young adolescent girls. Just an extra hour of exercise a week lessened obesity in young overweight girls. vi Benefits extend beyond improvement in health status. Studies in California suggest that children who are more physically fit perform better on standardized math and reading test scores. vii Sallis *et al.* showed that children who participated in school physical education programs did not experience a harmful effect on their standardized test scores, though less time was available for other academic subjects. viii Coe and colleagues demonstrated in a prospective study with sixth graders that although academic achievement was not significantly related to physical education enrollment, higher grades were associated with vigorous activity, particularly activity meeting recommended Healthy People 2010 levels. ix The quality of the physical education program, not just the time spent being active during physical education, is the foremost concern. Our organizations do not want to increase time spent in weaker programs, just like we would not want to do that in other areas of the school curriculum. Physical education policy should prioritize quality

while, simultaneously and/or subsequently, trying to increase the amount of time children spend in class.

Elementary

Research suggests that young children learn through active engagement with the “stuff” of their world. Children in elementary school acquire knowledge through physical exploration of their environment. Physical education may provide children with learning experiences essential to the formation of mental schemes (i.e., mental patterns or systems that describe the ways people think about building blocks of thinking). Children form more effective schemes by physically interacting with their environment. Quality physical education programs facilitate exploration of movement in various contexts that enhance acquisition of knowledge.

The obesity epidemic

Children today face an obesity epidemic of great concern. The percent of children that are obese has doubled in the last thirty years; it has tripled for adolescents. Not surprisingly, obesity has a negative impact on a child’s health and well-being. In the short-term, obese children are more likely to have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure. In the long-term, obese children are more likely to become obese adults, increasing their chance for developing chronic diseases.

Preventive Measures

The good news is that obesity can be prevented through a variety of strategies aimed at proper nutrition and increased physical activity. Parents, caregivers, health professionals, school leaders, and government agencies alike are charged with teaching children healthy behaviors and providing a supportive environment. One way to increase physical activity is through school-based physical education. With children spending more than 1,000 hours annually in school, the academic environment plays a critical role in obesity prevention.

The Benefits of Physical Activity

Research is extensive on the connection between physical activity and academic performance. Brain structure and functioning has been linked to physical activity. Specifically, improved concentration, cognitive processing, and standardized test performance are evident in children who are more active. Research also links better school attendance and behavior to children who are more physically fit.

Physical Education: Quality and Quantity

Some may have concern that spending or increasing time in physical education will cause students to perform poorly in other academic areas. Schools must meet requirements for instructional time in core subjects and are under pressure to report high scores on standardized tests. This demand may cause educators to reduce or eliminate P.E. from the daily schedule. Studies have found this is not an effective strategy to improve test scores and may actually impede student performance. A quality P.E. program engages children in physical activity while teaching knowledge and skills for lifetime physical activity. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that schools provide 150 minutes weekly of instructional physical education at the

elementary level. Most Iowa schools do not meet this guideline. A 2011 online survey by the Iowans Fit for Life Educational Settings Workgroup found that only 4% of respondents (N = 108 P.E. teachers grades 3-5) indicated their school provided 150 minutes or more of P.E. weekly to students. Awareness of the benefits of daily P.E. could lead to increased daily physical education for Iowa students.

Middle School

Middle school students are intensely curious, prefer active to passive learning, and definitely favor interaction with peers during learning activities. The early adolescent exhibits a strong willingness to learn things they consider useful. They enjoy using skills to solve real life problems. Quality physical education programs provide a medium through which middle school students can refine and expand upon their physical repertoire of skills. It has been shown that students miss fewer days of school because of illness and exhibit greater academic achievement because of the physical vitality gained in physical education. The middle school student is ready to experience a wide variety of applications of fundamental movements, including traditional sports, adventure activities (e.g., rock climbing, ropes, kayak, skiing), and lifetime or leisure-oriented activities (e.g., roller-blading, biking, dance). It is during this period when students are capable of refining, combining and applying a variety of sport-related and lifetime skills. Students may explore after-school opportunities for specialized or/and competitive physical activity programs.

Rapid growth during the pre-adolescent years may affect students’ interests, choices, and activity patterns. Therefore physical education programs offer a variety of activities to meet and expand student interests. Fitness development becomes more systematic. Students develop specific fitness components, set goals and assess personal fitness levels.

High School

During the high school years students should be given more in-depth learning opportunities so they can understand the mechanical, physiological and social psychological aspects of physical activity. High school students’ growing ability to compare and contrast, analyze, and synthesize information enables them to apply movement principles in new and meaningful ways. Students can more fully understand the role of physical activity in preventive health and analyze the pros and cons of various types of physical activity in lifelong health. High school students become increasingly more independent as their daily lives become more complex and diversified. High school students begin to make decisions and choices in taking increased responsibility for themselves. Quality high school physical education programs provide students conceptual and practical understanding of: 1) health-related physical fitness, and 2) how to maintain a health-related level of physical fitness. Physical education plays a vital part in helping high school students maintain and refine the skills and knowledge needed to select physical activities to use throughout their lives.

Cognitive Benefits

Children learn through a variety of modalities (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile, physical). Teaching academic concepts through the physical modality may nurture children’s kinesthetic intelligence. Academic constructs have greater

meaning for children when they are taught across the three realms of learning, including the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Greater depth and relevance can be achieved when the subject matter constructs are related to each domain of learning. Research has demonstrated that children engaged in daily physical education show superior motor fitness, academic performance, and attitude towards school versus their counterparts who did not participate in daily physical education. Physical education learning experiences also offer a unique opportunity for problem solving, self-expression, socialization, and conflict resolution.

Physical Activity Improves the Quality of Life

Regular physical activity improves functional status and limits disability during the middle and later adult years. Physical activity contributes to quality of life, psychological health, and the ability to meet physical work demands. Physical education can serve as a vehicle for helping students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, behavioral skills, and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles. The outcomes of a quality physical education program include the development of students' physical competence, health-related fitness, self-esteem, and overall enjoyment of physical activity. These outcomes enable students to make informed decisions and choices about leading a physically active lifestyle. In early years children derive pleasure from movement sensations and experience challenge and joy as they sense a growing competence in their movement ability. Evidence suggests that the level of participation, the degree of skill, and the number of activities mastered as a child directly influences the extent to which children will continue to participate in physical activity as an adult. In early adolescence participation in physical activity provides important opportunities for challenge, social interaction, group membership, as well as opportunities for continued personal growth in physical skill. Participation for high school students continues to provide enjoyment and challenge as young people express preferences for activities that meet their specific interests. A comprehensive, well-implemented physical education program is an essential component to the total education of students. Physical education prepares students to maintain healthy, active lifestyles and engage in enjoyable, meaningful leisure-time pursuits.

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