

Physical Education

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From Team Sports to Fitness for Everyone

In some schools, physical education has traditionally consisted primarily of calisthenics, touch football, soccer, basketball, volleyball, dodgeball, and the like. But today physical education offers much, much more. Some physical educators now provide individualized fitness programs and a broad range of activities that may be individual, dual, competitive, or cooperative.

All students—including special needs students—are encouraged to develop skills in a number of lifetime sports so they will become physically active adults, not sedentary nonparticipants. Whereas handicapped students in the past may have been given blanket exemptions from physical education, now, with physician approval, exceptional students are mainstreamed into physical education classes whenever possible.

The impetus for these diversified programs is the nation's widespread interest in health and physical fitness for everyone. With cardiovascular disease the nation's number one killer, concerns about cholesterol, hypertension, and overweight appear in media reports and newspapers every day. Many police and fire departments now require their personnel to pass fitness tests, and the U.S. Army and Navy have upgraded their fitness requirements (*Tuscaloosa News* 1985). Increasingly conscious of the benefits of proper nutrition, exercise, and good health habits, parents want this information taught and reinforced at school.

Consequently, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD) is promoting a philosophical shift from sports and games-based activities to health and fitness-oriented activities for all ages (Lumpkin 1990). Further,

AAHPERD and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports are encouraging each state and local school board to require quality daily physical education for all students (Corbett 1990). In addition, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), a subdivision of AAHPERD, recently decided to promote "cultural diversity and equity" in the development and conduct of sports and physical education programs (*NASPE News* 1990).

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As a resource for teachers, AAHPERD offers a physical fitness and assessment program called "Physical Best,"¹ which encourages elementary children to make positive health/fitness behavior changes that should last a lifetime. In this program, students develop their own individualized fitness programs, monitor their own progress, and receive personal achievement awards as they advance. NASPE supports the new health and fitness philosophy with its "Basic Stuff" series,² resource materials designed to keep school practitioners up-to-date on new concepts and an expanding body of knowledge. In addition to changes in the content of physical education programs, organizations are advising that students spend more time participating in the recommended activities. For example, the Council on Physical Education for Children, a subdivision of NASPE, advocates that K-6 students participate in an instructional program taught by a certified physical educator for a minimum of 150 minutes per week, exclusive of recess.

For grades 7-12, the NASPE recommends 250 minutes a week of physical education, with attention devoted to interest and ability grouping, rather than the team-oriented, stereotypical sex-role divisions common prior to Title IX. Developing interest and competence in at least three lifetime activities is a recommended objective for students at this level.

"Operation 2000" (1989), a redesigned program in Perry, Ohio, is an example of the new direction in content as well as increased time allotments recommended for physical education. Perry's program includes daily aerobic exercise, fitness, strength, cholesterol, and body composition testing; mandatory swim competency; faculty

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- ___ Your teachers send their homework policy home to parents before the first assignment.
- ___ Your teachers have an organized, professional outline for Back-to-School Night.
- ___ Your teachers send a specific number of positive notes home to parents each week.
- ___ Your teachers call some parents each week just to relate "good news" about their child.
- ___ Your teachers telephone parents as soon as they become aware of an academic or behavioral problem.
- ___ Your teachers write down all the issues they want to cover before they meet with a parent in a conference.
- ___ Your teachers make follow-up contact with parents after a conference or phone call.

TOTAL SCORE

Scoring Key

- 90-100: Congratulations! You're on the road to effective parent involvement.
80-89: Good effort, but room for improvement.
79 or below: You're missing the best opportunity you have for effecting positive changes in your school.

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and staff wellness programs; 22 different elective activities such as tennis, badminton, and swimming; and Aerobic Fitness Days and Mini-Triathalons. "Operation 2000" was named for the school's present 1st graders who, through this exercise regimen, should be more physically fit when they graduate in the year 2000 than high school seniors are today.

This challenging vision of improved health, lifetime activity, and participation for all generates instruction that is both beneficial and exciting. With such dynamic programs of physical education, schools can meet their long-range goals to help all students reach their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional potential to enable them to become well-rounded, productive citizens □

¹For information about "Physical Best," contact Karen Giuffre, AAHPERD, 1900 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091; 703-476-3455.

²For information about "Basic Stuff," contact Judy Young of NASPE at the address given for AAHPERD in endnote 1.

References

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