



WHPE Position Statement

The Benefits of a Quality Physical Education Program

Physical education is an integral part of the total education of every child, from kindergarten through grade 12. Quality physical education programs are designed to develop physically literate individuals who have the physical competence, knowledge, confidence, and motivation to be physically active for a lifetime¹. Certified physical education specialists who deliver programs that are developmentally appropriate, sequentially planned, and instructionally appropriate allow our children to reap the benefits of physical education.

What are the benefits of a quality physical education program?

Multiple Health Benefits

Regular physical activity enhances cardiovascular fitness and improves muscular strength and endurance. It helps build healthy bones and, when combined with healthy nutrition, physical activity positively impacts body composition². Children and adolescents who meet the CDC's goal of accruing at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity have a reduced risk for developing chronic disease risk factors.

Skill Development and Skill Appreciation

Fundamental movement skills are the building blocks necessary for a lifetime of physical activity. When a child learns to run, throw, catch, kick, hop, skip, and balance it opens the gateway to successful and enjoyable participation in a wide variety of different activities. Certified physical education specialists explicitly teach these skills during physical education, ensuring that the skills and progressions taught are developmentally appropriate and delivered in a safe learning environment.

Improved Self-confidence and Self-esteem

Physical education instills a stronger sense of self-worth in children based on their mastery of skills and concepts in physical activity. They can become more confident, assertive, independent, and self-controlled. Research has shown that students who have a greater perceived competence in physical education participate in significantly more physical activity outside of school³

¹ SHAPE America. (2013) Grade Level outcomes for K-12 physical education. Reston, VA

² Education, IP. "The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity ..." 2015.
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf>

³ Carroll, Bob, and Julia Loumidis. "Children's Perceived Competence and Enjoyment in Physical Education and Physical Activity Outside School." *European physical education review* 7.1 (2001): 24-43.



Brain Benefits

Physical activity has a powerful effect on the function of the brain. It increases oxygen flow to the brain which in turn improves short term memory, alertness, information processing, and neural connections in the brain. Physical activity increases BDNF, a neurotrophin that has been described as “miracle-gro” or fertilizer for the brain⁴. Physical education teaches children and adolescents how to move at a moderate to vigorous activity level so that these brain benefits can be realized.

Strengthened Peer Relationships

Physical education can be a major force in helping children socialize with others successfully and provides opportunities to learn positive people skills. Especially during late childhood and adolescence, being able to participate in dances, games, and sports is an important part of peer culture.

Develops Subject Specific Knowledge While Complimenting Other Subject Areas

Physical education curriculum teaches students about exercise physiology, biomechanics, history, skill acquisition, principles of training, goal setting, and how to apply fitness concepts to facilitate self-improvement. It teaches students about core values such as respect, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, while developing communication and teamwork skills. In addition, physical education naturally lends itself to reinforcing knowledge learned across the curriculum. It serves as a lab for application of content in science, math and social studies.

Improves Academic Performance

Numerous peer reviewed studies have shown a positive relationship between physical education, exercise, and academic performance in K-12 students. An analysis of 14 studies found that increasing physical education time was positively associated with academic achievement in 11 out of the 14 studies. There were no negative effects on academic achievement with increased physical education time¹. Numerous research articles have detailed a positive correlation between physical fitness levels and academic achievement⁵⁶

Provides the Opportunity for Regular, Healthful Physical Activity

Physical education provides a wide-range of developmentally appropriate activities, accessible to all children and delivered to children in a fun, inclusive, and educational environment. For

⁴ Ratey, John J., Hagerman, Eric. (2008) *Spark :the revolutionary new science of exercise and the brain* New York : Little, Brown,

⁵ Grissom, Jim. "A study of the relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement in California using 2004 test results." *Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education* (2004).

⁶ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: [The Texas Youth Fitness Study](#)