

What is the Relationship BETWEEN Physical Education and Physical Activity?

By Graham J. Fishburne PhD, Professor
 Clive Hickson PhD, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta

The Benefits of Physical Education

Quality Physical Education Programs will Enhance Physical Activity Opportunities and Benefit Student Health.

Many children and youth in Canada today lead inactive lifestyles and follow poor dietary eating habits. As a result, they put themselves at risk for many serious illnesses associated with physical inactivity, including diabetes and heart disease.

To help guard against these diseases and other illnesses associated with physical inactivity, it is essential that children and youth engage in active healthy lifestyles. We need to ensure that Canadian children and youth develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for participating in active healthy living. This is the role of school Physical Education. Children and youth need to be Physically Educated so they will be physically active throughout their lives.

There is often confusion among professionals in the field, as well as by media and the general public regarding the similarities, differences, and interplay between Physical Education and physical activity. Often the terms are used interchangeably; however they are not the same. The implications of this have

the potential to negatively impact the way Physical Education is viewed and delivered in Canada. This resource was developed to identify the similarities and real differences between Physical Education and physical activity. It provides an understanding of why Quality Daily Physical Education should be experienced by all children in Canadian schools.

What is a physically educated person?

The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) defines physically educated people as those who...

- Acquire skills to enable them to perform a variety of physical activities
- Acquire skills that will help them to become physically fit
- Participate regularly in physical activity because it is enjoyable and exhilarating
- Understand and value physical activity
- Understand that physical activity can support self-expression and provide for social interaction with others
- Display responsible personal and social behaviour during physical activity
- Display an understanding of and a respect for all people during physical activity

A 'physically educated' person is a person who is physically literate. Similar to the need for children to become literate in mathematics and language, we also want children to develop physical literacy. These are people who have developed, through quality Physical Education experiences, a language of physical movement. They know how and why to move in a variety of ways, appreciate the importance of physical activity, and choose to regularly participate in physical activity endeavours.

How do students become Physically Educated?

In order to become a physically educated person, students need to experience...

- Developmentally appropriate Physical Education programs that are instructionally relevant for all children
- Instruction that incorporates effective teaching practices derived from research and teaching experiences
- Programs that promote the refinement and mastery of movement skills in order to develop a level of competency that can be used in a variety of physical activity settings
- Physical Education programs that guide students to lead physically active lifestyles
- Success in physical activity experiences

Physical Education

What is it?

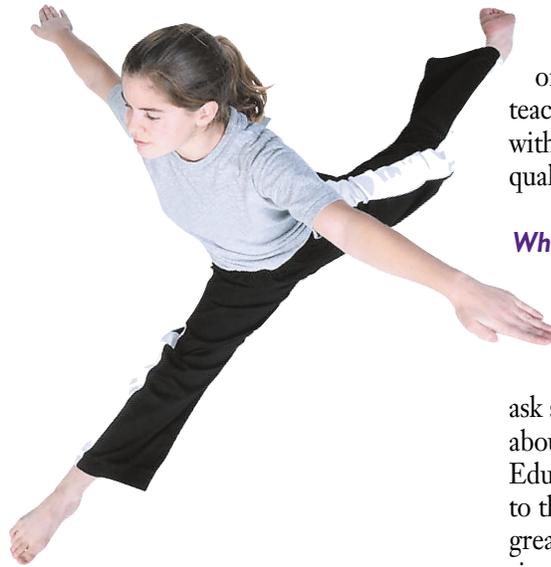
Physical Education is a school subject designed to help children and youth develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for participating in active, healthy living. As such, Physical Education programs are an integral component of the total school experience for students.

Quality Physical Education programs encompass a wide variety of carefully planned learning experiences from sport skills to outdoor skills, to dance and gymnastics. Attention to developmentally appropriate curricular goals and learning outcomes will ensure that children of all abilities and interests are able to build a foundation of movement experiences and knowledge – that is, a language of physical movement or physical literacy that leads to life-long active and healthy living.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of quality Physical Education include:

- the development of a level of personal fitness that supports healthy living;
- a skill base that enables children and youth to successfully participate in a variety of physical activities; and
- development of the habit of life-long participation in health-enhancing activities.



What is the role of school principals/administrators?

Principals and school administrators play a crucial leadership role in the design and implementation of quality school Physical Education programs. They support the overall development of students in a number of ways.

1. They ensure that the implementation of quality Physical Education programs is taught by designated Physical Education teachers who can take responsibility for the overall school program.
2. They ensure that teachers are well prepared, supported, and capable of achieving the learning outcomes of the Physical Education program.
3. They provide the necessary funding that is needed to acquire and maintain developmentally appropriate equipment to achieve the program's learning outcomes.
4. They ensure that the appropriate time within the school timetable is devoted to the teaching of the Physical Education program.

What is the role of the teacher?

Teachers have a pivotal role to play in the delivery of quality Physical Education programs. Quality programs require thoughtful planning that is linked to curriculum outcomes, well-designed lessons that have the intention

of student learning, and effective teaching in order to provide students with the opportunity to benefit from quality Physical Education.

What is the role of the parent?

Parents work in partnership with school personnel to ensure the successful development of their children. It is critical that parents ask school educators and administrators about the quality of the Physical Education program being provided to their children. Questions can vary greatly depending on the learning situation; here are some examples:

- What are the learning outcomes of the school Physical Education program?
- Does the Physical Education program support a wide variety of activities?
- How much Physical Education is offered to my child each week?
- Is my child's school providing the allotted Physical Education time as outlined in the school curriculum?
- Why is my child's Physical Education lesson cancelled so often?
- Why should my child miss their Physical Education lesson because the class has not finished other work?
- What are areas of strength for my child?
- Why is it that my child still cannot catch a ball properly?
- My child runs with an awkward style, is there anything that can be done?
- How can we help support what my child is learning in Physical Education?

What is the role of the student?

In order to gain the benefits of Physical Education, students need to participate regularly in lessons that promote learning outcomes in an enjoyable atmosphere; that is, in much the same manner as they would in other school curricula. They should aim to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitude to become comfortable and successful when participating in a wide variety of physical activities.

What does a Quality Physical Education program look like?

A Quality Physical Education program is a well-planned developmentally appropriate physical education program that is available to all children.

CAHPERD recommends that such a program require the following:

- Qualified, enthusiastic teachers
- Creative and safe use of facilities and equipment
- At least 150 minutes of class instruction per week for all students
- Well-planned lessons incorporating a wide range of activities
- Appropriate learning activities for the age and stage of development of each student
- An emphasis on safety, learning, success, fair play, self-fulfillment, enjoyment, and personal health
- Activities and lessons that are gender equitable
- A high level of participation by all students each day
- Physical activities which enhance the cardiovascular system, muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility
- Teacher reflection on teaching practices to enhance student success



Physical Activity

What is it?

Physical activity is a movement of the body that expends energy; such as participation in sports, dance, and exercise. Physical activity is used in Physical Education programs as a medium for teaching curriculum content and for providing fun opportunities through which to practice and improve on learned skills. Therefore, physical activity is an essential component of a quality Physical Education program. It is the vehicle to become physically educated, just as a book is a vehicle to becoming a reader. However, similar to how a teacher still needs to teach the skills of reading, as the presence of the book does not guarantee learning, teachers still need to teach the learning outcomes of Physical Education. Physical activity in itself does not create a physically educated person.

What are the benefits?

Increased levels of participation in physical activity can lead to higher levels of personal fitness, a life-long participation in health-enhancing activity, social inclusion, and an overall sense of belonging. A Physical Education program that promotes the understanding and appreciation of a wide variety of physical activities encourages students to participate in physical activity beyond Physical Education classes, such as during recess or at home or in the community.

What is the role of the school community?

The school community can contribute to the overall development of children and youth by valuing and promoting physical activity opportunities. Such opportunities can ensure that each student has the opportunity to understand and experience the value of a healthy active lifestyle and that the school becomes an active healthy school community.

What is the role of a physical activity supervisor?

Recess and lunchtime activity supervisors supervise student physical activity on playgrounds, playing fields, or in gymnasias. Their main role is to ensure the activity is safe and that it is an enjoyable experience for all. Whereas the children may engage in physical activities during these times, this is considered non-instructional time and as such does not replace physical education. Supervisors of physical activity are not expected to consult curriculum learning outcomes, plan for student learning, or evaluate and report on student learning.

What is the role of the student?

Children and youth need opportunities to be playful, on a daily basis, to exert independence and control over their personal activity choices. Students can choose what activities they wish to be involved in, their level of participation, and their extent of involvement.

Participation can be for a multitude of reasons not necessarily connected with skill learning and improvement. It is the hope that, through their participation in quality Physical Education instruction, students will develop the desire to be physically active throughout their lives.

What is the link between quality Physical Education programs and quality physical activity opportunities?

Physical Education provides an opportunity for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to successfully participate in a wide variety of physical activities. Without quality instruction, students may not reach their full potential, and may fail to develop the competencies necessary to achieve success and enjoyment in a variety of physical activities.

True Life Stories . . .



“Whereas it is very unlikely that you could have meaningful Physical Education without participation in physical activity, it is quite possible to participate in physical activity without any meaningful education.”

Dr. Graham J. Fishburne



In some schools, students do not receive quality Physical Education instruction from a qualified teacher. At times, teachers can lack the knowledge and confidence to teach Physical Education appropriately.

“Last year, P.E. was an unorganized time where we were often asked what we wanted to do when we got to the gymnasium and we either sat for a long time waiting to start a new game, a different activity or our turn. We just basically played games that involved someone being eliminated and we did not learn how to do things, we were just expected to do it.”

Female, aged 12

“P.E. can be fun, if it is taught by the right person. What I mean is if the person keeps you active doing stuff, not sitting on the side, and knows about P.E., the person needs to know how to teach it so that I can get better.”

Female, aged 14

“I don’t like P.E. when we miss it or we just get to sit down and watch. Sometimes we only get P.E. for a short time and we only get to play once and then we have to go back to class.”

Female, aged 8

“I don’t like it when we have to wait all the time, when we watch other people for lots of the class, it gets really boring. I like doing things myself.”

Male, aged 9

When students experience quality programs, they value their time spent in Physical Education lessons. They enjoy being active, like to be fully involved in their lessons, and believe they are improving their skill levels.

“I like P.E. a lot! It is my favourite thing at school. It is not fair when it is cancelled because of other work or if the class is not listening. I never want to miss P.E. lessons. I like it when we get to do things where we learn how to get better. I like to get better, it makes me feel good about myself.”

Male, aged 10

“This year, we practice different skills before we play a game or do an activity. I feel that I am starting to learn something and I am beginning to play games and do activities properly. We also do lots of activities that are individual based and not only team games. I am learning to know what my personal best is in a whole lot of different things. I am beginning to learn what kinds of activities that I can do well in and what I like to do.”

Female, aged 12

“Physical Education at school varied. Some years we would just play team games like floor hockey. Other years we would learn lots of new activities. I preferred the teachers who taught me curling and how to skate and how to play badminton. I still enjoy these activities.”

Female, aged 19

“I like it when my teacher keeps us active, no one is left out, we have lots of fun. We do lots of different activities that keep us busy while we are learning lots of new things.”

Male, aged 11

“I like P.E. when we are doing new things each class. I like it when we have lots of equipment out and we all get some thing each.”

Female, aged 7

“I really, really like P.E., it’s the best! I wish we could go to P.E. all day long! I like getting hot and sweaty. It is really good when I get better at stuff. Like stuff I couldn’t do before.”

Male, aged 6

What are the benefits of Quality Programs of Physical Education?

Our children and youth need to be 'physically educated' so they will be 'physically active' throughout their lives.

Research has shown that when children are engaged in quality Physical Education programs:

- Students usually perform as well or better academically than those receiving more academic curriculum time and less Physical Education.
- Students develop positive attitudes about school. This leads to improved attendance and reduced dropout rates.
- Students develop lifelong positive personal health habits, are less likely to smoke, use drugs or alcohol.
- Students develop aerobic endurance, muscular strength, and exhibit fewer risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- Students can develop active lifestyles that help to address health issues such as obesity, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and type-2 diabetes.
- Students experience improved self-esteem and self-concept, and lower levels of anxiety and stress.
- Physical Education can be a “hook” for some students, motivating them to attend school and stay on task in class.
- Participation in Quality Daily Physical Education programs in childhood is positively associated with higher levels of physical activity in adulthood.

Take Action and Speak Out

We all have a role to play to ensure that Canadian children receive quality Physical Education experiences.

Whether we are students, parents, or educators, the next steps that we all take are critical. In order to safeguard against the diseases and illnesses associated with physical inactivity, it is essential that we take action now so that Canadian children and youth gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to participate in active healthy lifestyles.

Whether we are students, parents, or educators,
the next steps that we all take are critical.

Children and youth must receive quality Physical Education programs so they can develop the competencies needed to successfully participate in a full range of physical activities.

What can I do? There are many things that we can all do to help. A number of specific suggestions have already been made. Here are a few more:

Administrators can...

- Ensure that quality Physical Education is included as a basic subject in school curricula.
- Ensure that quality Physical Education is provided adequate time in the school schedule.
- Ensure that schools have adequate resources in order to provide quality Physical Education programs; this includes equipment, facilities, and support.
- Ensure that the teachers responsible for teaching Physical Education have been properly trained and receive ongoing support and professional development opportunities.
- Hold schools accountable to the time and quality mandate that is stated in provincial curricula.

Educators can...

- Ensure that Physical Education has a true value in their school.
- Ensure that Physical Education lessons are developmentally appropriate for all children.
- Ensure that achievement in Physical Education is addressed in teaching and commented upon in report cards.

- Ensure that students are provided with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead active lifestyles.
- Ensure that students have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of activities.
- Provide a variety of opportunities for children to be physically active.
- Make Physical Education part of regular conversations in schools.
- Give Physical Education a place on meeting agendas and newsletters.

Parents can...

- Ensure that Physical Education is an integral part of their child's school experience.
- Ensure that their children are receiving adequate Physical Education time in the school schedule.
- Ensure that a qualified and enthusiastic teacher is teaching the Physical Education class.
- Ask their children what they are learning in Physical Education lessons.
- Ask that Physical Education homework be provided.
- Ask their child's teacher/principal questions about the Physical Education program and the learning experiences that children will gain through involvement in the program.
- Become a member of the school's Parent Council to offer support and help for the Physical Education program.
- Ask themselves, “Does my child look forward to Physical Education class”. If yes, ask why? If no, find out why not?

Students can...

- Become physically educated and lead active, healthy lifestyles!



403-2197 prom. Riverside Drive
Ottawa ON K1H 7X3
Tel/Tél : (613) 523-1348
Fax/Téléc : (613) 523-1206
e-mail/courriel : info@cahperd.ca / info@acsepld.ca



The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) is a national, charitable, voluntary-sector organization whose primary concern is to influence the healthy development of children and youth by advocating for quality, school-based physical and health education.

www.cahperd.ca

Vision

All Canadian children and youth living physically active and healthy lives.

Mission

CAHPERD advocates and educates for quality physical and health education programs within supportive school and community environments.

Research Says References:

Brynteson, P., & Adams, T. M. (1993). The effects of conceptually based physical education programs on attitudes and exercise habits of college alumni after 2-11 years of follow-up. *Research Quarterly*, 64, 208-212

Despres, J. P., Bouchard, C., & Malina, R. M. (1990). Physical activity and coronary heart disease risk factors during childhood and adolescence. *Exercise Sport Science Review*, 18, 243-262

Fishburne, G. J. (2005). *Developmentally appropriate physical education for children and youth*. Edmonton, AB.: Ripon Publishing

Fishburne, G. J. (1996). The need for and value of quality programmes of physical education. *Canadian Administrator*, 35(6), 6-11

Halas, J. (2001). Playtime at the treatment center: How physical activity helps troubled youth. *AVANTE*, 7, (1), 1-13

Kuh, D. J. L., & Cooper, C. (1992). Physical activity at 36 years: Patterns and childhood predictors in a longitudinal study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 46, 114-119

Powell, K. E., & Dysinger, W. (1987). Childhood participation in organized school sports and physical education as precursor of adult physical activity. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 3, 276-281

Sallis, J. F. & McKenzie, T. L. (1991). Physical education's role in public health. *Research Quarterly Exercise and Sport*, 62, 124-137

Shephard, R. J., & Trudeau, F. (2000). The legacy of physical education: Influences on adult lifestyle. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 12, 34-50.

Shephard, R. J. (1997). Curricular physical activity and academic performance. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 9, 113-126.

Trudeau, F., Laurencelle, L., Dulac, F., Rajic, M., Shephard, R. J. (1999). Daily primary school physical education: Effects on physical activity during adult life. *Medical Science and Sports Exercise*, 31, 111-117

Trudeau, F., Laurencelle, L., Tremblay, J., Rajic, M., Shephard, R. J. (1998). Follow-up of participants in the Trois-Rivieres growth and development longitudinal study. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 10, 368-377

Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) web site: <http://www.cahperd.ca>

Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute web site: <http://www.cflri.ca>