

Understanding Physical Education

Quality physical education reflects an instructional philosophy that emphasizes¹:

- Providing intensive instruction in the motor and self-management skills needed to enjoy a wide variety of physical activity experiences, including competitive and noncompetitive activities.
- Keeping all students active for most of the class period.
- Building students' confidence in their physical abilities.
- Influencing moral development by providing students with opportunities to assume leadership, cooperate with others and accept responsibility for their own behavior.
- Having fun!

Quality physical education emphasizes skills for lifetime physical activities (e.g. dance, strength training, jogging, swimming, bicycling, cross-country skiing, walking and hiking) rather than those for competitive sports.²

In addition to being fun, quality physical education is also a serious academic discipline under the guidelines of The National Standards for Physical Education which explicitly identifies what students should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program.¹

BENEFITS OF QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Physical education is at the core of a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity through schools.¹
- Physical education helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence needed to be physically active for life while providing an opportunity for students to be active during the school day.¹
- A student educated about physical activity “has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities, is physically fit, does participate regularly in physical activity, knows the implication of and the benefits from involvement in physical activities, and values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle.”²
- For both young people and adults, knowledge about how to be physically active taught in physical education may be a more important influence on physical activity than the knowledge about why to be active.²
- Quality physical education helps students master and gain confidence in motor and behavioral skills used in physical activity.²
- The enjoyment of physical education class was one of the most powerful factors associated with participation in physical activity outside of school.²
- There is a strong relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement.³
- Cumulative evidence indicates that conditions that improves general health promote both a healthy body and improved intellectual capacity.³

¹“Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Fall 2000.

²“Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 7, 1997.

³“A Study of the Relationship Between Physical Fitness and Academic Achievement in California Using 2004 Test Results” California Department of Education, April 2005.