

DROPPING THE BALL

SCHOOLS FAIL TO MEET PHYSICAL EDUCATION MANDATES

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM MULTIPLE SUBJECT STUDENT TEACHERS REGARDING PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT THEIR PLACEMENT SCHOOLS

May 2006

"In the fourth grade classroom where I am student teaching, physical education is so minimal it is almost non-existent. The physical education these students receive is called "psycho-motor time" and it is comprised of a grade-wide (100+ students) class for half an hour once every two weeks. I have only seen one such class since I have been there and because only 30 minutes was allotted with so many students there wasn't much activity or instruction that took place."

"If something else comes up on the days designated for P.E., then the physical education is bumped – this has been the case while I have been in this classroom. Last week, the Master teacher had planned all day to get the children out on the yard at the end of the day for an organized activity; however, when the time came, the teacher decided to stay inside and do an in-place song with movements, which lasted about five minutes."

"Everyone at the school I talked to expressed annoyance at the way PE was handled – a token appeasement that in their opinion wasn't worth the half hour. My master teacher said that it was a 'total waste of time' and that 'the students should be in the classroom learning.'"

"Since the school is a low achieving school I have seen more programs focused on building their academics rather than spending more out of class time on physical education (for example, the entire third grade stays in the library during lunch to practice multiplication). Unfortunately, the students at the school are desperately in need of a structured physical education program; however, the school will not extend their program to allow the integration of physical education and academic content."

"The activity that the students played for all of ten minutes was softball where there was very little activity taking place for the majority of the students. I was completely disappointed in this school. To know that this program comes from a very good school in the district worries me."

"There is no uniform physical education curriculum and program for the entire elementary school where I am currently student teaching."

"Most faculty and staff will tell you about their (physical education) program, and simply blame the lack of execution of it on testing and other academic difficulties."

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“At the elementary school where I student teach, I found out that students get only 30 minutes of physical activity once per week. The administrator pointed out that with the pressures to teach longer blocks of language arts and mathematics, physical education simply did not fit into the school day.”

“Movement is severely inhibited at this elementary school. Any walking the students do is done single file, with their hands behind their backs. They are forbidden to run at any time, even at recess. This restriction is also applied to physical education.”

“While students at this elementary school were ‘jumping for their hearts,’ one student went out into the sea of jumpers, looked at the mass of people watching, tried to jump, and just couldn’t get the hang of it. Being the only one among the rotating ropes devastated the student, and tears streamed down his face. The lack of motor skills training at this school caused this student’s self image to plummet, and no educational program is in place at the school for him to improve that image.”

“The problem goes much deeper than individual inappropriate practices; it is instead the general disregard for physical education and the failure to ensure the well-being of students. If this bleak situation is to change, teachers must be educated in the appropriate practices and administrators must be held responsible for the allocation of time and resources dedicated to physical education.”

“Physical education is an activity that consumes at most 45 minutes a week and this is often compromised by other

subjects. For example today the teacher announced that the students could choose whether to study science laboratory experiments instead of physical education. All students voted to study science in the laboratory and the teacher was satisfied to remove the physical education curriculum entirely from next week.”

“One area of the physical education program that is not aligned with the framework is the fact that the students rarely get to participate in a physical education program at all. Because Open Court requires three to three and a half hours of instruction daily, math is given one hour, and 30 to 45 minutes is obligatory for English Language Development, about 45 minutes to an hour is left for physical education, social studies, science, music and art.”