

+PE=>PA Positive Physical Education Experience Equals Increased Lifetime Physical Activity

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Introduction

Physical inactivity is defined by the Sedentary Behavior Research Network as the term 'physical inactivity' was described as performing insufficient amounts of physical activity, that is, not meeting specified physical activity guidelines [1]. The benefits of physical activity (PA) and exercise are indisputable; virtually everyone can benefit from becoming more physically active [2]. Regular PA/exercise is an effective primary and secondary preventive measure for multiple health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer [3-5]. According to the World Health Organization, physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for approximately 3.2 million deaths annually [6]. In addition, the frequency of physical inactivity is similar to, and often higher than all other risk factors [7]. The amount of evidence supporting the importance of an active lifestyle for optimal health and well-being has grown exponentially [8].

PE as an Intervention

Given the need for a change in the current lifestyle of school age children and once known the risks that are attributed to the habits of an unhealthy lifestyle, as well as the benefits that physical activity contributes to health and, considering that the school is the main institution of society to promote a healthy and active life within children and youth (Kelder et al. 1994, Pate et al. 2006, Sallis et al. 1997), we are now able to highlight the very important role that the subject of Physical Education has in promoting healthy lifestyles among their students (Shephard & Trudeau 2000, Tappe & Burgeson 2004). It has been stated that Physical Education has a determining role in the acquisition of long-term sport habits (Malina 2001, Trudeau et al. 1999), together with other healthy behaviours (Kelder et al. 1994). Furthermore, the satisfaction that students feel during Physical Education classes relates to the acquisition of those healthy habits (Jiménez et al. 2007). This established relationship between lifestyle and the subject of Physical Education, places the Physical Education teacher as the person involved in guiding students towards the acquisition of positive habits (Gil et al. 2008, Jiménez et al. 2007).

Quality of PE

Numerous studies (e.g. Curtner-Smith, 1999; Penney, 2002; Penney and Evans, 1999) show consistently that, despite a decade of the NCPE, schools continue to practice PE in a multi-activity, sport-based form that first appeared in government schools in the 1950s (Kirk, 1992). This form of PE is characterized by relatively short units of activity, sometimes as short as four or six lessons; an overwhelming focus on technique development; a lack of accountability for learning and little progression of learning; and the almost exclusive use of a directive teaching style. Evidence from these studies and from studies of girls suggests that this traditional form of PE is not meeting the needs of many young people entering KS3.

We know that students who have a positive attitude towards physical activities in Physical Education classes (PE) [9], or who indicate that they are more motivated and enjoy themselves more in these classes (Cox, Smith, & Williams, 2008), have a greater likelihood of being active outside the educational context. The PE plays an important role in the promotion

and acquisition of students' healthy behavior (Moreno & Llamas 2007, Nuviala Gómez-López, Pérez & Nuviala, 2011).

One major solution to this problem is physical education in schools. However, the opportunity to participate in Physical Education is not necessarily the answer to this problem. Of greater significance is the experience of the individual within the Physical Education classroom that may determine an individual's perception of, and future level of physical activity.

Recent studies find that people's feelings toward physical activity are often influenced by memories of their childhood experiences in physical education and sport. Unfortunately, many adults remember negative experiences, which may affect their desire to maintain a physically active lifestyle. Long recognized as an "inappropriate" instructional practice by NASPE (The national Association for Sport and Physical education), "captains picking teams" and other practices still occurs in some physical education and sport settings. With the increase in sedentary lifestyles and related health problems, teachers and coaches must consider the long-term effects of their use of potentially negative practices with children and youths in physical education and sport settings [10].

Physical education and sport settings are ripe with opportunities to form lasting memories, and there is good evidence that they do-especially when the memories are bad ones [10]. Therefore, if Physical Education classes have the potential to have such a powerful impact on its participants, it follows that those impacts can be positive rather than negative. Kirk, in his expose' on the state of Physical Education programming in the UK states, "Quality early learning experiences not only develop physical competencies but, crucially, also perceptions of competence that underlie the motivation that is vital to continuing participation [11]."

Sport and physical education provide many girls with unique physical, social, and psychological benefits. Physical education can help adolescent girls improve their self-esteem, assertiveness, pride, confidence, independence, and leadership skills. In addition, physical education and sport promotes aerobic power, muscular strength, and weight control in adolescent girls [11].

Unfortunately, national studies indicate that only 54 percent of girls between the ages of 14 and 17 years typically engage in vigorous physical activity that stimulates cardio respiratory fitness 3 or more days per week for 20 or more minutes per session), and only 20 percent engage in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on five or more days a week. These low levels of physical activity are made worse by the fact that only 25 percent

of adolescent girls participate in daily physical education at school, and these numbers are dropping on a yearly basis [12].

Besides simply breaking down the negative barriers quality Physical Education classrooms can improve the perception of physical activity and lead to increased physical activity levels in girls as well. Research reviews and personal experiences lead us to the clear conclusion that positive experiences in Physical Education can lead to increased physical activity throughout the lifetime. Additional interventions to provide training and support of PE programming can impact the levels of Physical Activity in a significant manner for the future.

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