



Don't Let Phys Ed Fizzle!
Why P.E. is a Crucial Part of Every Child's Curriculum

Is your child getting adequate Physical Education in school? Chances are, they're not. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), less than 4% of elementary schools, less than 8% of middle schools, and just over 2% of American high schools currently require daily Physical Education for students year-round. That's of great concern, as the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends at least 30 minutes of daily Physical Education for elementary school students, and 45 minutes for kids in middle and high school.

So why are children getting shortchanged on Physical Education classes these days? Back in 2001, U.S. legislation passed the No Child Left Behind Act in a well-meaning attempt to improve kids' performance in schools. However, with ensuing budget cuts nationwide and a new emphasis on academics over athletics, our nation's kids have gone from being well rounded to—well, round.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), a whopping 32 percent of American kids aged 2-19 are currently overweight, and 17 percent are obese. Diet and lifestyle definitely play a role in childhood obesity, but so does a lack of exercise. Let's face it: these days, it's all too easy for kids to spend hours playing video games or watching TV. And with schools nationwide cutting back on in-school Physical Education programs, our children simply aren't moving around as much as they used to—or need to.

Experts all agree: exercise is just as important as reading, writing, and arithmetics. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education says that Phys Ed helps kids learn motor skills, develop fitness, and gain understanding about the way their bodies move. It also gives their minds a much-needed break from classroom work, while nurturing their kinesthetic intelligence. Socially, physical competence builds self-esteem and enhances feelings of wellbeing.

So how do we ensure our kids are getting the Physical Education they need? As parents and Physical Education professionals, we need to become advocate for change. Help spread the word about the importance and benefits of daily Phys Ed! Talk to the board at your child's school and help ensure their curriculum includes:

- Instructional periods totaling 150 minutes per week (elementary) and 225 minutes per week (middle and secondary school).
- Licensed, highly qualified Physical Education specialists providing developmentally appropriate programs.
- Instruction in a variety of motor skills designed to enhance the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of every child.

For resources in this area, you can visit the National Association for Sport & Physical Education online at www.aahperd.org/naspe/ You'll find the Iowa Division at www.iowaahperd.org/