

Physical Education



DEFINITION OF COMPONENT

The goal of **physical education** is to provide students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and motivation to be physically active today and for a lifetime. A quality physical education program includes student and program assessments, attention to development of motor and social skills, and developmentally appropriate instruction in a safe and supportive environment. Physical activity is always a part of physical education but does not necessarily refer only to organized curricular activities. Classroom stretch breaks or recess are examples of desirable physical activity outside of physical education classes. (2)

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Desired outcomes of physical education programming such as regular engagement in physical activity and enhanced physical fitness have been associated with better grades in school and improved performance on standardized testing. Aerobic fitness has the greatest influence on academic achievement, and math is the subject most likely to be influenced by physical fitness. High body mass index (BMI) is negatively associated with fitness. (3)

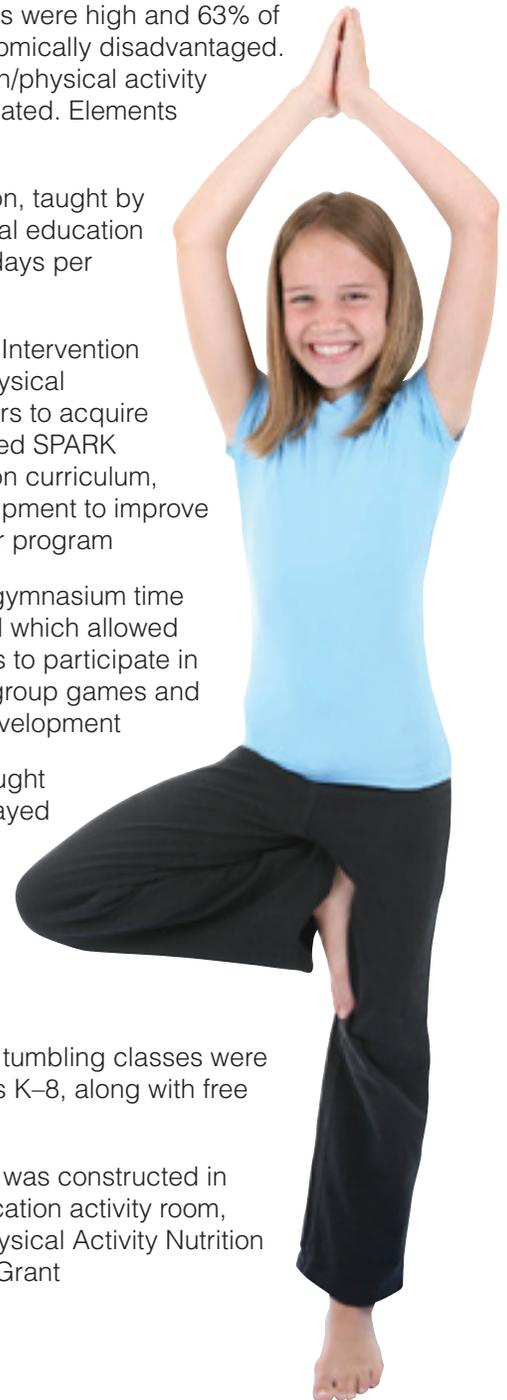
In a study of the relationship of daily physical education classes, physical activity participation, and academic achievement of sixth graders, researchers found that better academic performance was associated with vigorous physical activity. (7) According to five studies of elementary students, physical activity breaks during the school day may have positive influence on academic performance. Specifically, students who had daily classroom activity breaks improved in on-task behavior by 20% and exhibited significantly better concentration scores after engaging in physical activity. (13)

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Arkansas

In 2007, Fouke Elementary School had problematic attendance rates and standardized test scores. Obesity rates were high and 63% of students were economically disadvantaged. A physical education/physical activity intervention was initiated. Elements included:

- Physical education, taught by a certified physical education specialist, three days per week
- A Child Wellness Intervention Grant allowed physical education teachers to acquire the research-based SPARK physical education curriculum, training, and equipment to improve the quality of their program
- A before-school gymnasium time was implemented which allowed over 250 students to participate in organized large group games and individual skill development
- Students were taught juggling skills, played board games, and were given the opportunity to practice dance routines at lunch time
- After school, free tumbling classes were offered for grades K–8, along with free dance classes
- A transverse wall was constructed in the physical education activity room, funded by the Physical Activity Nutrition Tobacco (PANT) Grant



- In 2009–10, the school partnered with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service to initiate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Grant (SNAP-Ed)
- The Joint Use Agreement grant was used to assist the community and school to collaborate while improving the health, wellness, and fitness of students, parents, staff and community members

In 2009, Fouke Elementary earned a ranking in the top 3% of schools in Arkansas for fifth grade reading and science. An astonishing 92% of fifth graders met their growth objectives in literacy and writing. Nearly every grade level had higher scores than the statewide averages in math, science, and literacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICE

National Standards for Physical Education

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) sets forth National Standards for Physical Education to provide the framework for a quality physical education, which may be found at <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/>.

Time

NASPE recommends that schools provide 150 minutes of instructional physical education for elementary school children, and 225 minutes for middle and high school students per week, for the entire school year. Classroom energizers, recess, intramurals, sports, or recreational endeavors should be offered in addition to, not in place of, the physical education curriculum.

For More Information

NASPE also offers an array of teaching tools and guidance documents for implementing best practices, educating parents, and motivating children to engage in a lifetime of physical activity.

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