

ARTICLE REVIEWED

PK-12 School Physical Education: Conditions, Lessons Learned, and Future Directions

Ward, P., van der Mars, H., Mitchell, M.F., & Lawson, H.A. (2021). PK-12 school physical education: Conditions, lessons learned, and future directions. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, (aop)*, 1-9.

THE PROBLEM:

In its current state, the physical education profession does not have a unified stance on its direction and purpose. Physical education is included in the American education system as one of the critical elements to developing the whole child. Yet, the profession and its impacts on children in schools has varied from state to state and school to school.

In recognizing that the previous lack of uniformity is no longer acceptable, the authors of this article address the issues physical educators face and provide possible solutions in moving forward.



Research Summary:

The authors first address common issues that physical educators are combating. Their problems include large class sizes, multiple students with individualized education plans within the same class, lack of appropriate classroom (gym) space, little to no equipment, and limited technology resources. Unfortunately, these issues are combined with other factors such as the fact that physical education is a marginalized subject in schools, with teachers from other subject areas and administrators viewing PE as a lesser than subject. This is evidenced in policy as schools allow other activities, like band and ROTC, to substitute for PE requirements. It should also be noted that COVID-19 brought this to light as physical educators were removed from teaching their subject to support other teachers or teach another subject. Others lost their job. Other issues in the profession include the lack of content knowledge of in-service teachers due to limited professional development in physical education and the little use of curriculum and pedagogical models in PK-12 physical education.

Conclusion:

In this paper, the authors confront the many issues that the field of physical education is battling, and address the larger issue of how physical education can be in the best interest of children, schools, and society. As a solution, the authors provide these three recommendations: 1) connect health and physical education; 2) develop a curriculum that meets the needs of current and future students; and 3) establish community connections to benefit students, teachers, and schools.

Key Takeaway:

In this paper, the authors challenge the physical education profession to stop assuming its current state is acceptable and to join together to establish a unified front that benefits the students of today and tomorrow. The authors provide recommendations but ultimately plead for the necessity to be “harmonized, synchronized, and optimized in new ways” (Ward et al. 2021, p. 8).