



*American Alliance for
Health, Physical Education,
Recreation and Dance*

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The **American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance** was founded on November 27, 1885, when William Gilbert Anderson, a physical training instructor in at Adelphi Academy in Brooklyn, New York, invited a group of people who were working in the gymnastic field to come together to discuss their profession. These 60 people talked informally of methods of teaching, the best system of measurements, normal-training classes, and the manufacture of apparatus. After a demonstration of new exercise methods, they then took on the formation of a permanent organization which was named the Association for the Advancement of Physical Education (AAPE). Forty-nine people, all teaching physical education, enrolled as members of the organization with a pledge to meet the next year at the same place. Thus, the very first convention ran full circle with discussion, speeches, a demonstration, enrolling members, adoption of a plan of organization, and election of officers.

When a formal constitution was adopted in 1886, the organization was renamed the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education. The objectives of the Association were “to disseminate knowledge concerning physical education, to improve the methods, and by meetings of the members to bring those interested in the subject into closer relation to each other.”

The early years of the Alliance focused on defining and exploring the field of physical education and encouraging its inclusion in the schools. The organization’s name was changed to the American Physical Education Association in 1903. Over the 20th Century, the Alliance structure evolved to serve the growing and expanding nature of the profession as the knowledge of human growth and development grew. At one time, the profession of physical education was considered to encompass everything related to the physical well-being of people. It was concerned with physical activity, exercise, dance, sports, athletics, health education, health service, health environment, recreation, outdoor education, and safety.

In 1937, the APEA American Physical Education Association accepted an invitation from the National Education Association to merge its School Health and Physical Education Department to become and NEA Department with three divisions: health education, physical education, and recreation. The merger resulted in a new association name, the American Association for Health and Physical Education. The term “Recreation” was added to the title in 1938.

Health Education as an entity in the Alliance officially dates from 1937; however, in early issues of the American Physical Education Review, it is apparent that hygiene and health were part of the focus of the AAPE from 1885 to 1903.

The “D” was added to AAHPERD in 1974 although there was a dance section established in 1932 by the American Physical Education Association (APEA). And in the early 20th Century, Luther H. Gulick, physical education director of the New York City public schools and also president of the APEA, promoted the inclusion of dancing in the school curriculum and selected the one word “Dancing” for the convention theme in 1905.

In 1975, AAHPERD became completely disassociated from NEA. The association continued to rent space in the NEA building until June 7, 1980 when AAHPERD moved to its new headquarters building in Reston.