In the United States, for individuals ages two to 19 years old, the obesity rate currently hovers at 17%. This obesity rate has affected around 12.7 million children and adolescents during the past decade. With obesity now being labeled an epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has called for physical educators to encourage physical activity beyond the classroom and has gone so far as to recommend that physical educators assign homework (CDC, 1997).
Many professionals in other academic fields regularly identify homework as the hallmark of a rigorous and academically strong curriculum (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982). Because it allows students to continue to learn about a subject outside of the school setting, homework has the ability to increase active learning beyond the classroom, or in the case of physical education (PE), the gymnasium (Corno, 2000).

In a subsequent article, Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) also discussed the validity of homework. They stated that homework is not only an item for completion by students, but also part of the professional duties and responsibilities of a teacher. In relation to PE teachers and their goal of increasing physical activity among their students, homework may also be used to increase student engagement through creative thinking, problem solving, increased community service, and talent development (Corno, 2000).

### Homework in Physical Education

Looking at the existing studies, research has indicated that homework can be used to increase the consideration of PE as a credible academic field; this is especially necessary given the continued decrease in class time and increasing class sizes for physical educators (Hensley, 1990; Young, 2011). As the amount of time in PE classes has continued to shrink, additional engagement in physical activity and an increased intellectual understanding of lifelong health and fitness need to be achieved (CDC, 1997).

In another article, Docheff (1990) discussed how a focus on the levels of fitness and physical/intellectual development needs to also include an emphasis on fun. The “fun” perspective should be solidly embedded in homework, as making homework fun will encourage increased learning behaviors in those areas. However, it should be noted that assigning more homework for the sake of increasing time on task or as punishment does not typically result in success (Corno, 1996).

In yet another study, which looked at using homework in a PE class, researchers found that physical educators typically saw increases in physical activity levels outside of school hours when homework was assigned (Mitchell, Barton, & Stanne, 2000). A 2013 study revealed similar benefits to using homework in PE. It indicated that assigning PE homework can be a way to make student learning more appropriately aligned with SHAPE America’s National Standards for K–12 Physical Education by creating a physically literate individual (Gabbei & Hamrick, 2001; SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014; Williams & Hannon, 2013). The creation of this more physically literate individual can be accomplished by giving students opportunities to be more physically active and to have a better understanding of movement concepts as well as their own personal fitness levels.

Despite the research evidence supporting the benefits of homework in PE, the use of homework in a PE setting is fairly uncommon (Williams & Hannon, 2013). The failure of physical educators to properly utilize homework or even understand the benefits of it is most likely due to the lack of understanding or training in its utilization (Novak & Lynott, 2015). This article describes one method for implementing homework in PE that involves parents in the learning process.

### Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been identified as key to successful homework implementation and its ability to increase academic achievement. Articles have noted that students will spend more appropriate time and have a higher rate of completion when parents are more involved (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Facilitation of this parental involvement tends to correlate with the creation of a deeper value for schoolwork, an increase in homework monitoring, and the overall follow-through of its completion (Scott-Jones, 1995). Parents have also reported increased positive feelings and satisfaction with schools when they are able to be involved (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). Research has shown that using parental involvement in homework helps students to spend the appropriate amount of time for completing quality assignments. It has also been shown to be effective among underachieving students by providing better retention of the material (Epstein, Salinas, & Jackson, 1995). Although many students do not enjoy the completion of homework due to slow and untimely teacher feedback, an increase in intrinsic motivation has been shown to occur with the increase of parental support and involvement (Bembenutty, 1999).

Paramount to its successful implementation is the increase in communication with parents so they understand the concepts being taught. Parents often feel that homework is punitive and not necessary. Parents commonly argue that homework takes too much time. These opinions often transfer to the negative views reflected by students (Bempechat, 2004; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Partnered support from both the parent(s) and teacher on specific assignments helps demonstrate to the student the need for learning the material, which assists in intellectual growth. This growth will occur regardless of cultural background or socioeconomic status (Bempechat, 2004). Parents have also been shown to influence the physical activity levels of students (Brustad & Partridge, 2002). When increased physical activity is brought on by homework, it can also help to effectively increase the entire family’s physical activity levels (Williams & Hannon, 2013).

### TIPS Method

A method that is recommended for successful parental involvement and homework completion is the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) recommendations. The TIPS method facilitates the creation of interactive homework assignments to engage the student, the teacher and family members in cooperative learning. This involvement is achieved by allowing all members in the learning group equal access to and understanding of what is being learned (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Some studies have shown
eral methods and activities that have been considered successful (Balli, 1995). There are also improvements in report card grades and academic achievement (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Similar to other subjects, PE homework has been shown to be highly adaptable for family member inclusion (Docheff, 1990; Hill, 2009; M. A. Smith & Claxton, 2003). The TIPS method involves employing the following strategies for successfully involving parent(s) in homework assignments:

- Teachers instruct parents on the homework assignments and their concepts.
- A regular homework schedule is created and sent home for parents to track.
- Students are given several days for assignment completion, including weekends, so parent(s) can be involved.
- Assignments are written in easy, readable language for parents’ understanding.
- All assignments allow for communication between home and school via signatures and a comment section.
- Feedback from students and parents is used for redesigning activities for clarity and improvement.

**Recommended Activities for Homework**

Several articles have been written on the topic of using physical activity homework to increase the academic profile of PE and the physical activity levels of students and their family members (Docheff, 1990; Gabbei & Hamrick, 2001; J. Smith, Cluphf, & O’Conner, 2001; M. A. Smith & Claxton, 2003; Weston, Petrosa, & Pate, 1997). Research has shown several methods and activities that have been considered successful in homework utilization:

- **Journaling:** Students write about their physical activity experiences and what they did or did not enjoy.
- **Activity log:** Students record the activities in which they are engaging outside of the classroom. Depending on age, this log can include the amount of time spent exercising, how vigorous the activity was, and computing the amount of calories burned (by older students).
- **Lifelong activity research:** Researching the potential activities students can enjoy recreationally as they age, trying new activities, and documenting their experiences.
- **Fundamental motor skill (FMS) handouts:** Letting parents and students engage in practicing FMS and work on improving their skill levels through phases leading to mastery.
- **Creating physical activity schedules:** Cooperatively setting schedules for students and parents so they are able to spend time together, decide what types of physical activities to engage in together, and determine how vigorous those activities will be.
- **Interactive devices:** Using devices like pedometers or cell phones to facilitate fun learning activities, like geocaching or Pokémon hunting.

**References**


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Submissions Welcome!

Readers are encouraged to send “Theory into Practice” submissions to column editor Anthony Parish at anthony.parish@armstrong.edu.

The purpose of the Strategies column “Theory into Practice” is to distill high quality research into understandable and succinct information and to identify key resources to help teachers and coaches improve professional practice and provide high quality programs. Each column (1,000–1,300 words or roughly four typed, double-spaced pages) summarizes research findings about a timely topic of interest to the readership to enable practitioners to apply research, knowledge and evidence-based practice in physical education and sports.

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