



Implementing Policies to Enhance Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools

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In the United States, we are fortunate that national organizations such as the Institute of Medicine (IOM), US Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ASCD, and SHAPE America have created guidelines for physical education and physical activity. Despite all of these recommendations, there is no single federal law that mandates the number of days and minutes of physical education each week (IOM, 2013; McKenzie & Lonsbery, 2009; Story et al., 2009). Physical education teachers who are aware of and advocate for the implementation of national guidelines into the daily schedules in their school(s), increase the likelihood of children receiving quality physical education instruction and opportunities to be physically active. As such, the purpose of this paper was to provide a commentary regarding such guidelines and policies as well as to make recommendations for teachers and physical activity champions. It is important to note that this was not a traditional research study with participants, methods, results and discussion sections.

We all agree that participation in physical activity has multiple benefits, particularly for children. With school administrators under pressures to have students perform well on standardized tests because their performance is linked directly to school funding¹ (i.e. if students fail to achieve, the school receives less money and external oversight increases), the belief is that students should spend more time in academic subject matters. Common sense would suggest that the amount of time spent in academic subjects matters such as mathematics, language arts, and science is related to how students would perform on standardized tests; however, the idea that “more is better” is unsubstantiated in the research.

One unintended outcome of federal legislation was a reduction of time in physical education, recess, and another subjects like theater or performing arts that could potentially provide

opportunities for children to move (Slater et al., 2012). In December 2015, *No Child Left Behind Elementary and Secondary Act* was replaced with the *Every Student Success Act (ESSA)*. The new legislation includes language identifying health and physical education as an important part of a “well-rounded education.” If physical education is to be a core subject, a description of what recommendations for implementing such legislation are listed from a researcher’s, policy maker’s and teacher’s perspective.

Researcher’s and Teacher’s Perspective

From a researcher’s and policymaker’s perspective recommendations put forward by national organizations need to be based on rigorous scientific evidence that comes from program and policy evaluations. A summary of those evidenced-based recommendations is listed in Table 1. Also included in the table are examples of how teachers may interpret and act on the guidelines provided by national organizations. Additional resources and supplemental materials are highlighted.

Table 1. The Top Ten Researchers’, Policymakers’, and Teachers’ Perspectives on Physical Education and Activity National Recommendations

Researcher’s/Policymaker’s Perspective	A Teacher’s Perspective
1. All school-related persons should advocate for a whole-school approach to physical activity (IOM, 2013).	1. See the <i>Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child</i> website for ideas on how to begin taking a whole-school approach to providing physical activity across the school day and into the community. ^a http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/wsc/index.htm
2. All government and school-related agencies should systematically consider access to and the provision of physical activity in all policy decisions (IOM, 2013).	2. As policies are introduced at your school, consider how the policy may be related to a child’s health. See the Exchange blog for Darla Castelli on August 29, 2016, to read more about how one school district took advice from parents and turned it into a recess policy that mandates that each child has access to a safe playground with greenspace and at least 10 minutes of unstructured physical activity time.

<p>3. Physical education should be designated as a core subject (IOM, 2013).</p>	<p>3. Some schools have a health and wellness theme, and physical education is the centerpiece of the entire curriculum. See the following school's websites. Send an email, call, or visit these schools, as they are proud of what they have accomplished.</p> <p>Namaste Charter School in Chicago, Illinois – http://namastecharterschool.org/</p> <p>Odyssey Elementary School, Woods Cross Utah – http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/Domain/8175</p>
<p>4. Education and government agencies should develop and deploy data systems to monitor policy implementation and effectiveness (IOM, 2013).</p>	<p>4. Every teacher has access to an abundance of student data (i.e. gender, ethnicity, standardized test scores, Individualized Education Programs, FitnessGram® scores, etc.). You can be one of those teachers who regularly uses FitnessGram® scores to guide your decision-making about what and how to teach your health-related fitness lessons. For additional strategies on how to use student data to guide instruction see the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) website (http://www.pyfp.org/), the PYFP Year 1 evaluation report (http://pyfp.org/doc/yr1-eval-report.pdf) and PYFP Year 2 evaluation report (http://pyfp.org/doc/PYFP%20Year%202%20Report%20FINAL.pdf).</p> <p>Be sure to share your data with school administrators!</p>
<p>5. College-based teacher education programs should provide preservice and in-service educational experiences for teachers while emphasizing physical activity experiences (IOM, 2013).</p> <p>Preservice and in-service educational experiences should be provided to prepare teachers to deliver effective physical activity programs (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).</p>	<p>5. In 2017, read the JOPERD special feature entitled, <i>Physical Education Teacher Education Programs Creating Teacher Leaders to Integrate Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs</i>. In the series of articles, early adopting physical education teacher educators, describe how they made a change to their teacher certification programs before policies were a reality.</p>
<p>6. Disparities in programs should be eliminated, and access to</p>	<p>6. Ask for what you need. Submit proposals to receive grant funding.</p>

<p>facilities and opportunities should be available to all (IOM, 2013).</p>	<p>Create partnerships with local businesses. Request PTAs/PTOs to upgrade equipment, paint playgrounds, or plant a garden.</p> <p>These suggestions may not seem like policy implementation, but they are action items that would help to provide evidence that adopting a recommended national policy may not be so difficult after all.</p>
<p>7. The comprehensive school physical activity program should be implemented (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).</p> <p>Afterschool programs should ensure participants are appropriately physically active (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).</p>	<p>7. Consider how physical activity opportunities can be implemented before, during and after school. Use the CDC (2013), <i>Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools</i> manual to get started. For more resources visit https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/resources.htm.</p>
<p>8. High-quality physical education programs should be provided in schools (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).</p>	<p>8. Make your classroom the model of quality. *Plan lessons to have at least 50% of the time in MVPA *Communicate effectively *Expect students to engage to their maximal potential *Provide equal opportunities to succeed</p>
<p>9. Standards for childcare and early childhood education programs should be adopted to ensure children are physically active (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).</p>	<p>9. As a parent, demand that unstructured and structured physical activity opportunities be provided as part of the child care program for your children. As a teacher, get involved with the pre-K classes and offer developmentally appropriate physical activities that include dance and movement education.</p>

10. Colleges and universities should provide students and employees with opportunities and incentives to be physically active (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015).

10. Why do people love Pokémon Go? Visit Reddit and discover why people play (<https://www.reddit.com/r/pokego>). We need to understand why people have fallen in love with Pokémon Go and bring some of that imagination and community physical activity to our physical education classes.

In my Personal Physical Activity class, we applied gamification concepts and had college students earn digital badges for Try New Physical Activities, Workout with a Buddy, and Plan Physical Activities Outside of Class. Earning badge provided an advantage in the class, such as bonus points on a quiz or test.

Although a public school, Tucson Unified School District provides a wellness program for all district employees. To read about the program and the participant success stories visit

<http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/distinfo/wellness/index.asp>.

A Common Ground for All Perspective Physical Activity Champions

Anyone can be a physical activity champion, even students! Professional and scientific organizations should advocate for physical activity among all students (National Physical Activity Plan, 2015). Advocacy is our common ground, as we all want the same thing; for every child to be healthy and active, maximizing his/her potential. Despite this common ground, we sometimes avoid partnerships, neglect to take an extra step or even fail to share our resources. Developing or changing policies require us to act together, as our collective voice is stronger than any single entity. Get involved by taking action on one of the top ten teacher perspectives.



¹ In the US, schools are governed by the state and not the federal government. The proportion of students that meet state learning outcomes for by grade level is publically reported and then associated with the state budget that provides monies to each school district for distribution to each school within the school district.



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