

Provide and Protect the Essential Components

Brent Heidorn

At the time of this writing, we are in a crisis—a worldwide pandemic, thanks to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Information pertaining to the virus, including the most common symptoms, serious health risks for certain populations, the number of infected persons, expected recoveries, and what we can do to stay safe is all over the media outlets. In addition, local and state lockdowns, college/university and K–12 school and daycare closings, stay-at-home mandates, rules about the number of people allowed to congregate, national debates and news flashes, and more, are constantly flooding our networks daily. Our frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals are facing incredible challenges combating the virus while treating infected individuals. This is the result of crowded hospitals, a shortage of hospital beds, a lack of protective gear and respirators, and what seems to be a tremendously large number of people who are not heeding the advice, recommendations, or mandates to protect themselves and others. We are told the virus is much more contagious than other infectious diseases (like the flu) and is often spread before any known symptoms appear. A significant percentage of individuals in our workforce is now out of work, or likely fearing the inevitable, as restaurants and other local businesses close their doors. Millions of Americans have lost wages and have already taken large hits to their savings and/or 401k retirement plans. Similar situations as identified above are also reality in other countries all over the world. Currently, there is no information available about when exactly the crisis will end.

The Educational Response: Online Learning

In the spirit of positivity and focusing on how we might continue moving



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forward during difficult times, educators around the globe have turned to fully online instruction of our nation's youth. For example, nearly 50 million or more of America's youth are now being homeschooled in one way or another. While some schools, teachers, and students are accustomed to this teaching and learning style, many others have little or no experience, or may even lack the technological resources to participate. This creates additional challenges for school leaders, and so does, of course, the difficult task of asking parents/guardians to help with much of the instruction and/or provide support and reinforcement. Work- and learn-at-home challenges are common.

In recent weeks, beginning on or near March 16, fully online learning was the only method for many students in our country. If we want our students to continue learning the necessary standards-based content in all of their subject areas, virtual learning environments are the answer, at least for now. Teachers have risen

to the challenge, and in an extremely short amount of time, dozens or even hundreds or thousands of resources are now available to help those in need.

Physical Education: Standards-based Learning

Although learning via computer-based technology while staying in one's pajamas and sitting at the kitchen table may be suitable for some academic subject areas, initially, this presents obvious challenges for the field of physical education where at least 40% of our standards-based learning is in the psychomotor domain (motor skills and movement patterns; see Table 1). Further, it could easily be argued that additional physical education standards-based learning in the cognitive and affective domains also requires at least some focused psychomotor effort (see Table 2).

The recent pandemic and national crisis immediately affecting our schools and student learning has not isolated physical education as problem-free. For we too, as physical educators, must continue promoting student learning in our subject area. Naturally, this presents challenges in our predominantly face-to-face field, in particular how to continue ensuring student learning in physical education while engaging in social distancing. Thankfully, similar to many other academic subject areas, the field of physical education is extremely fortunate with a tremendous number of individuals and professional organizations committed to helping others navigate the world of online teaching and learning.

Physical Education Resources in a World of Online Learning

A quick Google search or use of other avenues for seeking resources related to physical education during these unprec-

Table 1.
SHAPE America National Standards 1 and 3

National Standard 1	The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
National Standard 3	The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

Table 2.
SHAPE America National Standards 2, 4, and 5

National Standard 2	The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance.
National Standard 4	The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
National Standard 5	The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

edented times yields immediate results. The available resources are helpful for effective teaching strategies, physical activity games, and learning tasks to be used in traditional physical education programs, presumably developed before the recent crisis. A myriad of new and exciting resources is now available, with more added daily. They include lesson plans for teachers, instructional videos, games that can be played alone or in a small group of individuals, sample psychomotor movements, and a variety of other tasks to keep students occupied and physically active. Many of these helpful tools and sites offer specific suggestions for how to teach and learn from home specifically during the COVID-19 outbreak. Even during the writing of this Viewpoint, I have received numerous emails advertising online learning tools, ideas, and games for physical activity and physical education, all to be performed while at home, including resources from our national association, SHAPE America, and others (see Table 3). It is likely that homeschoolers and other physical activity enthusiasts have been using similar opportunities for quite some time—now it is time for all of us to do the same. We can do this, thanks to so many wonderful role mod-

els whose ultimate goal seems to be that of helping others learn to be physically active for a lifetime.

Brief tasks, videos, narratives, and other resources can be used to engage students in calisthenics or muscle strengthening and endurance activities, including jumping jacks, lunges, push-ups, and the like.

We should be appreciative for the vast amount of new opportunities and resources. The field of physical educa-

tion, however, including thousands of teachers promoting physical activity, must continually be on guard for quality physical education. As a word of caution, the discipline we love and value so much must not succumb to the pressures of simply promoting physical activity without a clear emphasis on student learning. Intentions may be good, and the real-life opportunities at home are certainly more difficult to complete compared to learning tasks provided at schools in large gymnasiums, in larger groups of students, and with a variety of equipment. As a result, much of the suggested movements abundant in the online world of learning in physical education during this crisis are in the form of individual fitness-based activities. Brief tasks, videos, narratives, and other resources can be used to engage students in calisthenics or muscle strengthening and endurance activities, including jumping jacks, lunges, push-ups, and the like. Creativity and truly helpful information most certainly can help students (and others) maintain and/or increase their level of physical activity and fitness. To what extent learning takes place, beyond calorie burning and related benefits, however, is yet to be known. While there are some

Table 3.
Sample Resources Advertised during the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.shapeamerica.org/covid19-resources.aspx>
<https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources-for-schools-and-families-during-covid-19-coronavirus/>
<https://openphsyed.org/activeschools/activehome>
<https://www.swww.com/blog/coronavirus-activity-guide-45-boredom-buster-ideas-for-kids/>

Table 4.
The Essential Components of Physical Education (SHAPE America, 2015)

The Essential Components of Physical Education	Physical Literacy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy and environment; 2. Curriculum; 3. Appropriate instruction; and 4. Student assessment 	<p>To pursue a lifetime of healthful physical activity, a physically literate individual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has learned the skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities. • Knows the implications and the benefits of involvement in various types of physical activities. • Participates regularly in physical activity. • Is physically active. • Values physical activity and its contributions to a healthful lifestyle.

For more information, go to:
<https://www.shapeamerica.org/upload/TheEssentialComponentsOfPhysicalEducation.pdf>

great suggestions available for continued online learning in the psychomotor domain, the majority of suggestions are aimed at staying active and increasing fitness. Simply, this form of movement includes a multitude of options—a worthy promotion by all of us.

The Essential Components of Physical Education

The plea, then, is to continue providing the needed help for students to get or remain physically active during this time. It is possible, even probable, that some students will increase their level of physical fitness, hopefully developing more love of movement. This could result in tremendous gains in participation and growth over time, perhaps with more positive energy upon our return to the well-known traditional physical education learning environments. In addition, however, and equally as important, is the notion that we must not forget our roots and the essential

components of physical education (SHAPE America, 2015; see Table 4). Teaching quality physical education in

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a world of standardized testing with continued focus on math, science, and reading scores in K–12 schools is chal-

lenging enough. If our field of physical education loses sight of student learning in motor skills and movement patterns (Standard 1), and we primarily focus on physical activity and fitness (or other meaningful endeavors), in time, we may be fighting for more than just our health or against the repercussions from a serious virus.

Reference

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators. (2015). *The essential components of physical education*. Reston, VA: Author.

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