

Physical Education in the Curriculum:  
Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Physical Education

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
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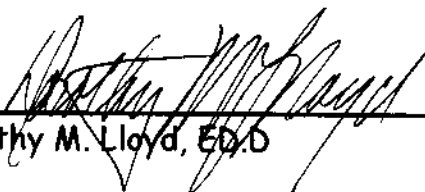
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## Abstract

### Physical Education in the Curriculum: Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Physical Education

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This case study examines the importance of physical education in the school curriculum. Physical education programs are being eliminated from the core curriculum in schools all across the United States. PE classes are now being reduced for academic classes and our students are often not receiving enough physical activity outside of school. As a result of eliminating school PE programs and physical inactivity, our students are missing the qualities brought forth by a quality program. Many children have become overweight and are at risk for obesity.

The study reports students' attitudes and perceptions of physical education in one high school in California. The main findings from the data were that students were active only when they were enrolled in physical education classes and were rarely physically active outside class.

The conclusion recommends an implementation of a four-year physical education program for all high school students.

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## Chapter One

### Physical Education Programs Decrease

#### Introduction

Physical education (PE) programs are being eliminated from the core curriculum in schools all across the United States. PE classes are now being reduced for academic classes and our students are often not receiving enough physical activity outside of school. A recent Center for Disease Control study found the percentage of high school students enrolled in daily PE classes declined more than 30 percent between 1991 and 1999 (American Obesity Association, 2000). Schools are pressured to emphasize standardized curricula and standardized tests with little focus on the significance of health and fitness, moral development or the relationship between the two, especially in our PE programs. In PE classes students can benefit from knowledge and skills needed for different sports, traditional and non-traditional games, dance, fitness, health, nutrition and diet, and moral development. Financial difficulties are often cited as the cause of program loss. Districts that experience financial crises will often cut their physical education programs first before other subjects (Morrow, Jackson & Payne, 1999). As a result of eliminating school PE programs and physical

inactivity, our students are missing the qualities brought forth by a quality program. Many children have become overweight and are at risk for obesity.

#### Statement of the Problem and Purpose

Eliminating physical education programs creates a problem. Students often disengage from regular physical activity unless they are enrolled in a physical education course at their school. Furthermore, physical activity is often now replaced with television, computers, and video games (American Obesity Association, 2000). The purpose of this study is to determine the importance of physical education in the school curriculum as perceived by 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in PE classes on the issues of physical activity, social development and positive influences. A survey of high school students (N=333) regarding their attitudes and perceptions about physical education was administered.

Physical education in schools' core curriculum and the problem of physical inactivity are lifetime issues surrounding physical fitness, personal development and social development. The California Physical Education Framework (1994) emphasizes these factors as the three major goals for California's physical education curriculum. Furthermore, Bandura (1986) supports a theoretical framework for analyzing human motivation, thought



and action from a social cognitive perspective related to moral development through physical activity. With these factors in mind, physical educators share the social responsibility to help educators and administrators appreciate the importance of physical education in schools making them aware of the number of inactive children. Then we can work towards the goal to decrease the number of negative health and social factors students' experience (Giles-Brown, 1993).

### Background

I became extremely interested in the examination of the issues surrounding physical education in the core curriculum. I saw first hand where I teach that not all students enroll in physical education and therefore are often physically inactive. Unfortunately my observations support the results of the California Physical and Health-related Fitness Test for 1993, which dictates that the physical fitness level of California's students has not improved much over the past four years (California State Board of Education, 1994).

Professionally, I have been involved with students K-12 in various capacities, and I have seen the physical education programs as well as a lack of importance of physical activity. My profession is important to the well

being of students' physically, cognitively and morally. Several researchers (Gabbard, 2000; Morrow, et.al, 1999; Sadler, 1992) agree that physical activity amongst our adolescents, particularly in California, is continuing to decrease. Students surveyed were currently in my PE classes. I wanted to know individual's perceptions and attitudes about physical education. I want to assert and reassert that physical education is essential to the core curriculum in our children's schools and without physical activity our students can be at a health as well as a social and moral risk.

#### Definitions of Terms

CAHPERD- California Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. CAHPERD is an educational organization which will achieve its mission by supporting, encouraging, and providing assistance to members statewide, as they initiate, develop, conduct and promote health, physical education, recreation, dance and other movement-related programs (CAHPERD national web site, [www.cahperd.org](http://www.cahperd.org))

Curriculum: The subjects or courses of study as part of the core curriculum taught at schools and colleges.

NASPE- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. NASPE seeks to enhance knowledge and professional practice in sport and physical

activity through scientific study and dissemination of research-based and experiential knowledge to members and the public (NASPE national web site, [www.aahperd.org/naspe/naspe-main.html](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/naspe-main.html))

Physical Education: A sequential, developmental, age-appropriate education program designed to provide students with the knowledge and ability needed to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle. (California State Board of Education 1994). Physical education is a process through which an individual obtains optimal physical, mental, and social skills and fitness through physical activity (Lumpkin, 1990).

Physical Educators: Teachers of physical education, coaches of sports.

#### Limitations

1. Subjects surveyed are currently enrolled in physical education classes, which may limit findings because they chose to be active participants in the current physical education curriculum.
2. Three hundred and thirty three subjects responded to the questionnaire and the validity of their responses depends on their commitment to answering honestly and to the best of their ability.

3. Subjects' level of understanding of instructions for completion of questionnaire.
4. Survey was given by the students' teacher at one school, which may limit findings because of the teacher's influence.

### Delimitations

This study can be considered a case study of one high school. As such, it has the following delimitations.

1. Only a hundred and seventy two ninth through twelfth grade female physical education students were surveyed.
2. Only a hundred and sixty one ninth through twelfth grade male physical education students were surveyed.
3. All students surveyed attended the same high school.
4. Students being surveyed are from a rural area of middle class economy of about forty five thousand people in the Central Cost section of California.

These factors limit the extent to which findings can be generalized because the study only represents a very small population of students in physical education classes.

## Overview of Thesis

Educational administrators, elective officials, and community leaders have emphasized improving our students' standardized test scores in Reading, Math and Science. In the process some feel that they are devaluing the importance of other core subjects such as Physical Education (Gabbard, 2000). Others (Cheatum & Hammond, 2000) support physical activity as the foundation for Reading, Math and Science. Through physical education activity students not only receive physical benefits but also gain social benefits. Physical education focuses on more than physical activity and works towards developing the person socially and morally (Johnson, 2000).

Without PE programs, lack of programs, or poor quality programs, more children may develop habits that lead to unhealthy lifestyles such as watching television, exercising less and growing increasingly overweight (Johnson, 2000). In many schools physical education does not even exist. I will argue that this is a disservice to our children.

In the remaining chapters of this thesis I will support the need for PE in the core curriculum, including the benefits from a quality, well thought out, developmentally appropriate physical education program.

A survey was conducted with 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders with a questionnaire regarding their perceptions and attitudes about physical education. I used descriptive statistics to summarize the data using Microsoft Excel 2000.

## Chapter Two

### Review of the Literature

This literature review will focus on three major areas of physical education (PE): physical growth development, social development and moral development. The parameters for this literature review were from 1985 to present.

One of the most important aspects of physical education is the effect it has on children's physical, mental, and social well well-being. When students are educated physically, they are more likely to become healthy adults motivated to remain healthy (California State Board of Education, 1994). Physical educators adopt the three domains of development when they execute their planning for qualitative activities: cognitive, knowledge and understanding; affective, social and emotional; and psychomotor, basic movement skills and physical fitness (Lumpkin, 1990; see also Black, 1995). Furthermore, physical education has a direct connection with academic learning. Children that are physically active and healthy are more likely to be academically motivated, alert and successful (California State Board of Education, 1994).

The California Physical Education Framework (1994) emphasizes three major goals for the physical education curriculum: movement skills and

movement knowledge, self-image and personal development, and social development. Through movement skills and movement knowledge, students learn how to move and understand the fundamentals of moving by experiencing purposeful movement. Students form positive self-images and work to the best ability through quality physical activities. Pertinent social behaviors are developed when students are engaged in activity either individually or in a group setting.

#### Physical Growth and Development

The review of literature yielded two major sources for discussion of physical growth and development in physical education (California State Framework of Physical Education, 1994; Hellison, 1985). Disciplines that fall under movement skills and movement knowledge are motor learning, biomechanics, and exercise physiology and health related physical fitness. Motor learning involves development of locomotor skill (walking, running, hopping, jumping) and nonlocomotor skills (balancing, bending, twisting, reaching, stretching). Motor learning also develops an understanding of the qualities of time, space, force, and flow applicable to those skills. Biomechanics involves the study of how the body moves and how gravity, friction, and the laws of motion influence such movement. Within exercise



physiology, students gain an understanding of the importance of developing and maintaining optimum fitness in the area of cardio respiratory endurance, flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, and body composition (California State Framework of Physical Education, 1994). The California State Framework of Physical Education (1994) also incorporates human growth and development in which children experience the stages of growth and development at different rates. An understanding of the body-type variations of endomorphs, mesomorphs, and ectomorphs can help students accept capabilities and limitations that may be a function of body type.

Hellison (1985) presents physical education goals through four developmental levels. He feels that PE goals need to be reached in a step-by-step progression of attitudes and behaviors. Students must first show that they can do Level I, Self-Control. Through this level, both self-discipline and the beginning of self-responsibility are encouraged. Once students show they are capable of self-control they then move on to Level II, Involvement. Students at Level II not only show self-control, but also are involved in the subject matter. Level II focuses on the need for physical activity in the program and provides for personal stability by giving students experiences in activities that can become a regular part of their

lives. Level III, Self-Responsibility for working and playing independently, requires that students first demonstrate the ability to become involved under supervision. Level III emphasizes the need for students to learn to take more responsibility for their choices and connect their choices with their own identity. Level IV, Caring for others, assumes that students have taken charge of their own lives to be able to reach beyond themselves to others.

In physical education classes, students' physical growth and development are apparent, however they are also developing socially through physical activities.

#### Social Development- Attitudes and Perceptions

The literature review regarding attitudes and perceptions of physical education yielded five articles that emphasize student attitudes and perceptions (Carlson, 1995; Chen, 1998; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993 and Tannehill, Romar, Sullivan, England & Rosenberg, 1994). Two of the articles (American Obesity Association, 2000; Tannehill, Romar, Sullivan, England & Rosenberg, 1994) include parents' concerns related to physical education.

Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1993) surveyed middle school and high school students in three urban communities. Students were given a twenty two-

item questionnaire to complete during their physical education classes. One of the important questions on this survey was, "How important do these students perceive physical education relative to their total education?" Of the 366 students surveyed, 211 (57%) reported physical education to be important, whereas 145 (43%) indicated it was of little or no importance. Hispanic American students (66%) attached more importance to physical education than their Anglo-American (54%), Asian American (48%) or African American (48%) counterparts (p.80). Students were also asked to indicate the importance of attitudes, values, and character development frequently included in physical education. Over 50% of the Asian, Hispanic, and Anglo-American youth ranked the importance of sportsmanship; African American youth more frequently suggested the importance of teamwork; and Asian American youth did not consider competition with self or others to be important.

According to a study by Carlson (1995), many students have negative perspectives of physical education. The study involved four phases: phenomenological interviews, teacher interviews, a survey, and student interviews. As a result, students saw physical education as having no purpose in their lives, meaningless or "lack of personal meaning." Other students feel

they have no control over what will happen in class, powerlessness or "lack of control." Others feel alone; they withdraw, and feel isolated from their peers in physical education class, either socially or emotionally.

Chen (1998) agrees with Carlson on the issues that portray students' negative feelings of physical education. This study examined students' perception of boredom derived from learning physical education in secondary schools. The findings suggest that feeling bored is a form of resistance that results when students are with little power or control in the learning process. Students feel bored when competitive situations arise, students will often avoid activities involving competition. Students also perceive boredom in PE classes when they thought they were not, or would not become, competent or skillful enough to engage in an activity. Negative learning experiences in physical education classes also resulted in students' perceptions of boredom in physical education.

Additionally, Tannehill, et.al (1994) included a study of parents' perceptions. Three hundred and fourteen 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and their parents were the intended subjects. The data-collection teams distributed a 42-item questionnaire in the classroom allowing students to reflect on physical education away from the gym environment and the PE

teacher. Additionally, a 36-item questionnaire was designed to access information of parents' attitudes and perceptions toward PE. Students were asked to give the questionnaire to their parents and in return they would be eligible for free movie tickets. When students were asked how important physical education is to their high school education, 94 (31%) indicated physical education was important. Over 50% of the students ranked PE as less important than all other subjects: math (77%), science (71%), English (75%), history (71%) foreign language (64%), and vocational education (55%). Art was the only area that was ranked as less important (21%) or as important (34%) as PE. Parents were asked what they considered to be the major purpose of PE at the high school level. Forty four percent of parents believed PE should promote health and fitness. Twenty percent of parents indicated that developing teamwork, cooperation, and improved self-image should be the most important purposes. Only 14% believed that learning new sport skills should be the main purpose.

The American Obesity Association (2000) surveyed more than 1000 parents nationwide and found that 80% of them do not want physical education programs being eliminated from their children's curriculum. Thirty percent of those parents are "somewhat" or "very concerned" about

their children's weight. Forty percent of parents said "too little physical activity" and "TV, computers and video games" as the causes of childhood obesity.

In this section of the literature review students had both positive and negative perceptions of physical education. Students are engaged in activity that promotes social development and can implement moral and character development as well.

#### Moral and Character Development in Physical Education

The review of literature yielded three sources (Bandura, 1986; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995, and Laker, 2000) for discussion of moral and character development in physical education.

Bandura (1986) supports a theoretical framework for analyzing human motivation, thought and action from a social cognitive perspective related to moral development through physical activity. He believes perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance and that a firm sense of self-efficacy is a key to optimal performance recognized amongst athletes. After capabilities are perfected and practiced extensively, perceived self-efficacy can be the difference between a good or poor showing in athletic contests. Bandura (1986) points

out that even the more talented athletes, by self-misgivings, can be easily surpassed by less capable competitors who are assured of their athletic abilities. Thus, athletes of comparable abilities but differential self-assurance do not perform the same. Gifted athletes with self-doubts perform far below their potential and less talented but highly self-assured athletes outperform more talented competitors who lack faith in their abilities.

Shields and Bredemeier (1995) believe physical education is the most significant physical activity context for developing moral character for several reasons: PE is less commercialized, bureaucratized, and formalized than organized sport, PE programs are structured with emphasis on competition, physical education benefits from the diverse range of values, goals, and objectives. Another reason for focusing on physical education as a context for moral development is its high numbers of participants. Physical education remains the largest organization setting for physical activity. A very important point is that physical education provides a context for moral development because it is organized and structured by a trained educator.

Shields and Bredemeier (1995) state four virtues in which physical education contributes to moral development. The first virtue, compassion

and moral sensitivity, can be displayed through role taking and perspective taking readily fostered in PE context. Teachers can give assignments that enable students to take different roles and perspectives. Virtue number two, fairness and moral decision-making, in the PE class can develop a sense of community with particular community norms. It is very possible to foster a constructive moral atmosphere supportive of efforts to be fair.

Developing such an atmosphere will involve two components: encouraging intrinsic valuing of the experience and community and promoting prosocial collective norms. Interdependent group work is essential in both. The third virtue, sportspersonship and value choice, can be seen when teachers encourage task orientation by helping students to define realistic and self-referenced goals. They can encourage the moral self by breaking down the walls of silence that often surround moral issues. Teachers can talk about morality and physical activity, letting students know the importance of moral concerns. The final virtue, integrity and implementing action, is shown through autonomy and social problem-solving skills in PE settings. Teachers can foster autonomy by encouraging self-selection of tasks, individualized goals, and assumption of responsibilities.



Laker (2000) discusses that society wants young people who know right from wrong, behave in a moral way, and who support a moral code that enables large numbers of people to live effectively together. In physical education, students can be taught the fair way, which is the right way, to play games. They can be taught in PE that playing by the rules allows the game to take place for everyone's benefit. In the larger context, this translates into everyone, or at least the vast majority of people, obeying the law of the land to allow society to function.

#### Opinion Articles of Physical Education

Eight articles reported opinions about the value of physical education. All eight support physical education programs. To date no articles have been found against physical education.

Giles-Brown (1993) and Zeigler (1999) discuss the importance of physical education. One strong argument of Giles-Brown (1993) is when physical educators help administrators understand physical education and its importance, the number of PE programs getting cut from the curriculum will decrease. Additionally, there are helpful guidelines to use to successfully convince policy makers to keep physical education in the curriculum in this article, the guidelines are as follows: physical educators must help

administrators become acquainted with the research in the field of physical education, and to do that, they need to know the research themselves before they can communicate with others about the subject. Physical educators should share the information with their colleagues and administrators that will explain that the best interest of the students is served. Physical educators can also educate the school committee by appearing before the school board at least once a year and show them what a quality program looks like in physical education, ask them to drop in and observe classes, and offer administrators and supervisors an observational tool to use that can help illustrate what students are doing in class as well as teachers' class management strategies. Physical educators can also approach the state Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (HPERD) state organization to form a committee to help educate administrators about effective teaching in physical education. Educators can write newsletter articles in the state teacher's association to raise the awareness of PE programs with all teachers.

While Zeigler (1999) agreed with Giles-Brown (1993) on educating administrators and decision-makers, he also supported Dr. Arthur H. Steinhaus and Dr. Raymond Weiss' thirteen principal principles of physical

education as cited by Zeigler, can be major attributes to a quality physical education program. These thirteen principles are significant in the research of physical education because they connect with the goals and objectives of physical education and support the content that needs to be taught to be in affective physical education program. For example, the "Longevity Principle" affirms that regular developmental physical activity throughout life can help a person live longer. This principle relates to a goal in the California State Framework for Physical Education.

Regarding quality physical education, Black (1995), Gabbard (2000), Lambert (2000), Morrow, Jackson and Payne (1999), Saffici (1999) and Siedentop (1992) describe the characteristics of a quality physical education program and how physical activity benefits the students in schools. Black (1995), Gabbard (2000), and Lambert (2000) suggest that physical education classes should offer opportunities to develop social and cooperative skills, and develop a multicultural perspective through participation in physical activities (Gabbard, p.31). Instruction should include a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and instruction in healthy eating habits and good nutrition. According to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), children should learn

how to be physically active by doing activities that increase their physical competence, self-esteem, and enjoyment (Gabbard, 2000). Black (1995) also includes one of Howard Gardner's seven multiple intelligences, "bodily/kinesthetic intelligence" as an effective teaching tool towards a quality physical education program. Morrow, et.al (1999), Saffici (1999), and Siedentop (1992) agree with Black, Gabbard and Lambert but offer additional suggestions. Morrow, et.al, (1999) describes a quality physical education program as offering a variety of sources and not be limited to schools. This type of program should include teachers, school administrators, health care professionals, parents, community agencies, and participants themselves. Only with the collaboration and support of everyone can we have an impact on the health and quality of life in our children and adolescents.

Saffici (1999) argues that if physical educators cannot adapt to meet the needs of all students, physical education will not succeed in being a viable piece of the curriculum. Siedentop (1992) adds that physical education should experiment with school-based fitness centers where instructional and drop in activity keep the center busy before, during and after school.

This literature review supports this thesis in that it emphasizes three major areas of physical education: physical growth and development, social development and moral and character development. This case study stresses the importance of physical education in the school curriculum and how these major areas support incorporate the skills for a well-rounded individual.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

This thesis surveyed students' perceptions and attitudes about physical education and the importance of physical education in the school curriculum (See Appendix A for questionnaire).

#### Setting

This study took place at a high school in the Central Coast. I will be referring to this school using the fictitious name of "California High School." California High School is the only major high school in the city of a population of approximately 40,000. The other high school is an alternative high school. Fifty one percent of the students are Latino, forty eight percent are Caucasian while one percent consists of students of African and Asian American descent. Students at California High School have to be enrolled in physical education classes or high school sports for at least two years or 20 semester units upon graduation.

All physical education classes at California High School are on block scheduling and last approximately ninety minutes and meet two or three times a week. Four classes are formed to make up the program: Introduction to Physical Education is usually for the first year PE student,

Advanced Physical Education is for the second through fourth year students who received a grade of "B" or better in their first year, Weight Training is also for those students who received a grade of "B" or better in their first year, and Adaptive Physical Education is offered for students with physical or mental disabilities that limit their activity. The students who do not receive a "B" or better in their first year have to repeat Introduction to Physical Education until they can successfully do so. The physical education program at California High School has two gymnasiums, a weight room, two swimming pools, two softball fields, two baseball fields, tennis courts, two soccer fields, two wrestling rooms, and a regulation track with a football stadium. Students are engaged in several activities throughout the semester including a unit on square and line dancing. Students enrolled in Advanced Physical Education are also offered off campus bowling at a local bowling center (See Appendix B for course descriptions).

### Research Participants

The research participants from California High School are high school female and male students from the ages of fourteen to eighteen years old, grades ninth through twelfth. All participants are currently enrolled in physical education classes. The three hundred and thirty three participants

were selected from my physical education classes and classes that I team-teach with a colleague. One hundred and seventy two female students and one hundred and sixty one male students were surveyed. Three hundred and thirty three surveys were collected and all questions were answered.

### Data Collection

I distributed to each physical education class that I teach or team-teach at California High School a questionnaire. The questionnaire had four questions to be answered with either a "yes" or a "no." The following statements were on this questionnaire:

1. Physical education classes provide me with situations that will make me a better citizen.
2. Physical education provides me with activity that I may not receive elsewhere.
3. Physical education helps me become a lifelong learner of sport, fitness, and health
4. My physical education teachers and coaches influence me to continue being physically active.



The questionnaire was given to the participants in January 2001. Each student present at the time of the distribution was given as much time as needed to complete the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

I used descriptive statistics to summarize the data using Microsoft Excel 2000. I compared females' answers to each question with the responses of the males for each question. I computed percentages of "yes" answers, percentages of "no" answers, and percentages of females "yes and no" answers as well as male "yes and no" answers. I created frequency charts for all responses and pie charts with proportions for each question. I chose to analyze data with descriptive statistics because my study used a census that included all members of the school population. In this case, inferential statistics such as t-tests and chi square test are not needed to analyze results of a census study.

Qualitative data collected from twenty selected students yielded data to confirm their answers of the questionnaire. From the twenty responses I examined the data to uncover any patterns and reasons they gave for their answers. I reported similar answers for each of the four questions.

The next chapter will report the findings of the questionnaire and interviews.

## Chapter Four

### Data Analysis and Results

In this chapter, I will analyze the data I received from the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade student questionnaire from California high School. The questionnaires were distributed to each class by the primary researcher during their physical education classes. Students took about fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire and interviews will be presented by each question individually. The statistics of each question will be presented first followed by graphs to illustrate the data. With the data I collected from my interviews with the twenty students, I wrote up a narrative to support their answers and data results. I examined their responses to uncover any patterns in reasons they gave for their answers. The narrative will first state the comments from the students in the group that responded "yes" followed by the comments from the students that responded "no" to each statement.

#### Question One

One hundred and seventy one female students and one hundred and sixty one male students responded to the questionnaire. The first

statement students responded to was: Physical education classes provide me with situations that will make me a better citizen. Eighty-nine females (52%) and ninety-six males (60%) responded "yes" while eighty three females (48%) and sixty-five (40%) males responded "no" to the statement. See figures 4.1 through 4.4.

Figures 4.1 and Figure 4.2

#### Better Citizenship

#### Yes and No Responses as a Whole

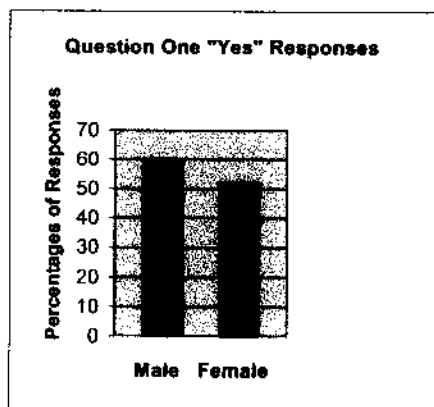


Figure 4.1

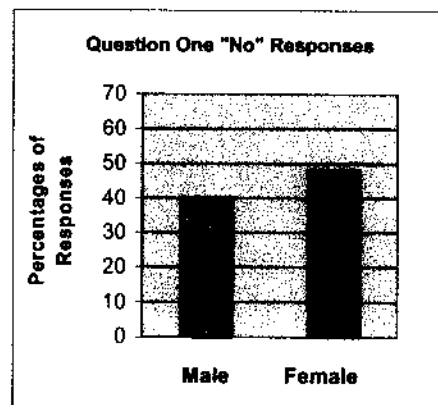


Figure 4.2

## Figures 4.3 and 4.4

### Better Citizenship

#### Yes and No Responses by Gender

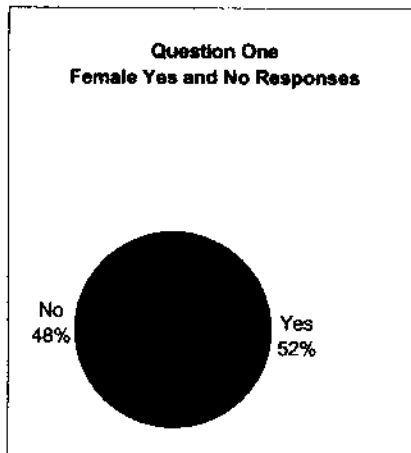


Figure 4.3

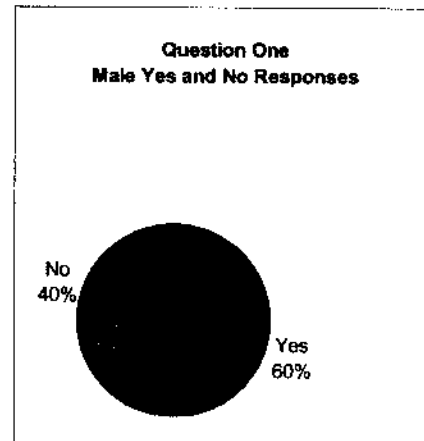


Figure 4.4

In this question I see a small gender difference in responding to physical education and citizenship. The male students seemed a little more likely to connect PE with citizenship than the female students.

When asked in interviews how physical education classes provide situations that will make one become a better citizen, students that responded "yes" felt that they incorporated teamwork and citizenship with other students they did not agree with or did not like in team activities. They felt this was an attribute they can use in the "real world" after high school and in the work force. Students felt they were becoming better

citizens because they were working with diverse people and were able to see how people felt about things and not just judge someone on their appearance. Students enjoyed using their leadership roles as captains or stretch leaders to help other and display sportspersonship.

Students that responded "no" felt they were not becoming better citizens in PE because not everyone gets along and expressed that if they did do something wrong others may not like them. Some students felt that physical activity no way determines what type of citizen you will be in life and doesn't determine what you are going to do in life. One sixteen year old male student stated, "PE is not a good basis for your future obligations, it is a subject that is sports oriented and health related." Students did not like the fact that they are pitted against each other through competition and viewed it as ridicule and negative.

#### Question Two

Statement two of the questionnaire was: Physical education provides me with activity that I may not receive elsewhere. One hundred and twenty four females (72%) and one hundred and fifteen males (71%) responded "yes" while forty-eight females (28%) and forty-six (29%) males responded "no" to the statement. See figures 4.5 through 4.8.

When students were asked why they could not receive physical activity outside of physical education classes, students often answered they simply had other obligations and responsibilities such as homework, chores, and their jobs. Students also mentioned they did not have access to facilities or equipment of some of their favorite sports such as volleyball, badminton, tennis, and swimming. Students felt when they were not in PE class they had no motivation to be active and it was no longer fun.

Students that were active outside of PE class were students that were involved in extra curricular activities, school sports, recreation programs, members of fitness gyms and club sports in the community.

In this data, both female and male students seemed to agree that they were receiving more physical activity while they were enrolled in physical education classes and less physical activity when they were not enrolled in classes.

Figures 4.5 and Figure 4.6

Activity in and out of school

Yes and No Responses as a Whole

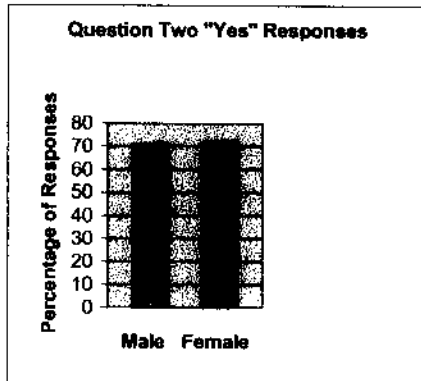


Figure 4.5

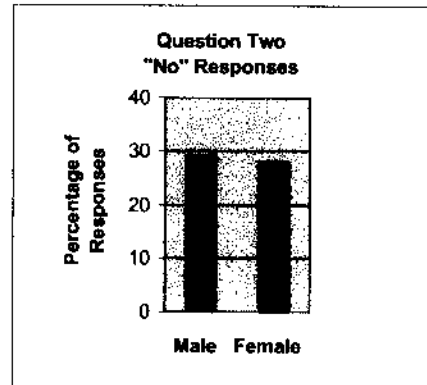


Figure 4.6

Figures 4.7 and 4.8

Activity in and out of school

Yes and No Responses by Gender

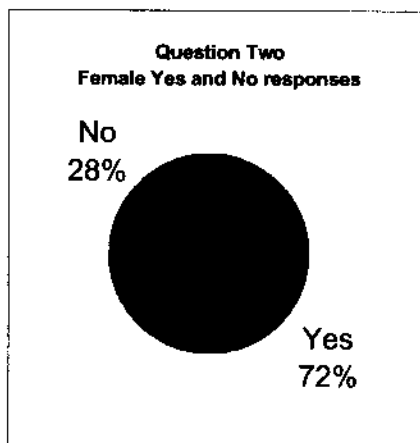


Figure 4.7

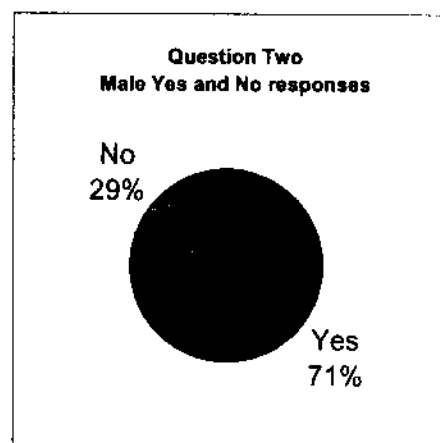


Figure 4.8



### Question Three

When asked if physical education helped one become a lifelong learner of sport, fitness and health, one hundred and thirty eight females (80%) and one hundred and twenty eight males (80%) responded "yes" while thirty three females (20%) and thirty four (20%) males responded "no" to the statement. See figures 4.9 through 4.12.

The pattern of this data shows that the females and males all shared the exact same percentages in "yes" and "no" responses. Most students did find a connection from PE classes to becoming lifelong learners of physical activity.

Figures 4.9 and 4.10

#### Lifetime Learning

#### Yes and No Responses as a Whole

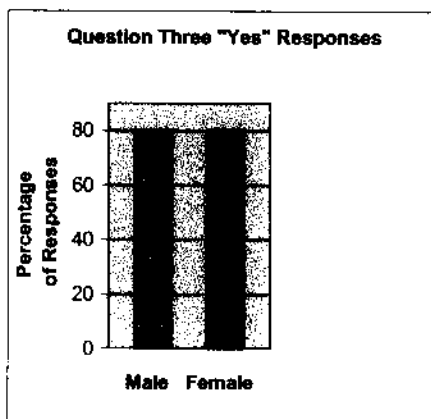


Figure 4.9

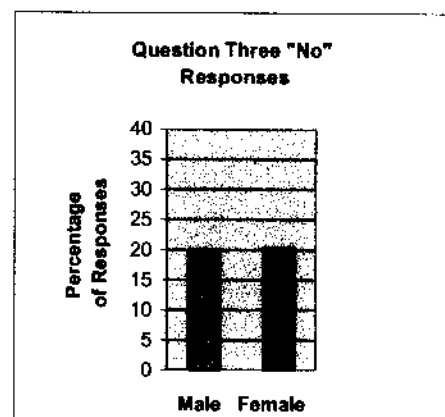


Figure 4.10

## Figures 4.11 and 4.12

### Lifetime Learning

#### Yes and No Responses by Gender

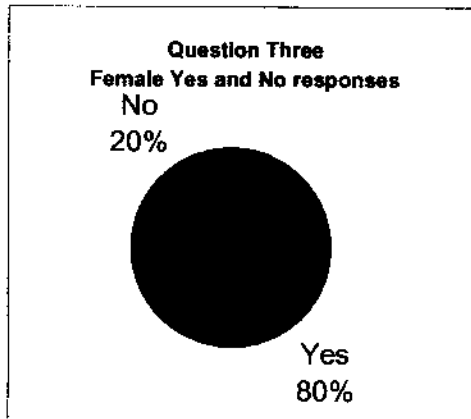


Figure 4.11

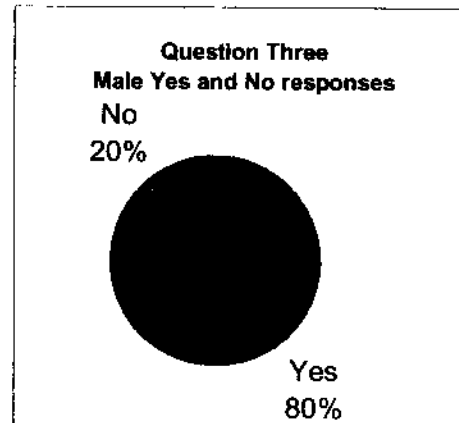


Figure 4.12

Most students that responded "yes" to this statement felt their PE classes helped them to become lifelong learners of sport, fitness and health. They said the skill development they received was a motivating factor to continue with certain activities such as running, team sports and individual sports. Students agreed they had an interest in health because of their well-being and the goal to "stay in shape." Students said they had fun in PE and that alone made them interested in continuing their learning.

On the other hand, students that responded "no" to this statement expressed they did not enjoy PE and were only in the class as a graduation

requirement. They felt outside school there would be no other peers to be involved with and that it would not be fun.

#### Question Four

The final statement of the questionnaire was: My physical education teachers and coaches influence me to continue being physically active. One hundred and forty five females (84%) and one hundred and thirty four males (83%) responded "yes" while twenty-seven females (17%) and twenty-seven (16%) males responded "no" to the statement. See figures 4.13 through 4.16.

Figures 4.13 and 4.14

Professional influences by teachers and coaches

Yes and No Responses as a Whole

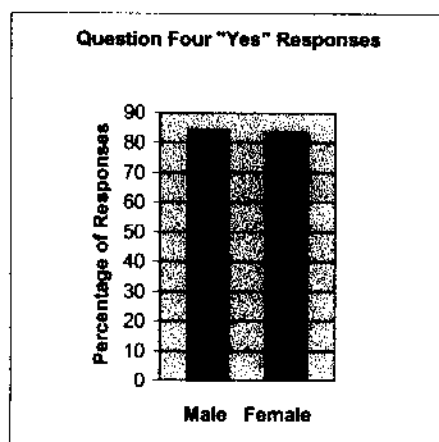


Figure 4.13

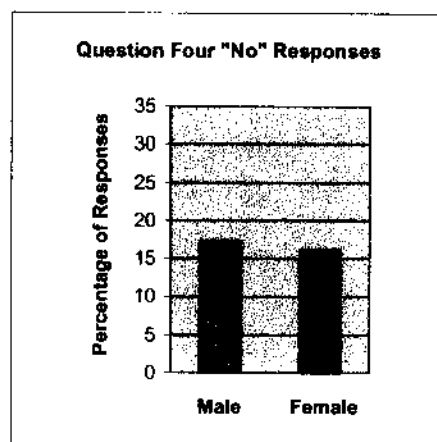


Figure 4.14

## Figures 4.15 and 4.16

### Professional influences by teachers and coaches

#### Yes and No Responses by Gender

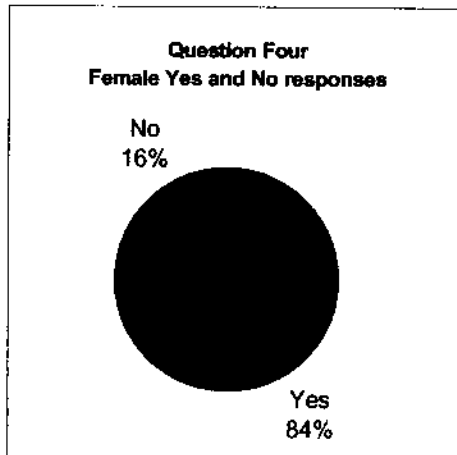


Figure 4.15

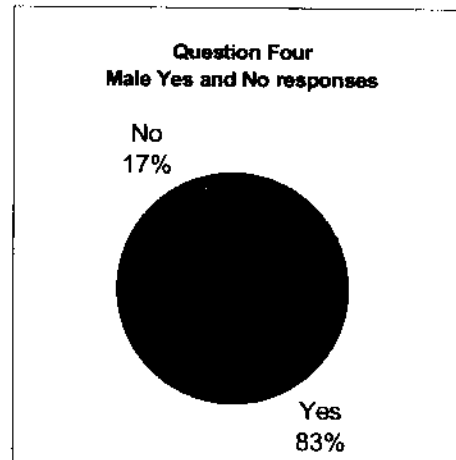


Figure 4.16

Again, the data indicates a pattern that both female and male students had a similar percentage for both responses. This supports that both genders felt their PE teachers and coaches had an influence on them to continue being physically fit at some time while taking PE classes.

Most students, the students that responded "yes", believed their PE teachers and coaches did have an influence on them to continue being physical fit and felt their teachers encouraged them to try harder, to be successful, helped them to become better at different skills, and frequently told them to put more effort into activities. Students said their PE teachers

genuinely cared for them and acknowledged and recognized their positive efforts. Students believed their PE teachers allowed them to have fun in class and let them "relieve their stress" and relax from everyday stressors through activities. Teachers taught new skills that the students could do at home and motivated them in explaining to them the importance of staying active and their health.

The students that responded "no", did not feel their PE teachers and coaches had an influence on them and felt the coaches only had an interest in the students that were already athletic and involved in sports. Students want PE teachers to acknowledge all students' efforts in class and not have favorites. One sixteen year old male student said, "PE is the survival of the fittest class, if you're not fit, you won't survive."

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the female and male students' both have similar responses for the four questions with very close percentages. The major finding in this chapter is that most students surveyed are only physically active when they are enrolled in physical education classes. According to the questionnaire results, few students are active outside of PE classes. The major difference between genders in the findings is that the male students

found more of a connection with citizenship and physical education than the female students.

Based on this analysis of data, I have the following recommendations and suggestions to offer a physical education program in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion, Main Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine if physical education should be in the school curriculum. One of the most important aspects of physical education is the effect it has on children's physical, mental, and social well-being. When students are educated physically, they are more likely to become healthy adults motivated to remain healthy (California State Board of Education, 1994).

This case study was done to investigate the importance of physical education in our schools' curriculum and to reflect on students' attitudes and perceptions of PE. It has appeared that many schools do not have a quality physical education program and in some schools, physical education does not exist. This thesis examined a small population of high school students and found that most students at California High School valued their PE program and saw it as an opportunity to be physically active. Based on the findings of this study, physical education should not only be in the school curriculum but in my opinion should be required all four years of a student's high school career.

## Main Findings

Participants found physical education was an integral part of their school learning and personal health. One of the main findings of this study and probably the most important finding was that the majority of the participants (72%) responded that physical education provided them with activity they may not receive elsewhere. This statistic strongly suggests that physical education belongs in our schools. Students at California High School have only a two-year PE requirement upon graduation. I feel once these students are no longer enrolled in physical education, they are not being physically active anywhere else. This becomes a major concern because students are not being as cautious of their fitness or health as when they are learning about it in school. They now have to monitor their own physical activity in their everyday schedules outside of school if they do not take it as a course. Now on top of jobs, dating, homework and other obligations students have, students are not as able to be as physically active as they were when they were in PE, which is why we need the four-year requirement.

Additionally the data supported twenty eight percent of the students are physically active outside their PE classes. I'm not surprised with this



information because this percentage includes athletes. The athletes that try out for the school's teams and make the teams continue to train and play for those teams all four years of high school. Those students are already self-motivated to remain healthy and physically fit. They are more likely to train and work out on their own and even call a buddy or two and play sports in their spare time. I know that occurs, I did that myself when I was in high school and continue to work out now. However, the focus of this thesis is on our average non-athlete students, the seventy two percent in this study.

The next finding that I thought was absolutely wonderful, especially since I am a physical educator, was the fact that eighty four percent of the participants felt influenced by their teachers and coaches to continue being physically fit. I must say that I am not totally surprised but it did catch me off guard a little bit. Everyday I feel I am more and more of an influence to my students that I teach daily. I feel it so important that educators realize the influence we have as role models to our students. They really look up to us and take what we have to offer to their hearts. I truly believe that, that's why I do what I do. I know if I value physical fitness and tell the students so they will at least think about it.

The most surprising result I found in this study was the response from the participants in regards to becoming better citizens through physical education classes. Only a little more than half of the participants agreed with that statement. When I talked to a lot of the students about the subject of citizenship, they thought of physical education as being only physical. They said they were there to "play", not to think about other things. On the other hand, other students felt sportsmanship was helping to be a better citizen and therefore thought PE did help. I was a little disappointed about the response because it made me think that I may not be teaching that skill in my classes or that it wasn't emphasized enough or possibly overlooked by the students.

One thing I liked that I found in the results was that the male and female results were quite comparable. There were no major differences in the responses given from the two genders for any of the statements. In fact all the percentages were within five percentage points. I feel these findings show a consistency in the PE program at California High School and its teachings.

### Recommendations for Physical Education Programs

As a priority my recommendation for a quality physical education program in a high school, specifically California High School, is an implementation of a four-year requirement of PE upon graduation.

If students are to receive the message of the importance of physical activity and fitness we need to start by teaching it every year to students throughout their four years of high school. I realize the graduation unit requirements are increasing (See Appendix C for current graduation requirements for California High School) but so is the rate of teenage obesity and inactivity (Luna, 2000). Our goal is to teach students activities that promote lifelong learning of the subject. Right now students at California High School take PE for two years and can't wait to get done and move on. I want students to want to take four years because they enjoy it and they enjoy being active not just because they have to. In order to make this happen, students should be allowed to be involved in the activity selection process. I believe if students choose what activities they will be involved in, they will be more motivated in the class. Students like feeling empowered in making choices about their education. Students having input

on the activities they will have in their class can also develop more leadership roles and hence increase citizenship in PE classes.

In order for California High School to have a four-year physical education program I recommend extending the school day to seven periods for all students. Students can schedule their classes starting at 7:00 a.m. for zero period until 3:35 p.m. for seventh period. Currently, students at California High School take three classes a day and meet every other day on a Block Schedule. The first block starts at 8:20 and the last block ends at 2:25. The zero and seventh period are presently for students that are behind in credits for their year in school or for remediating students. I believe students can incorporate all graduation requirements with PE classes all four years, with this additional class period. If students find it hard to fulfill all requirements students should enroll in a summer school physical education course. In order for additional PE classes to be added to the school day and to the curriculum, more physical educators need to be hired to teach these courses and in some instances teachers would teach six blocks.

In the past, physical education was a four-year graduation requirement. With all the pressures on schools to achieve high test scores

on standardized tests, no wonder little emphasis is placed on physical activity. Unfortunately, PE is not on the test, maybe it should be. Every year several of our PE students are taking the California Fitness Test's Fitnessgram, we should be putting our focus on achieving high test scores in fitness then maybe our students' overall standardized test scores will be higher.

#### Recommendations for Future Study

The findings of this case study allows for further studies that will continue to examine the importance of physical education being in the school curriculum. This study combined 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders as a whole to participate in the research. I would recommend analyzing each grade level by itself to see if there are any differences in the grades, as they get closer to graduating and fulfilling their requirement. This would allow the researcher to see if students' attitudes about PE change as they get older and also to see how many 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders were taking PE because they wanted to or because they did not finish their PE credits by their 2<sup>nd</sup> year in high school.

This study did some comparisons between females and males. I would recommend doing a more thorough study on each gender separately to see if

there are any major differences or similarities between the two groups. It would be of an interest to see what types of activities each group enjoyed most. I do anticipate a difference in choices of activities between the two genders.

My final recommendation would be to use a similar study with participants enrolled in two years of physical education and then do a follow up study with the same participants the next year when they are not enrolled in PE. The main purpose of this follow up study would be to compare the physical activity they are involved while not enrolled in PE class in comparison to when they were enrolled in class. The analysis would see if they were as active as they were when enrolled in PE to maintain their fitness level or if they were only physically active while they were enrolled in the classes.

Another possible recommendation for a further study would be to compare similar schools with a two year PE requirement and a school with a four year requirement, then analyze to see if PE makes an impact on students' overall academic learning and academic achievement.

## Conclusion

I have gained a great deal of knowledge from the students I worked with on this case study about their attitudes and perceptions of physical education. I feel it has helped me grow as a physical educator and taught me a lot about students and their health in general. I had the opportunity to teach these students something that will affect their lives during and after high school, physical fitness, citizenship and morals. From this case study I feel I have taught the importance of physical activity to my students and the importance of having physical education in our school's curriculum. I have emphasized time and time again that a two-year program is not enough for our students in this day in age with all the other distractions teenage students are surrounded by daily. Computers, video games, televisions, DVD players are now replacing the physical activity. Education needs to get the priorities straight. We can no longer just graduate our students out of physical education, we must make it lifelong learning and while we have a chance to influence our "tomorrow's leaders", we need to seize the moment. We must care about the well being of our students and it starts with their **physical well-being.**

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## Appendix A

### Student Questionnaire

Please mark either “yes” or “no” to the following statements

1. Physical education classes provide me with situations that will make me a better citizen.
2. Physical education provides me with activity that I may not receive elsewhere.
3. Physical education helps me become a lifelong learner of sport, fitness and health.
4. My physical education teachers and coaches influence me to continue being physically active.

**Appendix B**

**California High School**

**Physical Education Course Descriptions**

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**Mission Statement:** Through participation in P.E. students will develop a positive experience regarding Physical Education, leading to a lifelong commitment to personal health, fitness and physical activity. They will gain knowledge of various carry-over sports which will lead to enriched adult recreational pursuits.

**General Information:** Dress requirements: All P.E. students must wear the required uniform with the P.E. logo, and tennis shoes.

**Homework Expectations:** At the beginning of each activity, written homework dealing with rules and procedures of the activity may be assigned. Written tests are usually given at the end of each unit.

### Introduction to Physical Education

**Grades:** 9, or upper grades with below a 'B' in Introduction to P. E.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Description:** This is a required course emphasizing the development of individual skills, strategies and techniques used in basic physical education activities, physical fitness and body conditioning. Students will participate in a variety of activities. Written work, as well as physical skill development, will be expected in some areas.

**Activities\* offered in this class are:**

Speedball	Badminton
Soccer	Touch Football
Aquatics	Square/Line Dance
Speedaway	Tumbling
Softball	Wrestling/Combatives
Basketball	Continental Handball
Street Hockey	Ultimate Frisbee
Track	Body Conditioning/Fitness
Volleyball	Low Organizational Games

\* depending on availability of teacher and facility

Meets graduation requirement for P.E.

This course is repeatable for credit.

### Advanced Physical Education

**Grades:** 10, 11, 12

**Prerequisites:** Grade "B" or higher in Introduction to P.E.

**Description:** This course emphasizes the improvement and advancement of individual skills, strategies and techniques. Students are exposed to a wide variety of activities in individual, dual and team sports. These activities emphasize social interaction through carry-over sports as well as promoting awareness of the value of exercise and physical fitness for total health. Students may expect written, as well as practical work, in some units. There will be a \$20-\$30 fee for this class and students will be required to leave campus to go to bowling lanes.

**Activities\* offered in this class are:**

Soccer	Ultimate Frisbee
Volleyball	Badminton
Softball	Tennis
Basketball	Swimming
Speedaway	Weight training
Bowling	Aerobics
Square Dancing	Line Dancing
Flag Football	Jogging
Archery	Power Walking
Pickle ball	Cross Training
Eclipse ball	Health Lectures
Yoga	Archery
Gymnastics	Wrestling/Combatives
Track & Field	Folk Dancing
Body Conditioning & Fitness	

\* depending on availability of teacher and facility

Meets graduation requirement for P.E.

This course is repeatable for credit.

### **Modified Physical Education**

**Grades:** 9, 10, 11, 12

**Prerequisite:** P.E. or Special Ed. teacher recommendation.

**Description:** Modified Physical Education is a co-ed class for students with low motor skills or the inability to perform in the regular P.E. program. Instruction covers all phases of individual sports, team sports, physical fitness, low organizational games, stunts and tumbling, combatives, gym bowling, weight training and some rhythmic activities. All activities are taught in modified versions in keeping with the skill level of those involved. Grading emphasizes effort more than ability.

Meets graduation requirement for P.E.

This course is repeatable for credit.

### **Weight Training**

**Grades:** 10, 11, 12

**Prerequisite:** Grade of "B" or higher in Introduction to P.E..

**Description:** This course is an advanced strength and conditioning class for student athletes participating in strength and power sports. This course will have a heavy emphasis on weight training based on the principles of periodization, including Olympic weight lifting techniques and on the field anaerobic conditioning drills. *Students enrolled in this course must have a high degree of motivation and cannot transfer out of the class until the semester.*

Meets graduation requirement for P.E.

This course is repeatable for credit.

### **Physical Education for Athletes**

**Grades:** 9, 10, 11, 12

**Prerequisite:** Sign up in the Counseling Office

**Description:** Students who participate in athletics may be granted a Physical Education waiver of 2.5 units per sport. Students must sign up with the Counseling Office to receive credit in 7<sup>th</sup> period P.E. At the end of the season, the coach will check student's name as "credit/no credit." This will be sent to the Counseling Office for credit verification. Students may waive up to 20 credits for P.E. However, they will be required to enroll in other electives to obtain a total of 220-235 units. We encourage 9<sup>th</sup> graders to participate in Introduction to P.E. in place of a waiver in order to become exposed to the various sports activities.

Meets graduation requirement for P.E.

This course is repeatable for credit.



**Appendix C**  
**California High School**  
**Graduation Requirements**

**GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS****Credits per year**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>
English	40	10	10	10	10
Social Science	35	10	10	10	5
Math*	25	10	10	5	
Science	30	10	10	10	
Physical Ed.	20	10	10		
Fine Arts	10				
Vocational Arts	10				
Computer Science	5				
Electives	60				
<b>Total**</b>	<b>235</b>				

*All students will take seven periods unless they qualify for a waiver. (See page iv.)*

- \* *Students who have completed the geometry sequence are required to complete a total of 25 math credits. Students who have not completed a year of geometry must enroll in a math class for each of the four years.*
- \*\* *In addition to the above credit requirements, all students must pass the Proficiency Exam to be eligible for graduation, and the High School Exit Exam starting in 2004.*

**PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS**

The following credits are required to be promoted to the designated grade level:

**Grade 10: 55 credits**

**Grade 11: 115 credits**

**Grade 12: 175 credits.**

**PROFICIENCY EXAM REQUIREMENTS**

All students are required to pass the nationally normed achievement test designated by the State Board of Education and administered to satisfy the California State Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) requirements. Students must demonstrate proficiency at the following grade equivalent:

<b>Subtest</b>	<b>Grade Equivalent</b>
Reading Total	9.0
Language Total	9.0
Math Total	9.0
Total Battery	10.0

Additionally, each student must pass the District writing test which is graded "Pass/Fail."

In addition to the required units for graduation, and the District Proficiency Requirement, California state law requires that all high schools give the state mandated High School Exit Exam, and starting with the Class of 2004, all students must pass the exam to graduate.