

5-2019

Importance of Combining Physical Activity and Health and Wellness in to Physical Education within Schools.

Chandler McKean
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all



Part of the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McKean, Chandler, "Importance of Combining Physical Activity and Health and Wellness in to Physical Education within Schools." (2019). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 558.
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/558

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Importance of Combining Physical Activity and Health and Wellness
in to Physical Education within Schools.

Chandler McKean

Liberal Studies Department

College of Education

California State University Monterey Bay

Abstract

This senior capstone project brings to light the importance of physical activity and health and wellness education in connecting a child's mind and internal body, to their physical outer body. This project examines the physical education curriculum in its entirety and displays the current pros and shortcomings in physical education within schools. Today, the education system strives to educate its students to the best of their abilities. This focus has begun to push away non-academic classes, such as physical education, to devote more time and resources in other areas, e.g. math, sciences, and language arts. Through the use of literature review and anonymous surveys with regular teachers and physical education teachers in California, this capstone examines the importance of combining physical activity and health and wellness into physical education within schools. The findings suggest that combining physical activity and health and wellness is of great importance when striving to educate the "whole child."

Keywords: health and wellness, physical activity, physical education, curriculum, mind, and body

Introduction/Background

More than ever before, education systems worldwide are absorbed by the want to do well on test scores. Teachers are receiving less and less freedom to teach what their students need to be taught to be successful in today's society. Essential subjects, like physical education, are getting completely cut or cut down tremendously in public schools across the United States. If physical education isn't getting thrown away completely, it's the specifically trained physical education teacher that is getting cut. This puts more pressure on the regular education teachers to provide important knowledge for their students that they are not trained to do. This shift in education has begun an uprising of obesity in children with adolescent obesity nearly tripling since the 1970s in America. One in six kids ages ten to seventeen is obese in California; this obesity rate is higher than 30 other states in America. It is predicted that 50% of children will be obese by the age of 30 if current ways do not begin to change (Mckenzie, 2008).

There are many contributing factors to this obesity problem, however, this project focuses on the important issue of the diminishing physical education and the health and wellness curriculum that is being implemented in this field. A program study of a national sample of private and public schools in 2000 found that only 8 percent of American elementary schools and 6.4 percent of middle schools with physical education requirements fulfilled the correct requirements in all grades every day (McCambridge, 2006). Combined with the diminishing physical education programs, the research and literature review within this paper proves the importance of health and wellness that connects a child's mind and internal body to their physical outer body. This research paper will analyze why the most used definition of physical education is: the school subject in which students do physical exercises or participate in physical games and sports (Harcourt, 2010). There is concern within this definition because of the lack of

health and wellness education within physical education, and the connection that is proven between physical activity and health and wellness.

The primary research question that is proposed is: Why is it important to combine physical activity, and health and wellness as part of physical education within the curriculum in schools? Some linked secondary questions are: Is there a relationship between physical activity and health and wellness? Why is there a disconnect of the importance of physical education? Are their schools in California that are currently implementing curricula that combine physical activity and health and wellness into physical education? Are there any benefits for combining physical activity and health and wellness into physical education according to teachers? All physical education teachers, common core state standard policy-makers, California school districts, as well as parents of children in primary education, should be of interest to this research. This project should be of importance to the groups of people listed above because of the significance of our declining public health and increased percentage of child obesity in the United States, specifically California.

Literature Review

There are many aspects of physical education that play a huge role in understanding the importance of P.E. (physical education) in schools. The meaning and significance of combining physical activity and health and wellness in physical education is of main importance when exploring and reviewing the literature found for the project. In pursuance to collect the most and best information possible, articles, journals, and books are examined in this section to fully understand the primary research question: Why is it important to combine physical activity, and health and wellness as part of physical education within the curriculum in schools?

In order to effectively analyze physical education in its entirety, it is important to define and understand the different aspects mentioned in the primary research question. Physical activity is any form of physical exercise, engaging the body in some movement (Harcourt, 2010). According to U.S. Surgeon General, California Dept. of Education (2006), physical activity is an important way to improve one's mental, physical, and overall well being. It has also proven to have a positive effect on academic success and cognitive performance in children and adolescents (Cooper & Mulvey, (2012). Curriculum that supports P.A. are different body movements, sports, and physical games. Grasping essential movement skills at a young age is proven to help establish a baseline that grows motor skill acquisition and gives students an increased chance of continuing the healthy physical activity experiences throughout life. Children participating in physical activity can limit possible disability during the middle and late years of life (California Dept. of Education, 2006). P.A. has also shown to reduce stress by releasing chemicals in the brain that help control stressful and pressure situations. Medina, (2008) points out that there is a strong connection between one's body and mind.

Health and wellness in P.E. refer to the whole student's emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual well-being (Kilborn, 2012). Curricula related to these aspects of a student are lessons on hygiene, nutrition/food intake, and anatomy of the body. All three lessons mentioned are imperative when wanting to educate the whole child. When a child is not learning about their body or what is good and bad foods to put in it, the minimal amount of physical activity a child gets during allotted P.E. hours is not enough to make a difference in our current health crisis. These two important aspects combined with P.E. will lead to students gaining the skills, knowledge, and motivation to lead a healthy active, balanced lifestyle.

The combination of both physical activity and health and wellness within this paper is of main importance.

The old days of little league, church dinners, and playing with friends in the neighborhood have passed away, being replaced by kids sitting alone, with bad diets, long hours watching TV and playing on the child's computers and other tech-toys, and poor lifestyles and activity modeling provided by the family (Cooper & Mulvey, (2012).

The quote above is very eye opening to the changes in our society over the past 30 years. As previously stated, adolescent obesity has nearly tripled since the 1970s in America (Mckenzie & Kahan, 2008). Children obesity occurs when output of calories is less than the input of calories. A few important factors that cause obesity are overeating, eating foods high in fat, and not enough physical activity. As seen in the last statement, two out of the three important factors that lead to obesity have to do with nutrition, knowing about your body, and the food you are putting in it. The importance of physical activity and health and wellness in P.E. lies way beyond obesity, but touches on what obesity leads to. Once a person is considered obese, health risks significantly increase for developing other life threatening diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer (Mckenzie & Kahan, 2008). Children are encouraged to participate in physical activity in school, so they are more likely to engage in physical activity outside school grounds. The same should go for H.W.E. if children are taught in school how important the nutrients they put in their body are then they will be more likely to be mindful about their body and mind out of the school setting.

A study on implementing wellness in physical education showed a new approach to curricula and combines previously separated health and wellness and physical education to create a wellness education. The Health and Physical Education (H.P.E.) can and has proven to promote health in children and youth, and provide students with the ability to know how to be

well in all aspects- emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially (Kilborn, 2012). Because schools are designed to suppress children's physical activity, as well as the sedentary lifestyles Americans have adopted over the past 30 years, health and wellness education such as nutrition and anatomy of the body combined with physical activity is more important than ever before (Mckenzie & Kahan, 2008). Interdisciplinary learning, the educational process where two or more subject areas are integrated together, enhances what students learn and allows teachers to make curriculum more relevant. Integrating physical activity and health and wellness in P.E. will create a fun, engaging environment that educators want to teach in and students want to learn in (Cone, 1998). The existing California physical education standards are outdated and not relevant to the health epidemic our society is facing.

Currently, the California Department of Education's physical education model content standards are said to represent the crucial skills and information that students need to live a healthy, physically active lifestyle. California Law establishes the priority of physical education instruction in schools; however, this does not always show (California Dept. of Education, 2006). Throughout California, most public schools do not have a physical education teacher until grades four or five. Regular education teachers are required to get a certain amount of P.E. minutes in every week. These regular education teachers are trained to teach content matter in the classroom, and many times do not have the skills or the want to properly teach P.E. The teachers also have to make the decision if P.E. is important enough to stop a lesson that might be significant in the classroom. Many times, a teacher's decision will lean towards the academic side because of the pressure that is now put on teachers to make sure their students are at a certain academic level. When a P.E. teacher is teaching physical education they are normally given no more than 40 minutes per class period. This is not enough time to explain the game,

movement, or sport they are working on, and have the students actively complete it to the point that their heart rate is raised. This is just one more problem that the physical education system needs to find a solution to. The current physical education system in California is the reason that P.E. is not seen as important in educators mind, and is the cause of teachers not feeling like health and wellness is of significance.

Methods and Procedures

In my last four years at California State University, Monterey Bay, I thought a lot about what I wanted my senior capstone research project to be on. There were so many issues and topics within education that came to mind, and I didn't come across the topic of P.E. until I began my physical education emphasis classes, and began to think about what an impact playing a sport had on my life. After taking a nutrition and anatomy class under my emphasis, I was shocked to realize how little I knew about my body, and what was going into my body after all these years of playing multiple sports. This led me to the issue of P.E. and the absence of health and wellness education within it.

The methods and procedures used in this project include but are not limited to a literature review of articles, journals, and books. The field study in this paper aimed to survey thirty general education and physical education teachers from three districts in California. Fifteen general elementary education teachers were sent the anonymous survey, with five of the teachers completing the survey (See Appendix 1 for survey questions to regular education teachers). Fifteen physical education teachers in three districts of California were sent the survey, with twelve of the P.E. teachers completing it (See Appendix 2 for the survey questions to physical education teachers). The three districts that were surveyed are: Visalia Unified School District,

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, and Gilroy Unified School District. The population surveyed is from a variety of backgrounds and experience.

These specific methods of research were extremely helpful in fulfilling my research for my project. Anonymous surveys ensure that the teachers surveyed are not pressured to give the “perfect” answer, or lie because they might not be doing the correct thing. I chose to survey both general education teachers and P.E. teachers because I believe they both have a lot of insight on how P.E. is actually done in schools. It also brings two semi-opposing views to my project. Intensive research has been done in the library here at CSUMB and in Marina to examine how physical activity, and health and wellness as part of physical education is vital within the P.E. curriculum. Many hours were spent reading and analyzing scholarly articles and books on physical activity, health and wellness, and physical education. Besides reviewing literature in the libraries, my field study helped to further the depth of my project as it came to answering the multiple secondary questions.

Results and Findings

This section of results and findings is centered around the secondary research questions listed in the introduction/background. These questions are answered using the extensive research gathered, and the field study surveys completed by the regular education teachers and physical education teachers.

Is there a relationship between physical activity and health and wellness?

The mind and body are connected in more ways that someone could ever imagine. Physical activity and health and wellness are both main factors in slowing the rate of obesity in California, and all over the United States (Medina, 2008). A person can participate in P.A. for long periods of time and see no difference to their weight or health, however, this same exercise

with good eating habits and knowledge about your body and what it truly needs can make a world of difference. There is no difference in this and children and physical education in schools. The relationship between physical activity and health and wellness is the liaison to a healthier society.

The health crisis that we are facing is no secret. In the surveys sent out to both physical education and regular education teachers (See Appendices 1& 2 Question #1), fifteen out of the seventeen teachers answered positively to noticing the decline in children's health in the past twenty years. The other two teachers answered maybe. This shows the importance of combining physical activity and health and wellness with just a simple question and answer. The decline of children's health in California is noticeable and a problem that quickly needs a solution.

Why is there a disconnect of the importance of physical education?

Most recently, teachers are being pressured more and more to make sure that their students are scoring high on state tests, and that they are performing well in front of their principle. The last thing on a teachers mind is if their student is getting their mandated physical education minutes in. Even physical education teachers surveyed (see Appendix 2 Question #2) showed a fairly low number of importance in scale. Four (4) out of the twelve (12) P.E. teachers scored it at a three (3) or less in importance and only four (4) of those P.E. teachers gave it the highest rating of a five (5). The five regular education teachers surveyed (See Appendixes #1 Question #2) displayed even less of importance with not one teaching scoring it over a three (3) of importance.

Another extremely significant aspect to the disconnection of importance of physical education is the lack of support P.E. teachers and regular education teachers receive in this area. Ten (10) out of the twelve (12) P.E. teachers felt that they are not supported by their school or

district or are semi supported by one or the other. Teacher A states, “Not as much as I would like to be, (school) I often refer to it as my teaching on my P.E. island. Though understood and needed, I just don’t feel supported and as part of the team as I would like to be.” (Teacher A, personal communication, 23 March 2019). Another P.E. teacher, teacher F, reported “Sorta. I am not given the time or the resources to hit all the standards that are needed to be hit.” (Teacher F, personal communication, 23 March 2019). Because of this lack of support and readiness, teachers are destined to feel that physical education is of little importance compared to other subjects.

Are there schools in California that are currently implementing curricula that combine physical activity and health and wellness into physical education?

There are schools in California that are occasionally implementing curricula that combine physical activity and health and wellness into physical education. Out of the twelve (12) physical education teachers surveyed eleven (11) of them answered “sometimes” and one (1) answered “always” when asked if they incorporate health and wellness into their physical education curriculum (see Appendix 2 Question #3B). Out of the five (5) regular education teachers surveyed four (4) answered “sometimes” and one (1) answered “never” (see Appendix 1 Question #4B). The surveys completed show a little progress towards the right direction, however, there is still a ways to go. The surveys also display that health and wellness is still not being seen as important enough to educators to always be teaching it. Schools in California have major development to do, in order to create a interdisciplinary learning space in P.E.

Are there any benefits for combining physical activity and health and wellness into physical education according to teachers?

The teachers surveyed had different opinions when it came to the benefits of combining physical activity and health and wellness in P.E. About nine (9) out of the seventeen (17) teachers surveyed answered positively when asked if they believe that H.W. should be combined with P.A. in physical education (see Appendix 2 Question #3). Teacher D specified in saying, “It is important that students understand why and how exercise and nutrition affects overall physical and mental health” (Teacher D, personal communication, 23 March 2019). Another teacher described the benefits with certainty saying, “Health and wellness should definitely be incorporated into the physical education curriculum because nutrition hygiene and understanding one's body is all a part of educating our students to be healthy and active” (Teacher E, personal communication, 23 March 2019). Four (4) out of the five (5) regular education teachers also answered positively when asked the same question (see Appendix 1 Question #4). However, some contradicted their original positivity with their explanation of their answer. Teacher G reported, “I feel that is a good idea in theory, but if it starts being regulated it will start being more and more time mandated to learning about health and less time actually being healthy (ie running, exercising, etc...) which is what the students really need (Teacher G, personal communication, 23 March 2019). What this teacher does not understand is that being healthy does not just include running and exercising, but knowing your body and what you are putting into your body.

Discussion

Without nutritional and anatomical support of teachers and influencers of students, physical activity has no advantage point in the slowing or stopping of increasing obesity rates in America. I believe that the connection and relationship between physical activity and health and wellness is so evident in my project. Not only does the literature review and results and findings

repeat the importance of the combination time and time again, but the teachers surveyed confirm this affirmation. The current physical education system needs to fit appropriately with the current health epidemic and it does not. To make a change in the curriculum without pressing the importance of physical education in schools would be purposeless to say the least. Districts, schools, principals, and teachers are not seeing physical education as important as it should be, and it needs to transform.

Problems and Limitations

Overall, I feel that my field study and resource findings went well. However, there were minor limitations throughout my project. One of the bigger problems I faced, was the lack of outside, peer-reviewed, resources that were specifically concerned with the combination of physical activity and health and wellness in P.E. I found many articles, journals, and books on either one, but the combination was very difficult to find.

The other issue that was dealt with was the population size of the teachers surveyed, and receiving the surveys back from the little amount of teachers that I was in contact with. I was pleased with my ability to get regular education teachers and physical education teachers from three different districts in California, although, my desire was to have many more responses from each district. I undoubtedly believe that receiving more completed surveys would have been extremely beneficial for my project. A small population like mine in my field study can often be looked at as flawed, and I would have appreciated a stronger perspective from the teachers surveyed. I also believe that teachers can only make a difference to a certain extent and without the support and listening from policy makers the change isn't great enough. Therefore, another limitation in my project was the inability to speak to and survey policy makers from the

California Department of Education. This would have allowed me to examine and analyze the backbone of P.E. and truly understand the content standards to the fullest.

Even with the limitations throughout the process, I have made sure to uncover different viewpoints, varied studies, and a wide ranging population. I am confident that the research done is important, accurate, and precise.

Recommendation

The research, resources, and studies shown throughout the paper compile into evidence displaying the importance of combining physical activity and health and wellness in physical education. Physical education is extremely beneficial in all aspects of school and is proven to help children live a healthy lifestyle outside school. The California Department of Education must reexamine the physical education curriculum and reemphasize the importance of physical education in schools today. The department should consider the benefits that H.W.E. has on children and be sure to implement it within the P.E. content. The field study completed displayed that some general education teachers in California do not feel well equipped, don't see P.E. as a priority, and don't receive the help or time to appropriately teach P.E. All educators need to be given more professional development and planning time to teach physical education in a beneficial way.

Another important part to the importance of combining P.A. and H.W. in P.E. are the physical education teachers. It is essential that P.E. teachers are supported by their district, school, and principal. They should receive all the training they need to implement H.W. in their P.E. classes, and given freedom to accomplish the combination of H.W. and P.A. in physical education. All future educators, current educators, parents, students, and last, but not least, policy

makers should walk away from this paper with a better understanding of the importance of physical activity and health and wellness education in schools.

Conclusion

Why is it important to combine physical activity, and health and wellness as part of physical education within the curriculum in schools?

The results found in both the literature review above, and in the field study, prove and show why it is important to combine physical activity, and health and wellness into the physical education curriculum. Physical activity is only a portion of what physical education as a whole is (Laker, 2000). To have one health aspect without the other is truly meaningless. The evidence of the importance of the combination is quite overwhelming and simply needs to be applied in the physical education setting.

Even with the evident national health crisis arising, teachers' attitude does not always reflect as if they see physical activity as important, or as something that will effect a child's life. This being said, nutrition curriculum is taken with a positive attitude with many teachers (Barney & Deutsch, 2009). Combining physical activity and health and wellness education can help to gain positive attitudes from all teachers about physical education. It is essential that school districts, individual schools, principals, regular education teachers, and physical education teachers educate themselves and put more time and effort into physical education and all that in entails. Hopefully this will begin to start a shift in the physical education system, and help policy makers take notice of the issues going on.

References

- Ackley, K. (2018). The importance and new interpretation of physical education in the elementary school setting: Health and wellness education. CSUMB Capstone Projects and Thesis.
- Barney, D., & Deutsch, J. (2009). Elementary classroom teachers' attitudes and perspectives physical education. Wilson Web
- California Dept. of Education. (2006) *Physical education model content standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through grade twelve*. Sacramento, CA: California Dept. of Education.
- Cone, T. (1998). *Interdisciplinary teaching through physical education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Cooper, B., & Mulvey, J. (2012). *Intersections of children's health, education, and Welfare* (Education policy (Palgrave Macmillan (Firm))). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cornejo, K. (2018). Benefits of implementing physical activity in the elementary school classroom. CSUMB Capstone Projects and Master's Theses.
- Harcourt, H. (2010). Physical education definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/physical-Education>
- Jensen, E. (2000). *Moving with the brain in mind*. Thousand Oaks, CA; Corwin Press.
- Kelly, L. (1995). *Adapted physical education national standards*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics
- Kilborn, M. (2012). Kindergarten to grade 12 wellness education in Alberta: Health and physical education curriculum. *Physical & Health Education Journal*, 78(1), 6+. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A292997057/AONE?u=csumb_main&sid=AONE&xid=16762102
- Laker, A. (2000). *Beyond the boundaries of physical education: Educating young people for citizenship and social responsibility*. London ; New York: Routledge/Falmer Press.
- McCambridge, T., Bernhardt, D., Brenner, J., & Congeni, J. (2006). Active healthy living: Prevention of childhood obesity through increased physical activity. *Pediatrics*, 117(5), 1834-1842.
- Mckenzie, T., & Kahan, D. (2008). Physical activity, public health, and elementary schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 108(3), 171-180.

- Medina, J. (2008). *Spark: The revolutionary new science of exercise and the brain*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008.
- Morgan, P., Warren, J., Lubans, D., Saunders, K., Quick, G., & Collins, C. (2010). The impact of nutrition education with and without a school garden on knowledge, vegetable intake and preferences and quality of school life among primary-school students. *Public Health Nutrition*, 13(11), 1931-40.
- Penedo, F. J., & Dahn, J. R. (2005). Exercise and well-being: a review of mental and physical health benefits associated with physical activity. *Current opinion in psychiatry*, 18(2), 189-193.
- Physical Education Curriculum Framework Criteria Committee. Physical Education Curriculum Framework Criteria Committee., California. State Board of Education. California Department of Education. (1994). *Physical education framework for California public schools, kindergarten through grade twelve*. Sacramento: California Dept. of Education: Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Dept. of Education [distributor].
- Trudeau, F. (2008). Physical education, school physical activity, school sports and academic performance. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.*, 5(1), 10.
- Wilkinson, L. (2019). Physical education guidelines: Elementary schools. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/sf/peguideelement.asp>

Appendix 1

Anonymous Regular Elementary School Teacher Survey

1 . Have you seen, or noticed a decline in children's health as a whole in the past 20 years?

YES

NO

MAYBE

2. How would you rate the importance of PE in education compared to other subjects?

0 Least 1 2 3 4 5 Greatest

3. A. How much time do you devote to PE every week? Does it match up with the mandated minutes?

B. Do you find it difficult to get your mandated physical education minutes in? And why?

4. A. Do you feel that health and wellness should be incorporated and combined with physical activity into the physical education curriculum? Why or why not?

B. Do you ever incorporate health and wellness (nutritional help, anatomy of the body, and hygiene) into the mandated minutes?

ALWAYS

NEVER

SOMETIMES

5. Do you feel that you are properly equipped to teach P.E? Why or why not? How difficult or not difficult would it be for you to incorporate health and wellness in your teaching?

Appendix 2

Anonymous Physical Education Teacher Survey

1 . Have you seen, or noticed a decline in children's health as a whole in the past 20 years?

YES

NO

MAYBE

2. How would you rate the importance of PE in education compared to other subjects?

0 Least 1 2 3 4 5 Greatest

3. A. Do you feel that health and wellness should be incorporated and combined with physical activity into the physical education curriculum? Why or why not?

B. Do you ever incorporate health and wellness (nutritional help, anatomy of the body, and hygiene) into the mandated minutes?

ALWAYS

NEVER

SOMETIMES

4. Do you feel that you are properly equipped to teach P.E? Why or why not? How difficult or not difficult would it be for you to incorporate health and wellness in your teaching?

5. As a physical education teacher do you feel supported by your district/school? Yes or no and why?