Geography 324 – Opinion Paper:

*The Significance of Physical Education and*

*Why it should be Mandatory till the Twelfth Grade.*

In essence, the aim of physical education is to allow all children the opportunity to develop the proper knowledge, movement skills, positive attitudes and behaviours that contribute to a healthy and active lifestyle (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of leading a healthy and active lifestyle. There has also been a focus on the value of providing children and youth with meaningful and enjoyable physically active experiences. There needs to be a stronger emphasis on providing the proper education on health, nutrition and physical activity to children at a young age. Physical activity and physical education are essential aspects for the proper development and growth of young children and should be implemented on a daily basis. A pressing issue regarding high school physical education is that it is not mandatory after the tenth grade (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). I strongly disagree with the current physical education standard and feel that the Ministry of Education in British Columbia needs to enforce the importance of physical activity by making physical education mandatory till grade twelve.

A physical education (P.E.) program in school provides many lifelong benefits to all students. A P.E. program allows for all students to be physically active on a regular basis. This type of program also allows students to develop a strong appreciation for movement and physical activity in a variety of ways. Physical education in schools provides opportunities for all children to develop an enjoyment for all sorts of activities, games and movements (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). Not only does P.E. provide enjoyment and appreciation for activity, but it allows for the growth of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable students to ``enhance their quality of life through active living – a way of life that values physical activity as an essential component of daily routines and leisure pursuits`` (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). It has also been proven that P.E. programs in schools have made direct contributions to the overall education of students (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, children who participate in regular physical activity have a stronger desire and enjoyment of enhanced memory and learning, better problem solving skills and better concentration (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). Other benefits of physical education include the development of a positive attitude in one`s self and others, and a deeper understanding an appreciation for concepts such as teamwork and cooperation (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). Daily physical activity will provide a variety of health benefits: weight control, reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, reduce the risk for diabetes, reduce risk for some cancers, strengthen bones and muscles, improve mental health, and increase ones chances of living longer (Act Now BC, 2010). Engaging children in physical activity that involves team sports contributes to the growth of positive social and personal behaviours, which also lead to improvements in school (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). I feel that incorporating a strong physical education system in all years of schooling is necessary for students to build the proper knowledge and skills to lead active, healthy, responsible, and productive adult lives (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008).

In today’s society, the main problem with physical education programs in schools is that it is not a mandatory subject for students after the tenth grade (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 2008). This lack of compulsory curriculum for grades 11 and 12 can potentially lead students towards a less productive and unhealthy lifestyle in the future. With reference to **Table 1.0:** **Characteristics of Development Chart** on page 5, it is made clear that the physical characteristics, emotional and social development, and intellectual development reach their full potential by ages 16 to 18 (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 1997). This chart goes on to explain that most students ages 12-15, who have not had substantial physical activity experiences, are still in the developmental stages in regards to physical activity (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 1997). Students in grade 11 and 12 who engage in physical education on a daily basis should demonstrate strong muscle coordination and motor skills. Whereas students aged 12 to 15 are more likely to show ``relatively poor coordination and awkwardness`` (Ministry of Education: British Columbia, 1997). Another important reason as to why physical education should be mandatory till grade 12 is that students aged 16 to 18 are approaching adult height and weight. This makes it essential to keep these students physically active on a daily basis. Implementing physical activity till grade 12 also increases students` emotional, social and intellectual development (**Refer to Table 1.0: Characteristics of Development on Page 5)**. Students aged 12 to 15 are still in the developing stages of physical activity and have not yet reached their full potential. Therefore it is necessary for physical education to be mandatory for students aged 16 to 18 to allow them to reach their full potential regarding physical activity.

If physical education is implemented after grade 10, I feel that schools should provide numerous options of a variety of physical activities for students in grade 11 and 12. A physical education program for students in grade 11 and 12 needs to guide students to realistic everyday physical activities that they will engage in after high school graduation. Activities such as yoga, fitness classes (abs only, ABT, boxer fit etc.), weight training, swimming, tennis, golf, hiking, rock climbing and running classes need to be options for these students. Providing a variety of options and giving students the freedom of choice will aid in the process of becoming an adult. Introducing such activities in high school allows students to feel more comfortable participating in such activities, especially after graduation. I believe that it is necessary to give students these opportunities while in high school to provide them with strong background knowledge and basic beginner skills for these everyday activities.

Engaging children in daily physical activity from a ‘grass roots’ level is extremely important in many respects. It structures the development of lifestyle habits and positively influences individuals and their health. For reasons like these, an emphasis needs to be directed toward the gravity and importance of physical activity as a part of life. Fostering these mentalities at a young age to then neglect the continuation of this on to life is irrational. This is why it is imperative that students are guided to become more proficient with regards to their physical education. If students were given more opportunity to discover and excel in a wider and more appealing spectrum of activity, the effect would be more pronounced on society. Once the standard is set, the expectation of a physically active lifestyle is adopted for a lifetime. The Ministry of Education in British Columbia needs to readdress the physical education curriculum. The Ministry of Education needs to take an ambitious approach to the goals of physical education by introducing a realistic compulsory program that promotes continued physical engagement from grade 11 to life.

**Table 1.0: Characteristics of Development**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age Group** | **Physical Characteristics** | **Emotional and Social Development** | **Intellectual Development** |
| **Ages 12 – 15**  (Grades 8 to 10) | -continue to develop and refine hand-eye skills and demonstrate increased muscle coordination  • boys reach puberty and may experience rapid and uneven growth (arms and legs may grow rapidly)  • may show periods of relatively poor coordination and awkwardness (may show poor posture because of rapid growth)  • understand safety rules but sometimes take risks  • often are marked differences between sexes in their preferences for physical activity  • often engage in more formal team activities(continue to show great loyalty to group or team) | • may begin to show bouts of anxiety or  moodiness (emotions may come close to  the surface)  • start to question adult authority  • sometimes engage in self put-down (may  begin to define self in terms of opinions,  beliefs, and values and to expand their sense  of self by copying the culture or current fad)  • gradually gaining independence from parental  influence (may view brothers and sisters as  a bother or nuisance) | • begin to develop abilities to manipulate  thoughts and ideas, but still need some handson  experiences  • can do some abstract reasoning  • often like jokes and words with double  meanings  • developing abilities to talk about recent  events, plans for the future, and career  aspirations  • need ownership of decision making with  responsible guidance |
| **Ages 16 – 18**  (Grades 11 & 12) | • have more refined hand-eye skills and  demonstrate stronger muscle co-ordination  • females at age 16 approach adult weight  and height  • males at age 17–18 approach adult weight  and height  • males tend to increase in trunk length first  • skeletal and muscle growth normally  accompanied by loss of body fat | • increase in self-confidence and  independence  • usually friendly and well-adjusted  • less focus on self and more consideration  given to others  • more able to make choices and decisions  independently  • beginning to see themselves as adults  • male and female students often make choices  in activities based on stereotypes and may  need encouragement to broaden skills and  attitudes | • increased ability to deal with abstract  reasoning  • ability to rationalize decisions made by  themselves and others  • can take ownership for decision making with  minimal guidance  • increasing emphasis on career planning and  future aspirations |

References

Act Now BC. (2010). *The Importance of Physical Activity for Children.* Retrieved March 10th,

2011, from http://www.actnowbc.ca/families/children\_and\_physical\_activity

Ministry of Education: British Columbia. (2008). *Physical Education 8 to 10: An Integrated*

*Resource Package.* Retrieved March 10th, 2011, from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca /irp/pdfs/physical\_education/2008pe810.pdf

Ministry of Education: British Columbia. (1997). *Physical Education 11 & 12: An Integrated*

*Resource Package.* Retrieved March 10th, 2011, from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca /irp/pdfs/physical\_education/1997pe1112.pdf