



## How can we improve the marginalization of the field of physical education? How can we be seen and treated as a field as important as science, math and English?

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# How can we improve the marginalization of the field of physical education? How can we be seen and treated as a field as important as science, math and English?

In science and mathematics, students learn cognitive reasoning; in English and history students learn persuasive writing; in physical education students learn cooperation, spatial awareness, and creative problem solving. The physical education environment is incredibly unique. Not all students will go on to be mathematicians, writers or scientists, but all students will go on to be movers and they need to be physically literate. We need to demonstrate how skills and concepts in physical education can be applied in the real world.

— *Tyler McGilligan, student,  
The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

With health issues, obesity and disease being such a major issue in the United States, I believe there is a dire need for physical education and it is starting to gain traction in schools. It is definitely giving science a run for its money as a critical discipline, because while we want these other traditional topics to carry students into meaningful careers, we set the precedent that being healthy is a priority for being able to carry out these jobs/careers long-term.

— *Kristy Butler, graduate student,  
Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.*

I believe that we need to be firm and clear about how unhealthy students are becoming in today's society. If nothing changes, our society will soon be composed of mostly obese and overweight humans due to our inability to teach them healthy and active concepts. In order for physical education to be taken seriously we need to first show that

having a lack of health knowledge and becoming inactive/obese is equivalent to not learning math formulas in a classroom. Once society begins to view physical education as a necessity for developing healthy and active students and not simply as "extra recess," progress can take place.

— *Giancarlo Crivelli, student,  
The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

We have all heard students ask, "When will I ever use this?" or "How is this relevant?" In these situations, the students may have been questioning the long-term value of studying quadratic equations or frog dissection. Yet the benefits of physical education cannot be appreciated by looking only at the short term. The impact of PE stays with stu-

dents throughout their entire life. Physical education is so much more than the simple learning and repetition of basic skills used in sports. Quality physical education classes help students acquire skills in communication, cooperation and teamwork that they would not learn in any other subject. Not only do our students learn the value of physical activity in the actual classroom, but the experiences they have inspire them to become active outside of the classroom so that they are less likely to succumb to a sedentary lifestyle. With obesity on the rise and technology running rampant, there has never been a greater need for physical education courses. The skills established in PE classes support students to become well-rounded individuals with healthy, balanced lifestyles.

— *Justin Killoran, student,  
The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

## February Question

How are physical education teachers incorporating content about stress, anxiety, and stress management in the curriculum?

Respond briefly\* and submit your response by November 5, at [www.shapeamerica.org/publications/journals/joperd/voice.cfm](http://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/journals/joperd/voice.cfm) or via email: [joperd@shapeamerica.org](mailto:joperd@shapeamerica.org)

\*Preferred length is 200 words or less; occasionally, longer responses may be considered. Please include your institution's name and your position — whether faculty or staff member, administrator, or student. We also welcome suggestions for future Issues questions.

**A**s physical educators we often feel undervalued by our colleagues. These issues affect PE teachers and how they represent the field. I think it is important for all teachers to value each subject regardless of their thought on the subject or their past experiences with the subject. To de-marginalize PE, I think the physical educators should get involved with the community and other teachers; to gain support from them. Invite parents, teachers and members of the school board to come watch a lesson for the day to see what standards you are meeting and what the students will gain from physical education. By advocating how important PE is to our youth and parents, other teachers will start to see it as well, especially if they see how well you integrate other subjects into your lessons for the day.

— *Courtney Michael, student, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.*

**F**or a very long time, physical educators have been battling stereotypes. “Aren’t you just going to be a glorified babysitter?” As a physical educator, I understand that I will be constantly addressing these statements. But there are many reasons why physical education is just as essential as mathematics, science, and language arts. It has been proven time and time again that physical education helps students concentrate throughout the rest of their classes. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, physical education classes have been shown to increase test scores and students’ focus. Physical activity has also been confirmed to help stimulate brain activity. Along with helping the students with their studies, physical education may be the only time students have any type of structured exercise during the day. In view of the childhood obesity epidemic, these students require that daily exercise, even if it is only 45 minutes a day. To the untrained eye, physical education may seem to be an extra recess or a time for students to “blow off steam.” The rebuilding and rebranding of physical education has already begun, but we are

still quite far from being seen as a serious classroom.

— *Melanie Turgeon, student, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.*

**I** think we can improve the marginalization by requiring administration to be more engaged in physical education. In my experience, school administration is very knowledgeable of the other core subjects like math, reading and writing. The school often has in-school training for all of the core subjects and the administration is very involved. However, when it comes to physical education, we are required to sit through this training with nothing to do, and little information pertaining to our profession. The administration and the leaders of the school should be trained in what we do just as they are with all other subjects. There are many studies that show how physical education improves learning, and we are not being used in this way. It should not be the PE teachers’ job to educate administration on the benefits of physical education — it should be a responsibility of the school to provide education and resources to our administration and leadership.

— *Bruce Billingslea, physical education teacher, Parklane Elementary School, East Point, GA.*

**I**n elementary, middle and high school the main focus for academics is always the general education classes, such as math, science and English. I agree that those classes are important, but they do not supply knowledge about personal health and well-being throughout an individual’s life like physical education does. Physical education allows individuals to explore different life activities, to remain healthy, and live an active lifestyle to prevent diseases and to try to live a longer life. In order for physical education to be given the same importance as other subjects we must all come together and advocate. We must raise our voices with reliable information about

our students, about how physical education benefits students from when they enter kindergarten to the day they take their last breath. We must show through data that we are the ones who are trying to combat the growing rates of obesity, and we must have data, through assessment and evaluation, to back that up. Physical and health education are the only courses that educate students on their own well-being.

— *Chelsea Yousko, student, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

**P**hysical education has been described as the “glorified recess of education” by other content area educators. Why is physical education being marginalized? Is it because we get to wear track suits to school? Is it because students run around and talk to their peers while working? Maybe, but in my opinion, it’s because we are letting other educators marginalize us. Physical educators, as a whole, need to get on the same page with how we want to be perceived. If most physical educators are doing their best to enrich their students’ body and mind and the rest are “rolling out the ball” we are never going to reach the level of respect we need. Physical educators need to promote themselves positively and stop taking on the role that is set in place for us: the recess teacher. Physical education can use math, science, and English while simultaneously teaching PE content. It is the most pliable subject and we should be proud of that.

— *Lindsey Spriet, student, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.*

**I**n order to improve the marginalization of physical education in today’s society, current and future physical educators must establish themselves as a necessity by working with science, math and English teachers and incorporating their academics into lesson plans and activities for physical education. This will provide students with different ways of learning these subjects while staying

active and engaging their mind and body at the same time. In physical education, brain-based learning and theories of multiple intelligences are used to create lessons similar to those in academic classrooms.

— **Brandon Geddis, student,**  
*The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

We can start by hiring physical educators who have a degree in the field. The sooner we start doing this, the less we will see “teachers” rolling out the ball. If PE teachers take the subject seriously, I think that students and administrators will follow. How can we mistreat our own field and expect others to treat it any different? Physical education has so much to offer. It could be viewed in the same way as math, science and English if we as physical educators start showing administrators why we should be taken seriously. It starts with us teaching our students and not rolling out the ball. We will forever have a bad reputation if we do not take ourselves seriously.

— **Jermaine Kermis, student,**  
*Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.*

The only way to improve the marginalization of physical education is to improve the stigma of it: and it starts by changing the culture of physical education. Traditional physical educators and traditional physical education styles have been viewed as lazy, unsuccessful and boring. By raising the bar of preparation for the future physical educators that are coming out of college now and in the future by educating them on authentic lesson planning, assessment and evaluation, physical education will start to progress. It is important to mention, to entirely scrub physical education of that musty stigma it will take a 10- to 20-year evolution to phase out the traditional physical educators who continue to go through the same antiquated motions and get the next generation of effective teachers

that will get our field out of the past and lead us into the present and future — resulting in a new era of physical education that will allow our concentration to reside on the same pedestal that science, mathematics, and English currently sit on.

— **Joseph Guner, student, The College**  
*of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

I believe that the best way to improve the marginalization of physical education is by showing the numbers. We need to be more diligent in fitness testing so our results can be used in research to show the benefits of PE. It has been shown that increased physical activity correlates with decreased obesity, but there must be facts presented to show this. Once these studies get published and released to the public, it is then our duty to promote the research to anyone and everyone around us. The more people see the direct benefits of physical education, the less marginalization we are going to face.

— **Amber Corcoran, graduate**  
*student, Georgia State University,*  
*Atlanta, GA.*

We can provide administrators with data that shows how well students perform in their core classes after physical education. If student performance data shows that students’ academic performance increased after taking a physical education class, then administrators will see how integral physical education is to improving the academic outcomes of students. Lastly, make sure that administrators see the instruction that takes place and not just a teacher who “rolls out the balls.” The instruction piece has great academic value, while rolling out the balls may cause administrators to view physical education as non-academic and therefore less valuable than the other content areas.

— **Ravenell DuPree, health and**  
*physical education teacher, Crabapple*  
*Middle School, Atlanta, GA.*

We need to shed light on the big issues that proper physical education can remedy if we want to be viewed as necessary in our school districts. We are not viewed as important because most people are unaware of the benefits of physical education, or of the detrimental effects of taking physical education away. For example, with the growing popularity of technology, many of our students will grow up playing on an iPad instead of learning and practicing essential movement patterns, which physical education can remedy. In addition, the United States in particular is facing a rising obesity crisis, resulting from unhealthy eating and exercise habits. Physical education can give our students information for making healthier choices, while providing students activity time during the school day. Lastly, physical activity is shown to have a positive correlation with academic learning and performance. As physical education teachers, we have to stress these issues daily in order to show the world how important physical education is.

— **Dennis Dressel, student,**  
*The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*

In order for the field to gain importance, the life-long benefits of physical education need to be addressed and known by all. Physical education allows students the opportunity to gain physical skills that they can carry with them throughout the rest of their lives. Creating competent movers directly correlates to the number of physically active adults we will see in the future. With the increase in obesity rates, developing individuals who enjoy physical activity and are competent movers is more important than ever. There are many students who rely on PE as their main source of physical activity. Due to the lack of money, time or resources, many students cannot participate in after-school sports or activities. Without PE these students will get an extremely minimal amount of activity.

— **Marissa Colon, student,**  
*The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.*



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