

Middle School Physical Education Requirement: A Position Statement from the Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

It is the position of the Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (GAHPERD) that all students in grades k-12 receive quality physical education taught by certified physical education specialists from accredited teacher preparation programs. The current model in Georgia does not require students to complete a middle school physical education requirement, although most middle school students receive some opportunity to participate in physical education. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled in physical education and the number of allotted minutes for physical education have been drastically reduced at the middle school level. To meet the recommendations for quality physical education established by SHAPE America: Society of Health and Physical Educators (www.shapeamerica.org), all middle school students in Georgia should be provided with daily physical education at a minimum of 225 minutes each week.

Support from Research

- Quality physical education can **promote lifelong physical activity and physical fitness**. Quality physical education programs, while often reduced during difficult economic times, are “a critical investment in the immediate and long-term health and productivity of our nation’s citizens” (NASPE, 2011) and the need for increased amounts of physical activity is well-documented. Most states, however, do not require a specific amount of instructional time in physical education and more than half allow exemptions, waivers, and/or substitutions (Shape of the Nation, 2012). Quality physical education programs can develop physically literate individuals who are confident in their abilities and knowledge so that they will become lifelong movers (SHAPE America, 2013). The benefits of physical activity gained from a quality physical education program are many (LeMasurier & Corbin, 2006). During the middle school years students should be provided the opportunity to apply a variety of sport-related and lifetime skills (NASPE, 2001) that lead to a physically active lifestyle throughout the adult years. In addition, quality physical education

programs promote social skills, help develop strong interpersonal relationships among students, and provide meaningful experiences.

- Numerous studies demonstrate that academic performance is not improved by increasing the amount of time in other academic classes and decreasing time in physical education. In fact, research indicates that **quality physical education programs contribute to improvements in academic performance on standardized tests** (Castelli, Hillman, Buck, and Erwin, 2007; Lee, Burgeson, Fulton, & Spain, 2007; Strong, et al., 2005; Trudeau & Shephard, 2010). Specifically, “increasing time during the school day for physical activity does not appear to take away from academic performance” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2010). This includes academic achievement, academic behaviors, and indicators of cognitive skills and attitudes, such as concentration, memory, self-esteem, and verbal skills (Active Living Research, 2009).
- Participation in daily quality physical education is directly related to the **prevention and reduction of child and adolescent obesity** (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Institute of Medicine, 2004; USDHHS, 2008). According to a 2013 report, 12.7% of 10- to 17-year-olds in Georgia are obese (CDC, 2015). Although progress has been made in recent years, the overweight and obesity rates among the children and youth in schools in Georgia demonstrates a growing concern.

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