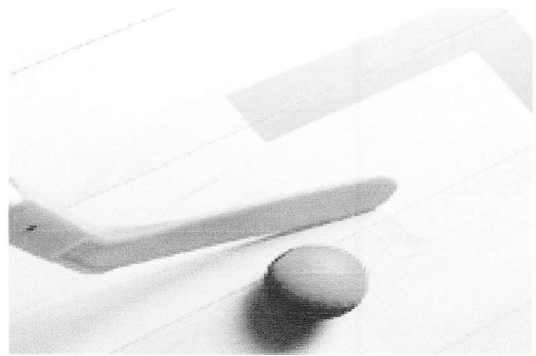


PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

This article explains some of the differences between physical activity and physical education. It outlines the different benefits each provides and helps you understand your role as a parent in supporting physical activity and physical education in your child's school.



What are Physical Activity and Physical Education?

Is there a difference between physical activity and physical education? You bet! To start with, quality physical education always includes physical activity, but the reverse isn't always true. Physical activity is any movement of the body that expends energy. For example, a spin class at your local fitness center is physical activity. Physical education is an important part of the school curriculum. It's designed to help children and youth develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be active and healthy for life. A child in a quality physical education class develops an understanding of physical movement, called "physical literacy," that leads to lifelong, healthy, active behaviors.

The Alberta curriculum identifies four general outcomes for physical education (the ABCDs):

- A: Activity
- B: Benefits health
- C: Co-operation
- D: Do it daily... for life!

These outcomes are all connected. They are achieved through involvement in physical activity, which is the main building block of physical education.

What Are the Benefits?

Physical activity can lead to:

- Higher levels of personal fitness and health
- A feeling of belonging
- Appreciating a wide variety of activities
- Lifelong participation

Physical education can lead to:

- Developing a personal level of fitness that supports active living.
- Developing basic skills that support participation in a wide variety of physical activities.
- Establishing lifelong habits of active living.

What Is My Role as a Parent?

Parents have a key role to play in supporting physical activity and physical education. Start by developing your own habits for lifelong participation in physical activity. Being active at home, at school and in the community sends kids a consistent message.

All Grade 1-9 students should have a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity a day at school. This can happen through physical education or through other physical activity opportunities provided by the school. And don't forget that's only part of it. To get their full 60

minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity a day, children need to do the rest of it at home and in the community.

What you can do:

- Support the implementation of daily physical activity in the school community.
- Advocate for daily physical education as a worthwhile, important subject.
- Ask the administration and staff of the school about the quality and frequency of physical education.

Although physical activity and physical education are closely related, physical education goes beyond participation. It helps your kids develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to lead an active, healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity should be an integral part of your kid's education as part of physical education. Try to ensure that the school devotes enough time and expertise to it. Ask your kids about their physical activity and physical education experiences in school and support healthy habits for life!