Topic Exploration Project #1

Kaitlin Schultz (200393863)

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*Educating the Student Body,* is a book discussing the feedback found by a committee called “Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment”. The group was formed to review the current status of physical education in schools, examining the short-term and long-term effects of being active, the outcome academically when participating in physical activity, as well as the idea that even though children spend the majority of their day sedentary in a school setting, schools shouldn’t be the only factors responsible for providing students with 60 or more minutes of physical activity a day.

The main concepts of the study identified that a lack of physical activity increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, this goes along with the idea that by educating students at a younger age about the importance of physical activity, once they reach adulthood it becomes common knowledge. The role of schools plays a major part in the study conducted, they found that budgetary restraints, resulting in teacher layoffs and lack of proper equipment lead to insufficient physical education programs. Some schools also stated that they lacked properly trained physical educators, and nearly half of school administrators reported cutting significant amounts of time from physical education, art, music, and recess to increase time in reading and mathematics. The committee developed six areas in which they recommend schools and facilitators to focus on within their physical activity programs, each recommendation gives a lengthy example with different scenarios for improving the overall outlook of future physical education programs. The main purpose behind the information expressed in this book is to get school boards aware of the drop-in childhood physical activity and ingrain the message that without physical education in our schools the future of our adolescent population has an increased risk of developing cardiovascular diseases at continually younger ages.

Growing up in small-town Saskatchewan it wasn’t uncommon that your science teacher was also your physed teacher, having smaller class sizes means that the school is restricted to the number of teachers that can be employed. Most often teachers are hired to teach a specific subject but end up picking up other classes which they might not be very educated in, due to the lack of allowed hiring. This can prohibit students from receiving the proper knowledge and understanding of major components in a curriculum. For example, in physed, students can become deprived of how being physically active and literate can persist over a lifetime if taught properly in childhood. Personally, my grade six to nine physed teacher was also my math teacher even though his major from University was history. This didn’t diminish the quality of teaching we received because he came from a very sports minded background, but now as I’m moving through my University degree I’m understanding the more appropriate ways of teaching fundamental movement skills to children for a goal of lifelong active moving.

Another topic from the article that speaks to my past experiences in the education system, is the quote “Physical education, although important, cannot be the sole source of the at least 60 minutes per day of vigorous to moderate physical activity recommended to enhance the health of children”. This is one of the main reasons that I chose to peruse a teaching degree with a major in physical education, through working with children in before and after school programs in elementary schools and more advanced skill learning through coaching in high school I will be able to connect with a wider range of students who want to be active. From my past experiences in high school, I volunteered in different coaching roles, specifically a program that focused on teaching children from grade one to five of the basic movement patterns required for the game of basketball. It was an after-school program that allowed the children to become exposed to the idea of basketball, and work towards to goal of 60 minutes of physical activity in the day.

Throughout the book chapters, there is a common theme stating that even though students spend the majority of their day in a classroom, and attend physed classes this still won’t meet the requirements that children need. This makes me realize that the role teachers and volunteers play in before school and after school programs is just as important as lesson planned physed classes. In recommendation 1 the committee suggests a “whole-of-school” approach to physical activity promotion. This idea encompasses all parts of a school day; travel to and from school, before and after school programs, recess, physical education classes, and classroom instructional time. During all of these segments of the day, we can begin to ensure that students are incorporating some form of physical activity. In my high school, we never had any programs before or after school but we did have a variety of school sports that students could sign up for, or intermural activities during lunch were great ways of receiving a portion of our physical activity for the day. This type of program seems like a very realistic approach that I could see myself implementing into a future classroom or school of mine. It allows for all members within a school to be active participants in a goal of decreasing physical inactivity.

I believe that as I enter future classrooms and gymnasiums I need to keep an open mind when it comes to dealing with physical education, not every student is going to want to participant in every before or after school program that is offered. So being patient and slowly exposing children to new activities can be the best process. Allowing students to move at their own pace, will allow me to build trust and form connections. By allowing all staff members to participate in a “whole-of-school” approach to physical activity it can create an atmosphere that students feel invited to be in and excited to grow and develop as individuals.

**Reference:**

Kohl, Harold W (2013) [*Educating the student body : taking physical activity and physical education to school*](https://casls-primo-prod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=01CASLS_REGINA_ALMA2163845920003476&context=L&vid=01CASLS_REGINA&lang=en_US&search_scope=default_scope&tab=default_tab&query=creator,exact,Institute%20of%20Medicine%20(U.S.).%20Committee%20on%20Physical%20Activity%20and%20Physical%20Education,%20author.&sortby=rank)

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