

ACHPER SA POSITION PAPER

“The place of Health and Physical Education in the school curriculum”

ACHPER believes that an educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make for the future. School Health and Physical Education (H&PE) teaching is central to the development of children and youth skills, knowledge and habits of mind that lead to active and healthy living.

H&PE is concerned with the holistic development of the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be physically active and healthy throughout life. It encompasses learning through physical activity [eg, fundamental movement skills, recreation, sport, dance, gymnastics, aquatics], healthy living, values, personal and social development. Central to Health and Physical education is the importance of learning using a range of physical activity contexts.

Physical education is identified internationally as education in (movement skills), through (personal and social skill development) and about (bio-physical and social understanding) movement (ACARA, 2012; ACHPER, 2009; Arnold, 1979). Physical Education is more than simply an individual being active or moving. Health education is the development of students functional, interactive and critical ability to use and access health information (health literacy) (ACARA, 2012). Health Education and physical education are interconnected by common curriculum objectives directed toward education for active and healthy living.

All education sites should have access to specialist teaching to enhance the development of quality and productive health and physical education pedagogy and programs. This should include direct teaching responsibilities, support to classroom teachers and the facilitation of school/community links.

A positive relationship between physical activity, health and academic performance has been demonstrated in several studies*. These studies suggest that when a substantial amount of school time is dedicated to physical activity and health education, academic performance meets and even exceeds that of students not receiving additional physical activity.

It cannot be expected that the curriculum will “fix” child and youth social problems and other issues that may contribute to young people’s health and wellbeing. The priority for H&PE will be to provide ongoing, developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to practice, create, apply and evaluate the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to maintain and enhance their own and others health, wellbeing and participation in physical activity (ACARA, 2012). Movement is central to the contexts through which learning occurs in H&PE.

ACHPER (SA) recommends:

- A strengths-based approach to H&PE curriculum that acknowledges that most students come to the learning area feeling positive about their health and their participation in physical activity (ACARA, 2012)
- That all schools have access to qualified H&PE specialist teachers.
- That consistent with the Melbourne Declaration (2008) H&PE be positioned as a essential component of the curriculum for students within the compulsory ages of schooling (R-10); with physical education occurring weekly (ACARA, 2012).
- The reintroduction of “daily physical education” for all early years and primary school settings because of the vital role played by physical activity in healthy brain and body development (Ratey, 2008).
- The reaffirmation of the importance of “active schools” (Fox, 1996; Pill, 2006) where schools become sites that act to enhance daily physical activity accumulation.
- That eighty hours H&PE in curriculum time per year (ACARA, 2012) is the *minimum* time entitlement for H&PE for students within the compulsory age of schooling, and that 100 minutes per week is the minimum expectation for physical education (Government of South Australia, 1996)

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References

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- * see for example, *The Association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance* (2010) at http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf