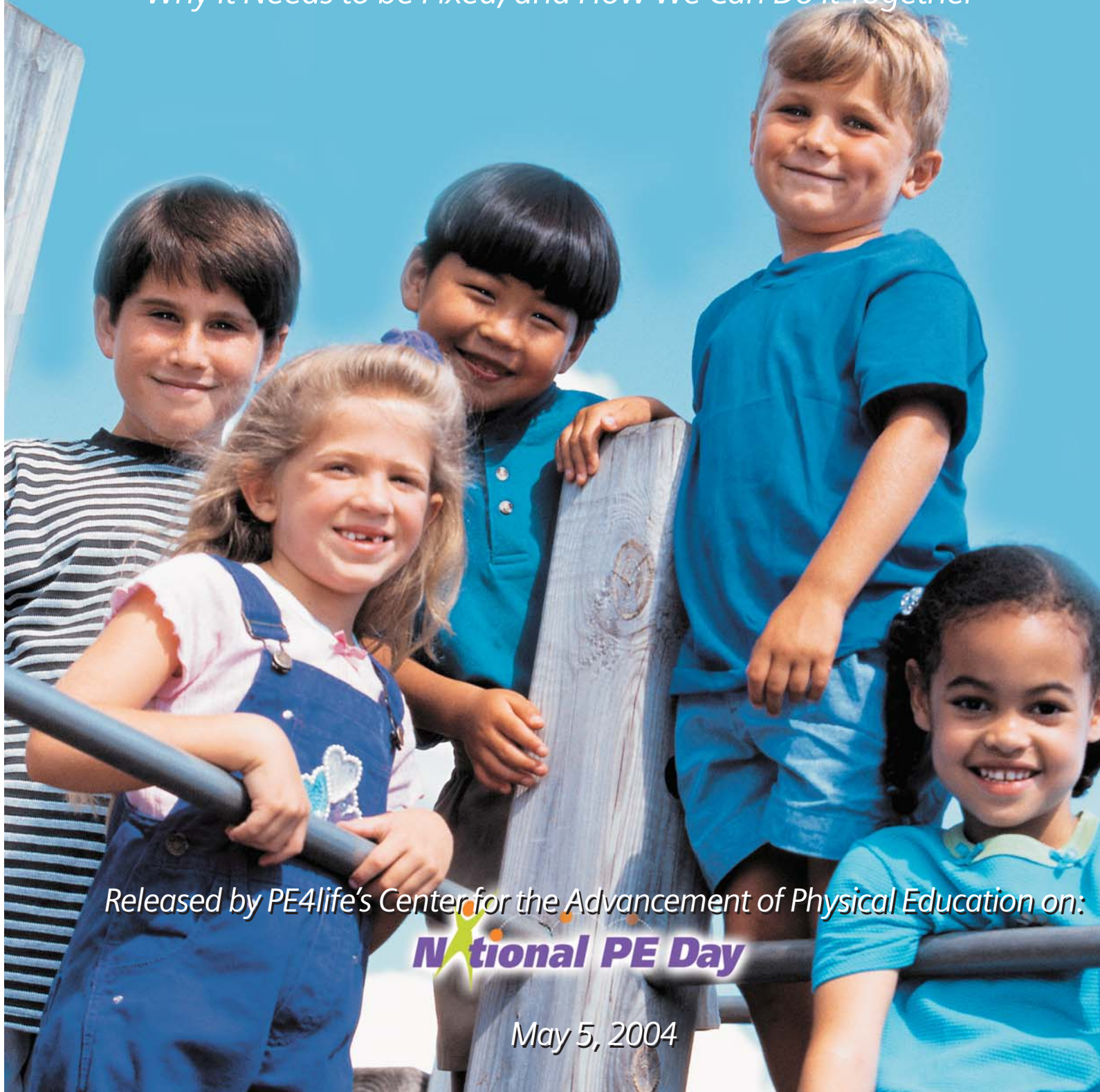


The logo for PE4life, with 'PE' in purple and 'life' in green, with a small orange dot above the 'i'.

# Blueprint For Change

*Our Nation's Broken Physical Education System:  
Why It Needs to be Fixed, and How We Can Do It Together*



*Released by PE4life's Center for the Advancement of Physical Education on:*

***National PE Day***

*May 5, 2004*

# Blueprint For Change

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# The Purpose of This Document

Once one peruses the growing collection of data on our nation's childhood obesity epidemic and the overall decline in our kids' fitness levels, the inescapable conclusion is that our children need more physical activity, along with the health and wellness knowledge to make physical fitness part of their lifestyle. To that end, there is strong evidence that quality, daily physical education is the most effective and efficient way this country can positively impact the short and long-term health of our children. This "Blueprint for Change" has been developed by PE4life's Center for the Advancement of Physical Education (CAPE) to help build momentum toward a vision in which every student, in every grade, in every state has an opportunity to reap the benefits from high quality physical education programs on a daily basis.

# A Note From the Father of Aerobics and the Leader of the International Physical Fitness Movement

During a long career as a physician and leading advocate for physical fitness, I've never seen the state of our kids' physical fitness worse than it is today.

In a country where more than 10 million children ages 6 to 17 are considered overweight and almost half of these are severely obese, it's more important than ever to educate young people about the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

If we're going to halt the childhood obesity epidemic, and get our kids on a path toward physical fitness, one area that must improve drastically is our country's physical education system.

One of the best ways I've seen for doing that is the PE4life program. I am very impressed with the PE4life model in general, and the PE4life Institutes in particular. PE4life's "train the trainers" concept works.

Physical education in this country needs to move away from the traditional, competition-oriented team sports model and toward a health and wellness model emphasizing lifetime sports and physical activity. The PE4life approach to physical education does this. It is exactly what needs to happen if we are to have any hope of avoiding a medical disaster with this generation of children.



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# Overview

Almost 65 percent of adults in the United States are either overweight or obese. A report in the March 10, 2004 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association cites statistics showing that 400,000 Americans died in 2000 due to a lack of physical exercise and poor diets.

That's sad news. But what's even sadder is our children are on pace to be significantly fatter than we are by the time they reach adulthood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the percentage of children ages 6 to 11 who are overweight has increased nearly 300 percent over the past 25 years. The numbers are almost identical for teenagers.

**"Children today have a shorter life expectancy than their parents for the first time in 100 years."**

*—Dr. William J. Klish, professor of pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine*

We're in the middle of a childhood obesity epidemic and the health implications are scary. For example, until recently Type 2 diabetes was considered an adult disease. However, in recent years, the incidence of the disease has increased dramatically in children and adolescents because more children are overweight. Dr. William J. Klish, professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine, notes that the percentage of children and adolescents found to have Type 2 diabetes at Texas Children's Hospital in 2002 was 27 percent, an astounding jump from less than 1 percent 20 years ago.

**"One in every three U.S. children born after 2000 will become diabetic unless many more people start eating less and exercising more."**

*— Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan, diabetes epidemiologist,  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

Making this picture even more ugly is the fact that while the physical fitness and health of our kids has been steadily declining; the number of physical education (P.E.) classes in our schools has been simultaneously dropping as well. This despite an array of experts stressing more physical activity is crucial if children are to avoid obesity and achieve optimal health.

**CDC research suggests that less than 10% of students attend physical education classes on a daily basis.**

There have been a variety of socio-cultural developments over the past 25 years that have combined to discourage a physically active lifestyle. In essence, our children are increasingly growing up in a culture that makes it easy to be sedentary. The consequences for them, and the nation as a whole, are staggering.

The bottom line is America's children need more physical activity. We're at a point in our nation's history where the need to teach our kids the benefits of a lifelong, physically active lifestyle has never been greater.

# How Did We Get To This Point?

**Physical inactivity has contributed to an unprecedented epidemic of childhood obesity that is currently plaguing the United States.**

*--Fall 2000 report to the President of the United States from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education*

At the most basic level of analysis, the childhood obesity epidemic is caused by a poor balance between calories consumed and calories burned up. While many people justifiably point their fingers at our youth's fast food inclinations and "super size it" mentality - especially on the part of adolescents, research shows that the primary cause of the epidemic is that children aren't getting enough exercise today.

The problem starts with toddlers.

"There are really only two possibilities, reduced activity or increased intake. None of the dietary assessment data indicate that children are eating more," said John Reilly, leader of a study published in *Lancet* in January. "Adolescents may be eating more but young children are eating less. A 3-year-old 25 years ago was eating 25 percent more than a 3-year-old today. But physical activity levels have dropped quite dramatically over the last 15 or 20 years."

A lack of physical activity remains the primary culprit through the teen years. Recent research findings by researchers at San Diego State University and the University of California San Diego's School of Medicine found that the lack of physical activity was the most significant risk factor contributing to obesity in 11-15 year olds.

But why the big drop in physical activity? The answer can be found by looking at a variety of socio-cultural developments over the past 25 years that have combined to discourage physical activity.

- New technology advancements have allowed kids to be less active while new media (DVDs, computer games, cable and satellite television, etc.) have made sedentary activities more attractive. A 1999 national survey found that children 2-18 spent, on average, over 4 hours a day watching television and videos, playing video games and using the computer. Most of that time is spent watching television with 33% of kids watching more than 3 hours a day, and 17% watching more than 5 hours a day.
- States and school districts have devalued physical education in the face of growing problems with childhood obesity. The amount of time students spend in physical education classes has decreased steadily the past 25 years. Physical education has become a low priority for our nation's schools despite its proven benefits.

- Growing safety concerns have resulted in parents limiting outside playtime for children - even in their own yards. Moreover, fears of injuries and lawsuits, have led schools and recreation districts to tone down playground equipment to the point that the equipment provides only minimal exercise benefits.
- Intramural sports programs in our public schools are going the way of the dinosaur as schools focus resources on sports participation for elite athletes at the expense of participation for all.
- Community investment in parks and recreation centers has been less than adequate.
- Kids are walking and riding bicycles less than ever before. National transportation surveys have found that walking and bicycling by children aged 5-15 dropped 40% between 1977 and 1995. Parents and their cars are replacing walking and bicycling as the primary means of getting to school, as well as to after-school and summer activities.

**"Americans have developed a 'drive everywhere' mentality ... We are teaching our children to get into the car, even for very short trips, and that is having a major health impact."**

*-- Lauren Marchetti, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.*

# Why is Quality, Daily Physical Education So Important?

**"This is not about appearances. The issue here is health. It's about the fact that overweight and obesity increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, Type 2 diabetes, several forms of cancer, breathing problems and other health problems."**

*--David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., former U.S. Surgeon General*

In the United States, more than 95% of 5-17 year olds are enrolled in school, nearly 55 million kids in all. Schools represent the only institutions that can reach nearly all our kids.

Surveys indicate that more than 60% of children 9-13, do not participate in any organized physical activity during non-school hours. For these kids, school-based physical education programs are the only place they'll get any exercise and learn about important health and wellness issues that can positively impact the rest of their lives. A quality, daily physical education program that reaches all children is simply the most cost-effective delivery system in the country to combat our childhood obesity epidemic.

**Over 75% of U.S. children are not active even 20 minutes a day, the minimum daily activity requirement.**

## The Benefits of Quality, Daily Physical Education

- **Improves physical health** – Physical activity provides numerous benefits leading to a high quality life, including disease prevention. Moreover, the important connection between K-12 physical education and lifelong physical activity is that studies show healthy life-styles are more likely to be developed and maintained when exercise and other healthy behaviors are learned early in life.

**"Children and teenagers today suffer from a lack of exercise. I would rather write a prescription for P.E. to combat this problem. Kids are too sedentary."**

*--Dr. Norman Spack, The Children's Hospital, Boston*

- **Enhances mental health** - Research has shown that regular participation in physical activity during childhood and adolescence reduces feelings of depression and anxiety. Studies have also revealed that physical activity and sports participation contribute to enhanced self-esteem. Active kids are more confident, assertive, independent and self-controlled.

**"The evidence shows that physical fitness is a stronger indicator than sports participation for self-esteem and relating to others. The kids feel better about themselves. The key concept is physical activity, not your skill level."**

*--Don Ellison, professor of kinesiology, University of Illinois at Chicago*

- **Improves academic performance** - There is now scientific evidence to support the old adage of a "sound mind in a sound body." Several studies have shown a distinct relationship between academic achievement and physical fitness. In particular, recent research has determined that physical activity facilitates cognitive development. For example, in a 2002 California Department of Education study, higher academic achievement was associated with higher levels of fitness.

**"We now have the proof we've been looking for: students achieve best when they are physically fit."**

*--Delaine Eastin, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction*

Dr. John J. Ratey, a Harvard brain-research specialist, is a strong believer in physical activity's positive impact on the brain. In fact, he believes exercise is fertilizer for the brain, calling it "Miracle-Gro."

- **Reaches at-risk students** - Physical education provides an ideal mechanism to promote healthy choices and habits for some of the most in need.

**"Physical education in schools can reach the very students who are most at risk - the overweight child with a bad body image, the uncoordinated student who's never been taught skills or the shy kid with no confidence to join a team or engage with others at recess. It is in many ways these kids for whom physical education can do the most good."**

*--Tim McCord, Department Chair, Physical Education,  
Titusville Area School District, Titusville, Pennsylvania.*

- **Reduces medical costs** - The cost of overweight and obese citizens to the United States economy is nearly \$120 billion annually and growing. Quality, daily physical education can reverse that trend. A worldwide study conducted by the International Council on Sport Science and Physical Education (and financed by the International Olympic Committee) found that "every dollar invested in physical education saves \$3.20 in medical costs."

## Parents and Teachers Agree on the Value of Physical Education

- 81% of teachers and 85% of parents favor requiring students to take physical education every day at every grade level.
- 87% of teachers and 88 % of parents believe school boards should not eliminate physical education for budgetary reasons.
- 87% of teachers and 77% of parents believe schools should not eliminate physical education classes to focus on meeting stricter academic standards.
- 90% of teachers and 86% of parents surveyed connect physical activity with improved academic performance and behavior.
- 94% of teachers and 89% of parents favor developing new "lifestyle" approaches to physical education, focusing on activities children can continue to participate in after they've left school.

# What Has Been Done to Address the Problem?

In the Fall of 2000, a report to the President of the United States from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education, entitled *Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports*, listed 10 strategies "to promote lifelong participation in enjoyable and safe physical activity and sports." Of the 10, four focused on improving our school-based physical education system. The report concluded, "Enhancing efforts to promote physical activity and sports among young people is a critical national priority."

Unfortunately, four years later, the situation is even worse. Little progress has been made in the battle against our childhood obesity epidemic and the overall decline in fitness levels among our young people. In fact, numerous "calls for action" over the last couple decades have, to a large degree, fallen on deaf ears.

One of the first was the American Academy of Pediatrics statement on physical fitness in 1987. The Academy strongly stated that school-based physical education and after-school activities are needed to promote a lifelong habit of aerobic exercise. Specifically, the Academy encouraged physical education programs to emphasize lifetime activities and sports like cycling, swimming and tennis and spend less time on team sports such as football, basketball and baseball.

**Nevertheless, many physical education programs have been deemphasized or dropped and the "team sports model" remains the predominant approach to physical education in this country.**

In 1996, the Surgeon General's report, *Physical Activity and Health*, encouraged regular participation in physical activity during childhood and adolescence, citing the substantial health benefits as well as some mental health paybacks.

**Sadly, physical activity by children and adolescents has dropped since 1996.**

In 1998, Partnership for Prevention prepared a report for the Congressional Prevention Coalition entitled, *Nine High-Impact Actions Congress Can Take to Protect and Promote the Nation's Health*. The Partnership's goal was "to identify a short list of specific actions Congress could take today that have the potential to prevent the most disease, injury, and premature death, now and in future years at a reasonable cost." One of the nine high-yield options for Congress to achieve real improvements in America's health and quality of life was "create financial incentives for states to require daily physical education classes ...."

**To date, Illinois remains the only state to require daily P.E. in grades K-12.**

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has issued physical activity guidelines for children. According to NASPE, children should accumulate at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, of age appropriate physical activity on all, or most days of the week. This recommendation was reinforced in the 2000 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which is the basis of all federal nutrition education and promotion activities. These guidelines advise Americans to "be physically active each day." In addition, children and teens are advised to have at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily.

**The reality: Over 75% of U.S. children are not active even 20 minutes a day**

*Healthy People 2010*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' initiative to establish health objectives for Americans for the first decade of the new century, includes physical activity as one of the nation's 10 leading health indicators and specifically recommends increases in moderate and vigorous activity among adolescents.

**Yet, high school adolescents are now 24 percent less active than grade-school children.**

Research by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reveals that 81% of teachers and 85% of parents favor requiring students to take physical education every day at every grade level.

**However, research suggests that less than 10% of students actually attend P.E. on a daily basis.**

The unfortunate reality is little progress has been made to date toward the crucial objective of getting kids more active and reducing the childhood obesity problem.

# What Are the Barriers Preventing Physical Education Reform?

Despite a worsening childhood obesity epidemic; despite a mountain of evidence pointing to physical inactivity as the primary cause of the epidemic; despite the numerous benefits of quality, daily physical education; despite more than a decade of reports from the Surgeon General, top health and education organizations, and numerous public leaders calling for change; and despite a strong majority of teachers and parents who believe P.E. should be a big part of the solution; physical education continues to be treated as the ugly stepchild in schools across the country.

The reason is that several powerful barriers to physical education reform have yet to be fully acknowledged and/or effectively addressed. Until they are, needed changes in our country's physical education system will remain but a pipedream.

The following are the critical barriers that physical education advocates must overcome if quality, daily physical education is to be actualized in this country:

## **A lack of accountability for results exists in most P.E. programs today**

Teachers of math, English and other academic disciplines are required to collect data to demonstrate growth in student learning. Historically, physical education programs haven't been required to demonstrate student advancement to the degree other subjects have. This hurts P.E.'s credibility in the eyes of fellow teachers, school administrators, school board members, parents, etc.

## **P.E. does not have standardized fitness or health and wellness tests**

Let's face it; in the education world today, to be respected, a discipline must be tested. If students are not assessed in various health, wellness and fitness areas, the physical education program will not be valued as an integral part of the school's overall curriculum. In an era of increasingly tight school budgets and growing competition for limited dollars, physical education programs must be prepared to show strong data highlighting the return-on-investment (ROI) for P.E.

## **Physical Education is not part of statewide educational assessment tests**

Only in Missouri is physical education a required part of the statewide educational assessment test. A few other states have made physical education a voluntary element of their state assessment exams. In today's world, in which school administrators and school board members have so much riding on their statewide educational assessment test results, it only stands to reason that subjects not part of these tests will receive secondary consideration.

## **Physical Education is rarely part of students' overall grade point averages**

A credibility gap exists with key stakeholders when physical education is not part of students' overall grade point averages. It's a credibility gap that's almost impossible to overcome in today's education environment. Bottom line, there is no way that physical education can be treated as an equal with other subjects if it's not part of the GPA.

## **Lack of integration between the education and health communities**

Despite all the evidence showing positive correlations between physical activity and the short and long-term health of students, there has been very little coordination between the education and health communities regarding efforts to implement quality, daily physical education programs. Physical education is the only subject offered in schools that is critical to students' long-term health. Support from national, state and local health organizations would enhance the credibility of physical education immensely in the eyes of educators and parents.

## **Negative perceptions of P.E. can hinder physical education's advancement**

A number of key decision-makers, including teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents have negative perceptions and memories when it comes to physical education. Some of these folks remember a team sports-oriented culture where they were often picked last and humiliated. Others recall "gym class" as nothing more than glorified recess. Still others remember P.E. as catering to the jocks in class. Some look at P.E. classes and don't see any lifetime physical fitness value. These lingering perceptions are significant barriers to the advancement of the "new" P.E., which is focused on getting all kids physically active through a wide variety of sports and physical activities and instilling the lifetime benefits of health and wellness.

## **Physical education lacks a strong public policy presence at federal, state and local levels**

Physical education is probably the only area of its importance in society not to have a policy "think tank" consistently addressing the key issues, trends and policy topics in the field. Politics, economics, environment, health, education, you name it, there's a policy "think tank" for all of them. In any field, significant and lasting change requires policy research, analysis, development and implementation. A physical education "think tank" could be the "information resource" for policy change agents at the federal, state and local levels, providing them with critical data, analysis and position papers. A "think tank" would also be a strong resource for the media as well as the general public.

## **Parents have yet to grasp the severity of the situation**

While the childhood obesity epidemic and overall decline in the physical fitness of our young people is receiving increasing media coverage, most parents still don't fully appreciate the severity of the situation. Moreover, they aren't fully aware of the poor state of our school-based physical education system today. As such, an active coalition of parents demanding quality, daily physical education for students in K-12 has yet to materialize.

## **Society lacks a reliable measure of the economic cost of physical inactivity among our children**

Before the public and private sectors increase their financial support for initiatives designed to increase physical activity among children and adolescents they will need economic justification. In essence, government organizations and corporations need more data regarding the costs of physical inactivity among our young people.

# A 10-Step Action Plan for Physical Education Stakeholders

Quality, daily physical education in grades K-12 must be part of any national strategy to increase our kids' physical activity, promote healthy lifestyles, and address the soaring health care costs plaguing our country today. In order for that vision to become a reality, a comprehensive and integrated approach, involving every group, organization and individual having a stake in the health and wellness of our children, must be undertaken.

It's by nature a collective challenge. Nobody can take it on unilaterally. There's an old African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." In this case, that proverb needs to be modified to, "It takes a village to raise a *healthy* child." Everyone has a role to play.

Accordingly, the following action steps have been designed to directly attack the critical barriers (outlined in previous section) that are preventing quality, daily physical education from becoming a reality in our nation's schools.

## 1. Demand Increased Accountability from Physical Education Programs

Accountability is a survival issue for physical education. Today's P.E. programs are fighting for respect, credibility, and dollars. In order for quality, daily physical education to have a chance in this country, physical education must reach the point where it is held to the same accountability standards that core academic subjects are. School-based physical education programs must be held responsible for producing healthy, active children who understand the importance of physical activity and establishing habits leading to a lifetime of physical fitness. To that end, P.E. programs must provide students, parents, administrators, board members, etc., data from tests that objectively measure student improvement on health and wellness measures. Utilization of individualized assessment tools, including both fitness and cognitive tests (see below), are musts. Otherwise, P.E. will continue to be marginalized or eliminated.

## 2. Develop National Standardized Fitness and Cognitive Health Tests

Developing a national standardized fitness test, along with a cognitive health test, is the best step toward increased accountability and credibility for physical education. Part of the current problem in the physical education community is the lack of standardized measures. National standardized fitness and cognitive health tests could be the foundation of a return-on-investment (ROI) calculation that would help determine the value of physical education programs. Standardized tests would also allow stakeholders to compare the effectiveness of various P.E. curriculums across the country.

### **3. Conduct Research That Quantifies the Cost of Physical Inactivity Among Students in Grades K-12**

Even though it's almost universally accepted within the health community that physical activity provides enormous health benefits, including both the prevention and treatment of multiple diseases and conditions, only 3% of national health care expenditures are directed toward prevention measures. That figure seems unfathomable until one realizes that there has been very little research conducted in an attempt to quantify the cost of physical inactivity - especially in children. If we had solid data on the economic costs of our children's physical inactivity, funding for preventative physical activity programs, including physical education, would be an easier proposition.

### **4. Include Physical Education in States' Educational Assessment Tests**

For better or worse, the growing number of statewide educational assessment tests that measure students' academic progress are carrying more and more weight with parents, education administrators, school board members, legislators, etc. These state tests are in essence the scoreboard in K-12 education. Physical education has two choices: 1) Become part of these statewide tests; or 2) Continue to be deemphasized.

### **5. Incorporate Physical Education in the Calculation of Students' Grade Point Averages (GPAs)**

Whenever physical education isn't part of a school's grade point average calculations (as it often isn't), P.E. suffers from a damaging credibility gap in the minds of key stakeholders -- namely students, teachers, parents, administrators and board members. In these cases, it is easy to marginalize P.E. To be viewed in the same light as other school subjects, physical education must be part of each student's GPA.

### **6. Revolutionize Physical Education Training in the United States**

Less than 5% of the population competes in team sports after the age of 24, yet team sports remain the core of many K-12 physical education programs around the country. One reason for this situation is that many of our physical education teacher prep programs at our colleges and universities still emphasize a team sports-centric model of P.E.

In an environment in which childhood obesity rates are growing and overall fitness levels are declining, a health and wellness model that includes a variety of sports (including team sports) and lifetime fitness activities must be the focus of P.E. training programs if physical education intends to keep pace with the 21st century needs of students.

## 7. Transition All Physical Education Programs to the New "Lifestyle" Physical Education Curriculum

Time is critical. Our kids can't wait for physical education programs that are health and wellness-based. And neither can K-12 physical education instructors. Given this era of budget pressures and an emphasis on raising academic standards in core subjects, if the physical education profession doesn't quickly adapt and demonstrate its relevance in effectively addressing the health and wellness challenges of our young people, physical education will rapidly be dropped from school curriculums.

Undoubtedly, the transition to a health and wellness-based P.E. program will be more challenging for some schools than others. However, all K-12 physical education programs in the country should be continually moving toward the new "lifestyle" physical education model, which is built around the following cornerstones:

- Focus on developing a healthy lifestyle through lifetime sports and physical fitness vs. developing skills in team sports such as football, basketball and baseball.
- Assess students based on their progress in reaching personal physical activity and fitness goals.
- Use technology such as heart rate monitors and pedometers to customize physical fitness goals for each student.
- Include nutrition education as part of an overall approach to health and wellness issues.
- Motivate children to embrace health and wellness for a lifetime.

## 8. Increase Public Policy Advocacy Efforts to Advance Physical Education Reform

Throughout the years, efforts to influence public policy in the area of physical education have been minimal. The most effective way to change attitudes and behaviors is to change the policies that drive them. A physical education "think tank" could serve as a research and policy clearinghouse and fill an "information resource" role for P.E. stakeholders.

It's also important to note that physical education public policy issues are often unique in each state. As such, it's important that every state have a full-time physical education policy analyst/lobbyist familiar with the situation at the state and local levels

## 9. Cultivate Stronger Partnerships Between the Education and Health Communities

To date, coordination between the education and health communities has been lacking in regards to the physical education reform movement. This must change. Educators and health professionals must work jointly to make quality, daily physical education an integral part of a national health policy to address obesity and reduce health care costs. A quality, daily physical education program -- that reaches all children -- is the most cost-effective delivery system in the country to combat our childhood obesity epidemic. As such, physical education reform needs to be positioned primarily as a health policy initiative in order to maximize its chances of success.

## 10. Create a Parental Involvement Initiative

Parents intuitively believe in the ability of physical education to improve the long-term well being of their kids. A PE4life study found that 63% strongly agree and 23% agree with the statement, "Increased P.E. in schools will improve the long-term health of children." Another study found that 95% of parents believe "regular, daily physical activity helps children do better academically." However, parents are frequently stumped about how to get started and what to do with their kids, especially teenagers. Research has shown that parents want help in assessing their children's fitness levels and cultivating good exercise habits. Parents need to feel empowered to take action. A nationwide parental involvement initiative would be a powerful tool in the quest for quality, daily physical education programs in our schools.

# The PE4life Way

**"Physical education is the most effective grassroots program available to get children active today and help them establish healthy fitness habits that will last a lifetime."**

*--Jim Baugh, Founder, PE4life*

PE4life is a non-profit organization determined to make quality, daily physical education in each of our nation's schools a reality. PE4life sees three key problems with our nation's current physical education system: 1) The dramatic decline in the number of students taking physical education classes on a daily basis; 2) The continued emphasis on the "sports model" of physical education that overemphasizes team sports skill development and participation at the expense of health and wellness education and lifelong physical activity skill development and participation; and 3) Grading students based on skills and innate abilities versus effort and progress toward individual goals.

The PE4life program is about getting kids active now and instilling the lifetime benefits of health and wellness. It's about enabling each student to maintain a physically-active lifestyle forever. It means emphasizing fitness and well-being, not athleticism. It eliminates practices that humiliate students. And it assesses students on their progress in reaching personal physical activity and fitness goals. A PE4life program exposes kids to the fun and long-term benefits of *movement* - it's really that simple.

Phil Lawler, a veteran physical education teacher and coach, saw the light after a long school day about 10 years ago.

"In the old days, we said, 'let's run a mile, and if you can't run a mile under eight minutes, you're a failure.' How many people in this country were turned off to exercise by those standards? I put a heart rate monitor on a young lady, and based on her 13.5-minute mile, she was a failure. But when I downloaded her heart rate monitor, her average heart rate was 187. By just my observation she wasn't doing anything, but in reality, she was working too hard. Now with this technology, we won't make that mistake again. We will personalize it and we'll give kids credit for what they do," said Lawler, who today is director of the Naperville, Illinois PE4life Institute.

## The Components of a PE4life Program

- Provides quality, daily physical education.
- Meets the needs of all students, not just the athletically-inclined.
- Motivates children to embrace health and fitness for a lifetime.
- Provides a wide variety of health and fitness activities, including individual and team sports, to promote an active lifestyle.
- Provides authentic, individualized assessment - including fitness testing and cognitive testing - as a meaningful part of the learning process, empowering students to value and oversee their personal lifetime fitness.
- Incorporates technology into physical education on a regular and continuing basis.
- Emphasizes and provides support for the P.E. staff's continuing education in order to stay up-to-date on current practices.
- Continually communicates with and advocates to parents, administrators, community leaders, state policy makers, and other stakeholders about the value of daily physical activity.
- Meets or exceeds the national standards for physical education as established by the National Association of Sports and Physical Education (NASPE).

## The PE4life Way is Working

**"You will end up saving more lives through your profession as a physical education instructor than I will ever be able to do as a physician. Please make physical education teachers throughout the country aware of the immense effects their efforts can have in developing a healthier population."**

*—Dr. Michael Kretz, 25-year practicing physician, Hudson, WI*

The PE4life model - based on evidence-based solutions and proven delivery systems -- is working. For example, the FitnessGram test, which evaluates students in six fitness-related categories, was used to compare the physical fitness levels of 9th grade students in Naperville, IL (home of the first PE4life Institute) with their 9th grade, non-PE4life counterparts in California. In all six categories, the Naperville students far out-paced their peers in California. In the two most significant categories, "aerobic capacity" and "body composition," the results were significantly in favor of the Naperville kids. For example, of the 1,500 freshmen in Naperville, only 3% were found to be overweight or obese. On the other hand, 32% of their 9th grade counterparts in California, were overweight or obese.

Moreover, parents of the students at Madison Junior High School, home to the Naperville, IL PE4life Institute, voted physical education the #1 curriculum in the school. Additionally, Naperville counselors are currently recommending that students take their toughest academic class immediately following physical education whenever possible. Finally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention named the Naperville program a model physical education program.

Other PE4life Institutes around the country are having similar results. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that PE4life Institutes are premier physical education programs. Achieving results like Naperville won't happen overnight. However, every physical education program in the country can start to make small changes toward the "lifestyle" model of physical education that is the hallmark of every PE4life Institute.

**"As a professional physical educator, nothing fulfills me more than seeing young students figuring out that one doesn't have to be a sports star to be a healthy, active self-assured person."**

*--Tim McCord, Department Chair, Physical Education  
Titusville Area School District, Titusville, PA*

## PE4life Institutes: "Train the Trainers"

**"Attending the PE4life Institute certainly raised the bar for us. I've never seen children so excited about coming to P.E. class. What is going on with physical education in [the PE4life Institute] should be happening in every school in America."**

*–Pollia Griffin, Assistant Superintendent, Madison County School District, Flora, MS*

The PE4life philosophy is to "train the trainers" in the best of what the "new" P.E. offers. PE4life Institutes are exemplary, daily physical education programs built upon a foundation of evidence-based solutions and proven delivery systems. These Institutes are designed to provide training to other school districts and communities around the country so that they can develop their own PE4life programs.

The pilot PE4life Institute was established in Naperville (Illinois) School District 203 in October 2001. Today, there are two additional PE4life Institutes, one located in Grundy Center, Iowa and another in Titusville, Pennsylvania.

In addition to learning about the PE4life program itself, participants at each PE4life Institute receive customized training on how to secure funding from external sources. In addition, information is provided regarding developing community outreach programs that promote the value of physical education for the community as a whole.

### PE4life and the PEP Grant

The PE4life initiative started in 1999. The initial focus was to help pass the Physical Education Program (PEP) legislation in the United States Congress. With PE4life playing a prominent role, the PEP legislation passed. In the years since, PEP grants have helped hundreds of school districts enhance their physical education programs.

The Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) provides grants to local educational agencies and community-based organizations. The grants pay 90 percent of the total cost of initiating, expanding, and improving physical education programs.

In January 2004, Congress approved a bill that contains \$70 million for PEP grants for 2004. The \$70 million will translate into approximately 300 grants for school districts across the country to use in improving their physical education programs. This was a major victory for PE4life and other PEP grant advocates. 2004 is the fourth consecutive year the allotment for the PEP grant program has increased.

## PE4life's Future Initiatives

**"The bad news is that our nation's childhood obesity epidemic is worsening. The good news is that the most cost-effective delivery system for addressing this epidemic is a quality, daily physical education program that reaches all children."**

*--Anne Flannery, President & C.E.O, PE4life*

PE4life is continually broadening its efforts to bring quality, daily physical education to all K-12 students across the United States. To that end, PE4life is developing several new initiatives, including the following:

- **The Center for the Advancement of Physical Education** - PE4life's Center for the Advancement of Physical Education (CAPE) was launched on National PE Day, May 5, 2004. CAPE's mission is to help bridge the gap between evidence-based solutions and proven delivery systems, resulting in quality, daily physical education programs for all children grades K-12.

CAPE is the nation's first physical education "think tank" and is dedicated to research, analysis and policy initiatives in the area of physical education. In addition, the Center serves a clearinghouse role. The intent is for CAPE to be a "go-to" information source for educators, legislators, policy analysts, advocates, health professionals, the media, sports reformers and the general public on physical education-related issues.

The Center's output includes: primary and secondary research, position papers, issue briefs and backgrounders, policy proposals, op-ed columns and books.

- **The State of Physical Education in the United States: A Report Card** - This annual "report card" will examine the state of physical education in each of the 50 states. It will explore current trends and developments in the field, and look at contemporary public policy issues.

## PE4life's Future Initiatives

- **PE4life Summits** - PE4life has targeted 15 states across America in which to hold PE4life Summits over the next two years. PE4life Summits are designed to bring a given state's school officials and health and wellness professionals together for the purpose of developing strategies for strengthening PE4life programs throughout the state.

In partnership with the Coalition for a Healthy and Active America (CHAA), PE4life will initially conduct meetings with physical education stakeholders in each of these 15 states to identify key issues. After these preliminary discussions, a date for a statewide PE4life Summit will be set. As part of these Summits, top P.E. programs will be identified and given the opportunity to compete to become a designated PE4life Institute.

- **A Mobile PE4life Institute** - In an effort to reach more physical education teachers, administrators and parents, PE4life is developing a mobile PE4life Institute to take the PE4life program on the road. The mobile PE4life Institute will incorporate all facets of PE4life's school-based Institutes.

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