

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY VS. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

There is a distinction between physical education and physical activity, yet many people use them interchangeably.

Physical Education is defined as a planned, sequential program of curricula and instruction that helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, self-management skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles.

The physical education setting, whether the gym, field, or multipurpose room, is the classroom in which a certified physical education specialist teaches the curriculum of physical education. This class should be treated with the same level of professional concern as other learning environments.

A quality physical education program would include an environment in which:

- Curriculum aligns with the national standards for physical education;
- Teacher lessons have a sequential purpose over a unit of planned curriculum;
- Children are given the opportunity to learn with appropriate time and space for practice;
- Children have enough equipment;
- Children feel safe and are provided with activities which support a positive self esteem;
- Children are taught by a certified specialist;
- Children are instructed and assessed in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Exercise is the subset of physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive and is done to improve or maintain physical fitness. Physical activity and exercise is the application of what is learned in physical education class.

Children need time to learn and practice to master basis locomotor skills to become active adults. In order to master skills and knowledge, students benefit from time and practice with a specialist in the area of physical education.