TAHPERD Position Statement
Class Size for Physical Education

The Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance supports the concept that a lower student-teacher ratio for physical education classes provides a safer environment and is more conducive to learning. TAHPERD also supports the recommendation of the *2001 Shape of the Nation Report* that states "Class size for physical education should be the same as for any other subject. Large classes put students at greater risk of injury as well as reducing learning and teacher feedback" (p.4). In addition, the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) states "No more than 25 students per (credentialed) teacher, or the same size as other subject areas…" (COPEC, 2001; Hennessy, 2005)

Large class sizes inhibit the amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for each student. It is recommended that at least 50% of every physical education class should be spent in MVPA. Large classes demand more time for organizational activities thereby reducing the time for physical activity (Darst & Pangrazi, 2006; Hastie & Saunder, 1991). Large physical education classes contribute to a decrease in student learning, a decrease in acquisition of motor skills, and a decrease in the achievement of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Research reveals that smaller classes are associated with higher achievement at all grade levels (Sallis et al, 1999; Shepard, 1996). Recent findings in the area of brain research indicate that student performance in physical education can impact student performance across all subject areas. Schools that provide quality physical education, with appropriate class sizes, generate a positive effect on academic achievement including increased concentration, improved mathematics, reading, and writing scores, and a reduction in disruptive behaviors (Hennessy, 2005).

The role of physical education in educating the ***whole*** child cannot be diminished (COPEC, 2001). The benefits to children and adolescents of a quality physical education program taught in smaller classes can positively impact both academic learning and physical activity patterns. Healthy, physically active students are more likely to be academically motivated, alert, and successful. Participation in physical activity may enhance the development of a healthy self-image as well as the ability to pursue intellectual, social, and emotional challenges. Quality physical education in Texas' schools is critical to the development of motor skills, physical fitness, and understanding of concepts that lead to lifelong healthy lifestyles. Therefore, TAHPERD supports a small teacher to student ratio for all physical education classes.

References

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