

CREATING A LOCAL K-12 PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM GUIDE

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Overview

A curriculum guide is a structured, written document that delineates the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources and assessments that comprise the physical education program. Additionally, a district's physical education curriculum provides a critical link between state and professional guidelines and frameworks.

Accordingly, an exemplary guide which assists in planning and implementing high-quality physical education instruction:

- establishes a clear philosophy and set of overarching goals that guide the entire program and the decisions made that affect each aspect of the program;
- establishes sequences both within and between levels and assures a coherent and articulated progression from grade to grade;
- outlines a basic framework for what to do, how to do it, when to do it and how to know if it has been achieved;
- allows for flexibility and encourages experimentation and innovation within an overall structure;
- promotes interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of curriculums, when appropriate;
- suggests methods of assessing the achievement of the program's goals and objectives; and
- provides a means for ongoing revision and improvement.

The creation of such a school or district curriculum guide should not be viewed as the culmination of the curriculum development process, but rather as an essential station along the path of ongoing curriculum development and implementation. Therefore, no guide will be perfect, no guide will ever be a finished product and no guide will be free from criticism. To be effective, however, a guide must earn acceptance by teachers and must be deemed educationally valid by parents and the community. This acceptance will be far easier to attain when the curriculum guide is:

- consistent with what is known about child growth and development;
- compatible with the general philosophy of the school district;
- based upon clear convictions about teaching and learning;
- articulated from kindergarten through Grade 12;
- easy to use by all physical educators;

- filled with samples, examples and suggested resources; and
- collaboratively developed by a broadly-based committee of teachers and other interested individuals.■

Key Resources

A high-quality curriculum guide in any discipline is the result of a carefully planned process that integrates the efforts of many and is supported by a broad array of resources.

Leadership is essential to the initiation, organization and completion of the project. Without leadership, curriculum development in physical education often is given a low priority with respect to other curriculum initiatives. Because of the isolation and size of the department, it is often a teacher-led, bottom-up decision and process. Key resources, therefore, become the people who comprise the physical education curriculum advisory/steering committee. The committee consists primarily of physical education teachers who represent the various schools and grade levels in a district, administrators, faculty members representing other content areas, members of the public and students. This committee becomes the driving force for curriculum change and the process of implementation.

The size of the committee is dependent on the size of the district, but also must be a manageable working group. It is critical that such a committee be led by an effective, knowledgeable and respected chairperson. This advisory/steering committee assists in the early stages of development, such as identifying key issues and trends and assessing needs. The committee then becomes critical in the ongoing review as the document is formulated by a writing committee. The writing committee should consist of a representative group of content specialists. Depending on the size of a district, leadership might come from a department chairperson or district coordinator. A district curriculum specialist, if available, should serve on the advisory/steering committee and, if possible, the writing committee.

Time is essential: time for people to think, to research and to write. After-school, evening or weekend meetings often are not particularly effective. Effective curriculum development is better achieved through released time or summer work, or a combination of both. Half-day or full-day released-time meetings on a bi-weekly or monthly basis can be productive, but frequently require either individual or subcommittee work between meetings. Summer work has been proven to be successful because participants can devote their complete attention to the task. Many committees use one year or

one summer to complete a draft for review and piloting. The draft then would be revised during a second summer, based on written feedback and focus group discussions. Regardless of the exact scheduling, considerable time is required to do the job completely and correctly.

It is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel each time a curriculum guide is developed. A review of the present district curriculum needs to be completed first to determine whether a new or revised guide is necessary. The process should draw upon a range of available materials and resources that allow curriculum committees to cut and paste pieces and sections that meet local goals and needs. Among the source materials that should be available to every physical education curriculum development committee are the following:

- *Moving Into The Future, National Standards for Physical Education: A Guide to Content and Assessment* (1995);
- *National Standards for Beginning Physical Education Teachers* (1995);
- *Developmentally Appropriate Physical Education Practices for Children* (1992);
- *Appropriate Practices for Middle School Physical Education* (1995);
- *Appropriate Practices for Secondary School Physical Education* (1998);
- *this Guide to K – 12 Program Development in Physical Education*;
- *Professional Teaching Standards for Physical Education in Connecticut* (1999);
- *Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment Manual* (annual updates);
- the district curriculum guide presently in use;
- local district's education philosophy and goals;
- exemplary curriculum guides and frameworks from other school districts and other states;
- professional journals (e.g., *JOHPERD* and *Teaching Elementary Physical Education*);
- selected professional books, research reports, and national studies and reports; and
- the use of technology, e.g., resources available through the Internet.

A more extensive list of physical education curriculum development resources (including those above), are included in Appendix J.

Finally, adequate funding also is essential to the curriculum development process. Funds may be needed for items such as:

- salaries for school staff members who participate in the work, or for substitute teachers covering for released staff members;
- secretarial services and duplication of materials;

- professional materials, literature and equipment;
- consultant services;
- travel expenses to visit other school systems;
- printing sufficient copies of the pilot/review version and the final draft of the guide; and
- a professional development budget needed to implement the guide.■

Curriculum Development Process

The development of an effective curriculum guide is a multistep, ongoing and cyclical process that progresses from evaluating the existing program, to designing an improved program, implementing the improved program, evaluating the success of the improved program and back to evaluating the existing program.

There are many approaches to curriculum design. Districts must determine what will work best, given where the program is now and where the district would like the program to go. As districts work more and more on revising standards and assessments, models for curriculum design also will change.

Some districts have begun to develop curriculum by focusing on assessment first, using a "backward design". In this process essential questions help guide developers to define the core content. Beginning with intended achievements, performance tasks are developed that maximize student engagement, followed by the setting of benchmarks for progress and criteria for evaluation. Tasks must be meaningful and purposeful, providing a focus and coherence for student learning (examples are given in Chapter 2).

Many school districts carry out the evaluation and design components of the curriculum development process in a planned and systematic manner that convenes a committee to examine the following eight components (each is reviewed in the sections that follow):

1. **identify key issues and trends in physical education;**
2. **assess needs;**
3. **develop a K-12 program philosophy;**
4. **develop K-12 program goals and grade-level goals;**
5. **develop and sequence grade-level objectives;**
6. **identify resource materials to assist with program implementation;**
7. **identify and develop assessment items and instruments with which the program's success and effectiveness will be evaluated; and**
8. **pilot, implement and refine.**

1. ISSUES AND TRENDS. The first step in any curriculum development process is “getting the lay of the land.” Those involved in the process should be aware of the current trends and changes in education. These trends will have much the same impact on physical education as they would on any content area. A review of what is happening in physical education will allow a curriculum committee to identify the key content-specific issues and trends. Committee members need to examine the history and trends within their district and across the state and nation as they begin to identify a vision for physical education at the local level. The committee needs to be brought up to date with the research and best practices in physical education.

In the process of surveying the landscape of physical education, committee members are likely to identify many issues and trends from different levels and varying constituencies. The following are examples of those issues which will need to be considered as the curriculum development process moves forward:

- **education**
 - inclusion of all students;
- **physical education**
 - philosophical viewpoints, ranging from the human movement concepts of the 1930s to humanistic sport and physical education of the 1960s and 1970s and the current wellness movement which focuses on physical and lifetime activities that help to maintain fitness
 - curriculum models: sport education, personal fitness, movement education, interdisciplinary approaches, self-and social responsibility, personal meaning, developmental education, activity-based education, humanistic/social development education, wilderness and adventure education, and conceptually based education; and
- **local level**
 - scheduling of space, time and resources.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT. Armed with a common set of understandings that arise from the identification of issues and trends, a curriculum development committee is wise to conduct a needs assessment to best ascertain the perceptions, concerns and desires of groups or individuals who share an interest in the process. For example:

- teachers may be dissatisfied with older content and techniques in light of recent research;
- teachers may wish to include new means of assessment, e.g., portfolio;

- teachers may want to make far greater use of technology to enhance learning;
- the curriculum coordinator may be looking to increase the amount of interdisciplinary work in which students are engaged;
- the district may have taken on a new focus, such as teaming or block scheduling;
- students may express a need for different and enriched curricular opportunities;
- parents and others may have special concerns; and
- fitness scores are not reflective of what is in the curriculum.

Regardless of the circumstances, committees planning curriculum revision will require a structured needs assessment to gather information and guide the curriculum development process.

3. PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY. “What does physical education accomplish?” “Upon what guiding principles is our physical education program built?” “What are our core beliefs about teaching and learning in physical education?” “What is unique about physical education?” These are some of the fundamental questions that the overarching philosophy or vision of the program must address. As such, the program philosophy provides a unifying framework that justifies and gives direction to all physical education instruction.

Having studied curriculum trends and assessed the current program, curriculum developers should be ready to prepare a draft *guiding philosophy* for the K-12 physical education program. The philosophy should address the role and value that physical education has for the individual and also for society. Such a philosophy, or set of beliefs, should be more than just “what we think should be happening,” but rather, “what our curriculum is actually striving to reflect.”

Like most of the curriculum development process, it is not necessary to create a philosophy out of thin air or to reinvent wheels. Accordingly, four sample program philosophies and sets of beliefs are presented for consideration and/or adaptation.

An effective philosophy statement has the following characteristics:

A. Accuracy

- Claims that the philosophy makes for physical education are supportable.
- The philosophy makes an educationally appropriate case for the role of physical education in the K-12 curriculum and the importance of physical education for all students.

B. Linkages

- The physical education program philosophy is consistent with the district's philosophy of education.
- The philosophy provides a sound foundation for program goals and objectives.
- The district's physical education teachers are sincerely committed to each belief outlined in the philosophy.

C. Breadth and Depth

- The philosophy is aligned with sound pedagogical practices.
- The philosophy provides a clear and compelling justification for physical education.

D. Usefulness

- The philosophy is written in language that is clear and that can be understood by parents and other non-educators.

**SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY
STATEMENT 1**

Hamden, Conn. Public Schools

Physical education is an integral part of the ever continuing educational process for each student. We believe that the K-12 physical education program contributes significantly to the optimum development of each student. This program provides a balance of activities which reflect and challenge the divergent needs of students in the psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains.

The pursuit of optimal physical fitness throughout life and the development of a healthy body is the essence of a good physical education program. Learning the fundamental components and the primary principles of physical fitness helps one to develop positive attitudes and motivational techniques that will be carried on throughout one's life.

The trend in today's society for vigorous physical activity to enhance the quality of life and reduce the risk of catastrophic illness is obvious. The school recognizes this trend and its obligation

to promote a healthy society by developing a physical education curriculum that will focus on "fitness" as the principal component and major objective to be achieved. This direction will take on new meaning as all activity tasks will be analyzed in light of the contribution they will make toward the impact on the physical health and well-being of each student.

**SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY
STATEMENT 2**

Canton, Conn. Public Schools

Physical education helps students attain physical and mental well-being and competencies. It is the one subject area that provides learning in all three domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Through a well-articulated and sequential program of physical education, each student will have the opportunity to develop and maintain a high level of physical fitness necessary for maximum growth, development and wellness.

Physical education helps every child develop movement and sport skills, a positive self-image, positive social interactions and problem-solving techniques. It also helps foster communication skills, promotes productive goal setting and positive attitudes which result in a healthy lifestyle and a productive use of leisure time.

**SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY
STATEMENT 3**

**Conn. Regional District 18
Public Schools**

An individual who experiences a high level of fitness, exhibits a higher level of mental, emotional and social well-being. Consequently, the physical education program in Regional District 18 strives to instill a positive attitude within students regarding the importance of physical activity as an ongoing endeavor. By providing for successful experiences in

a variety of activities, we endeavor to maintain and reinforce a child's inherent love of movement and play. At the same time, it is emphasized that achieving a high level of fitness requires more time than is presently allotted in the school program.

Working within these constraints, we strive to increase individual growth patterns through a sequential developmental program. The program aims to provide enjoyable and successful experiences by offering activities appropriate to the students' physical and mental abilities. Through the medium of physical activity, we seek to promote kinesthetic awareness, cooperation, understanding of individual differences, improved self-esteem and interest in life-long activities.

We seek to reverse the trend of today's youth toward reduced fitness. Thus, we strive to stimulate their desire for play and fitness by increasing their awareness of the numerous activities available to them and by affording them many opportunities for success at play.

SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT 4

Clinton, Conn. Public Schols

The famous words of John Locke, 17th century English philosopher, are still true today. He stated – "A sound mind in a sound body is a short but full description of a happy state in this world. He that has these two has little more to wish for."

An integral part of every student's formal educational experience is an effective physical education program.

The Clinton School System offers a well-planned, sequential program of instruction in physical education. The program is designed to promote a healthy lifestyle through a multidisciplinary approach, which is developmentally appropriate.

4. PROGRAM GOALS. While the K-12 program philosophy describes fundamental beliefs and helps to inform the process of instruction, most curriculum guides describe a set of K-12 program goals. These goals are general statements that summarize the key psychomotor, cognitive and affective content expectations of the program. They provide direction for the entire physical education program from kindergarten through Grade 12. Grade-level goals, when presented, focus on the developmental differences that might guide the program at a specific grade level. For example, this curriculum framework is based on one set of program goals.

An effective set of program goals has the following characteristics:

- Each goal is open-ended, to provide for continuous growth from kindergarten through Grade 12 and into adult life.
- Each goal grows logically out of the physical education philosophy, and the linkage is clear.
- Each goal grows out of a district goal, and the linkage is clear.
- The goals are reflective of the individual community.
- The goals are comprehensive enough to provide the basis for a quality K-12 physical education program.
- The goals include each of the outcomes of physical education suggested by the philosophy.
- Each goal is realistic.
- There is a manageable number of goals, usually between four and eight.
- Each goal lends itself to developing one or more objectives.

The following sample sets of program goals are offered for review and adaptation.

SAMPLE GOALS STATEMENT 1 Conn. Regional District 18 Public Schools

As a result of participation in the physical education program students will:

1. understand the importance that physical activity and fitness have on one's mental, emotional and social development;
2. experience the "joy" of play through exposure to a variety of physical activities;

3. participate in activities in which self-discovery, problem solving and creative decision making will flourish;
4. acquire proper skills for various physical activities through sequential development;
5. develop positive self-image and confidence through successful experiences of play;
6. demonstrate a general knowledge of rules and strategies in activities;
7. demonstrate positive patterns of social behavior, interpersonal relationships and cooperation among individuals towards attaining a common goal;
8. develop and refine motor skills through a variety of activities in order to provide for overall effective movement;
9. experience leisure time activities that can be pursued as adults in society;
10. understand the personal benefits and enjoyment gained through physical activities during leisure time; and
11. recognize individual capabilities and potential and develop a willingness to aspire to that level.

SAMPLE GOALS STATEMENT 2 **Hamden, Conn. Public Schools**

Goal 1: Physiological Development

To provide a program of instruction to recognize the developmental stages of growth and achieve the physiological components of fitness; and maintain desirable fitness levels through a continual process of evaluation.

Goal 2: Psychomotor Development

To provide a program of instruction leading to proficiency in the performance of physical skills requiring coordination, rhythm, accuracy and poise, with physical acts performed in a graceful, aesthetic and efficient manner.

Goal 3: Cognitive Development

To provide a program of instruction leading to the development of knowledge, sensory perception, judgment, memory and reasoning necessary to per-

form skills that lead to a physically active lifestyle.

Goal 4: Affective Development

To provide a program of instruction leading to the development of desirable attitudes and expression of feelings and emotions involving the appreciation of self and others. Primarily, these experiences relate to movement, sports participation and spectatorship.

SAMPLE GOALS STATEMENT 3 **Conn. Regional District 15** **Public Schools**

A physically educated person in Region 15 leaves Grade 12 predisposed to continue to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

1. A physically educated person in Region 15 demonstrates his or her enjoyment of physical activity.
2. A physically educated person in Region 15 demonstrates that he or she possesses the knowledge of the benefits, skills and rules for a variety of sports and activities.
3. A physically educated person in Region 15 feels successful when he or she participates in physical activity.
4. A physically educated person in Region 15 exhibits the attitudes and behaviors of an active and healthy person.

5. OBJECTIVES. If the philosophy and goals of a curriculum represent the spirit or soul of the curriculum, then the grade-level objectives represent the core or heart of the curriculum. It is within these specific grade-level objectives that the curriculum delineates clear expectations of what is to be learned. Objectives should describe observable and measurable behaviors and define what children should know and be able to do.

Using the performance standards defined in this guide at Grades 4, 8 and 12, curriculum developers can work backward to make decisions about the specific objectives that will guide student learning in kindergarten and Grades 1-4 to meet the standards set for all students by the completion of Grade 4.

In selecting, writing and sequencing objectives, several key questions arise:

- Does the objective address essential content, or is it focusing on activities without purpose?
- Is the objective sufficiently specific to give the reader a clear understanding of what the student should be able to do, without being so detailed as to make the statement labored or the objective trivial?
- Is the objective compatible with the goals and philosophy of the program and the real and emerging needs of students?
- Is the objective realistic and attainable by students?
- Are appropriate materials and other resources available to make the objective achievable?

As objectives are selected and written, they may be organized by grade, by themes, in units, in sequential levels of instruction or through some combination of these. Decisions about the organization of a physical education curriculum guide must be made with care and must reflect the overarching philosophy of the program and the preferences of the teachers who are to use the guide. It is most important that the curriculum is presented with coherence and purpose.

Organization of Objectives

- A *grade-level* structure organizes objectives by grade and is the most commonly used structure.
- A *unit* structure groups objectives by the movement concept and/or skill. Units may or may not be organized by degree of difficulty and may be large or small, sequential or nonsequential. A unit organization is most commonly used for high school courses.
- A *thematic* organization places all of the objectives for a specific theme or topic together in sequential order, without regard to specific grade. Such an organization lends itself to individual instruction and continuous progress within a theme.
- A *sequential* organization outlines objectives in a continuous chain without regard to grade level or theme, and allows for individual student progress along a continuum of skills and experiences.

An effective guide often will incorporate more than one format. For example, a common arrangement lists objectives grouped by units within each grade level. In this manner a third grade teacher would be provided with a complete listing of the third grade objectives organized by activities or skills. However, it is important

for the teacher to take into consideration the second grade objectives containing skills that may have been introduced but not taught for mastery, as well as forthcoming fourth grade objectives. This information is often provided in a scope and sequence and is of great importance, as the objectives flow from elementary to middle school and then to high school.

In addition to the delineation and sequencing of content by objectives, many curriculum guides provide information to help teachers implement the curriculum. For example, some curriculum guides:

- provide an example of what is meant by each objective;
- suggest instructional activities, techniques, strategies or materials that support specific objectives; and
- provide information on how the objectives can be evaluated.

Accordingly, curriculum developers have a range of options for formatting and designing an effective curriculum guide.

6. RESOURCE MATERIALS. An effective curriculum guide goes beyond a listing of objectives and identifies suggested instructional activities, strategies, materials and resources to help educators meet a particular objective or set of objectives. Teachers should collaborate to identify a wide range of materials that will assist in meeting the specific needs of varying styles and developmental levels of students. The curriculum document should go beyond identifying what students should know and be able to do, and become a tool that assists the teacher in program implementation and delivery.

7. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT. Assessment and evaluation often are addressed as the culminating piece of curriculum development. Consequently, these important instruments often are neglected or left incomplete. Some models for curriculum development begin with student assessment tools and build backward. Whatever the model, it is necessary to recognize the importance of assessment in the entire curriculum development process. It is critical that curriculum, instruction and assessment be aligned.

The assessment vehicles should be directly related to the objectives; cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Student assessment should be an ongoing process. The model for assessment should permit flexibility in the types of evaluation. Physical education specialists also must look at the trends in other disciplines. Physical education always has been performance based, but how can this be evidenced and documented? Portfolios and other types of authentic assessments are illustrated in Chapter 2.

Research over the past several years has brought change in the focus of physical fitness testing. The current recommended practice focuses on the development of health-related physical fitness tests with criterion-referenced standards. The intent is not solely to assess physical fitness components, but to provide students with knowledge and concepts about fitness and help them to develop positive attitudes toward participating in a healthy, active lifestyle over the span of their lives. Scores are not used as grading criteria or for competitive comparisons in meeting standards, but serve as a means for individualized goal setting and the application of fitness concepts. Physical education assessment issues involve the uniqueness of the discipline and the three domains: psychomotor, cognitive and affective. The issue of whether or not or how the affective domain should be assessed needs to be considered. Attitude, effort and participation are important, but must be balanced with the psychomotor and cognitive achievements of the student.

The importance of assessment and accountability go hand in hand. Physical educators must be able to explain and show evidence of what students have achieved. Assessment is a component in both teaching and learning.

Assessment can provide vital information about student learning and progress, as well as program effectiveness. The key is to think of assessment as part of the instructional process that facilitates learning, not an extra task that must be done for grading purposes. When assessment is regarded as a learning tool, it becomes an integral and important part of each lesson.

(Schiemer, 1996)

8. PILOT AND IMPLEMENTATION. During curriculum development, many districts will pilot portions or all of the curriculum at certain grades or schools.

This can be one mechanism for obtaining feedback on the curriculum prior to districtwide adoption and implementation.

A reasonable time line for the implementation process should be developed. Leadership should ensure that the necessary personnel and financial resources are available for implementation. Staff members need to be made familiar with the curriculum and be assigned individual responsibilities for implementation. Professional development should focus on the new strategies or issues that have brought about changes in the curriculum, e.g., assessment, standards, block scheduling. Copies of the revised curriculum should be made available to all staff members who are responsible for implementation, other departments for use in interdisciplinary planning, administration members (building level and central office), and for public viewing in school and community libraries. It is also beneficial for elementary classroom teachers to have copies of the portion applicable to the grade they teach.

Time and a vehicle for feedback and evaluation need to be built into the implementation process. There should be periodic checks to monitor implementation. Feedback surveys; questionnaires; focus groups, including staff, students and parents; external reviews and student assessments are some mechanisms which can be used to evaluate the success of the curriculum. Refinements can be made, based on the feedback.

The curriculum development process is ongoing. The cyclical process of needs assessment, planning, development, piloting, implementing, monitoring, assessing and revising is what helps to ensure quality programs for all students.■

Reference

Schiemer, Suzann. "Efficient and Effective Assessment Techniques," JOHPERD 67, No.9 (November/December 1996): 28.

