

Dr. Schwegler on Phys. Ed.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Excerpts from
Radio Broadcast
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It is interesting to note in connection with the current revival of popular interest in education that new emphasis is being placed upon physical excellence.

In this matter we are but imitating many of the nations of the past, because keen interest in this matter can be traced back to remotest antiquity--the Persians insisted upon it, the Scythians planned for it, and the Greeks went even so far as to conceive of the human body built in the image of the gods. To them physical excellence involved something bordering upon worship and in consequence they built a system of education in which physical perfection was the rallying point around which the whole scheme of educational activity centered. Through all the intervening ages recurrent emphasis has been placed upon physical excellence in spite of the tidal waves of asceticism which from time to time threaten to engulf the concept. Within the past decades under a new wave of humanistic thinking, however, the conviction of need of health and physical perfection has once more emerged as a dominant interest in human affairs. The consequence is that at present no system of education is thought of as being adequate or modern which does not provide soundly scientific and efficient training in this field.

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A few basic ideas may perhaps be urged as forming necessary components of a forward-looking and efficient program of physical education. In the first place the sciences that contribute to form the modern science of dietetics have shown definitely the vital relationship existing between food both as to quantity and quality and normal growth and efficiency. We now know that we need not only proteins, carbohydrates, and minerals, but the modern lore of vitamins has amazingly expanded our insight into the fundamental conditions underlying human well-being and no program of physical education is complete which does not impart to the child right knowledges and reliable habits with reference to this mass of information.

Secondly, we have at our disposal at present an ever-increasing mass of information in the field of physiology and bio-chemistry which bears directly upon effective functioning of the human body and which when practically applied in the form of principles of hygienic living will serve to enhance beyond all earlier concepts of possibility a state of physical and mental well-being and efficiency enduring not only for the brief flower-time of youth but all through maturity and on to an extended period of old-age.

In the third place, we are beginning to appreciate increasingly the human contact-making results of bodily skills of the play variety, the bearing upon mental alertness, the relationship of health to moral and mental stability, the sanitary values of vigorous physical activity, and the economic and social implications of contacts made in connection with group play. The so-called minor sports--golf, swimming, tennis, handball, and other similar activities appropriate for early middle and later life--are gradually being recognized as desirable components of the total repertoire of one's life and are being thought of as necessary adjuncts of the life program of the modern man and woman.

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I have said nothing thus far concerning the place and function of public athletic spectacles. They form an important, defensible, and age-old component of our group life, but they are not what we have in mind when we speak of physical education. They constitute a problem of highly technical, quasi-professional character of their own, and it is not our purpose in this