

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

A paper read by, Mr. E. R. Sheldon, Supervisor of High Schools, Kansas State Dept. of Education, at the State Convention of the K.H. & P.E.A. held in McPherson

Some one has said that teaching is recognized as the most highly cooperative enterprise in the world. Granted that civilization in America is face to face with a youth problem and that the job of the teacher is one of cooperation, then it is evident that the schools must assume a part of that responsibility of helping young people to find their places in an adult world. We must keep in mind that whatever is done for youth in our Nation must be done by the local community.

What is meant by Health Education? For practical purposes it is best to think of the secondary school health program as the benefits coming to the child through the health services he receives and the benefits obtained from classroom instructor.

Good health is not inalienable. It must be earned and maintained. Nor is this easier to do in the twentieth than in the nineteenth century. It is, in fact, increasingly more difficult. The sober truth is that civilization tends to destroy health, and only the combined efforts of an alert public health service and education can preserve the vitality of individuals or the Nation.

Although I have had but two decades of school experience, during which time I have been especially interested in health education, I am quite thoroughly convinced that the development of good health habits and the building of sound bodies are about the most useful services that a school system can render. I am sure that there is properly very little or no distinction between physical and health education. They have one common purpose: The fostering of good health and the building of health habits that will be practiced throughout life. Out of every child's life should come the mastery of one or more games or physical activities that he can practice and enjoy throughout life.

I am convinced that physical education is equally desirable for both boys and girls and that the games and athletics should be so varied and extended that all pupils may participate regularly in some activity. It is certainly true that contests for prizes or trophies should be

discouraged as rapidly as we can create in the pupils the desire to do their best at all times for no reward beyond the satisfaction of the attainment of a worthy goal.

I am positive that our cities need to establish an adequate number of playgrounds and recreation centers so that all boys and girls of the community may have the opportunity of healthful outdoor recreation under competent supervision. It pays in moral as well as in health returns.

I am sure that emotional control is a major responsibility of a program of health education; therefore student-leadership should be encouraged.

Education itself is dependent on physical vitality. A reasonably strong body is the best guarantee of mental health. Good physical condition is necessary, too, to long-continued mental effort. A strong body makes for mental endurance. Then, too, learning itself depends on good health, since the child must be alert, rested, willing, and responsive. A sick, tired, or mal-nourished pupil is inevitably a slower learner because of his handicaps. The future may reveal that, for very many pupils, a given amount of time and effort spent in improving health yields more learning than the same time and effort spent in direct and immediate study.

We are told that the use of physical education in controlled situations has become an important therapy in the recovery of mental patients. Opportunities are afforded through recreational activities to gain deeper insight into difficulties of the personality. Since you are guides to moving and doing, you in the profession of physical education have special opportunities and obligations in molding personality. No one can guide physical education activities without at the same time guiding personality adjustment. Now sometimes teachers who seem to get good results in athletics get abominable results in personality outcome. Usually these unwise teachers do not know any better. They have been looking for