

Physical education activities are no panacea by which the ills of a weak character may be automatically cured. The content of the curriculum can be made to present the possibility of such education, but this content must be made to function, educationally, by skillful teaching. To see that this curriculum educates, there are a number of items which must be emphasized.

To insure learning, there must be interest on the part of the student in the activities used. With few exceptions, even boys and girls who state that they "hate gym" confess that they would like to be able to do these activities, and that if they were able to do them, they would thoroughly enjoy participating in them. The major reason they are not interested is that they do not possess the requisite skills. Interest is probably distributed normally. There will be a few who can never be made to enjoy participation in physical education activities. There is evidence (data from Chinese university students) to show that skill in games is distributed with a close approximation to normality. Some are motor geniuses, and some are motor morons. If the same individual happens to be near the small end of the interest distribution, and also at the small end of the skill distribution, it is most probable that little can be done to help him. The same problem is presented in mental education in those who fall by the wayside in spite of all that our best school systems can do for them. It has been demonstrated however, that the curve can be moved over towards the right with skillful teaching coupled with a scientific curriculum. To accomplish this, the following things, among others, must be emphasized:

1. The immediate, definite objective which is before the eyes of the pupil should be one which he feels to be a worthwhile one. The pupil is seldom interested in piece-meal activities from which he sees nothing ahead. The formal type of calisthenics is seldom interesting, though the personality of a clever teacher cannot infrequently make it bearable, especially to those who, like some groups of adults, seek improved health as the primary objective. If the pupil sees that in his massed work there is a definite, pedagogical progress being made in the skills of the activities which he desires to learn, as athletic games, track and field, combative activities, or (especially in the case of girls) dancing, experience has shown that he will be interested and will work to attain that end, if the dosage is not too large. But he must know that objective and appreciate it. The teacher must see that his progression is sound and the purpose clear.

2. Teaching must be intelligible - the pupil must know the specific ends that both he and the teacher are seeking, and be able to tell the direction of the expected or accomplished improvement. In addition to skillful teaching, there should be standardized, objective tests of proven validity to measure performance; standards of attainment should be established for each activity used, and these correlated with a real curriculum as definitely taught and definitely required as are the corresponding ones in mental education.

3. The progression of the curriculum should be perfected to the degree that the most rapid possible progress may be made by the student, and so that only skills relevant to the physical education desired shall be learned, skills without clashing psycho-motor associations. "Ecclectic" systems are usually guilty of transgressing this requirement. Learning competitive skills and forming competitive associations involve double waste.