

## **Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education**

Debate about the merits and improprieties of dodgeball continue to be escalated in the media, school districts, and among state and national organizations. The Texas Association of Health Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (TAHPERD) states that dodgeball is not an appropriate game when it uses children as targets and produces a situation in which students sit instead of move.

If dodgeball is a game in the physical education class where students are not given a choice to participate, it is not appropriate to force a student to be a target that results in inactivity. The purpose of physical education as stated by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) is to provide K-12 students with:

- Knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to be physically active for a lifetime.
- A daily dose of physical activity for health benefits.
- Positive experiences so that “kids” want to be physically active outside of physical education class and throughout their lifetime.

Exercise and physical activity have been proven to relieve stress, improve mood, reduce incidences of depression, reduce anxiety, and best of all, in the school setting, help children learn and improve overall academic achievement (Ratey, 2008).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (October, 2011) support age appropriate moderate to vigorous physical activity and provide the following alarming data and statistics:

- Obesity now affects 17% of all children and adolescents in the United States.
- The percentage of adolescents and children who are obese tripled from 1980 to 2008.
- In 2008 alone, more than one third of U.S. children and adolescents were overweight or obese.
- Obese children are more likely to become obese adults.
- Statistics show that children and adolescents who are obese have a 70% to 80% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.

Current trends and best practice models continue to reinforce outcomes associated with (a) educational standards set forth by states, provinces, nations, or governing bodies and (b) goals that are important to healthy human development and well-being for appropriate grade levels and populations (AAPAR, March 29-April 2, 2011). Dodgeball is the most recognized form of human target games and NASPE (2006) has published a position statement against it. All too often, exclusive and punitive practices such as children picking teams and exercise as punishment, continue to frustrate and hurt even the most competitive children (Williams, 1996).

NASPE acknowledges that the arguments most often heard in favor of dodgeball are that it allows for the practice of important physical skills – and “kids” like it.

- Dodgeball does provide a means of practicing some important physical skills such as running, dodging, throwing, and catching. However, there are many activities that provide instruction and practice of these skills without using human targets or eliminating students from activity.
- Some kids may like it - the most skilled, the most confident. But many do not! Certainly not the student who gets hit hard in the stomach, head, or groin. And it is not appropriate to teach our children that you win by hurting others.

TAHPERD’s philosophy statement regarding physical education says the following: “Physical education is an essential part of the total education program and makes significant contributions toward the achievement of desirable educational outcomes through the medium of physical activity and related experiences.” The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans focus on the implementation of quality physical education as the cornerstone of physical activity. Elimination games, such as dodgeball, that force inactivity, do not create a best practice model of desirable physical activity.

#### References

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2012 Approved by Board of Directors