

## Should the physical education grade be included in a high school student's GPA?

Writing as a university-level teacher-educator, I feel it is critical to the future of our K-12 physical education programs that the physical education grade be included in the high school GPA. My recommendation is qualified, however, by several prerequisites that too often are absent from physical education programs: (1) the physical education curriculum must be academically sound and rigorous, and (2) the physical education grade must be based on sound measurement and evaluation practices. A written curriculum containing developmentally appropriate objectives and activities must exist and be the basis for daily, written lesson plans. Each curricular objective must be evaluated using valid, reliable, and objective measures. Summative physical education grades ought to represent a weighted composite of valid and reliable measures of motor skill, fitness, authentic games play, improvement, and knowledge. Subjective attributes such as attitude, effort, or ethical behavior should be included only when objective measures exist for evaluating all students. Traditional, but trivial, grade components such as dress and showering (and even attendance) should be avoided. Should physical education be on par with other academic subjects? Certainly, but only when our content and evaluation practices are on par!

—*Stephen J. Langendorfer, associate professor, School of Human Movement, Sport, and Leisure Studies, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403.*

It would be wonderful to consider a future utopia in which physical education grades are included in a high school student's GPA and, of greater importance, are perceived to be as important as grades in reading, writing, arithmetic, and other academic subjects. Sadly, such a prospect is unlikely to materialize. What of other strategies?

This writer began his career at an Outward Bound school in the Scottish Highlands that was inspired by the educational philosophies of the German-born educator Kurt Hahn. His focus was on character and values, and I found myself in a setting where the students had to drive their own fire engine, man a mountain rescue team, study conservation and ecology, and involve themselves in many outdoor activities. While there was a standard curriculum, faculty meetings—and academic assessment and grading—were not just innovative, but polemical. Student progress was measured not by letter criteria but with a graduated formula based on perceived effort, application, and improvement (or the lack thereof). It may seem simplistic, but the system won me over eventually, and I became a rabid supporter of such an ethos. It roundly recognizes and encourages the student who is trying to do better. I strongly recommend that such a system be implemented to support curriculum credibility for contemporary U.S. physical education.

—*Scott A. G. M. Crawford, professor, College of Education and Professional Studies, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL 61920.*

I feel that it is necessary to evaluate children in physical education. If students know beforehand that they won't receive a grade, they will be tempted not to participate or give their all. Giving grades can also motivate the students to participate and excel in future physical education programs.

There are also disadvantages to assigning grades in physical education. One is that some children are not blessed with as much physical ability as others. I feel students should be evaluated on their participation rather than their ability to perform a skill. Grading may affect future participation in physical education programs, and children who receive low marks may lose self-esteem and stop participating in physical activity.

—*Joseph Nickels, graduate student, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.*

I believe physical education should be included in a student's GPA. The core courses (math, English, etc.) are included in the GPA even though a student is not proficient in these subjects. Often, I have had parents ask if their child can sit out during physical education class because he or she is heavy or uncoordinated and the other kids may make fun of them. Of course my answer is no, and I tell the parents that their children need to try in physical education. But in core courses, effort alone does not guarantee that a student will pass the class. Just because a class is hard, a student is not able to skip

that class and receive a passing grade.

—Angel Mathews, graduate student, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

**Y**es. Final grades indicate achievement in a particular content area. Students who excel in physical education should be rewarded just like students in other subject areas. Including the physical education grade in the GPA recognizes the importance of this achievement. Not including it sends a poor message to students and their parents: "Physical education isn't important."

As such, it is incumbent on physical educators to provide students with legitimate grades based on achievement. Showing up on time and dressing for activity does not merit the designation "outstanding achievement." If our grade is to be included in the GPA, we are obligated to make students earn it; it must reflect an authentic assessment of their achievement. We must also be sure that students are aware of such grading practices at the beginning of a course.

When high-achieving, college-bound students complain about a "B" in physical education lowering their GPA and jeopardizing scholarship opportunities, physical educators must show a genuine interest in the goals of those students, be encouraging, and help them to see the importance of an overall education, including physical education. Then, tell them to be proud of their "B" and wish them good luck in the future.

—Dennis Docheff, Physical Education Department Chair, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, MO 64093.

**O**f course! This is a no-brainer question! Physical education is a part of the curriculum and should therefore be a part of a student's GPA, period! If we as educators, administrators, and parents value physical education in our schools, then we need to place as much sig-

nificance on it as on other subjects. We would never question whether math or science should be a part of a GPA, so we should not question the value of physical education. For those of you who would argue that some of the best students just cannot succeed in sports, wake up! Physical education has moved beyond just sports; it focuses on health, movement skills, coordination skills, social skills, team cooperation, and many other skills that students will use throughout their lifetime. High school is the last time that students will have required physical education; for that reason, we as teachers need to use it as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of activity in our increasingly sedentary society. If we do not give physical education the recognition of being a part of the GPA, respect will be lost for a subject that is crucial to a healthy society. Give physical education the credit it deserves!

—Christine Burger, student, Concordia University, Mequon, WI 53095.

**I** cannot see how you can average in the physical education grades when they are often qualitative ("satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory") rather than quantitative (A, B, C, etc.) and

when a class meets only two times a week. Until administrations give more class time to physical education and physical education teachers get more serious, the situation will not change.

—Wade Hawkins, Jr., graduate student, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

**I** am a non-traditional, first-time college student entering the field of physical education for three reasons: first, to fulfill a lifelong dream, second, to demonstrate to my students the importance of lifetime involvement in physical activity, and third, to earn respect for our profession. Education should be designed to meet the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and emotional needs of every student. It should develop the whole person and enable each student to prepare for life outside the confines of school and to become a productive member of society. Physical education is the one subject area that meets all of the above criteria. Physical educators instruct in all domains as well as in the social aspects of citizenry. Physical education can play a leading role in eliminating discriminatory practices by promoting

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FEBRUARY QUESTION

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Please include your institution's name and your position—whether faculty or staff member, administrator, or student. We also welcome suggestions for future Issues questions.

## Issues

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ting multicultural understanding and tolerance for all.

Physical education students are guided through the organic development of strength, endurance, and flexibility. They are also instructed in fundamental movements and some sports skills. Knowledge of each, and proficiency in some, as measured using various assessment tools, may ensure lifelong involvement in physical activity. Affective learning is individual, and it occurs when a student places an intrinsic value on the rewards that come from physical activity. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. Obesity and hypokinetic diseases are at epidemic proportions. Hundreds of thousands of people die annually in this country due in part to their sedentary lifestyles. The first step to curtailing this

tragedy is through education—physical education! I dream of the day that physical education is mandatory for every student, every day, in every grade. I vote “yes” to including the physical education grade in a high school student’s GPA. Why? Because physical education is not a roll-out-the-ball “gym class” or an extended recess period. It is the most important and complete subject area, wherein lessons are taught in all learning domains. Physical education is truly a microcosm of life, and every lesson taught has the potential to translate into the “real world” and prepare students to become healthy, productive members of society.

—Michelle Y. Failla, student and president of the Physical Education and Health Fitness Club, Connecticut State University, Newington, CT 06111.

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