

A STUDY OF THE STATUS OF  
THE HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM  
IN THE SMALL HIGH SCHOOLS OF KANSAS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Much has been said about the physical deficiencies and health defects revealed by the draft in the United States during the World War I. Later reports of the Hoover Commission further crystalized the issue and these events gave much impetus to physical and health education.

With a background of a four year college course in the field of physical and health education, nine years teaching experience in these subjects in the smaller high schools of Kansas have convinced us that this problem has been greatly neglected in the state, particularly in the smaller schools. This conviction has resulted from close contact with a considerable number of such schools in addition to those in which we have worked.

We are convinced, therefore, that there is an urgent need for tangible data and a crystallization of purpose bearing upon health and physical education in the smaller high schools of Kansas and it is with a purpose to help meet this need that we undertake a study of the question.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A perusal of available literature bearing upon the question of physical and health education leaves one with the impression that there has been much discussion and little investigation of the subject, particularly with respect to the small high school.

In 1933, Prentup (10, p. 42) made a survey of physical education in first and second class cities of Kansas in which he found a fairly well organized physical education program. In the majority of cases the instructor was well qualified and had charge of coaching responsibilities as well. He found a shortage of health examinations, poorly equipped gymnasiums, little attention to corrective physical education, but good development of intramural programs.

It is evident from the studies made that the educators in the larger school systems have accepted physical education as a means of improving and maintaining the health of the student.

#### The Importance of Health and Physical Education

Information from the writings by experts in the field of health and physical education, has been used to focus attention on the importance of health.

In stressing the importance of good health Chapin (3, p. 7) set forth two principles that may be taken as a basic creed for physical and health education as follows: 1. "Life without good health is usually neither enjoyable nor efficient."  
2. "The best moral and spiritual outlook runs parallel with physical health."

Quite often one sees first aid to the injured. Should not one look ahead of that and see first aid to the well, in order that young people may learn how to keep well and strong. Then as they reach middle age or the early part of old age, they

need not fall heir to those ailments, common to that period of life. As Chapin (3, p. 81) points out:

Also as "Middle Age" advances, many persons tend to put on flesh, and if this goes beyond a certain point, it does not make for health or resistance. When the waist line bulges beyond the chest line, the prospect for a long and vigorous life diminishes in direct proportion as the former outstrips the latter. The insurance companies long ago recognized this fact and have established a ratio between the weight and height of the individual beyond which they will not accept a risk.

It is true that there are many who do not have good health in the sixties. But the reason for so much poor health in later life is due mainly to lack of activity. There are many individuals who plan to become inactive at sixty despite the fact that they have lived, previously, a vigorous and useful life.

One should be taught a number of interesting games and should take part in physical activity when he is in high school in order that he can be prepared to participate in some of these activities in later life. Of the importance of keeping fit Rogers (12, p. 1-3) stated:

The human body is a machine through which the mind works. Every exhibition of mental activity is accompanied by physical activity, and the quality and quantity of mental work depend upon the condition of the machine. It would be foolish to expect any automobile to do its best with a flat tire, or when supplied with little oil and inferior fuel, so it is just as absurd for a teacher to expect his best school work from a child who has defective sense organs, who is badly fed, insufficiently rested, or who is depressed by other faulty conditions or by disease.

So let us for a moment simply think of the human body as a machine. A successful mechanic whose duty it is to operate a machine takes the greatest

care of it. His success depends on keeping his machine, whatever it may be, in good running order.

Few people realize that the human body is the most perfect, and at the same time the most complicated, machine in existence. Moreover, this elaborate machine is under their own control. So unless we know how to care for this machine how can we expect to keep it in good order?

Intelligence, organization, and thorough training are just as necessary in physical education as in the fields of engineering, music, and other professions. Barrows (1, p. 20) expressed the same opinion when he wrote: "Bodily training should be given an appropriately fitted place, by specially trained and well qualified teachers."

In Bowen's (2, p. 5) work is found this statement: "Students preparing to enter the field of physical education should get a sane view of its purposes."

The physical education department should have three aims, and should hire their instructors accordingly: (a) to discover and remove physical defects, if possible; (b) to teach healthful habits of living, and the principles that underlie these habits; and (c) to conduct physical activities that will keep the bodily organs functioning normally.

The leadership is largely responsible for the results obtained in competitive athletics. If coaches will stress fine ideals and cooperation rather than the play to win, inter-school athletics will be desirable; but if poor sportsmanship is permitted, or contestants are taught to keep merely within the law then inter-school athletics are apt to be undesirable.

La Porte (6, p. 54) pointed out that: "The inter-school athletic program for boys is at once a blessing and a hazard. It requires very careful administration and should be supervised by only the best trained teachers available."

As long as superintendents of schools, and those in authority, stand strongly for fair play and sportsmanship and insist that these things are more important than winning, high school athletics can be kept clean. However, as Bowen (2, p. 17) stated: "The educational authorities who hire coaches to win at any cost and who insist that they win or quit are the most serious blocks in the way of progress today."

To substantiate the point that school supervisors and school authorities should think well before hiring a college athlete to direct their educational program without proper training in such work, a statement is quoted from Williams (13, p. 116): "It is pure folly; he lacks not only the technical training so essential to real success in his work, but also the educational background that is vital to an understanding co-operation."

It is not the intention to minimize the importance of skill in athletics in the one who is chosen to fill that position. Skill in one's particular field is without doubt one of the prime considerations for the selection of a candidate, but while athletic participation is important it is not the only qualification for one who is to coach athletics. He must be equipped technically, and also be able to handle his class work

satisfactorily. He must have the ability to handle boys and exert a good influence for without doubt his power in this field is unlimited, his influence over boys is tremendous, his word is law.

Most teachers agree that the coach or athletic director in our smaller schools has more influence upon the youth than any other one instructor; therefore, his selection should be given the greatest consideration. The authorities in this field insist that more weight should be given to character than to any other one thing, for the director must be a clean man in every way; it is certain that there can be no clean sport with a coach whose character is reproachable; it is necessary only to observe the attitudes of various boys in some of our schools to prove this. There is a saying, "As is the coach so are the coached." One could even go farther and say, "So will be the student body." A coach's work is close to a boy's heart; therefore, he does not have trouble in keeping the boys interested in his work, and consequently he has better chances to teach the boys successfully.

Concerning qualifications for an ideal coach Williams (13, p. 122) stated:

- a. Irreproachable character. Educators admit that the character of young men is formed during the impressionable period he is under a coach's direction; also that this character is developed mainly through play and activities. It is, therefore, important that a man be a person of high ideals, and unquestionable character.

- b. Leadership and enthusiasm. The coach must be a natural leader, capable of arousing enthusiasm, of winning the respect, confidence and support of his students.
- c. Knowledge of technique and ability to impart his knowledge to others. The ability to teach football, baseball, or track is quite a different thing than being able to perform well in these sports. There are many excellent performers, some good teachers, but very few who combine both qualities. Ability to teach is absolutely essential to a good coach; ability to perform well is desirable, but not essential.

#### What Some States Are Doing

The movement for physical training first gained its foothold in Europe, and in due time found its way to this country. The original plan of physical training was to correct bad posture, and other ills sometimes caused by too long sitting; however, inter-school athletics were soon initiated.

Training in practice as well as theory of hygiene or health education is being adopted in the schools by states. Improvements may be noted in the teaching methods and in the textbooks used in the elementary schools. Rogers (12, p. 9) points out one weakness: "In high schools, however, except incidentally in connection with general science, biology or civics (none of which subjects are always required of all pupils) the matters of health are too much neglected."

High school and college administrators who wish to introduce physical training courses are first confronted with certain legislative controls. Among these are some which are

mandatory; others which are merely permissive; however, as pointed out by Ready (11, p. 43) 37 of our 48 states have state requirements for participation in physical education activities in the curriculum. The states by enacting mandatory regulations covering the selection of teachers provide for a leader qualified through training to take charge of their school activities. Ready (11, p. 43) further stated that:

While a large number of states have enacted legislation requiring instruction in physical education to be given in elementary and secondary schools, only about half the states have included in these laws requirements that publicly supported institutions offering curricula for teachers include some instruction in physical and health education in all general curricula.

Kansas is not listed among these states. According to Ready Missouri has enacted legislation concerning this very problem.

The sub-committee on legislation of the committee on the school child, White House Conference on child health and protection, concerned itself with health education when it called attention (11, p. 43) to the fact that: "Neither disease nor defects await the annual (if that often) advent of the physician or even the monthly or weekly visit of the nurse." The commission especially recommended that the training of all teachers for the detection or signs of communicable diseases and of physical defects should be required.

It is consoling to know that Ready's studies reveal a beginning in health education and that in some states all applicants for teaching positions are required to present

credentials in health education. A few State Departments of Education recognize the value of having all teachers properly trained to supervise health and physical education, and those having direct charge of physical education departments must have additional training, according to their responsibilities. When our schools are supplied teachers qualified in respect to health, many of the defects with which we are now so frequently confronted will be prevented.

The old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago, and certainly would not handicap him if he had had the proper health instruction at an early age. Howe (5, p. 55-56) continued his statements about the child and his health instruction as he wrote:

This can best be accomplished by simple, practical instruction in hygiene, and training in health habits among our school children.

When a child first enters school, his health direction should become a regular part of his education. He should first be given a thorough physical examination, to detect, if possible, any defect that might interfere with his physical or mental progress.

The school report sent to parents each month should indicate the physical condition as well as the mental progress of a child.

Any such plan should induce parents to keep their child in the best physical condition, thereby improving his mental work as well.

Such instruction and training should begin in kindergarten and continue through high school. However, to be most efficient

it must be given to the child in a manner which he can understand and which appeals to him. Bearing on the question of general health service Howe (5, p. 57-58) stated:

It should apply to every child and should include daily health inspection of each pupil under a teacher trained in the purposes of school health service.

School authorities must appreciate the importance of health service as an educational function, and must demand its proper recognition and support. Emphasis should be placed in the school as the logical community center for health instruction and health direction.

In a sense the physical education program is still an educational infant, and in many schools baseball, or playground ball, continues to be the one major activity repeated year after year, from the third grade through high school, and no attempt is being made to produce a varied activity program. In other cases physical education consists merely in supervised play without the benefit of a teacher who has the knowledge to instruct. In this connection La Salle (7, p. (IX) ) wrote:

Teachers of children whose educational preparation has been limited largely to the traditional academic disciplines will be judged quite inadequate for the professional task unless they, too, are aware of, sensitive to, and prepared in those areas of motor skills that comprise a substantial part of a child's proper education.

Physical training is mainly a program of keeping well and not one of getting well. It must of necessity be administered as a part of and not as apart from the educational system in which it operates.

To the class room teacher is given the greatest

opportunity to render the most effective school health service.

Howe (5, p. 54) in discussing class room teaching said:

That she may be qualified for this responsible work, she must be better trained in the fundamental essentials of school health service. She must be fully familiar with the general educational program of which she is most interested in good health, with all it implies, and in proper sanitation, and yet be capable of recognizing and advising intelligently regarding ill health and bad sanitation. She must be a health trainer in the room in which she teaches.

In referring to physical fitness of teachers Howe (5, p. 55) further stated:

State colleges for teachers, state normal schools, and other institutions in which teachers are trained should establish a plan of school health service. Physical as well as mental qualifications should be given to health attainments as well as to mental development, and physical fitness should be required for graduation.

Connecticut's department of education (10, p. 43) requires a very comprehensive course of training. It begins with physical examinations, and requires that within a given time the candidate shall have his or her physical defect corrected. If other states would join in this program the teachers of a few years hence would constitute a strong force for the improvement of health and the encouragement of physical training.

Hoyman (4, p. 575) presented a picture of what the State of Oregon is doing:

Several years ago, the Oregon High School Principals' Association adopted a recommendation to the effect that, in all standard Oregon High Schools one unit toward graduation should consist of the satisfactory completion of a minimum three-year program in health and physical

education. They further recommended that all high schools should extend their program to four years, with a minimum standard of two forty-five minute periods of physical education and one forty-five minute period of health instruction weekly.

Some states and cities have made requirements as to the physical condition of the teacher hired, in order that the person may not participate in a line of work for which he or she is unfit; boys and girls require a strong healthy teacher, if they are to obtain the most satisfactory results from subject matter and other school activities.

Although Kansas has set up limited qualifications for the teaching of physical and health education in the Class A High Schools, little has been done, or is being done, in raising the qualifications for teachers who are teaching physical education (the term coaching athletics is more often used) in the small schools of the B and C Classes. Both boys' and girls' physical training and health training are being seriously neglected. There are athletics for the strong husky lads, but very little if anything is done for the unfortunate such as the underweight student, or any of those that might be abnormal in the back, shoulders, limbs, or have various other abnormalities.

The help that these under privileged would get from a well prepared health and physical education program, could readily be seen in a few years. Besides the nerve tonic which they would receive from play, exercise would stimulate appetite, increase respiration, aid circulation, extract poison and in

general promote better health.

Health and physical education are required in most colleges (in some cases the requirements are very limited and not very beneficial). But records show that only 26 out of 100 boys or girls ever get to college, and only six out of 100 finish. Thus, there is a real necessity for health education and physical training in our high schools.

It is believed that Kansas has accomplished something in setting up standards for the teachers in physical education, where credit is recorded toward graduation. These standards (9, p. 11) are as follows: Fifteen semester hours credit in physical education, ten hours of which must be in the field of health, physiology, first aid, or school hygiene. If, however, the state would set up these standards for all physical activity directors, a definite stride would be taken to place the physical and health education program on a sound educational footing.

#### PROCEDURE

The following information concerns a study made of all the Class B and C High Schools of the State of Kansas, whose enrollment is 60 or less. The names of the schools were obtained from the Kansas Educational Directory as compiled by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The information secured from the questionnaires, from the principals' organization reports, and from the teachers' preparation card index, gives the reader a fair picture of the health

and physical education program as found in the small high schools of Kansas.

#### FINDINGS

In gathering data by the questionnaire method a person is usually confronted with several problems. There were 206 schools included in the study; of that number 125 questionnaires were returned. A number of the questions in the questionnaires were not answered fully enough to give significant results. The answers to the questions which were answered somewhat satisfactorily have been tabulated and the results given in Table 1.

In summarizing the data concerning prevalence of physical examination and activities programs it develops that a large percentage of the schools do require some form of physical activity. While most of the schools require a physical examination of the boys and girls participating in the physical activities, a physical examination was not required in the majority of cases of freshmen nor in the majority of cases of the non-participating students. In the replies on the question, are the physically handicapped students included in the physical activity program it will be noted that only eight of the schools replied in the affirmative. Seventeen of these 21 schools did not require a physical examination. Many physical defects cannot be detected without a thorough physical examination.

Table 1. Prevalence of physical examination and activities program.

Tabulated questions	Yes	No	Unanswered
Requiring a physical activity program.	93	9	23
Requiring a physical exam. to participate in activity.	64	25	36
Requiring a physical exam. of all students.	25	64	36
Requiring a physical exam. of all freshmen.	19	82	24
Physically handicapped students included in program.	8	35	81
Physical and health education related with academic courses.	8	47	70
School executives believe qualifications of physical activity director be raised to 15 college hours.	76	30	19
Is physical activity program a part of the school day.	82	26	17
Is physical activity program mainly athletics with inter-scholastic competition the main incentive.	78	17	30

In practically two-thirds of the cases, the physical activity program is a part of the school day. The reason for this practice is that most rural youth are needed for farm work. Another reason is that quite a number of the small rural high schools use buses for student transportation, hence the necessity for all the students to be ready to leave at four. In

only a few cases is it found that physical and health education is related with the academic courses. The fact that the physical activity directors, in a large majority of cases carry on the activity program mainly for athletics with interscholastic competition the main incentive, gives the school executives ample reason to believe that the qualifications of the physical activity director should be raised to 15 college hours. They no doubt believe, as most educators believe, that too much time and effort is given over to interscholastic competition. If less time was spent on athletics there would be more time for an all around intramural program. This kind of a program can be worked with the regular athletic program, and in so doing it would benefit practically the entire school.

Tables 2 and 3 contain data tabulated from the questionnaires concerning the extent of physical activities.

Table 2. Physical activity periods per week.

No. of periods a week	For boys	For girls
5	47	21
3	22	7
2	13	43
No answers	43	54

Table 3. Length of physical activity periods.

Length of activity periods in minutes	For boys	For girls
45	12	37
60	32	30
90	16	00
120	8	00
No answers	57	58

A brief summary of these Tables 2 and 3 shows that the boys meet more regularly than the girls, and that the periods are longer. This is probably as it should be. However, there is definite evidence that the girls are given an opportunity to get some benefit from the activity program.

The last question relative to the number of college hours that physical activity directors should have in health and physical education has been divided to determine where the high school executives believe emphasis should be placed; whether in the field of health education or in the field of physical education. Various opinions were expressed in giving the number of hours of college work that each school executive believed essential for the physical educational director, or as he is more commonly referred to as the coach, in order to carry out the health and physical education program of the school, as shown in Table 4 the number of college hours ranged from zero to 65, with a weighted mean of 13.2.

Table 4. Amount of training in physical and health education believed desirable.

College hours	Schools reporting on health ed.	Schools reporting on physical ed.
5	4	7
6	9	3
8	4	10
10	16	19
12	6	2
15	16	21
20	14	0
30	0	2
65	1	0

It is evident that the school executives do not have the same opinion of the number of hours that the physical activity directors should have but it is quite evident that they are well aware of the fact that more training is necessary in this field to establish and maintain a sound health and physical education program in the small high schools. One may conclude from the replies that a large majority of the school executives believe that the physical activity director should have from 10 to 20 hours of college work in the field of health and physical education.

The men now holding such positions in the small high schools do not have this amount of training. In fact, a study in this field which follows later reveals that a large

percentage of the physical activity directors have no college credits in this field.

It is difficult to imagine a person conducting a class in Latin, geometry, European history, or even in a general shop class without first receiving some training in those fields. It is just as unreasonable for men with no training in health and physical education to be responsible for, in a large measure, the future health of the growing boys and girls of the small high school. It stands to reason that this practice of hiring men to fill the position of physical activity directors on the assumption that the work is not very important, and that it is an activity that most anyone without skillful training can handle efficiently is not to be recommended. Several incidents have been observed in the past few years that typify the reasons. A boy who was known to have a weak heart was permitted to play a game of basketball. He missed the next five weeks of school. Another boy just returning from a ten day attack of influenza, was urged to compete in the county track meet. He was an exceptionally good mile runner and was out to better the record in that event. This was not accomplished. Two years later a thorough examination revealed an enlarged heart. It would be difficult to say just what part the running that day played in the enlarging of the heart, but as weak as the boy must have been the extra strain on that organ of the body was certainly injurious.

From such instances it is evident that consideration

should be given to the hiring for the responsible positions of coaches, men who have the training to handle efficiently this vital part of the school work.

A study was made to determine the number and kind of health subjects taught, in the small high schools. The principals' organization reports which are kept on file in the State Superintendent's Office at Topeka, were used in this study. These reports give the schedule of classes stating the exact number and kind of subjects taught each semester. In examining 103 reports of the schools in question, only 36 were found to offer biology and 28, physiology. Of course, this does not give the entire picture. A large number of the small high schools must alternate subjects from year to year. If a follow-up study were to be made it would probably be found that some of those schools that did not offer such courses as biology and physiology at the time when the data used in this discussion were being gathered, would be offering such courses the following year. It is reasonable, however, to conclude that nearly half of the small high schools of Kansas are not offering courses such as biology or physiology.

Subjects such as first aid, school hygiene, personal hygiene, were not listed in any of the curriculums. These courses are fundamental subjects for a good health program in any school. The carry-over value of such subjects to everyday living is not to be doubted.

In the study to determine the amount of teacher preparation

that the physical activity directors have had in the field of health education and physical education, a list was prepared from the principals' organization reports, which are kept on file in the State Superintendent's Office. These reports give the names of the teachers in charge of the health and physical education program of the high schools of Kansas. After securing these names, additional information was obtained from the teacher preparation card index, which has been prepared by the two State High School Supervisors and is kept in the Supervisor's office. The record of all college work is transferred from their college transcript to this card index, giving the exact number of college hours that the teacher has earned in each field of education.

This card index has not been entirely completed as yet; but it was sufficiently near completion to make available the record of the college work from 134 teachers' index cards.

These 134 teachers as designated by the school executives of the schools in question were the physical activity directors or as they are more commonly referred to the coaches. In the review of the cards to determine the amount of training the physical activity directors have had in the field of work in which they have been assigned, data have been tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5. Training of present physical activity directors.

College hours of training	No. of activity directors
0	68
1-4	29
5-14	25
15 or more	12

In summarizing Table 5, it is found that, more than half of the physical activity directors have received no college training in the field of health and physical education. There were only 12 that were really qualified to direct and supervise the work to which they were assigned.

If the state education authorities were to require the same level of qualifications in the teaching of health and physical education in the Class B and C High Schools as they require in the other fields of education, two-thirds of the teachers would not be qualified to carry on this work.

#### SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this study is to determine the status of physical and health education in small high schools with an enrollment of 60 or less in Kansas and to focus attention on their deficiencies and problems in this respect.
2. A careful study of available literature was undertaken to reveal the best standards and practices in physical and

health education. Data concerning the schools in question were collected from the files of the principals' organization reports in the office of the State Superintendent for the year 1939-40, from the card index of teacher preparation prepared by the state high school supervisors, and from a questionnaire sent to 206 high schools, 125 of which made returns.

3. In the review of literature it was found that experts in the field of health education and physical education believed that health is a primary essential to happiness and success in life, that the health of the student should be given prime consideration by all teachers. They emphasized that the background for living a clean healthful life can best be obtained through a well planned, well executed health and physical education program which must be supervised and directed by well trained teachers, thus indicating that health and physical education should have a major place in the secondary educational program.
4. Results of this study indicate that practically all Class B and C High Schools whose enrollment is 60 or less have a physical activity program for both boys and girls, but seldom does the program extend beyond competitive athletics.
5. There is a definite need for more physical and health examinations for the high school students. In nearly all the cases, only the members of the boys' athletic teams were given examinations.

6. The physical activity classes meet from two to five times a week, and the length of the class periods ranges from 30 minutes to 120 minutes.
7. The physically handicapped students are not included in the physical activity program.
8. There is practically no relationship between academic subjects and health education.
9. The physical activity program in a majority of cases is a part of the school day.
10. In nearly all the cases the physical activity program consists mainly of athletics, with interscholastic competition being the main incentive.
11. The physical activity directors have practically no training in physical and health education.
12. The majority of school executives believe that the physical activity directors should have from 10 to 20 hours of college training in the field of health and physical education.
13. In the majority of schools health subjects are not included in the high school curriculums. Not a single school offered first aid or personal hygiene. A few schools offered biology or physiology.
14. There is a definite need for the state education authorities to organize a better health and physical education program in the small high schools of Kansas.
15. As an outcome of this study and of experience several

recommendations seem reasonable:

- a. The state should appoint a physical education director to organize and supervise a sound physical education program for all the schools of the state.
- b. A set of minimum requirements equal to that in other teaching fields should be set up for teachers of health and physical education.
- c. Provision should be made to give every school child a thorough physical examination at least once a year.
- d. A complete record of the physical examination with recommendations should be sent home to the parent.
- e. The record of the physical examination and corrections made, should be a part of the cumulative health record kept on file in the principals' office.

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