

A STUDY OF THE STATUS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN KANSAS WITH NINE HUNDRED  
OR MORE STUDENTS ENROLLED

by 1264

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## INTRODUCTION

### Definition of Physical Education

Physical education has been defined as the change in the behavior of the human organism resulting from participation in big-muscle play and related activities.

### History of Physical Education

The beginning of physical activities for elementary school age children dates back to the ancient societies of Persia and the Greek city-state of Sparta. They recognized the military value of play when they placed youth in the army at an early age and taught them play activities as a preparation for the more serious activities of war.

### Aim of Physical Education

The aim of physical education in the elementary school should be to provide a progressive program of physical activities that will develop the child not only physically, but mentally, socially and emotionally as well.

Physical education in the elementary school should include a balanced program of activities to meet the needs, interests and abilities of each child.

### Objectives of Physical Education

The overall general objectives of elementary physical education is to develop fundamental skills related to body movement, to attain a satisfying degree of physical fitness, and to develop wholesome attitudes, appreciations and knowledge of physical activities that are a part of the child's experience.

## DEFINITIONS

1. School District - A unit of elementary education under the administration of a superintendent.
2. Physical Education - Physical education as used in this report refers only to elementary physical education.
3. Qualified Elementary Physical Education Teacher - A physical education instructor in the elementary school who has a degree in that subject.
4. Home Room Teacher - The classroom teacher who supervises the students during the exercise or physical education period.
5. Play Equipment - Balls, mats, ropes and other generally expendable supplies used for proper physical education instruction.
6. Outdoor Play Area - Outdoor play areas as used in this report indicates all outdoor playing fields, track facilities, apparatus areas and hard-surfaced courts.
7. Self-testing Activities - Activities which the student can perform on his own are self-testing activities.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report was to determine the number of school districts over 900 in enrollment with an elementary physical education program, the number and quality of the staff, facts concerning the program itself, the curriculum, facilities and equipment and the educational importance of the elementary physical education program.

It was hoped that the information in this report would be of value to school superintendents and elementary principals wanting to establish elementary physical education programs. It was also hoped that some of the present elementary physical education programs may be improved after studying the results of this survey. This report may help them in comparing their particular situation to the overall picture of elementary physical education as it exists in schools of their size.

## PROCEEDURE

After researching the subject and through consultations with Mr. R.A. Wauthier, a simple, short answer questionnaire was constructed to collect information pertaining to the overall elementary physical education staff, program and facilities and equipment.

The questionnaire consisted of a three page form and included yes and no questions and several fill-in-the-blank questions. It was felt that this type of questionnaire would take less time to answer and would result in more returns for a more accurate and complete study. A copy of the questionnaire was included in the appendix of this study.

The name of the superintendent in each elementary school district over 900 enrollment was found in the Kansas Educational Directory.

A questionnaire along with a stamped self-addressed envelope was mailed to each of the superintendents. It was requested in the cover letter that the superintendent complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

After twenty days fifty-eight schools returned the initial questionnaire. No follow-up letters were sent.

The answers to each question were recorded and the data tabulated and used in this study. The results of the questionnaire polling were:

Number mailed . . . . .	63
Number returned . . . . .	58
Per cent returned . . . . .	92

Tables were set up for each question or idea on the questionnaire. An explanation of each of these was included in the results and discussion. Most of the schools answered the questionnaire completely or answered the questions which they felt applied to their school situation. Several of the schools had more than one response to some of the questions, therefore, on some questions the total per cent was more than one hundred.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Number of Elementary Schools

The number of elementary schools and the total enrollment of each was obtained from the Kansas Educational Directory.

The number of elementary schools surveyed totaled 583. These 583 schools were from the fifty-eight school districts which responded to the questionnaire. As shown in Table I, five of these school districts had fifteen or more elementary schools and totaled 210 in all.

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Groupings by number of schools	Number of districts	Total elementary schools
0 - 5	18	67
6 - 10	24	183
11 - 15	11	104
16 or more	5	210
Total	58	583

The least number of schools, three, was recorded in four school districts. Most school districts had between six and ten elementary schools. This occurred in twenty-four school districts and totaled 183 elementary schools.

TABLE II  
TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Groupings by size of school district	Number of districts	Total students enrolled
Above 4,000	5	72,930
3,999 - 3,000	5	17,466
2,999 - 2,000	9	22,677
1,999 - 1,000	32	43,782
999 - 900	7	6,616
Total	58	163,561

The enrollment of the elementary school districts surveyed varied from as high as 33,132 students to the lowest number possible in the survey, 902. There were five elementary school districts with an enrollment of 5,000 or more students. Wichita Public Schools had the largest number of students in this group with 33,132. This number represents twenty per cent of the total students enrolled. The other two large school districts in this group were Kansas City, Kansas with 17,263 and Topeka Public Schools with 12,243 students enrolled. Together these three school districts made up thirty-seven per cent of the total, while the five schools together in the group made up 72,939 or forty-five per cent of the total population in all the elementary schools surveyed.

There were also five school districts with from 3,000 to 4,000 enrollment. This represented 17,466 students and ten per cent of the total.

Nine school districts in the 2,000 to 3,000 group had 22,667 students or fifteen per cent of the total.

The next group of from 1,000 to 2,000 enrollment had the largest number of school districts, thirty-two and 43,782 enrolled students or twenty-six per cent of the total.

The last group of from 900 to 1,000 enrollment had nine school districts and 6,616 population. This number was only four per cent of the total enrolled students in the survey.

The total enrollment of the fifty-eight school districts surveyed was 163,561 students, and sixty per cent of the total enrollment of all the school districts in Kansas. The five school districts which did not respond to the survey did not have their enrollment included in the total.



STAFF

Authorities in the field have noted that qualified leadership must have been provided by the physical education teacher for the elementary student to have achieved desirable results in their growth and development through participation in physical activities.

In this section questions included were concerned with certain aspects of the elementary physical education leadership as they currently exist in each school district. Questions were concerned with the number and qualifications of the elementary school physical education staff members.

Question 1. How many physical education instructors are employed in your school district at the elementary level?

TABLE III  
NUMBER OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS

Number of instructors	Number of school districts	Per cent
121	1	2
15	1	2
13	1	2
12	1	2
7	2	3
5	2	3
3	6	10
2	5	8
1	15	26

As shown in Table Three, the average number of instructors employed was one, which occurred in twenty-six per cent of the school districts surveyed. The most instructors, 121, were employed in one large school district and equalled only two per cent of the total school districts. Thirty-four school districts or fifty-eight per cent had at least one elementary physical education instructor employed. This indicates that the remaining twenty-four school districts or forty-two per cent did not have a physical education instructor employed.

Question 2. Do you have an elementary physical education instructor in each elementary school?

TABLE IV  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR PRESENT

Instructor present	Number of schools	Per cent
Yes	7	12
No	48	83
Part time	3	5

Eighty-three per cent of the school districts surveyed indicated that they did not have an elementary physical education teacher in each elementary school. Seven school districts or twelve per cent did have an elementary physical education instructor in each elementary school. All seven of the teachers had a degree in physical education. Three school districts com-

mented that although they did not have a physical education teacher in each school, they did have a part time physical education consultant. These three consultants also had a degree in physical education.

Two school districts noted that they would have an elementary physical education instructor in each elementary school by the school year 1969-70.

Question 3. How many of the elementary physical education teachers have a degree in physical education?

TABLE V  
DEGREE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION PRESENT

Teacher had degree	Number of teachers	Per cent
Yes	191	83
No	41	17

Eighty-three per cent of the physical education teachers surveyed had a degree in physical education. This represented 191 elementary physical education teachers. The 191 elementary physical education teachers represented thirty elementary school districts with physical education. These thirty had at least one qualified teacher with a degree in physical education in each district.

#### PROGRAM

According to authorities, growing up has been defined as the most important task of the elementary school child, and providing experiences for

growth and development was considered the most important tasks of the elementary school program.

In this section questions asked were concerned with activities included in the curriculum, the presence of an elementary physical education curriculum, the number and length of periods and the type of exercise periods.

Question 4. What type of physical education or exercise period do you have in most of your elementary schools?

TABLE VI  
TYPE OF EXERCISE PERIOD PRESENT

Exercise period	Number of schools	Per cent
None	3	5
Noon time	18	31
Recess period	40	69
Required	20	43

Three schools or five per cent indicated that they did not have an exercise period of any kind during the school day.

Eighteen school districts or thirty-one per cent of those surveyed had noon time exercise. Seven of these also had elementary physical education taught by a qualified physical education instructor. Five school districts mentioned that they had replaced the hour-long lunch period with a twenty to thirty minute "closed lunch period."

Forty school districts or sixty-nine per cent surveyed had recess

periods under the supervision of the home room teacher. Twenty of these school districts or 34.5 per cent also had required physical education under a qualified physical education instructor with a degree in physical education. The other twenty school districts or 34.5 per cent did not have required physical education as indicated.

Twenty-five school districts or forty-three per cent had required physical education taught by a qualified instructor with a degree in physical education. This revealed that thirty-three school districts did not have required elementary physical education as indicated.

Three school districts noted that although they did not have required physical education as indicated, they did have a consultant who worked with the classroom teacher in providing them with new material and ideas to use when supervising the required recess period.

Question 5. If you do not have required elementary physical education taught by a qualified instructor with a degree in physical education in your school system, do you anticipate including it in the near future?

TABLE VII

## ANTICIPATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN FUTURE

Anticipate program	Number of schools	Per cent
Yes	15	64
No	4	16
No response	5	20

Out of a possible twenty-four answers, fifteen or sixty-two per cent of the school districts replied that a program for physical education was anticipated in the near future. Four school districts had no plans for including elementary physical education in the near future, while five surveyed left the question blank.

Of the fifteen school districts which anticipated elementary physical education in the near future, nine or sixty per cent were planning to organize a program within the next three years. Of these nine school districts, four expect to include elementary physical education as early as the school year 1969-70.

Four of the remaining six school districts which replied to this question stated that an elementary physical education program would be included when the funds became available.

Question 6. Does your school district have an overall elementary physical education curriculum in operation?

TABLE VIII

OVERALL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN OPERATION

Curriculum in operation	Number of schools	Per cent
Yes	29	50
No	29	50

Twenty-nine school districts or fifty per cent indicated that an overall curriculum was presently in operation, while twenty-nine school districts

or fifty per cent did not.

Of the twenty-nine school districts which had an overall physical education curriculum in operation, four noted that the classroom teacher had a complete guide for elementary physical education which was followed.

Twenty of the school districts that had no adequate physical education curriculum also had no qualified physical education instructor. Only nine of the twenty-nine school districts had a qualified physical education instructor.

Question 7. How many periods a week do the elementary schools have physical education?

TABLE IX  
PERIODS PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSDS MET

Periods per week	Number of schools	Per cent
5	3	9
4	0	0
Alternate (3 one week, 2 next)	12	35
3	4	12
2	7	20
1	3	9
Varied	5	15

In thirty-four school districts having elementary physical education, twelve districts or thirty-five per cent of the schools had physical education.

ion classes meet three times a week. Seven school districts had their classes in the schools meet two times per week for twenty per cent of the total.

Elementary physical education classes in three school districts met once per week and another three districts met five times per week.

In four school districts, physical education classes met during alternate periods consisting of three sessions one week and two the next week. Five school districts indicated that the physical education periods varied from school to school.

Question 8. What is the length of the physical education class periods in minutes in the elementary schools?

TABLE X

## LENGTH OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS PERIOD

Length of period	Number of school districts	Per cent
15	0	0
20	2	6
25	2	6
30	15	44
35	0	0
40	2	6
45 or more	1	3
Varied	12	35

Forty-four per cent of the school districts with physical education



reported that physical education class periods were thirty minutes in length. The shortest time allotted for the classes were twenty minute periods in two school districts.

The longest class period was forty-five minutes in one school only. In twelve school districts representing thirty-five per cent of the school districts with physical education, the length of the class period varied. In several instances, the school districts commented that the intermediate grades (four, five, and six) met for a longer length of time, while those meeting for shorter periods were the primary grades (one, two, and three).

Question 9. Which of the following activities are taught in the elementary physical education curriculum?

TABLE XI  
ACTIVITIES TAUGHT IN THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Activities taught	Number of school districts	Per cent
Team games and sports	34	100
Basic fundamental movements	34	100
Rhythmical activities	30	88
Self-testing activities	29	85
Relays and chasing games	29	85

The general groups of activities offered by one hundred per cent of the school districts were team games and sports as well as basic fundamental movements. Team games and sports included such activities as soccer, boundary

bound ball, dodge ball, and softball. Basic fundamental movements include the activities of running, jumping, throwing and skipping.

The next most popular activities were rhythmical activities which was typical in eighty-eight per cent or thirty school districts. Rhythmical activities may include the activities of "Pop Goes the Weasel", "Mulberry Bush", and "Virginia Reel." Several school districts indicated that although rhythmical activities was not specifically included in the elementary physical education curriculum, it was included as part of the curriculum in music education.

Both self-testing activities and relays and chasing games were included by eighty-five per cent or twenty-nine school districts. Relays may be of any type and include activities such as the kangaroo relay and the shuttle relay. Activities included under chasing games are pom-pom-pullaway and club snatch.

#### FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Experience shows that an adequate amount of both indoor and outdoor equipment and facilities are needed for an effective physical education program. When equipment and facilities are limited, the physical education program is also limited.

Questions asked in this section concerned important play equipment and the presence of indoor and outdoor play areas.

Question 10. What two pieces of playground equipment in your schools do you feel are the most important in the elementary physical education program?

TABLE XII  
IMPORTANT PLAY EQUIPMENT

Play equipment	Number of schools	Per cent
Gym mats	24	70
Climbing equipment	12	35
Various size balls	8	23
Jump ropes	8	23
Chinning bar	7	20
Scooters	6	17
Balance beam	5	14
Bats	2	6
Parallel bars	2	6
Side horse	2	6
Tinnickling sticks	1	2
Lumni sticks	1	2
No response	5	14

As shown by Table XII, the piece of equipment listed by the most school districts as the most important in the elementary physical education program was gym mats. Mats were listed by twenty-four out of the thirty-four school districts that had elementary physical education.

The next most popular piece of equipment was climbing equipment such as swedish gyms and climbing ropes. These were listed by thirty-five or twelve

per cent of the school districts. Various size balls, jump ropes, chinning bars, balance beams and scooters were also very popular. These pieces of equipment were listed by at least fourteen per cent of the school districts surveyed.

Question 11. Does your school district have a gym available for elementary physical education in each of the schools?

TABLE XIII  
GYM AVAILABLE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Gym available	Number of school districts	Per cent
Yes	12	35
No	17	50
No response	5	15

Twelve school districts or thirty-five per cent indicated that a gymnasium was available for elementary physical education in each of the schools in the district. Fifty per cent or seventeen of the school districts with elementary physical education stated that no gymnasium was available for each of the schools in the district. Of these seventeen school districts, five indicated that although no gymnasium was available for use, an indoor multi-purpose room was being used for physical education.

Question 12. What is the average number of outdoor play areas available for elementary physical education in your school district?

TABLE XIV  
OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS FOR ELEMENTARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Number of play areas	Number of school districts	Per cent
0	0	0
1	8	23.5
2	13	38
3	8	23.5
4	2	6
5	0	0
Unlimited	1	3
No response	2	6

All the school districts had at least one outdoor play area which was considered adequate enough for physical activities. Thirty-eight per cent of the school districts reported two outdoor play areas available for use in physical education. Both one and three areas were available for physical education in the elementary schools of twenty-three and one-half per cent of the school districts surveyed.

#### EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

All phases of the school program have as their educational objectives, the development of the physical, mental, social and emotional growth of their students. Voltmer and Esslinger states that physical education contributes more to all of these objectives than any other area of education.

The question asked in this area reveals the feelings of the superintendents towards the importance of physical education in the educational program.

Question 13. Do you feel that physical education is as important as the other subject matter in the present elementary school program?

TABLE XIV  
IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education	Number of school districts	Per cent
Yes	41	71
No	12	21
No response	5	8

Seventy-one per cent of the school districts surveyed indicated that physical education was as important as the other subject matter in the present curriculum of the elementary school program. Twenty-one per cent did not think physical education was as important as the other subject matter.

#### SUMMARY

This survey was sent to the sixty-three school districts in Kansas that had a total elementary student enrollment of nine hundred or more. The information in this study consisted of responses from the fifty-eight schools that returned the questionnaire. A total of 583 schools were used to comprise

the contents of this report. Five of these school districts had fifteen or more elementary schools, and composed nearly two-fifths of the schools included in the inquiry.

The elementary school districts surveyed included enrollments that varied in number from 902 to 33,132. The largest of these schools represented twenty per cent of the total enrollment reviewed in the study. The total enrollment of the school districts of this survey was 163,561 students. The enrollment of the five school districts which did not return the questionnaire was not included in the total students here stated.

The survey shows that forty-three per cent of the school districts did not have a physical education instructor employed. One school district had 121 instructors. This large number represents, however, only two per cent of the total school districts involved in this report. Fifty-eight per cent of the school districts involved in this study had at least one physical education instructor.

Eighty-three per cent of the districts surveyed, indicated that they did not have an elementary physical education teacher in each of the schools in their system. Twelve per cent said that they did have an elementary physical education instructor in each elementary school. All of these schools had teachers qualified with a degree in physical education. Three schools commented that they had a part-time physical education consultant (each of whom had a degree in physical education). Two districts anticipate the addition of an elementary physical education instructor in each elementary school by the year 1969-70.

Eighty-three per cent of the physical education teachers surveyed had a degree in physical education. These 191 teachers represented thirty elementary school districts with physical education programs.

Five per cent of the districts did not have an exercise period of any kind during the school day. Thirty-one per cent of the districts surveyed had noon time exercise. Fifty-nine per cent had recess periods under the supervision of the home room teacher. Thirty-four per cent also had required physical education under a physical education instructor with the required degree. Thirty-four and one-half per cent of the districts did not have required physical education being taught.

Sixty-two per cent of the districts that did not have physical education anticipate a physical education program in the system in the near future. Out of these districts which anticipate a program fairly soon, sixty per cent are planning to organize a program within the next three years. Lack of funds was the reason given for inability to specify a definite date when a physical education program would be organized in the system.

Twenty-nine school districts or fifty per cent indicated that they had an overall curriculum while the other fifty per cent did not. Less than one-third of the schools that did not have an elementary physical education program had a qualified physical education teacher.

Thirty-five per cent of the school districts had physical education scheduled three times per week. Twenty per cent of the districts had two classes scheduled per week.

Forty-five per cent of the school districts with physical education reported that they had class periods consisting of thirty minutes. School districts that had class periods of varied lengths commented that the difference was incorporated to facilitate the needs of the various age levels; the longest periods being allotted for intermediate and shorter periods for primary grades.

One hundred per cent of the school districts included team games and



sports as well as basic fundamental movements. Eighty-eight per cent of the districts used rhythmical activities. Eighty-five per cent of the school districts included self-testing activities and relays and chasing games.

Twenty-four of the thirty-four districts which had elementary physical education listed tumbling mats as the most important piece of physical education equipment. The second most popular equipment selection was climbing equipment.

Fifty per cent of the districts with elementary physical education stated that gyms were not available for each of the schools in the district. All the school districts indicated that the schools in their district had at least one outdoor play area.

Seventy-one per cent of the school districts surveyed indicated that physical education was as important as the other subject matter in their curriculums.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The fact that a number of schools are following a trend and eliminating the exercise period at noon, presents a more pressing need for the formation of elementary physical education programs in all schools.

There are presently a large number of elementary school districts that do not have required physical education programs. A large percentage of the school districts included in this survey, however, have plans for expansion of their curriculum to include a required physical education program.

A need for more elementary physical education teachers on the staff in each district seemed apparent because of the few school districts that had at least one in each elementary school. The intensions for program expansion in this area of the curriculum all over the state, would infer

a need for a greater number of graduates in this area.

Several factors influence the program of activities. Teachers, administrators and principals must take into consideration time allotment, number of students, play space, facilities, size of classes, as well as equipment and supplies available. The activities that are presently being taught in districts with an elementary physical education program seemed to meet general requirements for a balanced elementary physical education program in most instances. A variety of activities also were included in most programs.

The average length of the periods was thirty minutes, three times a week.

The survey indicated a lack of available equipment and facilities for the present number of students. More equipment, facilities and play areas are needed. Equipment could be utilized by large numbers of students at one time should be allowed for in the budget to improve the overall program. Elementary school districts that are contemplating future expansion or incorporation of such a program, should expect to make plans for an adequate gymnasium as well as more apparatus areas with hard-coated surfacing.

Playground equipment which aids the individual in development of coordination, flexibility, balance, agility and strength (especially of the upper body) were listed as the most essential types. Most of the districts did not have adequate facilities of this kind.

Most of the districts surveyed did not have access to a gym for elementary physical education in each school.

The outside play areas seemed to be adequate within the realms of the present program. However, the apparatus areas and hard-surfaced courts are inadequate for present physical education instruction in most schools.

Perhaps the additional apparatus, hard-surfaced areas, and available