

Rationale for the Study of Physical Education

John Kennedy believed “that the relationship between the soundness of the body and the activities of the mind is subtle and complex. We know what the Greeks knew,” he said, “that intelligence and skill can only function at the peak of their capacity when the body is healthy and strong; that hardy spirits and tough minds usually inhabit sound bodies.”

Physical education programs at all levels help students develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors to initiate and maintain a physically active lifestyle that will continue into and through adulthood. Students are encouraged to use physical activity as a means to develop personal initiative, responsibility, and a sense of caring about others and community.

A positive, supportive environment is important to the success of the physical education program. Such an environment accommodates a variety of individual differences such as cultural identity, previous movement experiences, fitness and skill levels, and intellectual, physical, and socio-emotional maturity. This inclusive learning environment allows students to experience positive, challenging, and enjoyable physical activity while learning the benefits and importance of such activity.

Excessive emphasis on competition conflicts with physical education goals. However, competition can be an element in the student’s intrinsic motivation to do his/her best. What matters is that competition equates with making the most of one’s physical potential and capabilities in a positive, meaningful way. Activities in physical education programs may emphasize self-improvement, participation, and cooperation rather than winning and losing.

Appropriate instruction in physical education incorporates best practices derived from both research and experiences in teaching students. This physical education curriculum sets forth developmentally and instructionally appropriate practices in designing, implementing, and evaluating physical education programs. These programs require commitment of staff, leadership, and resources.

Therefore, the Office of Catholic Schools committed to create a tool to assist teachers, students, and parents as each contributes to the important work of learning in physical education.

Through a contractual agreement with Barbara O’Block, an assistant professor at Calumet College of Saint Joseph, and the assistance of elementary and high school teachers who served as responders, the Office of Catholic Schools believes that such a tool has been created.

This tool – The Physical Education Curriculum – has been researched and designed to provide consistency, coherence, and rigor in the content and process of the teaching of physical education throughout the schools of the Archdiocese.