



# **AGAINST** *the* **ODDS**

A Resource Guide  
to Improve  
Physical Education  
in New York City  
Elementary Schools

*a publication of*

**NEW VISIONS**  
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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This guide is a product of the Sports, Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) project of New Visions for Public Schools. SHAPE is designed to assist in revitalizing fitness and sports programs in New York City's public schools.

This guide was developed in response to a study conducted by Educational Frameworks, Inc. that found that most New York City schoolchildren were not receiving the physical education they were entitled to under state law. Among the many problems documented in the report, *Hit or Miss*, were grossly deficient facilities, serious equipment shortages, high student-teacher ratios, and the lack of requirements for specialized training among most physical education teachers—particularly acute in elementary schools. New Visions for Public Schools convened a group of physical education professionals to discuss how teachers could overcome these obstacles and improve the physical education offerings in elementary schools within the existing constraints.

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NEW VISIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS is pleased to provide you with this resource guide for elementary physical education. Although physical education is an important component of the elementary school curriculum, implementing a quality program in New York City can be difficult given the current budget climate and the space and resource limitations many of our schools confront. This guide offers physical educators practical strategies, which do not depend upon new funds, for overcoming some of the obstacles they face in implementing quality physical education programs.

All students need opportunities to engage in regular physical activity. Research shows that regular physical activity has positive effects on the physical and mental health of children that can last a lifetime. Regular physical activity reduces the risks of premature death and chronic disease, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. It also helps children develop healthy bones, muscles and joints, diminishes feelings of anxiety and depression, and can combat the epidemic of obesity among children.

- Roughly two-fifths of NYC elementary schools do not provide regular physical education classes to all their students.
- Most schools offer physical education only once per week, in violation of state standards.
- The student teacher ratio is 730:1.
- The vast majority of physical education teachers are not licensed and are inadequately trained.
- Many schools do not have adequate facilities. A large number use areas other than a gym.
- Roughly half the schools have a serious equipment shortage.

—Educational Frameworks Inc.  
*Hit or Miss, 2000.*

Schools can improve children's health by offering students physical education programs that promote enjoyable physical activities and help them lead healthier and more active lives. Well-designed physical education programs teach students important social skills such as cooperation, teamwork and leadership, and encourage respect for differences in ability. They can also increase student motivation and engender a positive attitude towards school. Through interdisciplinary projects, physical education can build upon and reinforce other subject areas, such as reading, math, and science.

Despite the strong rationale for comprehensive physical education programs, these programs in New York City schools have, over the last two decades, become a casualty of fiscal constraints and increased pressures to meet academic standards. Physical education programs are routinely undermined when gymnasiums are converted into classrooms, outdoor space becomes parking lots, and teachers lack funding to purchase equipment or participate in real professional development. And, most importantly, students are shortchanged when their opportunities to excel are limited to the classroom, and their health is no longer a priority.

This guide provides a general outline of an elementary physical education program that addresses the real world challenges physical educators confront in urban schools. Elementary physical education should teach students the basic motor skills and concepts they need to become proficient in a range of healthy activities, and inspire them to develop a life long love of exercise. These are realistic, achievable goals that do not require large gyms, playing fields or enormous budgets.

We hope that you will share this guide with your staff so they can use it and the resources it identifies to improve your school's program. This guide includes an overview of relevant standards and curriculum development, as well as practical solutions to some of the real challenges confronting urban schools. It also includes a self-assessment tool for evaluating your current program and a list of helpful resources to strengthen your program. The most important ingredient you need to build a high quality physical education program is a commitment to improving the well-being of your students. We hope this guide helps you get started on your way.

## RETHINKING PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN NEW YORK CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Outside New York City and other urban areas, it is often easier to run a physical education program. Schools typically have large gymnasiums, outdoor playing fields, and plenty of storage space for equipment. Many districts require teachers to be specially licensed. In contrast, many New York City elementary schools do not have adequate gyms, playing fields or licensed physical education teachers, especially in the elementary schools. Despite these limitations, most parents, students, and even teachers and administrators want the same physical education program that the richly resourced schools can provide. But, more often than not, that is not possible.

What, then, is physical education in New York City? Setting aside traditional notions about learning to play and master sports on big green fields, physical education becomes the opportunity to teach children the basic movement skills and concepts they need to become proficient in a range of healthy activities.

Leading experts in the field agree that the ideal elementary physical education curriculum has three goals:

1. Teaching children the basic movement skills and concepts necessary for them to become proficient in a range of healthy activities;
2. Providing children with experiences that help them understand the importance of a physically active lifestyle, and
3. Ensuring that children participate in regular physical activity.

You can meet all of these goals within the walls of urban schools. For example, in a gym that doesn't have a basketball hoop, students can still learn basketball skills. Younger students (those in grades K through 2) can focus on skill building—running and dribbling. Older students (those in grades 3 through 6), can practice more sophisticated activities like passing and shooting – try having students shoot a basketball at a painted target on the wall. In addition, you can also explore a range of nontraditional activities, such as floor hockey, badminton, yoga, tai chi, aerobics, and dance. All of these activities are readily adapted to small spaces and easily taught with limited equipment.

### NEW YORK STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR ELEMENTARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

You might be surprised to discover that New York State regulations require daily physical education in grades kindergarten to three, and at least three periods a week in grades four to six. Few New York City public schools meet these standards. Most offer daily recess, but recess cannot replace instructional physical education. Physical education is planned and organized instruction with explicit physical, emotional, and social goals. In contrast, recess is unstructured free play providing those children who take advantage of it opportunities to be physically active with their peers.

In 1996, the NYS Department of Education established standards for all subject areas, including physical education, describing what a student should know and be able to do. The elementary physical education standards emphasize instruction and movement skills and performance indicators describe the evidence of new competencies. Since their introduction, these standards have helped schools implement

The goal of an elementary school physical education program is to help children develop the skills and interest that will put them on a lifelong path to fitness and health.

#### Standard 1: Personal Health and Fitness

- Students will have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness, participate in physical activity, and maintain personal health.

#### Standard 2: A Safe and Healthy Environment

- Students will acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment.

#### Standard 3: Resource Management

- Students will understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.

—New York State Learning Standards  
for Health, Physical Education, and  
Family and Consumer Sciences.  
May 1996.

developmentally appropriate and sequential curricula that focus on teaching skills.

Another extremely useful resource for teachers is the national standards for physical education developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). NASPE has developed grade-by-grade standards, which are consistent with New York State standards, assessment guidelines and sample benchmarks. You can find these guidelines in *Moving Into the Future—National Standards for Physical Education: A Guide to Content and Assessment*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

A developmentally appropriate program teaches children basic movement skills and concepts, while also accommodating individual children’s differing abilities and skill levels. Students develop the foundation necessary for learning more complex games and activities in later grades.

*Example of a movement activity for 2nd and 3rd grade students*

Build an obstacle course. Use cones, low boxes, tires, or other objects to create a simple challenge. Have students travel through the course at a walk, run, hop, and skip. Add music and see if they can follow the beat. Watch for the mature form of each skill. Complicate the activity by adding opportunities to balance, transfer weight, or travel at different speeds.

## BUILDING AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Teaching physical education is like teaching math. Before your students can learn to multiply, they must learn to add. Likewise, before your students can play soccer, they need to learn to run, balance, kick, dribble with their feet, and catch. The elementary curriculum is organized around three core areas: teaching movement skills and concepts; getting kids physically active; and teaching them to understand the importance of lifetime physical activity. When students are proficient in these three areas, they are ready to successfully combine them to learn a variety of sports and games.

### MOVEMENT SKILLS AND CONCEPTS

In the early grades, particularly grades K through 2, it is important to teach children how to properly perform a variety of seemingly simple skills. While adults often believe that these movements develop naturally, they do not. Children need to be taught how to move properly and fluidly.

These basic skills are the ingredients for all sports and games. By 3rd grade, as students have become proficient with the individual skills, they can be combined to form the more complex patterns necessary to dance, play sports, or do gymnastics. The following chart lays out the basic skill elements along with the grade in which they are the major focus of teaching.

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### MOVEMENT SKILLS

<u>LOCOMOTOR</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>NON-MANIPULATIVE</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>MANIPULATIVE</u>	<u>GRADE</u>
Walking	K,1	Balancing	K,1,2,3,4	Throwing	2,3,4,5
Running	K,1	Transferring weight	2,3,4,5	Catching	2,3,4,5
Jogging	K,1	Spinning	K,1,2	Kicking	2,3,4,5
Galloping	K,1,2	Turning	K,1,2	Striking	2,3,4,5
Hopping	K,1,2	Rolling	K1,2,3,4	Dribbling	2,3,4,5
Skipping	K,1,2	Rising/Sinking	K,1,2	Volleying	3,4,5
Leaping	K,1,2,3	Bending	K,1,2	Punting	4,5
Sliding	K,1,2,3	Stretching	K,1,2		
Jumping/landing	K,1,2,3,4,5				
Chasing/fleeing/dodging/faking	1,2,3,4,5				

The material in this chart is adapted from G. Graham, S. Holt/Hale, and M. Parker. *Children Moving 4th Ed.* Mountain View CA: Mayfield, 1998, p. 100.

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These skills are complemented by movement concepts. Concepts modify the skills—like an adverb modifies a verb. For example, you can ask a child to jump. That is a skill. When you add the direction “jump far,” you have qualified the skill and added a movement concept. You are describing how you want the skill performed. The following chart describes four categories of movement concepts and the grade where they should be taught.

## MOVEMENT CONCEPTS

<u>SPACE AWARENESS</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>BODY AWARENESS</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>EFFORT</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIPS</u>	<u>GRADE</u>
Self-space	K,1	Body parts	K	Speed:	K,1,2,3,4	With objects:	K,1,2,3
General space	K,1,2	Shapes: curved/	K,1,2	fast/ slow		over/under,	
Directions:	K,1,2	twisted/narrow/wide		Force:	2,3,4,5	on/off, near/far,	
forward/backward/		symmetrical/		strong/light		in front of/	
sideways/up/down		asymmetrical		Flow:	2,3,4,5	behind/beside,	
Levels:	K,1,2			bound		above/below,	
low/middle/high				(controlled,		around, across,	
Pathways:	K,1,2			jerky), free		through	
curved/straight/zigzag				(smooth,		With people:	2,3,4,5
Extensions: near/far/	2,3			continuous)		leading/following mir-	
large/small						roring, matching, solo,	
						groups, unison, meet-	
						ing/parting	

The material in this chart is adapted from G. Graham, S. Holt/Hale, and M. Parker. *Children Moving 4th Ed.* Mountain View CA: Mayfield, 1998, p. 100.

In the early years, grades K through 2, much of the focus is on movement concepts. In grades 3-6, the emphasis shifts to skills. Of course, younger children are learning skills as well, but the primary focus is on mastery of concepts. For example, while a 1st grader might be playing a game of tag, the focus of the lesson could be on pathways (curved, zigzagged or straight). In contrast, a 4th grader working on basketball skills will already understand pathways and can instead focus on dribbling, throwing, catching, and balancing. Focusing on skills and concepts does not preclude playing games. Countless fun activities emphasize skills and concepts. As your students become more proficient at performing individual skills, they can learn to play a variety of games that require them to combine different skills. For example, a child who knows how to throw and catch can refine those skills and build new ones by playing football, basketball, softball, or frisbee.

## HEALTH RELATED PHYSICAL FITNESS

Health related fitness—physical activity that leads to fitness and instruction that encourages an interest in lifetime physical activity—is also an important element of elementary physical education. Specifically, health related fitness includes cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition.

Young children should have fun in physical education class. Focusing exclusively on calisthenics can become boring or even cause muscle strain. Instead try lively active play. Students bore easily so try alternating the activities to make them more interesting while, at the same time, affording students opportunities to practice and master skills. Younger students should do an activity only to the point of increased heart

### *Example of a fitness activity for 6th graders*

Teach students how to measure their heart rates. Ask them to determine their heart rate at the start of class. Then teach a vigorous class. Do step aerobics (you can use a stairwell or boxes filled with newspaper) or play jump rope games. Before they cool down, have the students take their heart rates and compare to their pre-activity levels. Discuss the importance of cardio health. As homework, ask them to create a log showing their heart rate before and after performing three different activities at home (i.e. sedentary activities like doing homework, moderate activities like doing dishes or cleaning and vigorous activities like dancing or playing sports).

rate or heavy breathing. As students move into 4th grade, you can expect more vigorous sustained physical activity and an increase in students' understanding of its importance.

Easily combined with the teaching of movement skills and concepts, students can practice movement skills through activities that require vigorous movement. During your demonstration, and at the end of class, you can point out important health-related aspects. For example, jumping rope promotes cardiorespiratory fitness while honing jumping skills. To increase the challenge for older youth, you can ask them to jump for a longer time or try more complicated jumps (faster, trickier, or in groups)—all reinforcing basic movement concepts. Aerobics and dance can also be used to combine movement skills and fitness.

## TIPS FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING

As with every subject area, planning a physical education curriculum begins with a description of goals and objectives and the creation of related benchmarks. New York State or the NASPE standards should provide a useful starting point for identifying goals, objectives, and benchmarks. After you review the relevant standards, you will need to ask yourself, "What do I want my students to learn or be able to do?" You can then establish benchmarks to know when students are ready to progress and to guide you as you assess progress throughout the year.

How you develop your curriculum and lesson plans will be shaped or influenced by the particulars of your own school environment—the school's facilities, class size and frequency of physical education instruction, and the available equipment and budget. Once you have a clear picture of these resources, you can move on to planning the scope and sequence of your curriculum—what you will include over the course of a day, week, month, year and in what order you will teach it. The movement skills and concept charts in the previous section will be helpful in deciding which skills and concepts are appropriate for each grade.

If you are building a skills-based curriculum, you might start by reviewing the activities and lessons you commonly teach. Think about how you can modify them to highlight the particular motor skill you are introducing. Eliminate games and activities that do not teach and build skills or encourage active participation. For example, games like Duck, Duck, Goose force children to sit for long periods. Instead, modify games by changing the rules, equipment, skills involved, or number of players. For example, instead of a full soccer game, practice kicking on the ground by assigning partners and asking them to kick (with side of foot) and trap (stopping ball by placing foot on top) to each other. As they begin to succeed, increase the challenge by asking them to step backwards to increase their distance and practice their aim. Try volleyball with younger students by asking them to count how many times they can keep a beach ball in the air. Move on to a harder ball in the older grades as students' skills progress.

As you are planning, keep these tips in mind to help you create a supportive and effective learning environment:

- *Create a positive learning atmosphere.* You want your students—regardless of ability—to enjoy gym class. Focus on individual effort, not results. Offer students praise and support to promote their confidence and competence.
- *Maximize participation.* Make sure that all children, regardless of their ability level, have an opportunity to participate. Avoid games that require long waits or leave many students sitting or standing while only a few are running about. Children need physically active time. Ensure that girls and boys are equally encouraged and supported.
- *Maximize the time children are physically active.* Children should be moving most of the time. The CDC recommends that children should be active at least 50 percent of every class. Use games or

programs with activity, use multiple activities, divide children into smaller groups, use multiple equipment. If you have seven basketballs, use seven; use four volleyballs instead of one.

- *Minimize competition and promote cooperation.* Focus on the importance of teamwork. Don't overemphasize winning. Develop sensitive and creative strategies for dividing the group into teams. Encourage students to compliment and help one another and offer praise for teamwork, sharing, and compassion. Enforce rules against teasing, laughing at others, and exclusion. Introduce competitive games in the older grades. But, continue to offer children the chance to opt out and work on skill enhancing activities instead.
- *Always play it safe.* Know your space and design activities that can be performed safely. To avoid injury, follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum and teach activities geared toward the age and ability of your students. Always require students to wear sneakers. Never leave the gym unattended by an adult or take your eyes off the class.
- *Clearly demonstrate activities.* Never assume your students know how to do something you have not taught them or they did not learn in a previous year.
- *Set and enforce rules and regulations.* Discipline doesn't have to be a problem. Students who learn rules and regulations in the early grades will know how to behave and understand the consequences for failing to follow rules early on.
- *Link curriculum with other academic subjects,* incorporating literacy and linking the physical education program with the instructional goals of the school.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an important part of regular instruction. It should be a practical and meaningful source of feedback to both you and your students. When you plan your curriculum, you decide what you want your students to learn. You also set benchmarks to know whether they are making progress along the way. As you move through the school year, assessment tools help you know what your students are learning and how well.

Individual assessments are an opportunity to evaluate each student's progress in skill development, fitness and the cognitive elements of physical education. Once you understand the skills a student has mastered and those that need more practice, you can set new and more appropriate challenges. Students can also use this feedback to track their own progress. Remember, it is important to measure each student's progress against prior performance and not against other members of the class.

After evaluating students individually, you can look at them collectively to determine how well the whole class is progressing. You can also evaluate your own performance—are they all lagging with a particular skill because of the way you are teaching it, or is the skill inappropriate for the class's developmental level? Finally, if you can quantify your students' achievements, you can build support for your program. Parents, students and school administrators may consider adding resources to the program if they see evidence of improvements in student health, fitness, skill level, or some of the many cognitive benefits associated with physical education.

In physical education, students are constantly displaying their new skills making it easy to conduct genuine performance assessments. You can also use many of the same techniques used in the classroom to track progress and note student achievement. Portfolios containing homework, journals, drawings, and simple tests will let you know how students understand your lessons, and how they are feeling about the class. You can also develop rubrics to assess competence with different skills. For example, you might create three categories of proficiency—beginning (B), progress-

### *Sample skill assessment for 4th grade*

One of the skills 4th grade students are expected to master is overhand throwing and catching. Through teacher or peer observation, you can determine individual student progress. Divide the class into partner groups and have each throw and catch five turns. Observe for the following:

1. Student uses key elements of throwing (side to target, arm way back, step with opposite foot, follow through).
2. Student catches proficiently (makes eye contact with the ball, moves toward the ball, catches with hands-not body, bends arms and takes a backwards step or extends arms to absorb the force of the ball).

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**SAMPLE SECOND GRADE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

Julia S.	11/15	1/30	4/15	6/30
Skipping	B	P	P	M
Hopping	P	P	M	M
Galloping	B	P	P	M
Sliding	P	P	P	M

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ing (P), mastered (M). Try using a form for each student that lists the skills you intend to teach and leaves a space for marking progress over the course of the year. See the example (left).

In *Moving Into the Future—National Standards for Physical Education: A Guide to Content and Assessment*, NASPE lays out very helpful content standards, reflecting what a child should know, and performance standards describing the level of achievement needed to meet the standard. The NASPE standards have been refined down to the grade level to help teachers construct appropriate assessments. Also included are sample performance benchmarks and a variety of assessment techniques.

## HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Anyone who has worked in a public school knows the many obstacles to offering a high quality physical education program. Yet, teachers throughout the system have overcome many of these obstacles with creative and lasting solutions that have dramatically improved the programs in their schools. This section of the guide identifies the most commonly reported obstacles you might find and offers concrete suggestions for overcoming them in your school.

Before you try these ideas in your school, you will benefit from taking the time to accurately assess the current state of your programming. Attached to this booklet, as an appendix, is a self-assessment tool that was designed to help you identify areas where your school needs improvement. To complete the self-assessment tool, we recommend that you assemble a team of the “right people”: those members of the school community who can help make change. Together the team should review and complete the instrument. The form is brief and should take no longer than one hour to complete.

The self-assessment guide will point out areas where your program falls short. The next section of this booklet and the resource list that follows will help you develop an action plan for moving forward.

### I. SPACE UTILIZATION AND SAFETY

#### A. Inadequate Space

Many elementary schools do not have a proper gymnasium. Instead, they make flexible use of the cafeteria, roof, hallways, combined classrooms, and even the stairs. While none of these is ideal for instruction, each can be used creatively to provide children with opportunities to engage in physical activities.

When you conduct classes in a public space you will need to deal with several issues. 1) Children at play are noisy—how do you control sound? 2) Scheduling—how do you arrange to have the space on a regular basis (particularly with shared cafeterias)? 3) When do you rely on outdoor space, and where do you go in inclement weather? Your particular school environment will guide the solutions.

Some ideas to consider:

- Teach activities that do not depend on large open spaces. Explore aerobics, dance, tai chi, and yoga.
- Modify games and activities to fit in a small space. For example, with younger students, you can work on movement concepts by stringing a rope across an occasionally trafficked hallway and

practicing rising/sinking and bending with a game of limbo. Or use the string as a net and practice throwing and catching a beach ball over and under.

- Look for underutilized spaces around the building. Stairs can be used for aerobic training. A classroom works for yoga, tai chi, and some movement activities.
- Try borrowing an underutilized space from a neighborhood community center, house of worship, or larger school. (Make sure the space is near enough so you do not lose the whole period to travel time. Also be sure to get parental consent to take students out of the building.)

### B. Unsafe space

If your room is not designed as a gym or movement space—an all purpose room, or converted classrooms—safety considerations become paramount. Columns and other dangerous obstructions are common. Windows and ceilings are too low for ball games, or floors are inappropriate for running and jumping. Maybe the room presents too many dangers and should not be used. In that case consider finding other space.

Some ideas to consider:

- Make sure columns are well padded (this may incur greater cost).
- If your space has a concrete or slippery floor, rigorously enforce the sneaker rule. No sneakers—no play.
- Focus on activities that avoid the danger spots.

### C. Overcrowded space

If your school has a gym, you might be concerned about the number of students who are scheduled each period—some teachers report supervising up to 60 children a period.

Some ideas to consider:

- Explain the safety and discipline issues raised by overcrowding to your principal. Discuss the problems with instruction and supervision and try to have class size reduced.
- If you have two teachers, split the class in half, and use a classroom for activities that are suitable for small spaces.
- When children understand the concept of personal space, they can more efficiently play in a small space. You can avoid some collisions and injuries if you establish and enforce clear rules and safety routines starting in kindergarten. Make sure you reinforce them at the start of each new school year.

## 2. EQUIPMENT

Acquiring, replacing, and repairing equipment and supplies is a frequent problem for schools with tight budgets. Frequently there is little money to replace lost, damaged, or stolen equipment, let alone to add new materials. Teachers have to be very creative to keep the gym stocked. Storage is also a problem. Schools with limited space do not have adequate storage. Some have constructed storage space at the expense of play space.

### *Making Yoga Fun for 4th and 5th graders*

Explain to students that yoga poses imitate things found in nature: demonstrate the tree pose as an example. Ask students to work in pairs to come up with their own yoga pose, imitating an animal, bug, plant, planet, element, etc. Or come up with a list of things that the pairs can make into a pose, and see how different the results are when students share their poses.

### *Learning about personal space Activity for K-1st grade*

Mark each student's space with a hoop, carpet square, rope, or drawn box on the gym floor. Ask students to stand in the middle of their space and to imagine they are in a glass box. Ask them to try different ways of exploring the box—without getting out. Challenge them to reach the upper and lower limits of their box, to be as big as they can or as small as they can. Try, twisting, turning, and jumping. Play some music and ask students to create a dance—inside their box—using twists, turns, and jumps.

Some ideas to consider:

- Get together with some of the other physical education teachers in your district and purchase in bulk (often brings a substantial discount).
- Learn about free equipment. For example, the National Heart Association and AAHPERD run a program called Hoops for Heart that provides jump ropes. Contact neighborhood fitness centers, professional sports teams and manufacturers for donations of previously used equipment.
- Hold your own fundraisers. Get the PTA to help. Try contacting local businesses for support.
- Learn how to do more with less. For example, if you cannot afford targets for throwing practice, try some old tires. Beverage containers filled with sand work well in place of cones. Boxes filled with newspaper and sealed with tape are perfect for jumping on or over.
- Become more efficient at using what you have. Playground equipment can be used for fitness activities. Climbing system bars can be used to practice hanging and pull ups for developing upper body strength. Try using the equipment as an obstacle course practicing basic skills like jumping, bending, and twisting.
- Work with your building's custodian to develop new storage space.

### 3. FREQUENCY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Many schools are overcrowded and understaffed. As a result, few comply with the state mandate for frequent physical education. Most offer daily recess with one or two instructional periods per week. Once a week is certainly too little instructional time. Schools need to be creative to find more time for instructional physical education.

Some ideas to consider:

- In the lower grades, train classroom teachers to integrate movement into their day. Some movement concepts, such as body awareness, and some elements of space awareness can be covered in the classroom.
- Encourage students to join sports and fitness activities before and after school. For example, post a list of activities on a bulletin board and announce new opportunities as they arise. Build an organized recess program. While recess can never replace a structured program of physical education, try using the time to get kids moving. Plan activities, provide equipment and have trained staff or older students available to encourage and organize interested students and lead activities.

### 4. STAFF, TRAINING, AND CURRICULUM

Of course, no matter how well equipped your school is and how perfect the gym space, your physical education program will be inadequate without a properly trained staff. Many New York City elementary schools have one physical education teacher for a student body of more than 500. Most likely that teacher has never received any specialized training before being assigned to the gym. Similarly, few schools have invested in either training or curricula, leaving teachers to develop programs with little or no guidance.

Some ideas to consider:

- Approach your school principal about assigning additional staff to the physical education program.
- Check out your local colleges and universities. If they have physical education training programs, they may be able to offer professional development.

- Contact professional organizations (such as AAHPERD or NYS AHPERD) for local professional development opportunities.
- Purchase research-based commercial products from educational publishers. Many of these products include daily lesson plans and activity ideas.
- Join professional organizations. See resource list in next section.
- Search the Internet. Regularly check out [www.pecentral.org](http://www.pecentral.org) and some of the websites listed in the resource guide.

## CONCLUSION

So far, this guide has introduced you to the basic goals of a physical education program, the main skills and concepts involved, and offered some advice about how to make all of this happen despite the constraints of New York City public schools. At this point, you probably have more questions than answers. What follows are tools and resources to help you identify and organize your questions and tips for finding answers. All you need to start is the interest, and if you add some additional information and ingenuity, you will be on your way to improving your physical education program and, most importantly, your students' health and well being.

## LOOKING AT YOUR SCHOOL: IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

This self-assessment guide was designed to help you identify some of the obstacles interfering with the success of your physical education program. Upon completion, it will be a base upon which to develop an action plan to devise and implement solutions.

To begin this process, assemble a team of people who can help refine your physical education program. You could use your school leadership team and supplement membership with the physical educators or form a new team. Suggested members of a team are the principal, all the physical education and health teachers, two classroom teachers and parent representatives. Make sure some of the members have the authority to make changes in scheduling, budgeting, purchasing and training. Together the team should review and complete the self-assessment guide. The form is brief and should take no longer than one hour to complete.

The team should use the identified areas where your program fell short as a basis for brainstorming ideas and identifying issues that require additional expertise or information. Review this booklet for ideas and consult the publications and organizations listed in the resource guide. Develop an action plan. Assign tasks for follow-up meetings, set deadlines and work towards introducing and testing new strategies.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS ASSESSMENT TOOL:** Each statement below embodies the highest standard of practice for offering physical education or overcoming a common obstacle interfering with good physical education practice. Rate your school's performance in each category on a scale of 1-4 with 1 for least compliant and 4 for fully compliant.

### A. SPACE UTILIZATION AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

1. If your school has a gymnasium:
  - a. The student to adult ratio is no more than 25:1. 1 2 3 4
  - b. The number of children in the gym does not exceed safety. 1 2 3 4
  - c. The number of children in the gym does not interfere with your ability to plan appropriate activities. 1 2 3 4
2. If your school does not have a gymnasium:
  - a. You have identified a large room or space for conducting physical education classes (multi-purpose room, cafeteria, outdoor space). 1 2 3 4
  - b. The room is available on a regular basis. 1 2 3 4
  - c. Children are free to make noise. 1 2 3 4
  - d. The room is large enough for students to move about freely. 1 2 3 4
  - e. You have examined your building to identify other usable spaces (unused classrooms, infrequently trafficked hallways, stairways). 1 2 3 4
  - f. You have secured space outside of the building for regular use or use when your primary space is unavailable. 1 2 3 4

- 3. The space you use is safe and free from hazardous conditions.
  - a. Children are required to wear sneakers. 1 2 3 4
  - b. Any columns are padded. 1 2 3 4
  - c. Low windows are protected. 1 2 3 4
  - d. Exposed radiators are covered. 1 2 3 4
  - e. The room is regularly cleared of debris and equipment. 1 2 3 4
  - f. Any other safety considerations have been identified and resolved. 1 2 3 4

**B. FREQUENCY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 1. Your school is in compliance with New York State regulations. K-2nd have physical education instruction daily and grades 3-6 meet three times per week. Use the chart below to note frequency by grade. 1 2 3 4

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Periods per week							

- 2. Students have other opportunities for physical activity. 1 2 3 4

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of recess periods per week							
Number of periods for movement or other physical activity							

Total additional activities per week:

- 3. Physical education classes are not pre-empted because the gym space is used for other purposes. 1 2 3 4
- 4. To maximize physical activity, recess is organized. 1 2 3 4
  - a. Older students or trained adults organize and supervise activities. 1 2 3 4
  - b. The activities encourage students to be physically active. 1 2 3 4

**C. STAFF, TRAINING, AND CURRICULUM**

- 1. The school has an adequate number of physical education teachers based on the size of the student body and the frequency of classes. 1 2 3 4
- 2. The physical education teachers are specially licensed to teach physical education at the grade level of the school. 1 2 3 4
- 3. The physical education teachers receive regular and ongoing professional development. 1 2 3 4
- 4. The physical education curriculum is developmentally appropriate and sequential. 1 2 3 4
- 5. The focus of the curriculum is on movement skills and concepts. 1 2 3 4

6. The school has developed a regular and ongoing assessment system that focuses on progress rather than performance. | 2 3 4
7. If needed, the school has purchased a research-based curriculum from an educational publisher or a professional organization. | 2 3 4

#### D. EQUIPMENT

1. The physical education budget is sufficient for the purchase of the necessary equipment. | 2 3 4
2. The equipment is stored safely and securely. | 2 3 4
3. The parent association helps with the purchase or construction of equipment. | 2 3 4
4. The school has explored bulk purchasing or sharing equipment with other schools or community organizations. | 2 3 4
5. The school has enough equipment so children are active and not waiting for turns during class. | 2 3 4
6. The equipment is the correct size and weight for the students. | 2 3 4

## RESOURCES

### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

#### American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD)

A national organization containing six allied associations that together provide support and assistance to physical education, recreation and dance professionals. AAHPERD is the creator of Physical Best, a comprehensive health-related fitness education program, and the publisher of both JOPERD (the Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance) and Strategies, a bimonthly peer reviewed professional magazine.

[www.aahperd.org](http://www.aahperd.org)  
1900 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 20191  
(800) 213-7193  
Fax: (703) 476-9527

#### The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)

P.O. Box 79550  
Baltimore, MD 21279-0550  
(800) 213-7193, ext. 410

[www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm)

The arm of AAHPERD dedicated to physical education professionals. NASPE has developed the seminal standards for elementary physical education, offers professional development, designs curricular materials, publishes a newsletter and produces other helpful materials.

#### New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NYSAHPERD)

The NYS branch of AAHPERD advocates on behalf of health, physical education, recreation and dance professionals throughout the state. They also sponsor an annual conference.

[www.nysahperd.org](http://www.nysahperd.org)  
Elementary/Middle School interest section  
77 North Ann Street  
Little Falls, New York 13365  
(877) 473-7398  
Fax: 315-823-1012

(When you join, make sure you register for the "NYC Zone" to receive notices of local events.)

### WEBSITES WITH ACTIVITIES, LESSON PLANS, AND CURRICULUM IDEAS

#### Ask Eric Lesson Plans

[www.askeric.org/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Physical\\_Education](http://www.askeric.org/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Physical_Education)

Many lesson plans are available on this site as well as helpful information about how to develop a lesson plan.

#### Omaha Public Schools

[www.ops.org/pe/elem.html](http://www.ops.org/pe/elem.html)

Contains links to a variety of activities on many different physical education websites. This website is helpful because it uses the basic skills appropriate for elementary students to organize the activities, for example, jumping, landing and leaping, chasing fleeing and dodging, or dribbling with feet.

#### Elementary Physical Education Curriculum

[www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/~pe.elementary/ele\\_pe.htm](http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/~pe.elementary/ele_pe.htm)

Activities that follow a simply organized curriculum. Curriculum models and assessment are also discussed here.

## PE Central

[www.pecentral.org](http://www.pecentral.org)

Among the most highly regarded physical education resources on the web, PE Central is a comprehensive source for activities, lesson plans, assessment ideas, and health related programs. They have a good description of adaptive physical education, and you can find a terrific set of links to other useful websites.

## Game Central Station

[www.gamecentralstation.com](http://www.gamecentralstation.com)

A searchable database of games for grades K-12.

## Recess Information

[www.ipausa.org/recess](http://www.ipausa.org/recess)

Ideas for conducting a well-organized and effective recess program.

## Human Kinetics

[www.humankinetics.com/products/subjectsearch.cfm](http://www.humankinetics.com/products/subjectsearch.cfm)

One of the leading publishers in the field of health and physical education.

## Sports Illustrated for Kids

[www.sikids.com](http://www.sikids.com)

A fun site for kids. It offers news, games and interactive features.

## Republic School District, Republic, Missouri

[www.republic.k12.mo.us/guide/pe.htm#kindergarten](http://www.republic.k12.mo.us/guide/pe.htm#kindergarten)

A very detailed example of grade by grade curriculum guidelines for physical education.

## Sports Media

[www.sports-media.org](http://www.sports-media.org)

Provides lesson plans and teaching aids for physical and health educators in areas ranging from adaptive physical education to yoga. Has lots of useful links.

## GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) is the lead federal agency responsible for protecting the health and safety of Americans. See particularly, [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/guidelines/phactag.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/guidelines/phactag.htm) for guidelines for School and Community Programs: Promoting Lifelong Activity including recommendations for ensuring quality physical activity programs. You might also find useful a joint report to the President issued by the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Education documenting the rise in obesity among young people and recommending expanded programs of physical activity. See [web.health.gov/healthypeople/Document/tableofcontents.htm](http://web.health.gov/healthypeople/Document/tableofcontents.htm).

## New York State Education Department

[www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/physed.html](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/physed.html) is the link to the physical education curriculum, instruction, and assessment homepage. Here you will find several online publications including, the New York State Learning Standards for Physical Education, and a draft of the Health, Physical Education, Family and Consumer Sciences Resource Guide. The Resource Guide, while in draft form, has useful information about the elementary curriculum, including important advice on assessment.

## President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS)

[www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov) is dedicated to getting Americans physically active. They sponsor the Presidential Sports Award for 6-16 year olds and publish a variety of useful information about the importance of physical activity.

U.S. Department of Education  
[www.ed.gov/free/s-physed.html](http://www.ed.gov/free/s-physed.html)  
 Lists some free information about physical education programming.

#### PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY LIVING

The American Heart Association  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)  
 Each year, the AHA and AAHPERD co-sponsor two fundraising events designed to educate children about health and fitness. *Jump Rope for Heart* is for elementary school children and *Hoops for Heart* is for middle school aged students. As incentives for participation, schools receive the necessary equipment and, based upon the amount of money they raise, gift certificates for the purchase of physical education equipment. Students also receive "thank you" incentive gifts for their participation.

Healthy Steps  
[www.nyshealthyschools.org](http://www.nyshealthyschools.org)  
 The New York Statewide Center for Healthy Schools is a national organization dedicated to improving the health and educational achievement of young people through staff development, training, and technical assistance. In collaboration with the NYS AHPERD they run *Healthy Steps* a walking event designed to encourage students in grades K-5 to increase their level of physical activity through walking. Through an online tracking system, schools can record their progress to track competitions between classes within the school, compare themselves with other participants, and monitor their progress as they map their walk. Awards are given to the top schools as the annual NYS AHPERD conference.

Shape Up America!  
[www.shapeup.org](http://www.shapeup.org)  
 Working in conjunction with a wide range of agencies in the medical/health, nutrition, and physical fitness fields, *Shape Up America!* is a high profile national initiative to promote healthy weight and increased physical activity. They offer a wide range of information about weight and fitness.

#### OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

American Educational Research Association  
[www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)  
 This organization disseminates research findings and encourages scholarly learning in the field of physical education. If you are interested in research findings in physical education you may want to become a member.

American Red Cross  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)  
 American Red Cross in Greater New York  
 150 Amsterdam Avenue  
 New York, New York 1003-5025  
 Phone: 212-787-7871000  
 Fax: 212-875-2309  
 Provides information, training and certification in first aid and CPR.

Physical Education for Life  
[www.PE4life.com](http://www.PE4life.com)  
 A non-profit organization that advocates for expanded and improved daily physical education. They provide assistance to physical educators, parents and the community with local advocacy efforts. In

particular, you can find updated information about the federal PEP Grant program. PEP grants are funds to school districts to initiate and improve physical education. Grants range from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and can be used to purchase equipment and train teachers.

#### SUBSCRIPTION PUBLICATIONS

*The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* (JOPERD) is a monthly publication of AAHPERD. Recent issues include articles on teaching strategies, fitness, legal issues, assessment, dancing, teacher education, adapted physical education, and ethics and gender equity in sports and physical education. For information contact [www.aahperd.org](http://www.aahperd.org) or call (800) 213-7193.

*Strategies* is a bi-monthly peer-reviewed professional magazine that offers practical how-to articles for sport and physical education professionals at all levels. For information contact [www.aahperd.org/naspe/naspe-publications](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/naspe-publications) or call (800) 321-0789.

*Physical Education Digest* is a quarterly magazine that provides the latest ideas, tips, coaching cues and research on sports, fitness and physical education topics from around the world. To subscribe visit [www.pedigest.com](http://www.pedigest.com).

#### BOOKS AND ARTICLES

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). *Physical Best Activity Guide Elementary Level*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999. Contains instructional activities to promote health-related fitness, including aerobics, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and body composition.

Ashworth, S. & Mosston, M. *Teaching Physical Education. 4th Ed.*, New York: Macmillan, 1994. A textbook discussing various teaching styles and models.

Council on Physical Education for Children (COPEC). *Developmentally Appropriate Physical Education Practices for Children: A Position Statement of the Council on Physical Education for Children*. Reston: VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education (1992). Easy to read and important guidelines for teaching physical education, including examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices.

Davis, R. G., & Isaacs, L. *Elementary Physical Education: Growing Through Movement. 3rd Ed.*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Textbooks, 1992. Focuses on basic movement skills.

Graham, G., Holt-Hale, & Parker, M. *Children Moving: A Reflective Approach to Teaching Physical Education*. Mountain View CA: Mayfield, 1998, This is the pre-eminent textbook for students of physical education. It describes the movement skills and concepts approach, offers techniques for teaching and assessing students, and includes detailed descriptions and activities for teaching each of the various movement skills and concepts.

Graham, G. *Teaching Children Physical Education: Becoming a Master Teacher*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Books, 1992. This book gives important insights on becoming the best physical educator you can be.

Human Kinetics and Pettifor, Bonnie. *Physical Education Methods for Classroom Teachers*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 1999. Written for teachers without specialized physical education training, this book outlines the basics of teaching movement skills and concepts and health related fitness. Offers practical advice about creating a supportive and sensitive classroom.

National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE). *Moving Into the Future National Standards for Physical Education: A Guide to Content and Assessment*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1995. A clear and simple book that sets forth the national standards along with a grade level breakdown. For each grade, you will find sample performance benchmarks and a variety of sample assessment techniques.

Pangrazi, R. & Darst, P. *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children, 3rd Ed.*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997. Written by another leading expert in the field of physical education, this book provides great ideas and activities that can enhance your classes and keep children moving and focused.



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