

Sports and Games, including indoor and outdoor games and athletics, are important for success in every walk of life.

First of all, sports and games are good exercises and help build fine physique. They make students mentally alert and physically strong. Further, good health is one

of the most important benefits of sports and games. Secondly, students learn to cope with difficult situations to overcome nervousness, and they get much needed break from monotonous life! Further, sports and games help build a sense of co-operation and team spirit among students.

"A sound mind in a sound body," and it is an unavoidable necessity for all. The training in sports and games should be given in a scientific way and the suitability of a specific sport or game is to be determined based on the ability and interest

of the student. Inclusion of sports and games in the curriculum of studies is, therefore, very important.

Why play? We play by nature. Everyone has an instinct to play as one has an instinct to work! We work in serious mood and play in light mood. Therefore, play and work are complementary to each other! One cannot always be in a serious mood; one requires relaxation! Outdoor game or sport recharges battery of energy. Sportsman's spirit helps tide over the pangs of life! Tournaments at national and inter-national levels foster integration!

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS





Why is physical education important to students?

- They are great sources of pleasure
- It builds body and refreshes mind
- It trains mind of many virtues
- The players learn discipline and develop team spirit
- Each player learns to organize things
- One learns to accept defeat with grace



Physical Education refers to the process of imparting systematic instructions in physical exercise, sports, games and hygiene. Education aims at the training of the body, mind and conduct of a student whereas to keep a healthy mind within a healthy body, a student needs regular physical exercise. Physical education forms an important part of modern education.

Here, Brainfeed is sharing a comprehensive study on the importance of physical education in schools as espoused by **Shri Mukul Chowdhary** of EduSports. Please read on. . .

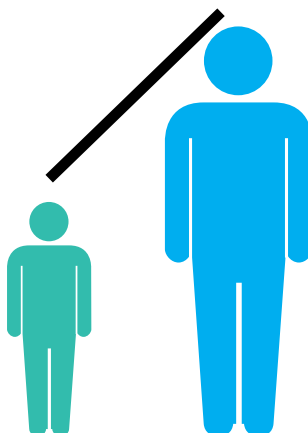
Importance of Structured Sports and PE in Schools

Sports play a significant role in children’s lives in developing their health and wellness. It is a well-known fact that children are happiest when they play. Whether it is playing informally, competitive play or playing just for fun, sports presents various experiences, situations and opportunities that have physical, social, psychological and academic benefits for children.

Regular physical activity provides numerous health benefits for children. It helps control or reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and osteoporosis and improves their metabolic health. Children who are physically active are more likely to grow into physically active and emotionally balanced adults.

Research conducted by Perkins et al. (2004)[1] found that adolescents who are highly active in sports are eight times more likely to participate in sport and physical fitness activities when they become adults, than adolescents who participate very little in sports.

Playing also provides many social benefits for children. When children play with each other they relate to each other and feel a sense of bonding and belonging to a community or group. They also learn to cooperate, share and understand each other’s point of view. According to Casey (2010)[2] when children play they use their own language, rules and values and play helps them to develop their own identities.



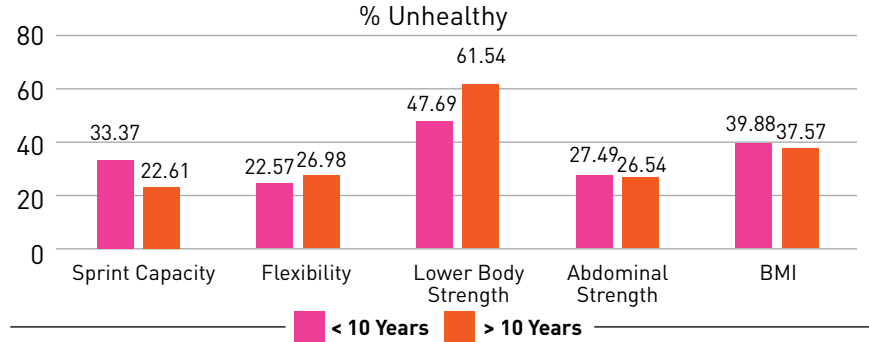
Aerobically fit students are 2.4 times more likely to pass math tests and are more than twice as likely to pass reading tests than those who are not fit.

- Aerobically unfit students
- Aerobically fit students

While participation in sports is most often connected to physical and emotional benefits, it also helps children in their academic performance

According to research done by Budde et.al, (3) aerobically fit students are 2.4 times more likely to pass math tests and are more than twice as likely to pass reading tests than those who are not fit. Also 20-40 minutes of brisk walking is said to improve mathematical performance in children.

Kids of all age groups show alarming fitness levels



Source: EduSports 6th Annual Health Survey 2015

Research by Jarret et.al's (1998)(4) published in the Journal of Educational Research, found that students engaging in directed physical activity during free time / recess have significantly higher concentration scores and are less fidgety, more focussed on their tasks than students who are sedentary.

The overall benefits of sports can be summed up as follows:

- Promotes health and fitness
- Reduces the risk of developing obesity and risk factors for diseases such as diabetes & heart disease
- Reduces the symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Improves behaviour inside and outside of the classroom
- Positively affects concentration and memory
- Sports teaches children to communicate. There is always more communication in sports than any other topic. It breaks the barriers.

Clearly the need for sports and physical activity has been well established. However, there are many challenges in ensuring every child gets the required amount play time.





How much play is needed for children?

Today, across the world, it is a rare sight to see a bunch of kids playing around in the corner of an apartment or in a playground. Instead children have different versions of their favourite sports that can be played at the comfort of their homes - in smart phones or through videogames. Also, with increased focus on academics and excessive exposure to technology, there is not much physical activity or exercise involved in children's daily routines.

According to WHO 2010 report(5) on physical activity the recommended level of physical activity for children between the ages 5-17 is atleast 60 minutes per day which could include moderate to vigorous physical activity. This will help improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Physical activity of amounts greater than 60 minutes daily will provide additional health benefits.

Unfortunately many children do not meet these physical activity recommendations.

The 6th edition the Annual School Survey conducted by EduSports(6), an in-school Sports education organisation in India, covered 1,48,054 children across 245 schools between the ages 7 – 17 in India.

Research by sport researchers such as Brustad(7) and Gould(8) have found that youth sports could very well be one of the most important activities in a child's life.

However, as children get older, it becomes more challenging for them to get enough daily physical

The key findings of the survey are:

- **2 in 5 kids don't have a healthy BMI**
- **1 in 2 kids lack the adequate lower body strength**
- **2 in 5 kids don't possess the adequate upper body strength**
- **1 in 5 kids don't have the adequate endurance capability**
- **3 in 10 kids don't have the desired sprint capacity**
- **1 in 4 kids don't have the desired flexibility**

activity. This could be due to increased academic pressures, lack of motivation from parents, or the children's inability to play particular sports well. Physical activity among children drops sharply between the ages of 9 and 15, according to a 2008 study(9) published in the "Journal of the American Medical Association."

According to a study conducted in Ireland, a number of well-established patterns in children's activity can be identified (Sallis, 2000; Caspersen et al., 2000)(10). These include the following:

- Children aged from around 8 or 9 years to 12 or 13 years are most likely to be active and likely to attain the recommended levels of activity.
- Physical activity declines during the teenage years, with the onset of decline usually identified as occurring sometime between 13 and 15 years of age. By the late teenage years, substantial minors have developed sedentary or low-activity lifestyles, though not to the same degree as adults. According to Sallis (2000), age-related decline in physical activity is so common in human populations and occurs so widely also in many animal species that it must have a biological basis and is not simply a consequence of social factors (such as pressures of study) that arise in particular cultures.
- Boys are more active than girls and are less likely to be completely sedentary.

Across the globe, implementing sports education programmes are a huge challenge, considering the various constraints we are faced with. However, with a structured approach to sports, these challenges can be overcome. The next section discusses this aspect in detail.

Sports Education Programmes

It is known that children spend a significant part of their time in schools. The school is therefore proven to be the best place to introduce changes in the way sports or physical education is handled, so as to reap its benefits.

Despite recognition of the positive impact sports has on education and child development, physical education does not feature in many schools as part of the curriculum or as a compulsory activity. Outside of PE classes, only children who are interested or talented in sports are provided training.

Consequently, every school has to evaluate how best to implement initiatives that provide the appropriate environment, tools and framework within which, this paradigm shift towards physical education and sports can be achieved. Schools have two broad areas through which they can promote physical education and activity levels amongst children.



Recess Time Activities:

Taking cue from studies conducted in the USA by shapeamerica.org the recess time can provide a great opportunity for schools to drive the physical education agenda. Supervised play during recess time has had tangible, demonstrated benefits in improving physical activity levels amongst children. One concern has been the allocation of correct resources for this and also the challenge of sustaining this



amongst children in high school or higher grades, whose other activities also impinge on recess times.

Structured & Inclusive Sports Programs

A structured sports programme is developed keeping in mind the physiological, physical and psychological needs of children and delivers holistic sporting experiences. A good structured sports education programme—starts at the kindergarten level; provides daily physical activity ensuring that every child participates; creates awareness among teachers, staff and parent community on the importance of sports education; adapts the curriculum based on the specific needs of the schools; educates children on living a healthy and active lifestyle; and provides

periodic assessment on each child's development.

To implement a structured sports programme schools require good sports facilities, certified instructors and coaches, support from parents and school staff and most importantly commitment from school to build a culture of sports education. Many schools might not have the expertise or resources to develop and implement such a programme.

In these cases schools can partner with organisations that have developed research-based curriculum keeping in mind the needs of children. These organisations typically have certified trainers, age-appropriate curriculum, and assessment techniques thereby providing a comprehensive approach towards sports education. Availability

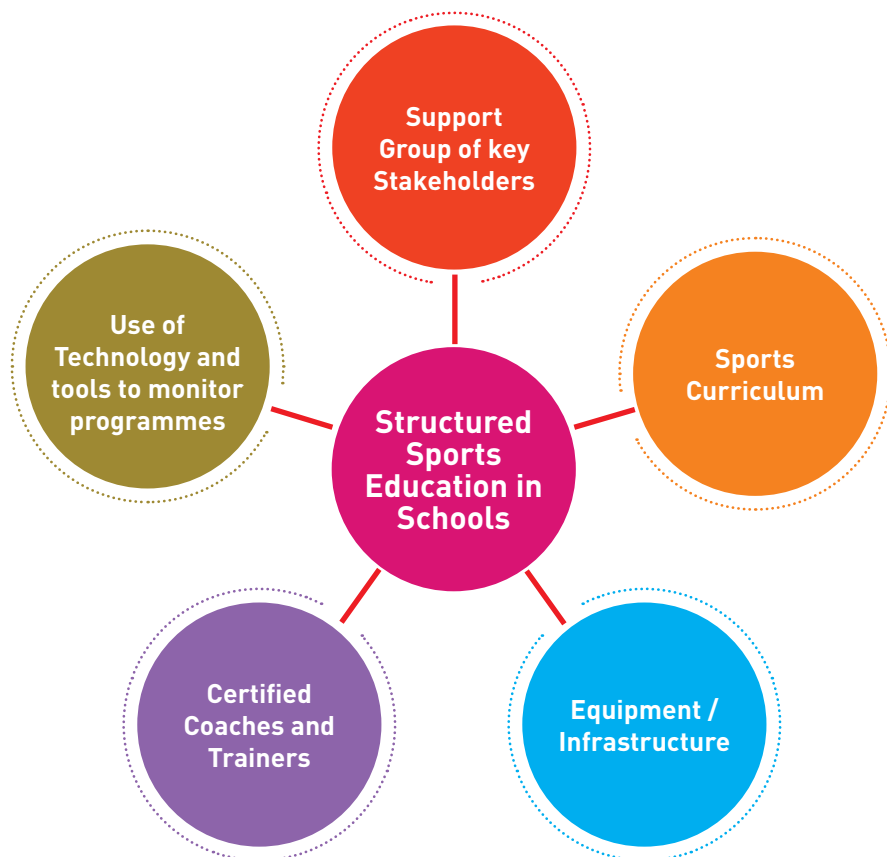


of specialist organisations makes this a potential area of collaboration where schools can retain administrative control while reaping the benefits of expertise in design and delivery of structured PE curriculum.

How Schools Can Implement Structured & Inclusive Sports Programmes

As with any other overhaul within the school system, implementing structured sports programs is also fraught with many challenges. Some of the key ways in which schools can effectively implement structured physical education programs include:

- **Support Group:** Create a group drawn across various stakeholders – school administration, teachers, physical education instructors, parents and partner organisations who can contribute to the monitoring and support required to keep up momentum of structured sports initiatives.
- **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Many schools in developed countries have benefited from partnerships with external specialist agencies who bring in the required expertise and tools to implement structured sports programmes.
- **Infrastructure and Equipment:**
 - Good sports infrastructure in schools with at least a good play ground, preferably a grass field.
 - Assess requirement of equipment needed for various age groups with reference to structured play programs. This assessment needs to be done bearing in mind:



- o Age appropriate physical activities planned for specific groups of children and associated material/ equipment
- o In addition to traditional sports equipment, there are many more sports / play aids to achieve better physical education standards.
- o Space availability within the school and extended location.
- **Coaches and Trainers:** Infrastructure and policy are



only part of the solution for better sports education. The most critical ingredient for success is having the right people as PE instructors, coaches and trainers. Even with a well-designed PE curriculum, the effectiveness depends largely on the availability of sufficient and qualified people.

- **Importance of Sports and Academics:** PE should be treated with equal importance as any other academic subject, and should not be looked at as an extra-curricular activity. The same philosophy needs to be embraced by parents as well, and equal importance to the subject and the teacher should be given in forums like the Parent Teacher Association.
- **Sports Education Curriculum:** PE should be treated with equal importance as any other academic subject. Equip necessary support and tools to run a good program in schools- This can include adequate rewards and recognition for students, a curriculum like any other academic subject, planned assessments and updates to parents like any other academic subject and the necessary



A curriculum like any other academic subject, planned assessments and updates to parents like any other academic subject and the necessary support from the school in events like sports days or school sports events to make them successful.

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- **Use of Technology:** Collation of programme information, training of coaches and relevant material can be made readily available with the use of technology. Internal reference websites, dashboards that help track student performance

Conclusion

Adopting a structured education programme clearly is a significant step towards ensuring every child is involved in physical activity and can reap its benefits. While many governments have guidelines and policies in place to support sports education, appropriate implementation of these guidelines will be key in delivering sustainable outcomes. Also different schools across different countries could adopt strategies that work for them and their children, based on the resources available. However, to attain this paradigm shift towards physical education and sports it is important to encourage the acceptance of a sports-oriented culture in schools and by the community at large, which requires a collaborative effort between various groups, associations and resources within the respective countries. ■

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