



Hawaii Chapter

Position Paper

January 27, 2004

Physical Fitness in Schools

Background

The characteristics of the "obesity epidemic" have been well documented in the mainland and Hawaii. We are already seeing an increased incidence of type-2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease in young adults.

It is generally accepted that the two basic methods of weight control are exercise and diet. For school children it has been shown that physical exercise enhances academic achievement.

We are fortunate in Hawaii in that our schools are teaching the "New Physical Education" addressing the six Physical Education Content and Performance Standards. The areas are instruction in essential physical skills, cognitive concepts, appropriate social behavior, self-expression that leads to positive physical activity choices, physical fitness and physically active lifestyle practices. This constitutes the "integrated approach" to teaching physical education.

The Problem

At a time when exercise and physical fitness through physical education is needed to counteract the trend to obesity in children, the DOE, through the Graduation Task Force, is considering reducing the curriculum requirement for physical education. The Task Force does not aim for a physically fit graduate as part of its Vision for the graduating student.

Pediatrician's Perspective

The goal of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to see all children reach their full potential in physical, mental and social/emotional health. A lifestyle based on the teachings of the integrated approach should lead to improved physical fitness and academic performance for our students. The integrated approach will also be a factor in controlling the obesity epidemic.

Advocacy

1. Increase the number of Physical Education positions in our schools.
2. Encourage teaching the integrated approach.
3. Support the review of the physical education programs, K-12, by the UH College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Leisure Science.
4. Urge the Graduation Task Force to include physical fitness in their Vision Statement for the graduating student.

Supporting and additional information can be found as follows:

1. AAP Policy Statement; www.aap.org/policy/re9907
2. Prevention of Pediatric Overweight and Obesity;
<http://aappolicy/aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;112/2/424>
3. Chai, Dennis, et al, Childhood Overweight Problem in a Selected School District in Hawaii, *American Journal of Human Biology*, 15:164-177 (2003)
4. Shepard, Roy, Curricular Physical Activity and Academic Performance, *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 9:113-126, 1997