"Make Physical Education an Adventure in Life"

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Abstract – Data shows that Adventure Fitness Education is the largest lifelong fitness activity currently in the United States. Adventure Education differs from traditional physical education in a number of major ways but the main one being risk involved. This inherent risk causes students to show noticeable personal growth in areas such as self-esteem/efficacy, psychological resiliency, and critical thinking. Depending on the activity, certain activities will be more useful for the goals of the instructor. Based on the data compiled below, Adventure fitness should be a part of all physical education curriculums.

Key Words:- Adventure, Fitness and Education.

According to a 2007 study, approximately 80% of students enjoy their current physical education classes (Carlson, 2007). This is a higher enjoyment rate than most other subjects but is definitely nothing to celebrate in the physical education community. Questions such as what will happen to the 20% that dislike physical education should prove bothersome to physical education instructors. Likely, these students will avoid physical activity and be more likely to become overweight or obese at some point in their adult lives or worse suffer from diseases triggered by these conditions. Thus, physical education instructors should always be seeking new ways to reach this 20%. Adventure Fitness provides an opportunity for instructors to address these students. Adventure Fitness activities are showing more growth in participation than any sporting or leisure activities. Adventure education can provide lifelong fitness activities and increase self-efficacy and psychological resiliency while increasing involvement for the 20% of students that dislike physical education for any school or group that implements the program.

Adventure Fitness varies from regular physical education in a few major ways. The main way is that "adventure education involves the purposeful planning and implementation of educational processes that involve risk in some way(Brown). This is often done in different setting than a traditional PE class such as natural or wilderness settings. Experiential learning, a key core concept of adventure ftiness education, is a philosophy towards teaching that links concrete learning from the lesson to more abstract general learning concepts. This makes the concept more valuable to everyday life as they can be applied as life lessons beyond the PE classroom. Adventure Education has been described as experts as empowering for students self-confidence/self esteem. Adventure Education also forces PE students to use critical thinking and team building skills that are prevalent in many activities (Neil). In addition, students end each activity by reflection on the values of the lesson during a debrief session. Adventure Fitness is very student centered and can provide a more cross-curricular approach to physical education pedagogy.

While numerous positive results have been shown from school that use adventure fitness curriculum, there are five major goals of these activities. Increase personal competence is goal number one. In the paragraph below, a study shows meaningful increases in individual resiliency which is an important part of personal competence. A second goal is to increase mutual support within a group. Otherwise known as team work skills, these are prevalent in most adventure activities. Developing an increased level of agility and coordination is another goal. While some adventure activities are not as vigorous as other PE activities such as team sports, adventure activities such as hiking can be a staple of a lifetime physically active lifestyle of a student (Rohnke 1999). The fourth goal is to develop joy in one's physical self and in being with others. Statistics show that adventure fitness is an inclusive activity that students enjoy because it is student centered. The final goal is to increase familiarity with the outside/natural world. This goal is important because getting students to see the naturally beauty of the world outside of Play station 3 can be a challenging task that must be achieved if Americans are to combat epidemics like rising obesity.

Adventure education philosophers have shown that controlled exposure to challenge and risk can enhance student's psychological resiliency. This was exhibited in a study of 40 young adults over a 22 day period. Data of the participants in the outbound study found that all participants showed noticeable gains in individual psychological resiliency. In fact, many young adults showed large gains (as much as 24%) in psychological resiliency. With the resiliency, the participants showed more of an ability to encounter the issues of dealing with everyday life. Overall, the "develop by challenge" philosophy prevalent in adventure education promoted serious personal growth for the group researched (Neil and Dias 2001).

One good reason to include adventure education into the Physical Education curriculum is that adventure activities are being more and more prevalent means of adult exercise. According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), participation in adventure sports has outpaced all other sporting activities. Mountain biking increased 86% to over 8.6 million participants annually. Backpacking and wilderness camping have also increased at a 50 and 60% rate respectively. The amount of rock climbing facilities has also grown drastically from 80 facilities in 1993 to as many as 400 today (Attarian 2001). The growth in these activities is not only seen in young adults and middle aged people, it is also seen in older Americans. Amongst the baby boomer generation, there has been an increase in participation of at least one adventure activity of 12% (Attarian). The results seem to point towards adventure education continuing to rise in popularity as equipment becomes more innovative and affordable. Thus, teaching adventure education is necessary because of the future relevance it will play in numerous students' athletic choices.

Adventure Fitness has been shown to produce noticeable growth in self-efficacy, self-esteem and team building. Research shows that certain adventure activities can be more effective for achieving individual goals or initiatives (Gillis and Speelman 2008). For example, high ropes courses were shown to produce more gains in team building skills. Also, self-efficacy shows higher results than self-esteem on these same high ropes courses. Despite this inequality, ropes courses showed positive results in almost all areas including overall group dynamics (31.8%) and behavior control (9.6%)(Gillis). The data available can make it easier to find appropriate adventure activities for an instructor's physical education course. Also, they can be used outside for the physical education classroom as the team building activities can obviously be effective for a coach of a team sport.

DISCUSSION

After showing the need for adventure education to become a regular part of the physical education curriculum, it is urgent that all physical educators adapt it for classroom use. It is a very good compliment for the students that do not enjoy the team sports that are so prevalent in traditional PE. In addition, AE can help student's self-esteem, leadership, and critical thinking skills that are paramount to 21st century learning. While the studies above show the results on a general school population, it would be interesting to see how effective adventure education could be for students with special needs. With the current focus on adapted physical education to reach physical education learners of all levels, it would be interesting to see how special education students enjoyed/performed in adventure education units. More research in this area would definitely be worthy for a scholar studying the usefulness of the adventure education curriculum for all students.

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