
INTRODUCTION

The Health & Physical Education Curriculum Committee, veteran Physical Education and Health teachers in the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools, gathered in the fall of 2007 to review and revise the Curriculum Guidelines published in 2003. The guidelines were originally compiled based on the Archdiocese of Denver's existing curriculum, *Moving into the Future*, *National Standards for Physical Education* from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, the McREL Health Standards and Physical Education Standards, and the curriculum guidelines of other Catholic arch/dioceses.

The committee members contacted other teachers of Health and P.E. in the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools as they began this work. They found that most teachers were aware of the guidelines and used them to a greater or lesser degree for their P.E. program. The teaching of Health was much more random. Some P.E. teachers are responsible for this content, some are aware that classroom teachers are responsible for this, and in some schools it may not be covered. The teachers we were able to poll offered few suggestions for revision. The Committee members brought some helpful suggestions for improvement based on their actual use of the document for the past several years.

Not all of the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools are able to provide a full-time P.E. teacher. Part of the goal of this committee is to provide guidelines that a general classroom teacher might also follow in teaching Physical Education. Ordinarily, the P.E. teacher should incorporate the Health Curriculum requirements into the P.E. class. However, much of what is taught under the heading of Health can also be covered in Science, Social Studies, and Religion. Teachers of these subjects should coordinate activities where topics are addressed in more than one area so that student learning is multi-dimensional but not redundant. Suggestions for when this might happen are included following appropriate objectives.

When a school has a part-time P.E. teacher or none at all, the faculty is encouraged to become familiar with these guidelines to identify areas of responsibility and overlap so that topics might be taught as cooperative units, as a team, or incorporated into other areas of the curriculum. When health is a responsibility of the classroom teacher, it is important for teachers who share grade levels to discuss the variety of content so there is no duplication and so no area goes unaddressed.

Many thanks to these members of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum Committee for their hard work:

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The Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools strive to educate the whole person: mind, soul, body and spirit. A well-educated person has respect for his/her body and understands the workings of that marvelous gift from God. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The human body shares in the dignity of 'the image of God'" (364). "Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good" (2288).

The teaching of Health and Physical Education, therefore, is an important component of the total Catholic school program and not a "frill" or an "extra." In the United States, where childhood obesity has become an epidemic, schools have a responsibility to provide enjoyable, safe, appropriate opportunities for exercise and physical play for students. Students who enjoy participation in sports and games may develop habits of life-long physical activity.

Teaching of Health and Physical Education goes well beyond the learning and playing of games. Education of the total person includes education that supports a lifestyle that cares for and appreciates the workings of the human body. Recent research indicates that physical activity impacts how the brain develops, increasing the ability to learn and be creative. This is especially true for school-age children. Guidelines from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education published in 2004 suggest that children should accumulate at least 60 minutes per day—and up to several hours—of age appropriate physical activity, that this should come in bouts of activity lasting 15 minutes or more, and that extended periods – two hours or more – of inactivity are discouraged for young children. Instruction in cooperative play, individual and team sports support an active life style.

Students learn to appreciate and understand their bodies and that a healthy body requires exercise and care. They learn to be sensitive to their own abilities, to different abilities in others, and to the gifts and challenges of individuals with special needs. Individual and team sports/games not only provide a source of exercise and relaxation, but also teach cooperation and teamwork. Lessons learned on the court or playing field can be applied to a student's broader life experience.

Students need to understand how nutrition impacts health. They need to have a sense of the workings of the human body and understand what is needed to maintain the health of that body. Students who have this information should be able to make better decisions regarding what they put into their bodies, how to care for the needs of their bodies in the different stages of life, how to avoid illness, and what to do in case of illness. They need to have appropriate information to engender a responsible attitude about behaviors that could put themselves or others into harm's way. Education in Health and Physical Education supports moral decision-making and a healthy life.