The Status of K-12 Physical Education in California During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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K-12 Physical Education During COVID-19

Key Findings

53.5%  
Of K-12 physical educators indicate limitations were placed on their ability to instruct

1 in 10  
Physical education teachers have been reassigned

2 in 10  
Elementary schools do not offer physical education instruction

4 in 10  
Programs had less instructional minutes

Support

Physical educators indicated they need additional support in ensuring quality instruction and assessing learning outcomes

Concerns

Physical educators have concerns about district return to face-to-face plans for physical education and continued marginalization of physical education

COVID-19 Adverse Impact

Decreased mental health, academic achievement, access to school services, and teacher job satisfaction

Increased childhood obesity rates and school absenteeism

Senate Bill 820 extended the elimination of minimum physical education instructional minutes through the 2020-21 school year

Physical Education

Is still required by law to be taught in K-12

Has numerous benefits including academic achievement, physical health, and mental health
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Executive Summary

Introduction. The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected K-12 students in many ways including academic achievement and their physical and mental health. Teachers have also been impacted including shifting their teaching methodologies. On March 19th, 2020 Governor Newsom issued a state-wide stay-at-home order due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rising cases within California. As such, schools transitioned to pandemic pedagogies resulting in millions of K-12 students in California having to complete their school year in distance learning. School leadership and teachers, including physical educators, had to adjust their pedagogy and content as the world grappled with the pandemic. On April 22nd, 2020 Governor Newsom signed Executive Order (N-56-20) that waived physical education instructional minute requirements. There is extensive scientific evidence that demonstrates the importance of physical education and physical activity on the overall development of school-aged children. Physical education has many benefits including contributing to overall health outcomes, academic performance, social emotional learning, and is part of a well-rounded education.

Purpose. The California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) received correspondence from concerned members about how schools and districts were interpreting Executive Order (N-56-20). Namely, how instructional minutes were getting significantly reduced, eliminated and physical education teachers being reassigned. In response, CAHPERD sent a survey to all K-12 physical educators in the state of California in early September 2020. The purpose of the survey was to investigate and report on the status of physical education in California as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods. A Google Forms survey was sent to physical educators in California. The methods of collecting and analyzing data are highlighted in Appendix A. The survey included 18 questions including multiple open-ended questions for respondents to expand upon their experiences. All data are reported with close attention made to protect the anonymity of respondents.

Findings. There were 474 qualified responses to the survey representing at least 215 different districts across the state of California. Results of the survey indicate that state-level and local decisions resulted in widespread uncertainty about how COVID-19 impacted instructional requirements. Some of the uncertainty was attributed to limitations placed on physical education. These restrictions included but were not limited to instructional minutes and assessment. Additionally, results demonstrate that elementary physical education instructional minutes have been reduced or eliminated more so than the secondary level. Lastly, respondents noted that schools and districts are not addressing the needs of all their educators specifically in terms of professional development, workload, and communicating return to school plans.

Conclusions. Students affected by this pandemic are struggling, and it is a necessity they receive quality physical education provided by certified physical education teachers. Physical education stakeholders must take an active approach in shaping the future of physical education.
Importance of Physical Education

It is the position of CAHPERD that physical education is as important to the development of the whole child as any other subject offered in the K-12 schools. There are many reasons that physical education is important including disease prevention, lifetime wellness, motor skill development, development of self-management skills, and that physical education is widely supported by parents and health organizations (Masurier & Corbin, 2006). In California, physical education programs are guided by the California physical education model content standards, which represent the essential skills and knowledge that all students need to maintain a physically active, healthy lifestyle. While CAHPERD provides leadership, advocacy, and professional development for physical educators in California, the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America, provides leadership at the national level. SHAPE identifies the essential components of physical education, which include various aspects of policy and environment, curriculum, student assessment, and appropriate instruction (SHAPE, 2015a).

Goal of Physical Education

The goal of physical education is to “develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity”

(Society of Health and Physical Educators [SHAPE America], p. 11, 2014).

Considering the goal of physical education as outlined above, it is important to define “physical literacy.” A person who is physically literate can perform a variety of physical activities, knows and values the benefits and implications of physical activity, demonstrates an active lifestyle, and is physically fit (SHAPE, 2014). Physical education is the only subject area in school that attends to the physical well-being of students and only academic area with instructional minute requirements. Physical education offers opportunities for health-enhancing physical activity. Additionally, quality programs ensure that students develop knowledge, skills, self-responsibility, and motivation to engage in health-enhancing physical activity for life. Quality physical education programs provide opportunities for all students to learn, address appropriate content standards, include meaningful content and assessment, and are taught by credentialed teachers (NASPE, 2004).

Benefits of Physical Education

K-12 students are spending considerably more time in front of a computer and less time involved in physical activity (Caroll, 2020). According to the U.S. Surgeon General, regular physical activity is one of the most important ways to maintain and improve one’s physical health, mental health, and overall well-being (USDHHS, 2015). For school aged children
increased screen time can increase depression, anxiety, suicide, and inattention (Lissak, 2018). Therefore, physical education is as important now as it has ever been because physical activity has short and long-term benefits for mood, sleep, and health (USDHHS, 2018). Physical education and being physically active have considerable benefits including:

1. **Physical Activity** - Physical education contributes to a significant portion of a student’s daily physical activity (Alderman, et al., 2012; Senlin, et al., 2014).

2. **Academic Performance** - Physical education and physical activity is related to increased academic performance (USDHHS, 2018; Rasberry, et al, 2010), including increased academic performance when physical education is taught by a licensed physical educator (Telford, et al., 2014). Related, fit students tend to be more receptive, cooperative, and have better attention spans (Ratey and Sattelmair, 2012). Additionally, being physical active as an adult is also important to improved cognitive functioning (Ratey and Loehr, 2011).

3. **Health Benefits** - Physical activity promotes growth and development in youth and has multiple benefits for physical, mental, and cognitive health. (Institute of Medicine, 2013.) Additionally, physical education is considered a preventative measure for adult conditions such as heart disease, high blood-pressure, and type 2 diabetes (USDHHS, 2018).

4. **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** - Quality Physical Education instruction has SEL content and is embedded within California state standards. SEL instruction can help students with academic performance, positive attitudes, reduced negative behaviors, and reduced stress (Durlak et al., 2011).

5. **Physical Literacy** - Children who are physically literate are more likely to meet or exceed physical activity recommendations (Belanger, et al. 2018). Additionally, an active child is more likely to be an active adult (Telama, et al. 2014).

6. **Activity Promotion** - Physical education is the foundation of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity (CSPAP) program (CDC, 2020), which promotes physical activity throughout the school day.

7. **Well-Rounded Education** - Physical education is an academic subject (SHAPE, 2015b), and under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Physical Education is considered part of a well-rounded education and should be considered equally as all other subjects (SHAPE, 2016).

There is extensive scientific evidence that demonstrates the importance of physical education and physical activity on the overall development of school-aged children. Given all the benefits of high-quality physical education it is important that schools provide students with the education they need and deserve as part of a complete education and development of the whole child.
Impact of COVID-19 on Students

The disruption of education due to the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all stakeholders involved including students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The long-term impact of COVID-19 on learning are yet unknown, this section will discuss what is known in terms of the actual or perceived impact of COVID-19 on students. Additionally, an overview of physical education requirements pre-COVID-19 and modifications to those requirements due to COVID-19 are presented.

Impact of COVID-19 on Students

It is estimated that at least 91% of students worldwide (over 1.5 billion students) have had their learning disrupted due to the pandemic (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO, 2020a), which has resulted in the loss of at least 47 days of in-person instruction (UNESCO, 2020b). Anyone involved in education since the pandemic began can attest to the impact on student learning. Other impacts of the pandemic include:

1. **Obesity** - Researchers indicate that due to increased sedentary behavior and increased screen time obesity rates are expected to rise, especially with minority children (An, 2020, Rundle, et al., 2020).
2. **Mental Health** - Children’s social and emotional well-being will likely be negatively affected due to a decrease in social interactions. This decrease could result in children having less opportunities to navigate skills necessary in developing friendships, more so for children without siblings (Campbell, 2020).
3. **Academic Achievement** - Achievement and opportunity gaps are expected to widen, disproportionately affecting low-income students (Garcia and Weiss, 2020). Additionally, initial reports indicate students are retaining reading skills, but math skills are lagging (Kuhfeld, et al. 2020).
4. **Technology Access** - Access to computers and stable internet has disproportionately affected poorer students (Garcia and Weiss, 2020, Stelitano et al., 2020).
5. **Absenteeism** - Increased student absentee rates (Kurtz, 2020).
6. **Teacher workload and Job Satisfaction** - Teachers are working longer hours (Kurtz, 2020), struggling with communication, student participation, teaching content, providing feedback, asynchronous instruction, monitoring progress and assessing learning outcomes (Stelitano, et al., 2020).
7. **Inadequate Services** - Schools have failed to provide adequate guidance for vulnerable student populations, especially students with disabilities (Diliberti & Kaufman, 2020).

As noted above, the true impact of COVID-19 on student health and learning outcomes will be something the education community will navigate for years to come. Initial studies and reports are not encouraging, especially for low-income and disadvantaged students (including students with disabilities). It will be the responsibility for all stakeholders to address these issues the best we can.
Physical Education Requirements in California

The subject area of physical education, like all subject areas, had to adjust instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, K-12 physical education has been impacted by legislation and executive orders that continue to impact instruction.

Physical Education Requirements in California Pre-COVID-19. Before the pandemic, elementary schools were required to have a minimum of 200-minutes of instruction every 10 days of school (Ed Code Section 51210) and secondary schools were required to have a minimum of 400-minutes of instruction every 10 days of school (Ed Code Section 51222). High school students in California are required a minimum of two years of physical education to be eligible to graduate from high school. However, high school students are required to take four years of physical education unless they meet the criteria for a two-year waiver (student consent and passing five of six standards of the PFT in 9th grade; SB 78 and 601). Additional exemptions are available for students pursuant Ed Code Sections 51241(a) and 51241(c), 51222(a), 51242, and 51246. Since 1996 the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) has been required (Ed Code Section 60800) to be administered in February, March, April or May to grades 5, 7 and 9.

Physical Education Requirements in California During COVID-19. Shortly after the transition to distance learning in March, 2020 CAHPERD started hearing from members about their concerns related to physical education instructional minutes and quality of instruction. Over the summer of 2020, these concerns increased as it became increasingly apparent that distance learning would continue into the Fall semester. Adding to the anxiety was Governor Newsom’s April 22nd, 2020 Executive Order (N-56-20) that waived the physical education instructional minute requirement and responsibilities for administering the PFT for the 2019-2020 school year. Senate Bill 820 extended the suspension of the PFT and the instructional minute requirement for physical education during the 2020-21 school year. While the executive order and Senate bill created a sense of uncertainty, the California Department of Education provided resources on their website related to physical education during the COVID-19 pandemic, this included a “frequently asked questions” section that clarified that physical education is still required in schools even though instructional minutes have been waived.

“Although the minimum instructional minutes for PE have been waived, PE requirements have not changed.”

(California Department of Education Covid-19 PE FAQ’s)
Who completed the survey?

Respondents. There were a total of 489 responses to the survey. Fifteen responses did not match the sample criteria of being current K-12 educators (College professors, security guard, etc.). Thus, resulting in 474 qualifying responses. Figure 1 outlines the positions within their schools and/or district. The majority of respondents were physical education teachers at Elementary ($n=99$, 20.9%), Middle ($n=179$, 37.8%), or High ($n=118$, 24.9%) schools. Additionally, respondents included classroom teachers who may have been responsible for delivering physical education content ($n=21$, 4.4%), Middle and High school health education teachers ($n=14$, 3.0%), Adapted physical education specialists ($n=11$, 2.3%) and the remaining 32 (6.8%) of respondents were teachers on special assignment, teachers who teach multiple subject areas, Athletic director/Department chairs, teachers who teach across multiple grade levels (i.e. K-8), and district specialists/coordinators.

School and School Districts. The respondents of this survey were asked to identify their school and/or district. Those identifiable data will not be presented to protect the anonymity of the respondents. At least 215 different districts were represented with seven respondents using acronyms to identify their district. Because some districts have the same acronym, it is unknown which district the respondent was employed. The participants of this survey represented approximately one-quarter of the 1,037 districts in the State of California (California Department of Education, 2020). It is important to note that some districts had more than one participant, with two districts having at least 12 respondents. In addition to the wide range of school districts at least 44 different private and public schools, a private educational organization and a county office of education were represented.
Results

The responses to the quantitative (multiple-choice) and qualitative (short answer) questions are organized below. To ensure the anonymity of survey respondents, identifying information such as the name of schools or individuals are not included in this paper.

The results section summarizes questions related to professional development, instructional minute requirements, and COVID-19 issues. Several of the questions allowed the respondent to expand upon their multiple-choice response. Lastly, participants were asked the following two open-ended questions at the end of the survey.

- Have issues arisen that you need help or support with? Please provide a brief explanation.
- Are there other issues that you deem important to note or share?

There were a total of 474 qualifying responses to the survey. Respondents were not required to answer all questions and thus, some chose not to. The results below include how many respondents answered each question. Additionally, a total of 231 survey respondents provided an answer to the first open-ended question while 265 replied to the second. The results are organized around the following concepts: (a) how districts responded, (b) physical education instructional minutes during COVID-19, (c) distance learning challenges and concerns, and (d) return to in-person challenges and concerns. Lastly, this section is concluded by a brief analysis deciphering meaning from the data.

How Districts Responded

Some questions in the survey related to how districts adapted and responded to the pandemic. Namely, how districts planned for physical education and how districts prepared their educators for distance learning. To gauge how districts were considering physical education, participants were asked to identify if any of the following were true in their district:

- If Physical Educators were reassigned to other duties
- If there were limitations placed on physical education related content
- If their district had a plan for physical education when campuses re-open
- If they had contacted their Union for assistance

Just over fifty percent of respondents (52.7% N=250) answered this question. These respondents indicated that there were limitations placed on physical education (n=139, 53.5%), that few districts had a plan for physical education when campuses re-opened (n=65, 25%), that some teachers were being reassigned (n=21, 8.1%) and few educators had contacted their union for assistance (n=35, 13.5%).

From the open-ended questions only four teachers stated that they felt supported by school leadership while 17 teachers stated that they were given minimal to no support in providing
distance learning in physical education. Furthermore, eight teachers expressed that physical education distance learning expectations were vague or unrealistic with two of those teachers stating that the district-provided curriculum was age inappropriate for their students and the same for multiple grade levels.

**Professional Development.** 97.5% (N=462) of respondents answered the question related to professional development. Over eighty percent of respondents (85.9%, n=397) identified the professional development they received during the pandemic was related to general educational technology. Meanwhile, just over 10 percent of the respondents identified they had professional development related to physical education, specifically, 43 respondents (9.3%) received professional development related to online instruction in physical education, and 12 respondents (2.6%) received professional development on other physical education topics. A few respondents (n=10, 2.2%) received funding to purchase external professional development or attend conferences.

In a follow up question, respondents identified the topics of the professional development that was offered to them. Topics covered included: Zoom, google classroom, Flipgrid, Mental/Social health, COVID-19, Online course development strategies, Social Justice, and IEP requirements during distance learning. The topics that were physical education related included teaching calisthenics, nutrition, health, SEL in dance and curricular programs in physical education. By-in-large, professional development was not physical education focused. The lack of content specific professional development was further discussed in the open-ended questions with an additional 17 teachers stating that they would have liked some assistance with effective content and instruction for distance learning physical education.

**Physical Education Instructional Minutes during COVID-19**

While physical education minutes were waived by Executive Order (N-56-20), physical education is still required to be taught K-12. It is important to note that it is unknown how many schools were meeting or exceeding the mandated instructional minute requirements in physical education prior to the pandemic. The findings from this survey indicate that physical education is still being offered, however, less so at the elementary level than at middle and high schools. Figure 2 provides an overview of how instructional minutes in physical education are being managed during the pandemic. Respondents were asked to identify the impact the pandemic has had on instructional minutes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. It is important to note that some respondents indicated they were able to answer outside of the grade level they taught.

To highlight the crux of the issue related to physical education minutes respondents discussed reduction and modifications. In the open-ended questions 13 teachers reported a reduction in the time allotted for physical education with 13 others stating that physical education was not currently being required in their school. Some of the alternatives for physical education, which are non-compliant with state law, included parent taught physical education or video activities provided by the district, but many stated that there was no replacement at all.
Elementary Physical Education Instructional Minutes. 73.2% of respondents (N=347) answered the question related to minute requirements for elementary physical education. Elementary physical education instructional minutes is perhaps the most striking. Only 84 (24.2%) respondents identified that physical education was meeting or exceeding 200 minutes every 10 days of instruction. A higher number of respondents (n=133, 38.3%) identified that physical education was being offered less than 200 minutes every 10 days of instruction. Discouragingly, 63 (18.2%) respondents mentioned that physical education was not offered at the elementary level. Respondents were asked to identify the instructional minutes elementary students were receiving if it was less than 200. There were 113 responses and they ranged from 20 minutes to 180 minutes, with the most common response being 60 minutes (n=26), and the average being 90 minutes.

Who is teaching elementary Physical Education? 46 (13.3%) respondents indicated physical education was being solely offered by the classroom teacher while 21 (6.1%) respondents identified that physical education was being offered in combination with the physical education teacher and classroom teacher.

Middle School Physical Education Instructional Minutes. 77.2% (N=366) of respondents answered the question related to middle school physical education instructional minutes. Responses were almost equal between meeting or exceeding 400 instructional minutes every 10 days of instruction (n=155, 42.3%) and less than 400 minutes (n=164, 44.8%). Discouragingly, there were almost 50 participants who indicated that there was no physical education for any students (n=21, 5.7%) or there was no physical education for some students (n=26, 7.1%).

141 respondents wrote in how many minutes per 10 days if less than 400 - responses ranged from 30 to 399, with the most common response (mode) being 180 minutes (n=12), and the average being 218 minutes.

High School Physical Education Instructional Minutes. 63.9% (N=303) of respondents answered the question related to high school physical education instructional minutes. Over 50 percent (53.5%, n=162) of respondents indicated programs were meeting or exceeding 400 instructional minutes every 10 days of instruction, while 36.6% of responses (n=111) indicated programs were meeting less than 400 minutes. Similarly, to middle school, there was a smaller subset that indicated there was no physical education for any student (n=18, 5.9%) or no physical education for some students (n=12, 4%).

Eighty respondents wrote in how many minutes per 10 days if less than 400 - responses ranged from 40 to 380, with the most common response (mode) being 180 minutes (n=8) and the average being 224 minutes.
Why are some students not receiving physical education? In a follow up to the minute requirement questions, participants were asked to explain why students were not receiving physical education. Twenty-four participants offered responses that discussed scheduling, substitutions, waivers, or exemptions, and a shift in who was teaching physical education. Almost half of these responses (n=11) discussed various scheduling issues. For example, if a district was on a version of block or quarter, students did not have physical education during the current term but would have it in a future term. The second prominent reason students were not receiving physical education was due to a variety of reasons, including: approved waivers or exemptions; courses that were not physical education courses yet granted physical education course credit; and decisions made to enroll students in courses other than physical education. This was particularly true for ELL and special education students. Lastly, participants described how physical education had been replaced by parents who were responsible for delivering physical education minutes and completing an activity log.

Distance Learning Challenges and Concerns

Assessing Students. Twenty-one teachers expressed concern about being able to assess their students in the distance learning environment. Twenty-six teachers stated that the inability to see students perform activities for reasons such as assessment based on an honor system or student accountability were limiting. Many of these teachers mentioned that students were not required to turn on their cameras during synchronous activity due to district policy. This raised

"Independent PE’ has become an option for our Middle School students where parents sign off on weekly physical activity.”
Adapted Physical Education Teacher
questions about student attendance. In addition, six teachers listed distractions in the home (ex. foul language or parents interrupting) as a challenge. Finally, five teachers were concerned with space for students to perform activities at home and liability that might result from injury during participation.

“We are not permitted to require that students be live, so basically everything is an honor system. We are doing our best to ensure we are providing daily live instruction that is standards-based, but have no real way of assessing student progress or ensuring students are completing task when off-camera.”

Middle School Physical Education Teacher

**Conditions of Instruction.** Beyond concerns with attendance, zoom expectations, support, and content, several teachers cited technology issues, class sizes, and time allocated for physical education as challenges. Issues with technology included two teachers referencing the quality of teaching equipment such as laptops and eight mentioning problems with internet connection and teaching platforms such as Zoom where “Zoom bombing” has occurred during classes. Fourteen teachers stated that they desire additional training using technology for distance learning (ex. Zoom training). Related to class sizes, eight teachers stated that they are responsible for the education of over 350 students with five of the respondents being responsible for between 475 to 700 students.

**Return to In-Person Teaching Challenges and Concerns**

**Marginalization of Physical Education.** Marginalization of physical education was on the mind of many who responded to the open-ended survey questions. Thirteen physical education teachers were informed that physical education will be delivered differently than other subjects when there is a return to in-person teaching. Some will continue to teach online, some will teach in a hybrid model, and some will be reassigned out of physical education. Regarding alternative assignments, eighteen teachers stated that their district has given or will give physical education teachers alternate teaching assignments removing them partially or fully from physical education instruction. Alternative assignments include being moved to different levels to assist with physical education (ex. elementary to middle school), teaching different subject matters in place of physical education, or being placed in an assistant (ex. teacher aide) or supervisor capacity (ex. recess or taking temperatures). Some of these alternative assignments were in place during distance learning and some will begin and/or continue once in-person instruction begins within the district. The expectation by some that physical education will be hybrid is perhaps another avenue used by districts to solve the spacing problem, but the common definition of hybrid instruction may not be the definition used for some physical education classes. Four teachers conveyed concern over how to teach both online and in-person when class sessions may have a mix of those who are face to face and those who are distance learning.
No plan for returning. Many teachers expressed concern about the state of physical education upon a return to in-person instruction. Thirty-one teachers conveyed that they have not been given a plan for school reentry for physical education. In addition, eighteen teachers stated that they either have not been given pertinent information about their classes that are necessary for curriculum creation, or have only been given a partial plan for school reentry for physical education. With physical distancing being a priority in schools, many of the aforementioned teachers were uncertain of the expectations that will be placed on physical education. Thirty teachers were concerned either about large class sizes, safety for large class sizes in spaces that are not conducive for distancing requirements, or inadequate facilities for social distancing regardless of class size. Several commented that their class sizes were still going to be larger than those of other subjects.

Feeling unsafe. Many teachers raised several safety concerns due to COVID-19 when thinking about the logistics of in-person physical education. Seventeen teachers made a comment about their concern for teacher safety, student safety, or both when in physical education. Furthermore, 21 teachers expressed unease or had unanswered questions related to cleaning protocols for equipment or expectations for the sharing of equipment. Twelve teachers commented that they either do not have enough equipment for each individual, as equipment in their schools cannot be shared, or that they are not allowed to use any equipment when the students return to in-person instruction. In addition, 15 teachers questioned how it would be possible to maintain social distancing due to challenges such as limited space or large class sizes. Concern over locker rooms and their availability were raised as well. Finally, six teachers had questions about mask adherence or mask expectations during participation in physical education.

Making Sense of the Results

In summary, the data suggests that many physical education teachers have seen limitations placed on physical education and are uncertain of how COVID-19 will impact the subject moving forward. Encouragingly, a greater number of secondary physical education programs, especially at the high school level, have retained their instructional minutes and have far fewer programs where the minutes were eliminated altogether. Leadership at schools and districts, however, have seemingly not addressed the needs of their physical educators with subject specific professional development, guidance, workload, and class size. Additionally, school leadership has decreased the amount of time provided for physical education across all levels, and there are concerns that such changes will remain in place post-pandemic. Clearly there is work to be

“I fear that PE will not be brought back. I feel that my district does not value PE or it’s importance and will seek to get rid of it all together.”

High School Physical Education Teacher

“Thus far our district has asked PE teachers to expose ourselves to multiple cohorts and provide non-PE related services (ie. recess, supervision, and other aide work).”

Elementary Physical Education Teacher
done at all levels and with all education stakeholders to address the quality and quantity of instruction but also in preparing for the return to face-to-face instruction.

The response from the greater physical education community during the pandemic as evidenced by Twitter hashtags like #HPEatHome and #AtHomePE, and other grassroots efforts have been heartening. However, as evidenced throughout this paper, students and educators affected by this pandemic are struggling. For students, it is necessity they receive quality physical education provided by certified physical education teachers. For educators, it is important they receive support from their school leadership and are part of the conversation. During the COVID-19 pandemic teachers have had to develop distance learning pedagogies by experimenting with technology, new assessment tools, student-centered teaching practices, and new curricula. Considering the shift in pedagogical practices, educators, researchers, and allies of physical education should examine the current state of physical education in California and consider steps to improve and promote programs and advocate for the future. It is imperative to reflect to examine old practices and grow as a profession in order to engage students with 21st century pedagogies. As the profession looks towards the future research and advocacy efforts need to be conducted to further expand on and address the concerns provided in this paper. The profession must rise from this uncertainty with a renewed vigor to look for innovation and transformation in physical education. Perhaps we should consider the opportunity in front of us to make positive, lasting change.
What Can Be Done?

CAHPERD believes in the strength and resilience of educators to advance the profession through individual and collective efforts. The pandemic has forced educators to a mode of teaching many never thought was possible, however, educators across the state, country, and world have shared resources on the internet, social media, and via their professional organizations. It is important to reflect on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section outlines what CAHPERD does for educators, but also resources and ideas for educators.

What is CAHPERD’s Role?

CAHPERD's mission includes the ideals “to promote healthful lifestyles through quality education for all populations and provide leadership to school, community and statewide programs in the areas of health, physical education, recreation, dance and other movement-related programs.” As such CAHPERD provides the following:

- **CAHPERD Online Resource Events (CORE).** CAHPERD has an ongoing free webinar series to support educators on a variety of topics. A list of the past webinars can be found here, as well on CAHPERD YouTube Channel.
- **Professional Development.** CAHPERD conducts an annual conference as well as regional conferences throughout the year. Dates and locations of conferences can be found on CAHPERDs website. Additionally, CAHPERD’s website has a variety of resources to curriculum and support resources for health and physical educators.
- **Legislative Lobbying.** CAHPERD retains a legislative advocate who works closely with CAHPERD’s Legislative Committee. This committee actively advocates for legislation that is beneficial to the greater HPERD allied professions as well as advocates against harmful legislation. CAHPERD accomplishes this by writing letters of support or opposition to proposed bills and engaging the CAHPERD community. Additionally, CAHPERD has advocacy resources on their website.

CAHPERD provides resources, professional support, and advocates at the state level for quality education. The organization relies heavily on educators to advocate at the local level as well as inform the organization how it can best assist with their goals.

What Can Physical Educators Do?

Educators, under normal circumstances, have many roles and responsibilities within the school setting. Regardless of the learning environment (distance, hybrid, or face-to-face) physical educators must prioritize meeting the students learning needs by developing opportunities for individual learning, promote a balanced curriculum, assess learning, and plan effective learning experiences based on California Physical Education Content Standards. In addition, teachers need to:

- **Become professionally engaged.** Become a member of organizations such as CAHPERD and SHAPE America. These organizations offer many benefits to their members and are strengthened by the membership they serve.
- **Communicate regularly with families, parents/guardians about learning.** Educators know that parents/guardians are a great resource. However, it is important to know
what to communicate to parents/guardians, this could include:

a. **Benefits of Physical Education.** Provide parents/guardians with information to understand the benefits of physical education (review information provided in the “Importance of Physical Education” section) but also give them activities and ideas so they may promote and engage in healthy activities with their children.

b. **How parents/guardians can help.** Provide parents/guardians with information how they can help the physical educator. This could include providing instructions on assignments for how the parent/guardian can help their child during distance learning lessons or homework assignments.

c. **What is your Purpose?** Communicate to parents/guardians the goals and objectives of the physical education program.

- **Inform school leaders about the value and importance of physical education.** It is imperative that school leaders provide both vision and support for the inclusion of physical education instruction regardless of the delivery model. School leaders are a great resource and can advocate for physical education. Be proactive and engaged with administrators by developing and sharing an annual plan based on program growth goals, instructional needs, equipment, and facilities. Administrators cannot assist unless they know what is going on. Do not assume that administrators know the requirements for physical education, why it is important or what is going on in the classroom on a daily basis. When communicating with administrators it is important to include:

  a. **Benefits of Physical Education.** Provide administrators with information to understand the benefits of physical education (review information provided in the “Importance of Physical Education” section).

  b. **What you do.** Invite administrators to your classroom. How does the physical education program address the health and well-being of students at the school? How does the physical education program incorporate innovative, unique, high-impact learning activities?

  c. **Concerns.** Let your administrators know if there are any concerns.

  d. **Positive feedback.** Send copies of positive feedback from students and parents to principals, district administrators and school board members.

  e. **Data.** Share results of the assessment process and data depicting student learning and ongoing growth. Share student work samples with school and district leaders as well as school board members. Further, collect and use data to build value for what students are learning, as well as to identify additional needs within the physical education program.

- **Advocate and organize.** It is important to stay informed and advocate at a local level about the importance of physical education. District Physical Educators at all levels should form one cohesive group by meeting, at least 3 times a year. Some things to consider for these groups are:

  a. **Know your district.** Review and understand the district organizational chart. What are the jobs of each district administrator, and what are their
responsibilities? And who oversees physical education? Meet with the district administration and superintendent that makes decisions about curriculum and Physical Education.

b. **Organize.** Create an organizing structure by having volunteers for a district lead for each level (elementary, middle and high school). This group should keep a roster of district physical educators with emails and phone numbers. This group should also get involved with new teachers’ training at the beginning of the year.

c. **Reach out.** Contact local pediatric doctors, parents, and other community partners to get their support for quality physical education instruction. Request their support in writing and/or speaking at school board meetings by linking quality teaching with learning outcomes. Meet with the leads of district Facilities, Counselors, Food Service, Assessment and Professional Development departments to discuss areas of mutual concern.

d. **Promote.** Develop Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs that target increasing physical opportunities before, during, after, and beyond school that includes students, parents, administrators, and the community.

e. **Present.** Develop and conduct presentations at School Board meetings about how you are infusing concepts important in the district including Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning in your lessons.

f. **Be informed.** Know the laws that govern education. Click on this link to search and read bill descriptions, as well as review the information in previous sections.

g. **Advocate.** Meet with your local district union president and communicate with local legislators. You can find your Union representative by visiting the California Teachers Association website. Click on this link to find your State Senator and Representatives.
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References


UNESCO (2020b). *What we have learnt? Overview of findings from a survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19.* [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374702](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374702)


### Other Resources


California Department of Education guidance on [exemptions for physical education](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/exemptions.asp).

California Department of Education [guidelines for elementary school](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/guidelines/elementary.asp).

California Department of Education [guidelines for middle and high school](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/guidelines/middlehigh.asp).

Executive Order [N-56-20](https://www.govexec.com/leg/56-20/) - Waives physical education instructional minutes indefinitely and the PFT for the academic year 2019-20.

Senate [Bill 820](https://www.ca.gov/senate/05/05/01/index.cfm) - Suspends the PFT for academic year 2020-21.

Educational [Code 51222](https://www.cde.ca.gov/cd/eo/hs/code51222.asp) - Instructional minutes for physical education at the secondary level.

Educational [Code 51223](https://www.cde.ca.gov/cd/eo/hs/code51223.asp) - Instructional minutes for physical education at the elementary level.

Educational [Code 60800](https://www.cde.ca.gov/cd/eo/hs/code60800.asp) - Physical fitness testing guidance.

Robert Roy Britt, (2019). *Why PE should be required from kindergarten to college: Physical activity improves mental and physical health... and grades.* Medium.

California Physical Education Community Work Group Guides:

- For [Teachers](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/teacherguidelines.asp)
- For [Parents](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/parentguidelines.asp)
- For [School Leaders](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pe/hs/schoolleadersguidelines.asp)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). *Health & Academics: Health students are better learners.*


Ray Sam. (2017). *Top 5 reasons why physical education is as important as schoolwork.* Education and Behavior.

Appendix A: Survey Methodology

Why was the survey conducted?

The survey was conducted because CAHPERD is invested in promoting and advocating for quality physical education. CAHPERD members were reaching out for support and guidance throughout the Spring and Summer of 2020. To best serve the profession, CAHPERD leadership decided to send out the questionnaire to K-12 physical education teachers to better understand the needs of physical educators in California.

Who was the survey sent to?

Respondents were recruited via an email blast from CAHPERD. The email was sent to CAHPERD members and non-members. The non-members were contacted from a database of physical education teachers' names and contact information that CAHPERD purchased from Market Data Retrieval. The survey was sent by email to 10,984 email addresses with 9,597 being successfully delivered (1,387 bounced back). 3,618 of recipients opened the email message and 489 responded (13.5% response rate) with 474 qualifying responses.

The email with the survey was sent via email September 2020, and the survey closed in October 2020.

How was the survey developed?

The survey included a total of 18 questions. Questions included the following topics (a) teaching position, (b) name of school or district, (c) professional development, (d) instructional minute requirements, and (e) COVID-19 issues. Additionally, several questions allowed the respondent to expand upon their response. Lastly, there were two open-ended questions asking respondents to share any issues they need support with and any additional issues they deemed important. The survey questions were evaluated for clarity by physical education experts and evaluated for Face validity; meaning the survey was evaluated to determine if it would provide answers to the purpose of this project (Salkind, 2010).

How were data collected?

Data were collected via a Google Forms survey. Respondents were provided with a link to the survey in an email sent from CAHPERD.

How were data analyzed?

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine number, percentages, minimum, maximum, mode and range to describe the responses. Qualitative data were analyzed by two Higher Education faculty members with considerable experience evaluating and organizing qualitative data. Data were analyzed separately by the two faculty members to develop themes using open and axial coding methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Given the exploratory nature of the questions, an atheoretical approach to analyzing the qualitative data was taken. Initial themes were developed separately, then themes were discussed and refined. Data were checked for negative cases and themes were confirmed by external reviewers.