



of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

AAHPERD RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM AWARD 2004

Attitudes, Intrinsic Motivation, and Perceived Climate in Physical Education Classes: How Do They Relate to Physical Fitness and Physical Activity?

INVESTIGATORS Melinda A. Solmon & Charity Bryan, Louisiana State University

CATEGORY Established Investigator Grant

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of students' attitudes and motivation toward physical education with an ultimate goal of learning how to design class environments and activities that will promote the adoption of active life styles. The investigators examined the relationships between self-reported levels of physical activity, measures of health related fitness, attitudes toward physical education, perceived motivational climate, and level of activity in physical education classes. Surveys, field-based fitness tests, and pedometers were utilized to gather information from students.

Self-reported level of physical activity and the number of steps taken during a physical education class displayed a strong positive correlation with health-related fitness assessments. Children who reported higher levels of physical activity as well as those who took more steps during their physical education class had a higher cardiovascular fitness level. Those individuals also had a lower body mass index and lower percent body fat, which was estimated by skinfold tests. Learning climates that emphasized personal improvement and mastering tasks were associated with positive attitudes toward physical education and physical activity, higher levels of perceived competence, and higher levels of motivation to be physically active. Current levels of physical activity and positive attitudes were directly related to intentions to engage in physical activity in the future.

The major findings of the study support several implications for teachers. Children who are currently engaged in physical activity perform better on measures of health related fitness which indicates that they intend to be active in the future. Positive attitudes toward physical education increase the likelihood that children will be actively engaged in physical activity; Positive attitudes are fostered in physical education classes where teachers emphasize learning and improvement rather than on winning games or outperforming other students. Creating motivational class climates in which students can be successful while engaging in physical activity is important, especially for students who are sedentary. In conclusion, it is important to select tasks and activities that students find to be useful and enjoyable in order to foster positive attitudes and increase the likelihood that children will choose to be active.