



Hononegah High School

Dan Phelps, P.E. teacher at Hononegah High School identified community partnerships as foundational to developing a withstanding physical education culture at his school. Phelps believes that it is the responsibility of physical educators like himself to develop students' fitness knowledge.

Hononegah High School

Level: 9-12th grade

Enrollment: 2,130

Low Income: 13%

- 87% White
- 2% Asian
- 2% Black
- 6% Hispanic

(ISBE School Report Card)

From Old Sports to New Small-Sided Games

The typical sports-based P.E. curriculum was in effect at Hononegah High School in Rockton, Illinois, until the introduction of heart rate monitors was a catalyst for change. Since Dan Phelps began as a P.E. teacher at Hononegah High School just one year ago, he has helped move this change along. Although the monitors had been used during P.E. class for some time, Phelps believed that more could be done to ensure that the students were not only reaching their targeted heart rate, but understanding the implications of doing so. "Initially, the goal was to get students in their target heart rate zone for 20 minutes of the 50 minute period using any modality the student chose, which turned P.E. class into a free for all recess where they weren't being taught anything. We don't want to take sports out altogether, but you do not want to see eight kids just standing around during a game of soccer. One of the biggest changes we have made was creating small-sided sports games in order to keep students' heart rates in their target zone for a certain amount of time." Small-sided games are variations of traditional sports games that use smaller teams to encourage more physical activity for students.

Lifelong Fitness

"We knew that the P.E. culture at Hononegah was weak. There was a disconnect between our department, the administrators, and the parents. Realizing that our culture and lack of recognition were due to what we were not doing was a wake-up call." Phelps believes that it is the responsibility of P.E. teachers to teach their students about lifelong fitness. "Kids are in public education for thirteen years. If they aren't being taught how to eat right or exercise properly, then what are we doing?"

Phelps and the other P.E. teachers have high hopes for the Carol White Physical Education

Program (PEP) grant for which they applied this year. He credits the partnership they have with Polar®, who sells heart rate monitors, for the momentum that caused them to apply for the PEP grant as well as the funding for a professional grant writer. The PEP grant would in part be used to purchase Polar® blue tooth heart rate monitors, allowing data to be automatically uploaded to a central location.

The school has strong partnerships with the community, something Phelps says is integral in growing their P.E. program. Such partners include the local YMCA, a nutritionist, the Winnebago County Health Department, and Illinois State University. "With our community partnerships we are starting to close the gap between health professionals, community organizations, and us," said Phelps.

"Promoting an enhanced P.E. program for our district is an integral part of our strategic plan. From an emphasis on broader wellness strategies to effective, long-term professional development, a comprehensive approach is created not only for physical activity but also for greater return on investment for our students in academic and elective courses,"

**--Lynn Gibson, Superintendent
Hononegah School District**

Resources

TriFIT Software

www.polar.com

FITNESSGRAM®

www.fitnessgram.net

Winnebago County Health Department

www.wchd.org

Carol White PEP Grant

www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html

Enhance P.E. Task Force

www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm

The Community Guide

www.thecommunityguide.org



Students at Hononegah in P.E.

Overhauling the Freshman Curriculum and Beyond

School leadership and teachers are committed to providing daily, quality P.E. classes; however, many students test out of the daily P.E. classes offered. Since students only have six periods for both academic and elective classes, P.E. has been an optional class under a P.E. waiver from the Illinois State Board of Education. Students can easily test out of P.E. for a whole academic year by achieving certain scores on the PACER test and one mile run, which measure cardiorespiratory fitness. The problem with this, Phelps believes, is that it does not ensure students have the health and fitness knowledge required by Illinois' learning standards.

As a school, they are working to make the waiver test more rigorous and have it test fitness knowledge so that fewer than the current 313 students will test out of P.E. class annually. P.E. is required every year for all grade levels, so with alterations to the waiver test, Phelps hopes to have most if not all students participating in P.E. every day while at Hononegah High.

The Path to Change

Overall health and wellness have been driving factors at Hononegah. District Superintendent Lynn Gibson supported the PEP grant writing process, which allowed the department to develop new philosophies and form strong relationships with community partners. "Promoting an enhanced P.E. program for our district is an integral part of our strategic plan. From an emphasis on broader wellness strategies to effective, long-term professional development, a comprehensive approach is created not only for physical activity but also for greater return on investment for our students in academic and elective courses," says Superintendent Gibson.

Doing What Is Best for Our Students

Even though the program is in the early stages of revitalization, it is already clear that these changes will be significant. The District has purchased TRiFit software which analyzes FITNESSGRAM® data, along with a bio-impedance scale to measure body composition and track fitness trends.

"To get it off the ground, you need to have everyone on board, but at the same time you need people who are willing to deal with adversity," Phelps said. He believes that the main factor in the success of the freshman curriculum and beyond is having data that show the value of what they are doing. Regardless of the roadblocks he may encounter, he says it is important to remember that, "at the end of the day, we always have to do what is best for our students, and not what is easiest."



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