

Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education

With the recent release of both a movie and television show about dodgeball, debate about the game's merits and improprieties has escalated in the media. Thus, the San Diego Unified School District Physical Education Department, California Association of Health (CAHPERD), Physical Education and Dance and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education would like to reiterate its position about including dodgeball in school physical education programs or after school programs on SDUSD properties.

San Diego Unified School District believes that dodgeball is **not** an appropriate activity for K-12 school physical education programs. The potential for injury and liability to the San Diego Unified School District outweighs any benefit students would receive. The purpose of physical education is to provide students with: The knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to be physically active for a lifetime:

- A daily dose of physical activity for health benefits
- Positive experiences so that kids want to be physically active outside of physical education class and throughout their lifetime
- The goals of physical education can be obtained through a wide variety of appropriate physical activities.
- Getting and keeping children and adolescents active is one of the biggest challenges facing parents and youth leaders.
- 61.5% of children aged 9-13 years do not participate in any organized physical activity during their non-school hours and 22.6% do not engage in any free-time physical activity.
- One-third of high school students are not adequately active and over 10% do not participate in any physical activity at all.
- 16% of U.S. youth aged 6-19 are overweight; triple the proportion of 25 years ago.

According to NASPE's *Appropriate Practices for Elementary School Physical Education* (2000), "in a quality physical education class teachers involve ALL children in activities that allow them to participate actively, both physically and mentally. Activities such as relay races, dodgeball, and elimination tag provide limited opportunities for everyone in the class, especially the slower, less agile students who need the activity the most."

The students who are eliminated first in dodgeball are typically the ones who most need to be active and practice their skills. Many times these students are also the ones with the least amount of confidence in their physical abilities. Being targeted because they are the "weaker" players, and being hit by a hard-thrown ball, does not help kids to develop confidence.

The arguments most often heard in favor of dodgeball are that it allows for the practice of important physical skills – and kids like it.

- Dodgeball does provide a means of practicing some important physical skills – running, dodging, throwing, and catching. However, there are many activities that allow practice of these skills without using human targets or eliminating students from play.
- Some kids may like it – the most skilled, the most confident. But many do not! Certainly not the student who gets hit hard in the stomach, head, or groin. And it is not appropriate to teach our children that you win by hurting others.

In a recent article about the new GSN (games network) TV show called “Extreme Dodgeball,” there is talk of “developing and executing extreme strategies to annihilate opponents” and the use of terms such as “throw-to-kill ratios,” and “headshots.”

“Is this the type of game that you want children to be exposed to?”