

# Technology in the Physical Education Classroom

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## I. INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly accepted belief that technology is a cause for a decrease in physical activity in students or youth. To combat this there are an increasingly vast amount of Apps and programs that use technology to promote physical and mental health. Specifically, there is technology that can support students and teachers in the Physical Education classroom. These technological tools are listed below and can be incorporated into everyday curriculum. It is important to consider, when planning to use technology in the classroom that "for technology to have a powerful impact on learning, it needs to engage students in the learning process, encourage higher-order thinking skills and be meaningful to the student." Technology has had a direct impact on the health and wellness of our youth today. Children are no longer heading outside after school to play hide and seek or tag, but rather are heading indoors to play video games or watch TV. "Playing digital games (video, computer and console games), or using computer may be other sedentary behaviors related to the development of overweight and obesity." Maybe, instead of eliminating technology, as it is an inevitable staple in our society, physical educators should embrace it and use it to encourage youth to be more active.

## II. HISTORY

The history of Physical Education has included technology throughout its development and "technological advances offer new ways to train and improve the human body for all types of physical activity." Using technology to monitor physical health is hardly a new innovation. "For years, pedometers, accelerometers, and heart rate monitors have been used as motivational tools." In recent years, these technologies have been made more widely available to the general public. As a physical education teacher with limited funding, these technologies would not be realistic for use in the classroom, therefore more widely available and inexpensive technologies may be more effective.

## III. ADVANCEMENTS

Technology in physical education and health has come a long way since pedometers and heart rate monitors. The introduction of the internet, smart phones and interactive video games have welcomed a new realm of ways to stay physically active. The internet opened doors for such platforms as blogs or websites, where teachers can create classroom websites, communicate with students and parents and post videos and other motivational tools. To take it a step further, the introduction of smart phones not only allow students to access the internet from anywhere, but they allow for students to download Apps which can help with motivation, tracking distances and even calorie counting. Finally, interactive video games can actually be used to literally workout, in other words you no longer have to sit still to play video games.

#### IV. TECHNOLOGY EXAMPLES

There are many forms of technology that are currently available that meet the needs of a Physical Education classroom or teacher. Below are some examples of technologies that can be used in conjunction with the physical education curriculum. While technology can provide some powerful experiences, it is important for teachers to be aware of how they are using technology and promote best practices in their own teaching. Not all of the technologies listed below should be used on a daily basis in the physical education classroom, but can be very effective motivators.

#### V. SOCIAL MEDIA

"According to a recent report from the Pew Research Center, 73 percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 use social networking." This number suggests that using this type of technology would not only be easy to implement but would also be helpful in motivating students to be more physically active. Students will be able to directly connect with other classmates and even their teachers. "One of the easiest and most straight forward is to create individual teacher profiles. These profiles should be publicly accessible and aligned with the philosophy of the department." . Creating a classroom Facebook account for example would allow students to post and chat with each other. They can also motivate each other, encouraging improvement in current curriculum based physical activity. "Prior to using social media with students experiment with it on a personal basis, and when comfortable use it with students. Always remember that any information sent electronically cannot be recalled; it is out there for everyone". Students may also be able to post pictures and videos of exercises, therefore using it as a platform to share knowledge. The use of social media would fall under the curriculum organizer of Safety, Fair play and Leadership where students develop skills related to "safe participation in a variety of physical activities in all activity categories"

#### VI. BLOGS/WEBSITES

The internet has an abundance of valuable resources for educators lesson plans. Pinterest is one such example of a collection of peer-selected content that educators have access to, often free of charge. This route also allows PE teachers to gain support from others who are teaching in similar situations, through content-sharing sites and teacher blogs. Aside from lesson plans, there are training plans that teachers can either access or can allow students to find for themselves. Allowing students to search for training plans on their own that support their own goal-setting is a powerful way to put them in charge of their own learning. Powercoach is an example of a website which provides a variety of tools, like online calculators and training plans based on weight, goals and current activity level. Apps for Android or iPhones are also available and quite easy to use, however they do require that students have access to, and are allowed to use that kind of technology. An alternative to this would be to create a class training program and have one teacher device that uses the program for all students, or a selected group.

#### VII. INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES

"Many fitness centers, schools, and senior centers are now offering interactive games to promote physical activity of children, adolescents, and older adults." Many companies produce video game consoles which promote physical activity, but one which has been prevalent in schools most recently is WiiFit. "This exercise game uses the handheld Wii remote controller and a balance board peripheral for some of the activities (e.g., running in place and yoga poses)." These activities certainly aren't congruent with the real thing, but the movements are very similar. This would be an excellent tool as this technology is familiar among youth and would therefore be an appealing activity. Students could also use this technology at home, making it a fitness tool that could potentially promote lifelong physical fitness and health. This technology helps to meet the curriculum organizer of "Active Living" which includes many prescribed learning outcomes but focuses on students willingness and understanding of wellness activities and their relation to their own personal health.

#### VIII. APPS

An App is software with a specific purpose (help track miles walked for example) that can be downloaded onto the device of your choice. In the past students might use maps to make plans for hikes, runs or walks.

There are great Apps that provide hiking trails, running routes and biking routes in select cities. Having students use these route planners to plan real or even imagined routes is a good way to encourage goal setting in Physical Education. It also addresses the curricular needs of "Alternative-Environment Activities," which are required elements in many districts. Other useful Apps include ones that track calorie intake, create and describe exercise routines for the weight room, and even ones that help track weight loss. Fitness and health are ever expanding in the App world it seems, there are always new Apps which can be bought and used by anyone. Students would benefit from using these Apps as they can access them from anywhere, and use them to track their progress. Teachers may even use them to track their students progress and use them for evaluation.

#### REFERENCE

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