

# Importance of HPE and the Role of the Teacher

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### ASSUMED PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- Child development
- Personal HPE experiences
- Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Australian Curriculum

### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter content focuses on the importance of Health and Physical Education (HPE) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings and school contexts. How HPE is taught is influenced by teacher knowledge, attitudes and confidence—factors shaped by a teacher's past experiences as a student of the subject. You will reflect on your past experiences and their effect on your perception of HPE and explore your role as an advocate.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

- Understand the importance of HPE
- Understand differences between HPE and physical activity (PA)
- Understand how perceptions about HPE are formed
- Understand that advocacy requires knowledge of HPE content, knowledge of the learner and knowledge of the school and community environment

## KEY TERMS

- Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings
- Health and Physical Education (HPE)
- Wellbeing
- Self-efficacy
- Physical activity (PA)
- Physical education (PE)
- Health
- Advocacy

## SETTING THE SCENE

### How do your perceptions impact on HPE?

Think back to your experiences of HPE in primary school. Who taught you HPE? What did you do? Was there an even mix of physical education and health education taught? Did you enjoy it? Are they fond memories?

Your perceptions of HPE have been shaped by your experiences as a student of HPE. These perceptions are important because “Individual perception influences opinion, judgment, understanding of a situation or person, meaning of an experience, and how one responds to a situation” (Munhall, 2008, p. 607). Perceptions shape what you teach and how you teach it. Morgan and Bourke (2008) identified that teachers’ HPE experiences as students influenced their confidence in teaching HPE. The respondents whose experiences were not positive indicated that this was due to HPE programs that lacked variety, and programs dominated by games and sports with little teaching or learning.

Morgan (2008) investigated pre-service and in-service teachers’ attitudes towards teaching HPE in a New South Wales context. His findings were that while the teachers valued HPE they preferred not to teach it. The reasons for this were lack of time, lack of training and lack of expertise. Teachers bring their prior experience, values and attitudes to the classroom. McMaster (2015) has called for a cultural shift in the perceptions of HPE in schools and the schooling community. But how is this to be achieved?

The first step in achieving this cultural shift is to identify factors that impact on perceptions of HPE and devise ways they could be addressed. Prior experience of HPE in the primary school years has been identified as a factor, and Morgan (2008) suggested that teacher training institutes recognise this and construct courses that incorporate reflection sessions and address and challenge pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards HPE.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to assist you to understand the importance of **Health and Physical Education (HPE)** because all components of development influence each other and are intimately linked to movement, play and physical activity. In **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)** settings and school contexts, opportunities to engage in these activities are provided in a quality HPE program.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The national debate in Australia about the importance of HPE and the need for its inclusion in the national curriculum is now over. The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Australian Curriculum: HPE) is a mandatory learning area available for implementation nationally and demonstrates the government's vested interest in a future healthy society. This quest for a healthy future for students, regardless of their family or social situation, aligns with whole-school curriculum aims and national aims for schooling. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA], 2008, p. 13) states that an Australian curriculum “will include a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It will also enable students to build social and emotional intelligence, and nurture student **wellbeing** through health and physical education in particular”. HPE provides opportunities for students to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills that have real world value and use, enhancing wellbeing and enabling them to make informed decisions that can lead to the enjoyment of a healthy lifestyle.

In HPE programs students participate in a range of educational experiences, participating in movement, learning forms of movement and the benefits of movement. These are skills that enable lifelong participation in physical activity. In acquiring these skills, students develop decision-making and problem-solving abilities and learn how to work individually and in groups. They develop skills in interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and leadership. They learn how to manage their body and the joy and challenge that results from participation in physical activity.

HPE and physical activity are differentiated; HPE is a curriculum area with an educative focus while physical activity is movement that involves physical exertion. Penney (2008) stated that education is the core business of HPE and this differentiates it from physical activity and sport. School sport is related to, but not a replacement for, an HPE program. The skills learnt in HPE may be applied in a sport setting. Through HPE, students gain an appreciation of their own and others' movement, which can assist them in participating in and spectating at sports events.

In HPE programs students also develop skills in health literacy: accessing information about health, evaluating information sources and communicating health messages within local, national and global

### Health and Physical Education (HPE)

A learning area that integrates physical education, health education and personal development. It allows students to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding to strengthen their sense of self, and build and manage satisfying, respectful relationships.

### Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings

Long day care, family day care, day care, preschools, kindergartens, playgroups, crèches, occasional care, multi-purpose Indigenous children's services, early intervention settings and similar type services for children.

### Wellbeing

A sense of satisfaction, happiness, effective social functioning and spiritual health, and dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience (ACARA).

**Figure 1.1** Learning HPE skills in sport**Self-efficacy**

The belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task.

communities. The learning experiences provided in a quality HPE program develop **self-efficacy** and participation in HPE supports academic achievement, develops resilience and helps students formulate strategies to deal with challenges.

While the ACHPER National Position Statement (2014), The Importance of the Health and Physical Education Learning Area in Schools, stated that “HPE contributes to a preventative health agenda as well as an educational agenda”, HPE should not be seen as a panacea for all the health problems in society. The importance of HPE needs to remain focused on educative purposes, where HPE provides a breadth of learning across a range of areas in movement and health to develop skills, knowledge and dispositions that will enable young people to live healthy, safe and active lives.

**CRITICAL INVESTIGATION**

Conduct further research on the importance of HPE and compose a paragraph that gives a personal perspective on the importance of HPE in an ECEC setting or primary school context.

**LEARNING IN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Learning in HPE is an integral part of the total education of every child, facilitating the development of both the mind and body. Dinan-Thompson (2009, p. xvii) defined HPE as “a learning area that brings together the integration of physical education, health education and personal development to reflect the dynamic and multidimensional nature of health, and to recognise the significance of physical activity and personal skills in the lives of individuals and groups in Australian society”.

HPE outcomes are evident in the Early Years Learning Framework and it is a core learning area in the Australian Curriculum. In Australia, there is common slippage in terminology between Health and Physical Education (HPE), Physical Education (PE) and Health Education (HE). In Queensland, HPE is the learning area, but PE is more commonly taught by primary PE specialists in Queensland primary schools (Brooks, 2017, p. 3). In New South Wales the subject is called Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) while in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, the term “Health and Physical Education” (HPE) is used.

While there are differences in terminology when identifying the learning area of HPE nationally, use of the term “HPE” indicates that learning will occur in the form of a program to assist the progression of students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in this area of the curriculum.

### CRITICAL INVESTIGATION

Please read the ACHPER Position Statement on the Importance of the Health and Physical Education learning area in schools (2014) and answer the following questions:

1. What are the fundamental differences between this definition and the Dinan-Thompson definition?
2. The author of this chapter prefers Dinan-Thompson’s definition. Why do you think this is?
3. Read the ACARA Rationale for Health and Physical Education and define HPE in your own words, noting that learning in HPE occurs in ECEC settings and school contexts.

Figure 1.2 Parachute activity



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION ARE NOT THE SAME THING

## Physical activity

Body movement produced by a contraction of skeletal muscle that increases energy expenditure. It includes playing *sport*, exercise and fitness activities, and everyday activities such as walking and many other forms of active *recreation* (ACARA).

## Physical education

A curriculum-based program that teaches students the benefits of physical activity, builds techniques for leading an active lifestyle and promotes healthy, long-term habits (SPARK, 2017).

The terms **physical activity** (PA) and **physical education** (PE) have been used interchangeably in the media and other contexts. It is important to understand that they are different but both are components of Health and Physical Education (HPE). SPARK, a research-based organisation that disseminates evidence-based PE programs, defined physical activity as “any bodily movement that involves physical exertion” and PE as “a curriculum based program that teaches students the benefits of physical activity, builds techniques for leading an active lifestyle and promotes healthy, long term habits” (SPARK, 2017). Learning in PE requires structure and a written curriculum that guides teaching, whereas PA can be structured or unstructured and, while being an essential component of a HPE program, it can also be performed outside educational settings.

## What is physical activity?

Physical activity is essential for brain development, good health and wellbeing, which underpins the economic, social and cultural structures of society and contributes to the prosperity and growth of the whole community. In Australia, we have physical activity guidelines from the federal Department of Health; the Australian 24-Hour Movement

Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years) contains time recommendations on participation in physical activity and sleep, and time restrictions on sedentary behaviours for babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children (5–12 years) and Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Young People (13–17 years) contain recommendations related to school-aged children. These guidelines apply to all children irrespective of cultural background, gender, socio-economic status, and ability (Australian Government Department of Health, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). The information from these sources is summarised in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1** Summary of physical activity recommendations from 0 to 17 years

Age group	Recommended time and activities
Infants (under 1 year)	Physical activity several times a day, including 30 minutes of tummy time. Activities are floor-based and involve crawling.
Toddlers (1–2 years)	180 minutes a day, including energetic play such as running.
Pre-schoolers (3–5 years)	180 minutes a day, including 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activities such as walking, running and climbing.
Children (5–12 years)	60 minutes of accumulated activity, including moderate and vigorous aerobic activity. On at least 3 days a week children should engage in weight-bearing activities that strengthen muscle and bone.
Adolescents/Young people (13–17 years)	60 minutes of accumulated activity, including moderate and vigorous aerobic activity. On at least 3 days a week children should engage in weight-bearing activities that strengthen muscle and bone.

Sources: Australian Government Department of Health (2017a, 2017b, 2017c): Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years), Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children (5–12 years), Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Young People (13–17 years)



Moderate-intensity physical activity includes such things as a brisk walk, whereas vigorous physical activity is what makes a person “huff and puff”, where talking in full sentences between breaths is difficult. The recommendations encourage children and youth to engage in a range of physical activities.

Currently physical inactivity globally is the fourth leading cause of death, and key findings from the Australian Health Survey: Physical Activity, 2011–12, found that:

In 2011–12, toddlers and pre-schoolers (aged 2–4 years) spent an average of around 6 hours per day engaged in physical activity. They also spent almost one and a half hours per day (83 minutes) in the sedentary activities of watching TV, DVDs or playing electronic games.

On average, children and young people aged 5–17 years spent one and a half hours (91 minutes) per day on physical activity and over two hours a day (136 minutes) in screen-based activity with physical activity decreasing and screen-based activity increasing as age increased. (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013)

#### TECH TIP

A5 colour brochures of the *Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines* are available free of charge, from National Mail and Marketing on the Department of Health website. These can be distributed to students and families.

**Figure 1.3** Types of physical activity

- Types of physical activity**
- **Active recreation**, for example bush walking, skateboarding, and surfing
  - **Sport**, for example netball, soccer, and volleyball
  - **Dance**, such as line dancing, ballet, and ballroom dancing
  - **Fitness**, for example strength training, balance exercises, and flexibility activities
  - **Active play**, using playground equipment, playing games, and skipping
  - **Active living**, where physical activity is integrated into everyday life such as using the stairs, energetic housework, and gardening. Some occupations also involve physical activity
  - **Active transport**, for example walking to public transport, walking or cycling to locations

### *The benefits of physical activity for children*

Children engaging in regular physical activity may experience benefits such as:

- Improved health—encourages healthy growth and development of children’s bodies
- Improved emotional wellbeing—helps young children feel more confident, happy and relaxed, with improved self-esteem and self-concept
- Improved mental health—improves concentration skills and ability to manage anxiety and stress
- Enhanced social skills—develops skills such as teamwork, meeting new people and developing friendships
- Increased capacity for learning and productivity—active children are generally more motivated and better organised than children who are inactive, and physical activity has direct links to improved learning outcomes
- A more positive school environment—active students are generally less aggressive and experience fewer discipline problems

## What is physical education?

PE programs aim to involve students in a broad range of physical activities as part of a structured curriculum to encourage healthy long-term habits in movement and physical activity. In the Australian Curriculum, students learn through participation in movement, and they learn about forms of movement, as well as the benefits of participating in movement. In ECEC settings, this occurs in semi-structured movement, play and physical activity learning experiences linked to The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009). These learning experiences are generally non-competitive, encourage participation and enjoyment, and are set up to be achievable and leave no child with a sense of failure.

In school settings, PE programs occur in HPE lessons, via an ongoing long-term structured program, teaching and assessing mandatory outcomes from the Australian Curriculum: HPE. The scope and sequence of the HPE curriculum assists teachers to ensure that the content of their programs is appropriate to the physical and mental development of their students. The learning activities that are established in lessons can be modified to suit the abilities of all students in the class by either making them easier or more challenging. The content is taught via engagement in a range of physical activities from a range of focus

**Figure 1.4** School physical education lesson





areas such as active play and minor games, challenge and adventure activities, fundamental motor skills, games and sports, lifelong physical activities and rhythmic and expressive movement activities.

In the Australian Curriculum: HPE, students learn about movement and physical activity in both the content strands: personal, social and community health and movement and physical activity. Physical Education is taught through the content descriptions of the three sub-strands of movement and physical activity: moving our body, understanding movement and learning through movement, which reflect participation in movement, forms of movement and benefits of participation in movement. There are content descriptions in the personal, social and community health strand that address the importance of regular physical activity for physical, mental and social health. Learning opportunities in both strands include:

- refining movement skills
- developing movement concepts and strategies
- fitness and physical activity
- elements of movement
- cultural significance of physical activity
- teamwork and leadership
- critical and creative thinking in movement
- ethical behaviour in movement settings.

### *The benefits of physical education for children*

While the benefits of PE programs can mirror those of physical activity mentioned in the previous section, PE programs provide children with regular access to experiences that promote healthy living in a supportive educational environment.

The transformative potential of HPE as a medium for advancing social justice has been recognised by Evans (2003) and Penney (2008). HPE programs should ensure equitable access for children who have been disadvantaged in receiving experiences that promote healthy living, including students with a disability, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students from culturally and linguistically diverse background, and students from under-served communities.

### **PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Did you engage in physical activity or physical education when you were at school? Were your lessons structured learning experiences, or did you just play games?
2. What are the advantages of an ongoing structured physical education program?
3. Thinking back on your time at school, which types of physical activity did you participate in? Did you personally meet today's guidelines on physical activity? How/why?
4. Children in primary school spend long periods of time sitting. What strategies could you use to improve this?
5. Thinking about the lives of children in long day care settings, schooling and after-school care, the majority of their day is spent in these settings and not at home. What responsibility do we as teachers have in ensuring children meet the recommended physical activity guidelines?

**Health**

A state of complete physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. It includes the ability to lead a socially and economically productive life (ACARA).

**What is health education?**

As defined in the Australian Curriculum: HPE (ACARA, 2018), **health** is “a state of complete physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. It includes the ability to lead a socially and economically productive life.” The first sentence of this definition parallels the World Health Organization (WHO) definition.

**Figure 1.5** Health education resources



Therefore, health education provides educational opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to “support them to be resilient, to develop a strong sense of self, to build and maintain satisfying relationships, to make health-enhancing decisions in relation to their health and physical activity participation, and to develop health literacy competencies in order to enhance their own and others’ health and wellbeing” (ACARA, 2018).

In ECEC settings, health education occurs in semi-structured learning experiences. These are linked to The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009), around children developing a sense of belonging, self-identity, positive interactions with others, building of relationships and friendships, recognition of emotions and self-regulation, establishment of health routines, food and nutrition, positive attitudes to physical movement, and ways to keep themselves and others safe.

In school settings, health education occurs in a comprehensive HPE program, teaching and assessing mandatory outcomes from the Australian Curriculum: HPE. The scope and sequence of HPE curriculum assists teachers to ensure that the content of their programs is appropriate to the physical and mental development of their students. The health education content is taught via engagement in learning activities in a range of focus areas such as alcohol and other drugs, food and nutrition, health benefits of physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, relationships and sexuality, and safety.

In the Australian Curriculum: HPE students learn about personal, social and community health through three sub-strands: being healthy, safe and active; communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing; and contributing to healthy and active communities. Learning opportunities in these areas include “threads” of curriculum content:

- identities
- changes and transitions
- help-seeking
- making healthy and safe choices
- interacting with others
- understanding emotions
- health literacy
- community health promotion
- connecting to the environment
- valuing diversity.

### *The benefits of health education for children*

Health education provides life skills that can positively influence the health behaviour of children and can benefit families, communities and environments. Learning about physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social health empowers children to make informed decisions about their own health and become advocates in the community. Health education programs that include parents and community assist with consistency in the health messages children receive at school, at home and in the community.

While the education and health sectors both agree on the importance of health education, the health sector is focused on changes in children’s health behaviours, improving health indicators and reducing morbidity (St Leger, 1999). The education sector is focused on the development of disciplinary knowledge, understanding and skills underpinning health education and how students will make meaning of and apply them in various contexts (ACARA, 2018).

## WHO TEACHES HPE?

In ECEC settings, it is generally the teachers and staff who teach HPE, using a community approach where educators, parents, carers and community work together to deliver learning experiences to the children. The schooling context is quite different.

In Australia, a federal government does not have constitutional power to pass laws on education, and the states and territories are responsible for the operation, administration, funding and regulation of state (public) schools. However, the federal government assists with the funding of non-government schools and supplementary funding for state schools. The federal government has a Department of Education and Training that is responsible for national policies and programs (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2016). This arrangement has created tensions between state and federal governments and contributes to both classroom and specialist teachers being responsible for teaching HPE in Australian primary schools.

There is no consistency in the allocation of teachers to HPE in Australian primary schools. Primary schools in Australia are funded and staffed on a generalist model where classroom teachers teach multiple learning areas to a class. However, many independent schools and some government schools will employ “key teachers of PE” to deliver the PE component of HPE. In the majority of cases, the classroom teacher is responsible for the delivery of HPE. The exception is Queensland, where primary PE specialist teachers are employed in state schools to deliver the PE component of HPE.

There has been debate about who is best able to teach HPE in a primary school setting. Curry (2013) argued for the placement of primary PE specialist teachers in New South Wales public schools to provide all children with opportunities to participate in PE lessons and address the situation where these lessons are neglected. McMaster (2013) saw the classroom teacher as the ideal person to provide developmentally appropriate instruction in HPE in primary schools. Lynch (2013, p. 12) brought the arguments of Curry and McMaster together by proposing “a university course where generalist teachers have the opportunity to specialise in developmentally appropriate primary HPE (which) will enable, in time, all schools in Australia to have classroom teachers who are prepared to teach the whole child with particular strengths and focus in physical learning as specialist primary HPE teachers”. Many tertiary institutions offer units on HPE in primary school teaching qualification courses but Lynch’s proposal forecasts an increase in the time and resources allocated to HPE through increased teacher advocacy for the learning area.

There is a third source providing instruction and lessons in HPE—the external provider. These may be sport development officers from sports organisations, individuals from private companies or not-for-profit organisations. The use of external providers in HPE programs has been investigated by Williams, Hay and Macdonald (2011), Williams and Macdonald (2015) and Powell (2015), and concerns have been raised that programs provided by external providers could replace a HPE program. Health education in schools is an increasing focus of government-funded initiatives with a “history of schools using “outside experts” for many health activities in schools” (Rowling, 1996, p. 254). The teaching of health curriculum and extra-curricular activities are conducted in schools by a range of people other than the classroom teacher, which reflects findings from other international and national research (Brooks & Dinan-Thompson, 2013; Petrie, Penney & Fellows, 2014; Rowling, 1996; Tasker, 2004; Whipp, Hutton, Grove & Jackson, 2011; Williams, Hay & Macdonald, 2011). Concerns about the use of external providers relate to their qualifications and skills, knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy, the continuity of programs once funding has expired, “one-off” lessons instead of a structured program and also equity concerns if it is a “user pays” system for students. However, there can be positive outcomes from using external providers if they support the HPE program by reinforcing and developing the learnings that take place in HPE lessons.

While there are a variety of teachers of HPE, ongoing research (Lovat, 2005; Rowe, 2004), suggests that quality learning is founded on quality teaching, so for students to experience quality HPE, it is essential that teachers value the HPE learning area and have both the pedagogical and content knowledge to deliver the curriculum. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015) called for education systems to have mechanisms for quality assurance in HPE programs to promote good practice and to promulgate sufficient curriculum time for the subject.

## The benefits of teaching HPE

Teaching HPE requires educators to learn a whole new set of skills in how to manage the classroom both indoors and outdoors. The skills required to teach sensitive issues in the classroom requires the establishment of trusting relationships, listening skills and empathy between students and the teacher. When teaching in an outdoor classroom, skills are required in risk assessment and risk management in relation to the physical as well as the emotional safety of the students in the class. Once the protocols for HPE classes have been established, the benefits of teaching HPE come in the form of the strong bonds and relationships that develop with students.

For some students in your classes, you may very well be the only constant in their life, the only person they can rely on to be a part of their life, to notice that they are there, to ask them how they are and to check up on them if they are not at school from Monday to Friday. The forging of these strong relationships comes from the fun associated with physical activity and the trust that you have established with them via the protocols set up in your classes.

As the teacher of HPE, you see students grow and develop and you are the one who introduces them to various forms of physical activity, helping them to find movement activities that they enjoy. You assist them in developing skills to question popular culture and examine different ways of seeing the world through role play and discussions in a safe and supportive environment. As a HPE teacher, you dress the part in sporting attire and participate in activities, letting students see your vulnerabilities on the playing field and help them to understand that we are all constantly learning to deal with challenges that we face on the playing field and also in life. HPE teachers make a difference.

## How do perceptions impact on HPE?

Unfortunately, not everyone sees the benefits of teaching HPE, because for some teachers, there are barriers put up at the mere mention of the words PE or HPE. Research by Morgan and Bourke (2008) suggests that this is due to teachers' HPE experiences as students, influencing their confidence in teaching HPE. It is hoped that, by engaging in the content of this text, readers reflect on their past negative experiences in HPE and identify that these feelings can impact on their perspective of HPE.

There are many challenges faced in HPE due to individual and cultural perceptions of the learning area. Many studies, both international and national, have identified HPE as having a low status and being perceived as less important than other learning areas (Barney & Deutsch, 2009; Brooks, 2017; Dodd, 2008; Gordon, 2017; Hardmann & Marshall, 2000; Sanderson, 1995; UNESCO, 2015). This can be attributed to multiple factors but is reinforced through the current focus on literacy and numeracy data collection and student performance in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Low status and importance is manifested through inadequate time allocation and timetabling, cancellation or rearrangement of HPE lessons, HPE being regarded as non-contact time by teachers, inadequate facilities (particularly in P–12 schools with one oval, one indoor gymnasium and one outdoor court area that supposedly cater for large numbers of students) and limited portable resources.

## CRITICAL INVESTIGATION

1. When the Australian Curriculum: HPE curriculum was written it had a notional time allocation to guide the writers. What was that allocation and what does it not include?
2. Research the time allocated to the teaching of HPE curriculum in each jurisdiction in Australia and identify which state or territory has the least amount of time allocated to the teaching of HPE curriculum from Foundation to Year 10.
3. What impact does the number of hours allocated to teach HPE have on students developing knowledge, understanding and skills in HPE?
4. In some school settings, HPE is only taught in one term or one semester. What impact would this have on student learning compared to engaging in this learning weekly over the duration of a school year?

HPE has also been perceived as a high-risk activity with potential for accidents and subsequent litigation. This belief about HPE and PA can be witnessed in the prohibition of certain physical activities in recess times and the regulation of student behaviour before, during and after school where students must sit in formations and not move. This perception can result in the withholding of play or sports equipment at recess times and the reinforcement of sedentary behaviour as desirable.

Another perception, related to who teaches HPE, is that encouraging physical activity is the sole responsibility of the PE specialist teacher or a designated teacher of HPE. There are resources available through professional associations such as ACHPER, state bodies and online, which demonstrate how physical activity can be incorporated in the classroom. Incorporating physical activity need not be onerous; small 1-minute activity breaks have been shown to enhance learning.

Another perception is that HPE can downturn trends in obesity or youth depression. Emmel and Penney (2010) highlight that these are just some of many health issues that a comprehensive HPE program will engage with from an educational perspective. What we do know is that health decisions are shaped by what happens in the classroom as well as the community with access and equity in relation to health and education still being a challenge across Australia.

## PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of your perceptions of HPE before you read this textbook? Where did those perceptions originate?
2. After reading the text thus far, how have your perceptions changed? Discuss these changes with a friend or colleague.
3. How could you change the perspectives of others who have a negative perspective of HPE?

### Advocacy

To argue in support of a cause or position, or speak out and act on behalf of yourself or another to ensure that your or others' interests are taken into account (ACARA).

### Advocacy

The knowledge gained about the definition(s) of HPE, the importance of HPE, who teaches HPE, the benefits of teaching HPE and the perceptions of HPE give a foundation for **advocacy**. Advocacy, which can be simply seen as support for change, can take different



forms. Advocacy should be targeted, with consideration given to the extent of the change, the ease of transition to change and the audience for change.

Penney (2008) saw HPE as a connective specialism and HPE teachers as connective specialists. According to Penney, HPE could be linked to discourses of lifelong learning, learning communities, personalised learning, inclusivity and excellence. Access to these discourses could be through participation in physical activity, sport, dance and recreation and the development and maintenance of healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. Seeing yourself as a connective specialist places you as an advocate because you have to mount a case for the contribution of HPE to the discourses while the discourses themselves provide an aspirational model for individuals and communities.

The outcomes of your argument need to be achievable. Making general claims about obesity reduction and health improvements, when these are difficult to measure, will not advance the cause of HPE in an educational setting. Evidence to promote HPE may come from teachers' and students' anecdotal accounts and from observable behaviour. A broader picture of policy to support HPE in schools is given in Chapter 2. The suggestions given below relate to a school setting.

The following are suggestions to address perceptions about HPE:

### *Perception 1: HPE is not important*

There is a wealth of articles and research papers that provide evidence on the importance of HPE, PA and sport.

One reason to support the continued inclusion of HPE in the curriculum is that it is an entitlement—students have a right to participate in HPE. Individual teachers would find it extremely difficult to effect any time allocation changes in a school without knowledge of how much time should be allocated to HPE in their state or territory. The ACHPER National Position Statement, Time Allocation of Health and Physical Education in Australian schools, argued for a mandated minimal time for HPE. Being well informed about recommended time allocations is necessary to present a case for HPE.

Gordon (2017) presented a case that HPE in the primary school contributes to wellbeing, not only through the physical domain but also through the contribution it makes to social and emotional learning. How and what students learn in this domain should be made explicit in HPE programs and shared with others as a means of advocacy.

Advocates exemplify their cause. This means, as a teacher, you demonstrate that HPE is important to you. If you are teaching HPE you must have a well-structured, developmentally sound program that the administration team, other teachers and parents know about. Invite the school community to observe your students enjoying and participating in lessons. In HPE, students can be our best advocates.

If you are not teaching the movement and physical activity strand you will be teaching the personal, social and community health strand of the Australian Curriculum: HPE. Again, the health program should be appropriately scoped and sequenced for the year level undertaking it. Students should be engaged in the lessons and knowledge about the program should be shared with administration, colleagues and parents. Consider how you model the health behaviour you teach.

### *Perception 2: HPE is high-risk activity*

Perception may not be evidence. In addressing the belief that HPE is high risk, observations of students' behaviour and participation in HPE and PA should be made. As an educator, you decide

on the learning experiences that are important for your students, and some of these will involve risks. The HPE program in all jurisdictions is informed by risk management and safety policies specific to that jurisdiction, where educators implement control measures to minimise risks in activities. As with student engagement, student safety should be evident in lessons. See Chapter 6 for information on how to perform a risk assessment.

Strategies for addressing this perception in PA include conducting an audit about the use of school facilities in recess and encouraging student-selected PA by providing suitable play or sports equipment in and out of lesson time. Discussing recess activities with students can assist in developing student responsibility for safety and inclusion. You can also establish occasions where students and teachers can participate together in recess games and activities—a public way of demonstrating that movement is valued.

### *Perception 3: HPE is the responsibility of a specialist or designated teacher*

There are inconsistencies in who teaches HPE in Australian primary schools. It could be a primary PE specialist teacher, the classroom teacher or an external provider. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEECDYA, 2008), the Australian Curriculum: HPE (ACARA, 2018) and The Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski, 2011) (known as the Gonski report) are concerned with equity in education; they refer to outcomes for all Australian students. Equity cannot be achieved if students do not have access to a teacher with knowledge of HPE content and knowledge of the learner. The implementation of the Australian Curriculum: HPE is dependent on this.

A cultural shift involves changing beliefs as to who is responsible for teaching HPE curriculum and a consequent valuing of HPE in school communities. One way to achieve this, as suggested by McMaster (2015), is to provide professional development to all teachers that increases their competence and confidence in teaching HPE. Brooks (2017) proposed that sharing of programs and student achievement between HPE specialist teachers and others (classroom teachers, administrative staff and parents) would enhance the teaching of HPE in primary schools. Through sharing information, the advocacy base is increased; more people will join the cause. Both McMaster's and Brooks' suggestions recognise the holistic approach to education as detailed in The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (see Chapter 2).

While these perceptions have been addressed separately, there is cross-over which allows for a collective approach to advocacy. Having a clear, shared definition of HPE and identifying the contribution of HPE to student wellbeing addresses all perceptions.

## Demonstrating the importance of HPE

There are a number of things that you can do in your classroom to demonstrate the importance of HPE in your setting or educational context:

- Be knowledgeable about HPE content and pedagogy.
- Seek assistance if you need support or advice on how to best teach and support your students in HPE.
- Set up an environment of “trust” where students feel able to discuss health topics openly and try new activities without fear of being ridiculed.
- Model the importance of HPE by timetabling HPE each week and ensuring that this time allocation is just as important as other subjects/activities.

- Scope and sequence curriculum to ensure that both health education and physical education are being taught across an entire school year.
- Report on student progress in hpe to parents/carers formally and informally.
- Encourage students to be active as much as possible in the classroom, during recess and lunch breaks and before and after school.

### Case study

You have just started teaching a Year 2 class in a new school. Describe the steps that you would need to take in order to ensure that you are effectively planning and teaching Health and Physical Education curriculum across the school year and reporting on this learning to parents.

You can see that your students only have a 1-hour Physical Education lesson timetabled each week for Terms 1 and 4 and nothing scheduled for Terms 2 and 3. How would you advocate for an increase in Physical Education lessons each week across the entire school year?

## CONCLUSION

HPE is a core learning area that integrates physical education, health education and personal development. Participation in HPE leads to students becoming active and informed citizens and developing skills that are lifelong.

HPE in the primary school may be taught by PE specialist teachers, classroom teachers, external providers or a combination of these. Different jurisdictions in Australia have different arrangements for the teaching of HPE in primary schools. Time allocations for HPE may differ in, and between, jurisdictions.

Perceptions of HPE are shaped by previous experience, the status of the subject and who teaches the subject. Advocacy involves addressing and challenging perceptions in order to achieve a cultural shift in attitudes towards HPE.

### Key summary points

- There are differing definitions of HPE.
- HPE is taught by specialists, classroom teachers and external providers.
- Different people have different perceptions about HPE based on past and current experiences.
- Successful advocacy requires a knowledge base and is targeted to an appropriate audience.

## End-of-chapter study questions

- What elements should a definition of HPE contain?
- You have been asked to deliver a brief presentation on the importance of HPE in primary schools to a school Parents and Citizens Association. What are the four most compelling points you can make to persuade your audience about the importance of HPE?
- Select one of the three perceptions in this chapter, or identify another perception and suggest an advocacy approach to address it.

## Further reading

Advocacy Activities—ACHPER Victorian Branch [www.achper.vic.edu.au/advocacyandpromotion/advocacy-activities](http://www.achper.vic.edu.au/advocacyandpromotion/advocacy-activities)

Education Matters <http://educationmattersmag.com.au/primary-schools-the-health-and-physical-education-learning-area-and-achper/>

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