

# Are Physical Education Teachers Physically Active Role Models?

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## Introduction

The nature of the school day places educators in a significantly influential position to shape the character and moral virtues (Lumpkin, 2008) of young people. Due to the influential role teachers have in the lives of students, it is essential that educators possess personal characteristics and enact behaviors that are socially and professionally appropriate. Physical educators are strong advocates for health and wellness and therefore also serve as important role models of healthy behavior of children and youth (Cardinal, 2001; Casey, 2009). Therefore, this leads to the question: Are physical education teachers currently serving as appropriate role models for health, physical activity, and fitness?

## Purpose of the Study

Investigate the physical activity behaviors of physical education teachers from the state of Georgia.

## Research Questions

- 1.In what moderate/vigorous physical activities do physical educators regularly engage?
- 2.How often do they engage in these activities?
- 3.Are there differences between these factors in teachers at elementary, middle, high school levels?

## Methodology

### Sample

Convenience sample of physical educators attending a voluntary summer professional development workshop in the Southeastern United States.

A total of 45 PE teachers from the state of Georgia participated in the study during the regularly scheduled workshop program.

### Instrument

Self-report physical activity was assessed with a previously validated self-report survey instrument The *Physical Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT)* (Meriwether, McMahon, Iisam, & Steinmann, 2006). Frequency and duration of MVPA and perceived benefits of PA were reported.

## Methodology, cont.

### Instrument, cont.

The instrument was completed simultaneously by all participants in a paper pencil format .

Grade level of instruction, age, and sex were reported.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis included descriptive statistic techniques. Data were evaluated against the physical activity recommendations posed by the AHA and ACSM (Haskell, Lee., et al., 2007).

### Findings

#### Demographic

N=45 (n male = 26; n= 19)

Instructional Levels (Elementary 26; Middle 14; High 5)

#### Frequency of Moderate & Vigorous Physical Activities

Moderate physical activities most often reported are shown in Table 1.

Vigorous physical activities most often reported were *basketball, walking upstairs, tennis, and carrying heavy loads*.

#### Frequency and Duration of MVPA Participation

Range of 120 -360 min/wk of reported MPA

Range of 60-360 min/wk of reported VPA

#### Variation in Participation by Grade Level of Instruction

59.9% and 68.1% of Elementary PE teachers met MPA and VPA recommendations.

66.6% female and 50% male Middle school PE teachers reported meeting MPA but did not meet VPA recommendations.

High school physical educators reported lowest levels of self-reported MPA and VPA engagement.

Table 1. Most frequently reported moderate physical activities

*Walking fast with a purpose*

*Housework: Mopping, sweeping, vacuuming*

*Mowing lawn, power mower*

*Playing with children: Kneeling, Lifting*

	% meeting MPA	< 40 years	% meeting VPA	< 40 years
<b>Elementary</b>				
Female (n=9)	66.67	1	55.5	1
Male (n=17)	47.0	2	58.8	4
<b>Middle</b>				
Female (n=6)	66.67	0	33.3	0
Male (n=8)	50.0	3	37.5	2
<b>High</b>				
Female (n=4)	25.0	0	0	0
Male (n=1)	100	0	0	0

Table 2. Percentage of teachers meeting recommendations for moderate and vigorous physical activity. Meeting MPA =  $\geq 30$  minutes moderate intensity aerobic PA on five days of the week. Meeting VPA=  $\geq 20$  minutes of vigorous intensity activity on three days per week (Haskell , Lee., et al., 2007).

## Discussion

- Findings from this study suggest that elementary and middle grades PE teachers are meeting the expectations set forth by NASPE (2002) necessary to demonstrate appropriate modeling of physically active lifestyles likely encouraging and influencing students' adoption of such behaviors.
- Data indicated that while gender was not, grade level of instruction was influential in the amount of MVPA reported by these participants. Specifically, elementary and middle school teachers reported more frequent engagement in activities of higher intensity than their high school counterparts.
- These data suggest that steps need to be taken to encourage and facilitate increased levels of participation by high school physical educators in both moderate and vigorous physical activities.

## References

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