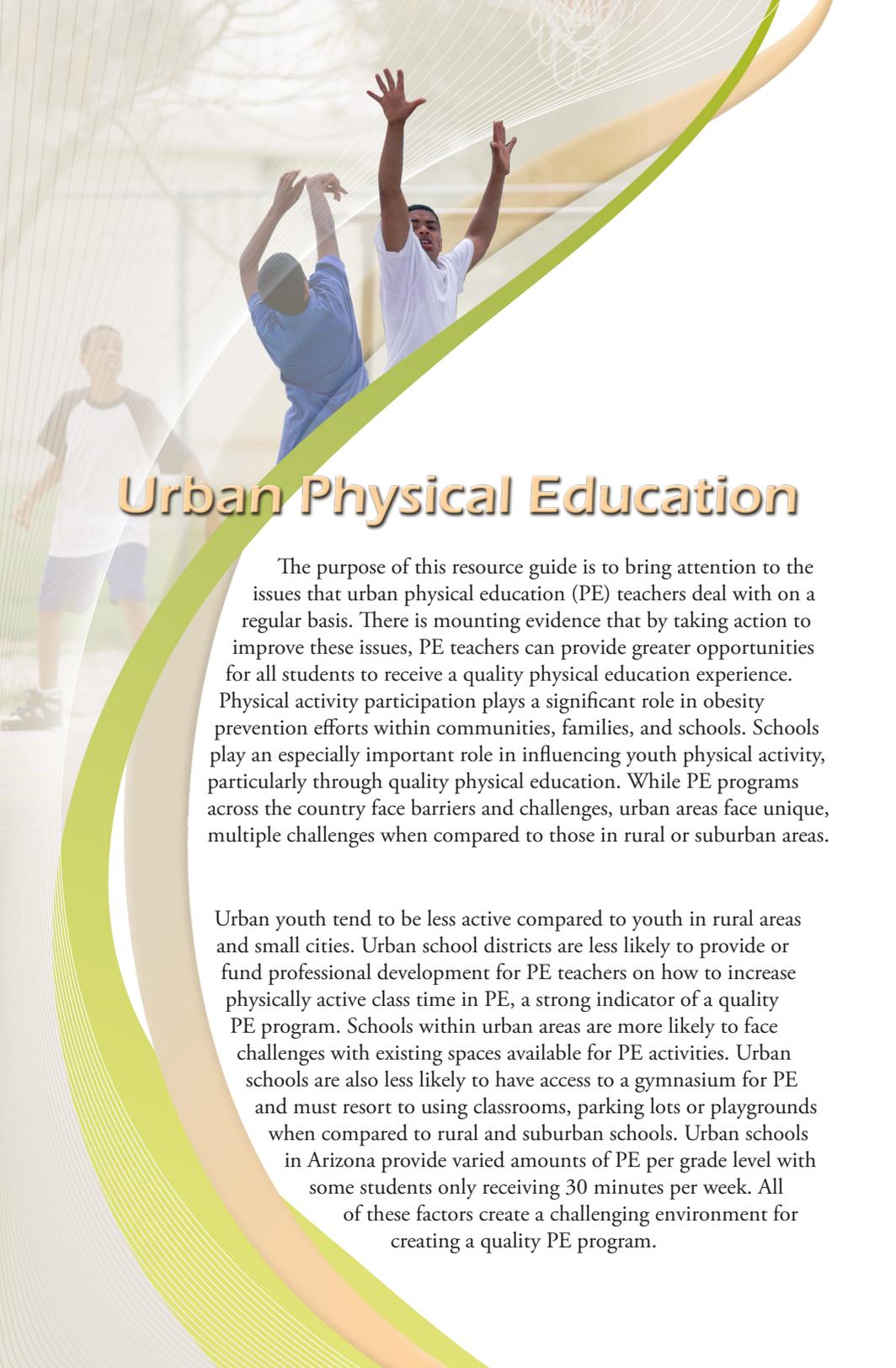




Urban Physical Education Resource Guide



Urban Physical Education

The purpose of this resource guide is to bring attention to the issues that urban physical education (PE) teachers deal with on a regular basis. There is mounting evidence that by taking action to improve these issues, PE teachers can provide greater opportunities for all students to receive a quality physical education experience. Physical activity participation plays a significant role in obesity prevention efforts within communities, families, and schools. Schools play an especially important role in influencing youth physical activity, particularly through quality physical education. While PE programs across the country face barriers and challenges, urban areas face unique, multiple challenges when compared to those in rural or suburban areas.

Urban youth tend to be less active compared to youth in rural areas and small cities. Urban school districts are less likely to provide or fund professional development for PE teachers on how to increase physically active class time in PE, a strong indicator of a quality PE program. Schools within urban areas are more likely to face challenges with existing spaces available for PE activities. Urban schools are also less likely to have access to a gymnasium for PE and must resort to using classrooms, parking lots or playgrounds when compared to rural and suburban schools. Urban schools in Arizona provide varied amounts of PE per grade level with some students only receiving 30 minutes per week. All of these factors create a challenging environment for creating a quality PE program.

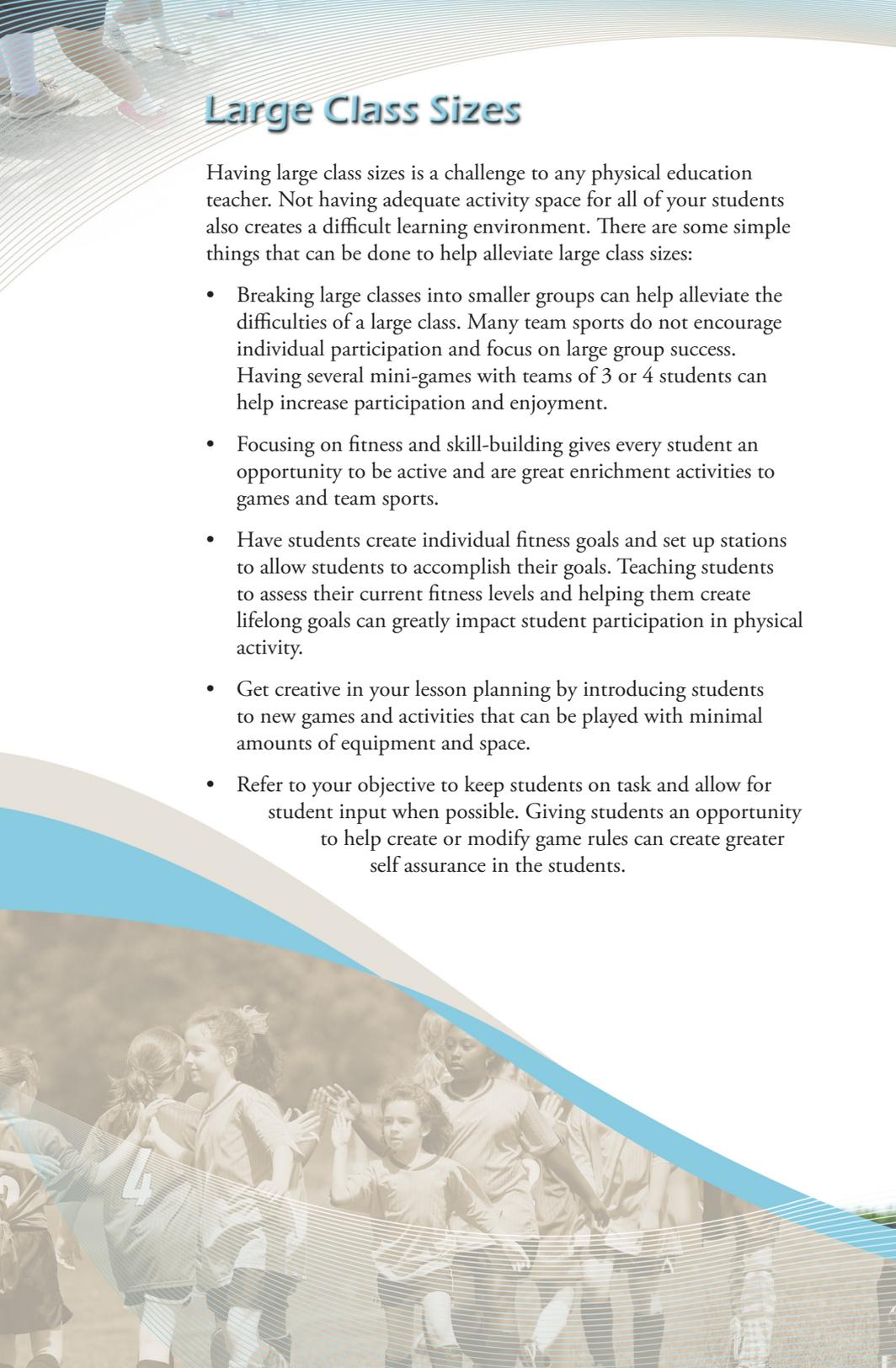
Challenges

The challenges that face urban physical education teachers are not always unique to an urban school setting, and can often be found in PE classrooms throughout the state. Urban physical education teachers are often faced with multiple challenges and minimal resources to combat those roadblocks. Identified Arizona Urban PE teachers were surveyed and results showed that large class sizes, lack of adequate space, lack of time spent with individual students and inadequate equipment are all obstacles for Urban PE programs. Additional challenges that PE teachers face are budget cuts and insufficient funding, lack of technology, behavior and discipline issues, lack of a grading system for students, lack of support from administration and lack of student enthusiasm. All of these issues create challenges for even the most highly qualified physical education specialist and contribute to a decreased physical activity in today's youth.

“A quality physical education program provides learning opportunities, appropriate instruction, meaningful and challenging content, and student and program assessment. In addition, quality physical education improves mental alertness, academic performance, and readiness and enthusiasm for learning in our nation's youth.”

NASPE Resource Brief - Quality Physical Education





Large Class Sizes

Having large class sizes is a challenge to any physical education teacher. Not having adequate activity space for all of your students also creates a difficult learning environment. There are some simple things that can be done to help alleviate large class sizes:

- Breaking large classes into smaller groups can help alleviate the difficulties of a large class. Many team sports do not encourage individual participation and focus on large group success. Having several mini-games with teams of 3 or 4 students can help increase participation and enjoyment.
 - Focusing on fitness and skill-building gives every student an opportunity to be active and are great enrichment activities to games and team sports.
 - Have students create individual fitness goals and set up stations to allow students to accomplish their goals. Teaching students to assess their current fitness levels and helping them create lifelong goals can greatly impact student participation in physical activity.
 - Get creative in your lesson planning by introducing students to new games and activities that can be played with minimal amounts of equipment and space.
 - Refer to your objective to keep students on task and allow for student input when possible. Giving students an opportunity to help create or modify game rules can create greater self assurance in the students.
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Classroom Management/Discipline Issues

Discipline is another issue that all teachers face and having a clear plan of action can often prevent inappropriate student behavior. Knowing your students individually is also an important factor in recognizing behavioral issues and utilizing effective discipline techniques.

- Create a safe, positive learning environment. The behavior of the teacher almost always influences the behavior of their students. Keeping calm in front of your students demonstrates the type of behavior that you expect from them. Avoid creating a hostile situation by not yelling or allowing students to have multiple outbursts which can often escalate the issue and disrupt the learning environment.
- Avoid put downs, derogatory messages and phrases that challenge the student in front of their peers.
- If a student continues to have outbreaks or disruptive behaviors try talking with the student away from their peers to diffuse the situation. Talk with their parent/guardian regarding any issues at home and talk with administration to determine if the student's behavioral issues are specific to your class.



Inadequate Facilities/Equipment

PE teachers are often forced to become creative, not only with their lesson plans but also with their use of space. Using hallways, parking lots, classrooms and any available space is a common occurrence for PE teachers. Inadequate equipment is also an issue in urban physical education programs as often times budgets are cut and replacing PE equipment is not feasible.

- Communication is the key! Open the lines of communication between your Food Service Director, administration, classroom teachers and other school personnel. Plan activities based on a calendar of events to avoid being overwhelmed by last minute changes in location.
- If you are forced to use a smaller space, modify your activities to ensure that all students are participating. Fitness stations and small group activities that require minimal amounts of equipment are often great activities to use in smaller, less safe spaces.
- If your budget doesn't include replacing equipment, apply for grants. Numerous companies and organizations award grants throughout the school year.
- Local businesses are often willing and able to donate products or services, such as equipment, to schools in need.
- Get creative with your existing space and equipment. Stepping outside of the norm can be very beneficial for your students. Go online to view lesson plans and activities that work for your situation. There are many online resources for lessons and activities.
 - Get involved in, or start a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). A SHAC is an on-going advisory group composed primarily of individuals selected from segments of the community. The group acts collectively in providing advice to the school district about aspects of the school health program.



Lack of Time with Students/ Student Motivation



If the goal is to teach students the importance of daily physical activity but you only see them once a week for 30 minutes, the message is lost. Teachers cannot change the amount of time they see their students but they can change the quality of instruction and the influence they have on their students outside of their PE class. Teaching students how to set fitness goals and rewarding them for their achievements not only encourages them to lead an active lifestyle, but it can also help motivate them to participate in your class.

- Start an activity club for you students. It can be a walking club, a running club, a bike riding club or a fitness club. Before and after school walking programs that are lead by parent volunteers are another great way to show the importance of daily physical activity. When students have ownership in their health, it can internally motivate them to perform better in PE class.
- Intramural sports teams are another great way to promote physical activity. Giving the students an opportunity after school to participate in sports not only promotes physical education and activity, but it's a great way to increase school spirit and pride.
- Structured Recess is a great way to increase physical activity without changing the amount of time students spend in PE class. Since most schools offer daily recess, create a recess environment that requires students to participate in some form of physical activity. Setting up stations for games and sports that coincide with the units in PE class not only promotes the activities that you are teaching in class, but also acts as a means of skill building for students.



Finding Resources and Support for Your Program

PE teachers face challenges not only in their classrooms but also can have problems finding the support and resources that they need to create a quality PE program. Parents and administrators don't always understand the importance of PE and physical activity and therefore do not place importance on the activities in and out of class. Advocating for your program is a good first step and can have positive results.

- Be your own best advocate! Teachers know their programs and situations better than anyone else. Advocating for your program is something that can not only increase awareness but also can encourage others to advocate for your program as well.
- Get support from your peers. Other PE teachers often know what you are going through and may be able to offer resources and guidance for you. Use the internet to search for grants, lesson plans and publications that will support your efforts to create a quality PE program.
- Join your professional organizations. These organizations are devoted to helping schools and teachers improve their PE programs. Becoming members of your professional organizations can provide you with the support and the resources that you need to create or maintain a quality PE program.

Internet Resources

www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth

www.pe4life.org

www.aahperd.org

www.azahperd.org

www.peuniverse.com

www.peacefulplaygrounds.com

www.physicaleducationupdate.com

www.aahperd.org/naspe

www.pcentral.org

www.healthologyaz.com

For more information please contact:

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Healthology
School health in action.

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