

Realising the Vision of 334

Nurturing Healthy Lifestyle through Physical Education

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Physical education (PE) is integral to quality education. In addition to helping students cultivate positive values and attitudes, it also improves their learning as a whole. In fact, the World Health Organisation (WHO) designates May 10 each year as the "Move for Health Day" to encourage people to actively participate in physical activities; whilst the United Nations (UN) declares the year 2005 as the "International Year of Sport and PE" in a bid to promote education, health, social development and world peace.

We highly recognise the recommendations made by the WHO and the UN. The new senior academic structure to be implemented in 2009 provides students with essential learning experiences, and more importantly, a key to active and healthy living.

Diversified Learning to Cater for Different Aptitudes

The senior secondary curriculum offers students with more diversified learning pathways in PE: (1) "Other Learning Experiences – Physical Development (OLE-PD)" ; (2) PE-related Applied Learning courses; (3) "Independent Enquiry Study (IES)" in the Liberal Studies curriculum; and (4) PE Elective.

Students acquire OLE-PD mainly through structured lessons in each week or cycle and a rich variety of colourful co-curricular activities. They are thus exposed to different types of PE-related learning activities, which are challenging and interesting. All these help students to foster a lifelong habit of participating in physical activities.

PE-related Applied Learning courses aim to provide students with practical learning experiences. As the public has been increasingly aware of the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle in recent years, related industries such as recreation management, fitness and dancing are getting more vibrant. Students are provided with many real-life learning opportunities to better understand these industries which are instrumental to their further study or career development in the future.

"Sports" is one of the themes for IES in the Liberal Studies curriculum. After students have developed a solid knowledge base in various key learning areas at junior secondary, they may go further to explore from multiple perspectives the relationship between sport and business, issues related to doping in sport, the impact of technology on sport performance, etc. These may help students relate and expand knowledge, and further develop generic skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition, senior secondary students can also opt to take the PE Elective for admission to tertiary institutions. The PE Elective further requires students not only to be proficient in the principles of movement, but also capable of applying them flexibly for putting theories into practice.

Students Benefiting from PE Elective

The PE Elective is one of the examination subjects of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. Its nine theoretical learning parts are subsumed under three overriding themes, namely "Body Maintenance", "Self Enhancement", and "Care for the Community", which highlight the benefits of leading an active and healthy lifestyle.

As the western proverb goes, "A sound mind dwells in a sound body". "Body Maintenance" is the basis of the PE Elective, which includes the human body, fitness and nutrition, and sport injuries. Students can take full advantage of this learning part to maintain a good physique, avoid sport injuries, and be proficient in sport.

"Self Enhancement" includes movement analysis, training methods and psychological skills. Students, who wish to excel or do better in competitions, should be knowledgeable about biomechanics of sport and exercise, factors affecting sport performance, and be conversant with scientific methods of training. Also, they can act as "student coaches" to help teach junior schoolmates, and to verify what they have learnt from a different angle.

"Care for the Community" includes history and development, social aspects, as well as sport and recreation management. This theme is closely related to the humanities and social sciences. Students need to cultivate a sensitive and an inquisitive mind about social issues, make reflections and reasonable judgments on relevant topics, and exude a strong sense of belonging to the community. Not only do they care about community sport development, they also take initiatives to make recommendations for improvement, and actively participate in school and community sport activities.

Theory-Practice Integration for All-round Development

The PE Elective is full of fun and highly relevant to students' daily life. It helps them lay a good foundation in science, the humanities and social sciences, and prepare them for post-secondary education. Given its holistic nature, it is suitable for both elite athletes and ordinary students who are interested in sport.

This Elective emphasises "Learning by doing" – to acquire, apply and verify theories in real-life situations. To this end, I encourage students to make good use of the "Practicum" sessions to deepen their understanding and hone higher-order thinking skills. In the same vein, teachers may also flexibly adopt teaching strategies such as lecturing, field-trips, enquiry learning and knowledge co-construction to help students broaden their knowledge base and deepen their understanding of PE, sport and recreation. They may also encourage students to read to learn and conduct empirical studies to develop relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Leading an active and healthy lifestyle is no empty talk. I appeal to students to maintain a good physique and be proficient in sport theory through practice and reflections, and share the benefits of being active and healthy with relatives and friends with a view to building a more active and healthy community.