

Altoona Area High School Physical Education Program Continues to Innovate

During the 2017-18 school year, the AAHS Physical Education department switched from a sports based program to a wellness based program after meeting with experts in the field and researching best practices. Mark Sapita has been instrumental in leading this charge. It was Sapita who began to ask the question “Why?” This line of questioning led to an evaluation of the curriculum and the objectives of the department. It was this discussion that led to the redesign of the curriculum and the activities/options offered to AAHS students. Students needed to be introduced to activities that were relative. This included activities such as spinning, dance, yoga, bosu balls, kettle bells, bowling at the Bavarian, and field trips to Canoe Creek to kayak, fish, walk, and bike.

Innovation



One year after switching the physical education program to a wellness based program, the AASD Phys. Ed. Staff has continued to innovate and try out new concepts. Sapita is now coordinating the wellness program working with outside community organizations to link our students to resources. Students visited the Teen Center and Shelter this year and a guest speaker on organ donation spoke with students during class. The students also designed their own 9-day individual fitness plan, as well as made a month

long goal of improving one health related component chosen from flexibility, muscular endurance, muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and body composition.

Accolades

Over the past few year, AAHS Phys. Ed. Department has hosted a one day conference for PSAPHERD members and local HPE staffs for the purpose of professional development and infusion of new ideas. Mr. Sapita, Mr. Palfey, and Mr. McGinnis spoke at the PSAHPERD state convention in December about changing a Physical Education program from a sports based program to a wellness based program. Assistant Principal Jason McGinnis: wrote and published an article in the PSSC and was asked to present at this year's upcoming state conference as well as serve as a guest on a YouTube think tank. Department Chair Tom Palfey was named to the PSAHPERD board of directors as the chairperson for membership. He and the other board members main goals are to increase membership and bring more one day conferences to other areas across the state.



All of these changes have taken place as a result of the collaboration between the AASD Administration and the staff working together for the betterment of Altoona Area students. "It is just a great thing to witness when everyone sees how physical education impacts the overall success of students," said Palfey. "Physical fitness positively affects the performance of students. AASD understands the positive impact physical education makes on our students." The goal with all of the changes has been to infuse a desire of our students to find what activity makes them excited and motivates them as they leave Altoona Area High School and move into their adult lives. This is about a life-long change. It's about developing life-long habits that encourage and promote healthy habits.