
Depiction Of School Activity in Katherine Thomas' Article

In 2004 the academic journal *Quest* published a article by author Katherine Thomas entitled "Riding to Recuse While Holding On By a Thread: Physical Activity in the Schools". In this paper I will analysis Thomas's argument on the issue regarding daily activity in schools across the United States. The journal *Quest* is the official journal of the National Association of Kinesiology and Physical Education in Higher Education. It is a scholarly journal for professionals in Kinesiology and physical education, the readers include academicians, teachers, and administers. (nakpehe, n.d.) Thomas's main purpose for writing this article is to inform her readers of what exactly is the unspoken dilemma for the lack of physical education and daily activity on society's grade level youth; from elementary to high school students.

In this article Thomas argues three unresolved issues on the matter of securing physical education in schools and making sure children are active to fight the obesity and inactivity rates across the nation. Thomas implements that school officials need to focus more on the science behind information regarding physical education and relying pure and reliable messages to the public. She also highlights that the officials need to have secure funds to keep the requirements active and stable for schools in the long term. Lastly she tackles the issue of leaders needing to stop being so critical and more supportive. The author takes the blame off the teachers in this article, she wants to pin point why exactly the requirements of physical activity in youth is not being met. She hits readers with strong studies and surveys from past researchers and brings to count what the school board officials are doing wrong locally and nationally.

Thomas's motivation for writing this article steams from the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Obesity and Overweight 2001. The Call clearly stated its intent is to "Provide all children, from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with quality daily physical education that helps develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence needed to be physically active for life." (Sevices, 2001). In my opinion Thomas's argument is very truthful. She takes a part something that I feel no one ever talks about and she analyzes the subject to a better understanding. She places blame where school administrators are last to fix but society is first to ask questions about. Being from a school system where physical education was required to graduate and was required of us to take every single year up to our junior year and became then became a choice, but we had a higher rate of diabetes and overweight students than the average school. I see where she says it needs to be a required enforcement of daily activity for every student to ensure healthier habits in the student's future.

Thomas's argument was one that did have a lot of "meat" or structure as a reader could say. She backed up her evidence with very supportive information and studies on the facts. But what Thomas does make confusing for me as a reader is the way her argument flows. She starts out stating a lot of numbers, surveys, statistics, studies, etc. But she does not make clear until the very end her own opinion of the issue. She makes it hard to understand and take out what her true feelings are on the issue. Even though she does state them in the beginning of the article I as a reader would have to like to see more aggression towards the matter.

In addition when it came to support for her three main claims of:

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- Better Funding
 - Clear Messages with consistent information about the need for physical activity
 - Need to be supportive and not critical

Thomas did a great job as far as giving her examples and reasoning.

On her claim for better funding; Thomas did a great thing by putting focus on programs that can help schools with lesser income and budget problems by supplying readers with information about government funded programs. For her to pin point these other options so that the readers cannot make up any excuses as to why they cannot afford the programs to have a secure base in the school system to me was a great idea. For example Thomas credits the Center of Disease Control (CDC) for programs such as VERB it targets teens to get active and increase their daily activity. They also provide another service called BAM that Thomas included that targets kids about their health and to take action when they are young. (Thomas, 2004, p. 164) She also credits the U. S. Department of Education Carol M White Progress for Physical Activity Grants. Which is federal money for physical education instruction, Thomas does a good job when she lists the good and bad about these grants but she goes to say in the article that the funding is between 1 and 2 million per state. (Thomas, 2004, p. 164)

On her claim for more consistent messages; her inclusion about past standards never being met. She wants scholars and leaders to look at past research and understand that requirements have never seen about average and are different for almost every state. She highlights that only a few states essentially try and met some type of prequisite of daily activity and way too many states are falling behind in the matter. She continues that even though people know the requirements or recommendations they are still doing nothing to achieve those goals. When Thomas stated a few of those facts in the article to me it was an eye opener. She strives so much to make the reader understand that it is not okay for schools to just barely pass by the hairs on a person's chin. She gets a reader like myself to understand that the officials can really do more they're just not trying as hard.

On her claim of officials to be more supportive; Thomas take the blame off the teachers. She says in order for students to get the full attention and requirements being made per week the number of staff would have to increase. (Thomas, 2004, p. 157) She also points out a fact physical education teachers just don't sit around when the students are not in the class; the instructors though not looked at like a regular grade-level teacher actually work full-time. I never really saw that argument logical until reading this and taking a step back and thinking head on about it, we have so many schools that only focus on testing or passing rates that they fall short of benefits the child will need long term. She also says that when children are so far behind in staying active and getting the daily recommendations that when they do make up a curriculum to follow by it is too much for the child to complete so they fall behind. Though it is not their fault Thomas's purpose is to endorse this so that the issue of falling behind does not pop up; because truly in any subject whether physical or mental no child deserves to be left behind.

Thomas (2004) in addition brings out her logical side when she argues who fault is it that the students do not learn enough or the right material:

Consider a worst case scenario, a teacher is hired to provide elementary PE but is not licensed in that area and therefore enters the field with little preparation. It is possible that teachers could live in one of 24 states that does not require continuing education—therefore the teacher could

continue teaching without any training related to the field. Assuming this is a quality issue, who is responsible? (p. 158)

I strongly agree that no matter what a teacher or professor teaches they need to be certified in that field. Thomas brings about the fact that states do not require teachers to be certified in physical education but must be certified to teach. Who's fault is that really, the teacher's, student's, or the state?

Although Thomas does seem a lot more logical in her writing she appeals to emotions very often as well. One that stood out to me as a reader was the issue on a child can participate in some form of physical activity no matter their physical condition. Steaming from another article she gave credit to issue by the Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Thomas summarizes (2004): "The intent is that students who are disabled will not be excluded from physical education because of their unique needs. Appropriate placements are on a continuum from regular physical education to adapted physical education." (p.159) Bringing this into her argument was an ideal factor I feel could make officials see that not only the regular kids desire a chance at being healthy.

She makes another statement about not discriminating against economic status. She states that just because a school has low-income or can provide less than the higher-income schools does not mean the children should get lesser opportunities due to safety issues or budget problems to get in the daily recommended amount. (Thomas, 2004, pp. 159-160) She goes to say that not all schools are created equal, and myself as a reader, student, and U.S. citizen strongly believes that that is a huge problem in our society that will go untouched and talked about until we have more arguments and publications like Thomas's to be the commander and chief of change in the system.

I felt this article did not necessarily have a lot of weaknesses or issues; Thomas's motive is clear, but she could add more of her own thoughts into the article and make it a true argument. Throughout the entire entry she states more facts and statistics then rather focusing on what she really thinks will improve the standard of P.E. and where it needs to be today. Granted she does show us the underlined issues and she supports her facts with well throughout surveys and past evidence to influence the problems as to why this particular program is not a stable program in schools. I as a reader and blinded citizen on what is really the problem with physical education would just have liked to seen a bigger fight in her own words for an issue she seems passionate enough to talk about.

She spends more time on past research and its findings than she does making up her own view points and bringing in her past publications. Though she does list two of her own written articles, I feel as though it it would have helped her more if she would have went into the basics of her own work and not just referring to it in one sentence. Readers need to know that you are a professional and consistent in what you are talking about and not just your reference page should show your pass accomplishments, her writing and argument should have been able to speak for itself.

Her flow of the article to me is a little off. I was not truly engaged as a reader of her view points in the very beginning. It was not until the end where her thoughts seemed as though they was slowly but surely coming together. She used what I thought were attention getters and strict underlines facts and statistics on the issue at hand. While she does a great job at pointing out

what is wrong and needs improving her organization could have been improved. For example she lists nothing but numbers, percentages, and surveys at the beginning to help clarify her points on requirements not being meant. But as I kept reading she kept decreasing with those and just started listings more of her opinion sources that helped refer a reader or glue them in.

Another thing I was a little confused as to why she put it into her argument had structured the appeal to ignorance in some ways. The information about a decrease in blacks being in physical education after the data was published by Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2001. Thomas writes that (2004) "The results indicated no decline in prevalence of PE for the total population, but a decline in Black students reporting enrollment in PE." (p. 153). This data was based off of four variables and none of which labeled race as a subject, so I felt as if mentioning this factor from the data she read upon was a little on the unnecessary side.

In conclusion Thomas's argument to me was a great one. It had its holes and weaknesses but she presented a topic and supported her claims by using well thought out examples and using authority from sources that were very creditable in this field of topic. She does not sugar coat her concerns about what officials are not doing and to myself as a reader I took as a key factor in determining the whether this is a valid enough argument. She shows her validity by bringing in strong evidence and points that could fall short with some people but Thomas does a great job at staying focused and making her statements stick.

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