

Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education

National Association for Sport
and Physical Education

impropriety
(im'pre-pri'tē) *n.*
an unsuitable or
inappropriate act
or quality

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

In line 4, the writer uses
parentheses to let you
know the abbreviation
for the National
Association for Sport
and Physical Education.

PERSUASION

What is the NASPE's
position on dodgeball
in school physical
education programs?

adequately
(äd'Y-kwīt-lē) *adv.*
enough to satisfy a
requirement or meet
a need

PERSUASION

Reread lines 18–24.
Based on these lines,
how would you describe
the tone of this
document?

With the recent release of both a movie and television show about
dodgeball, debate about the game's merits and improprieties has escalated
in the media and on the NASPE listserv.¹ Thus, the National Association
for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) would like to reiterate its
position about including dodgeball in school physical education programs.

NASPE believes that dodgeball is **not** an appropriate activity for K–12
school physical education programs. The purpose of physical education
is to provide students with:

- The knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to be physically
active for a lifetime
- A daily dose of physical activity for health benefits
- Positive experiences so that kids want to be physically active
outside of physical education class and throughout their lifetime

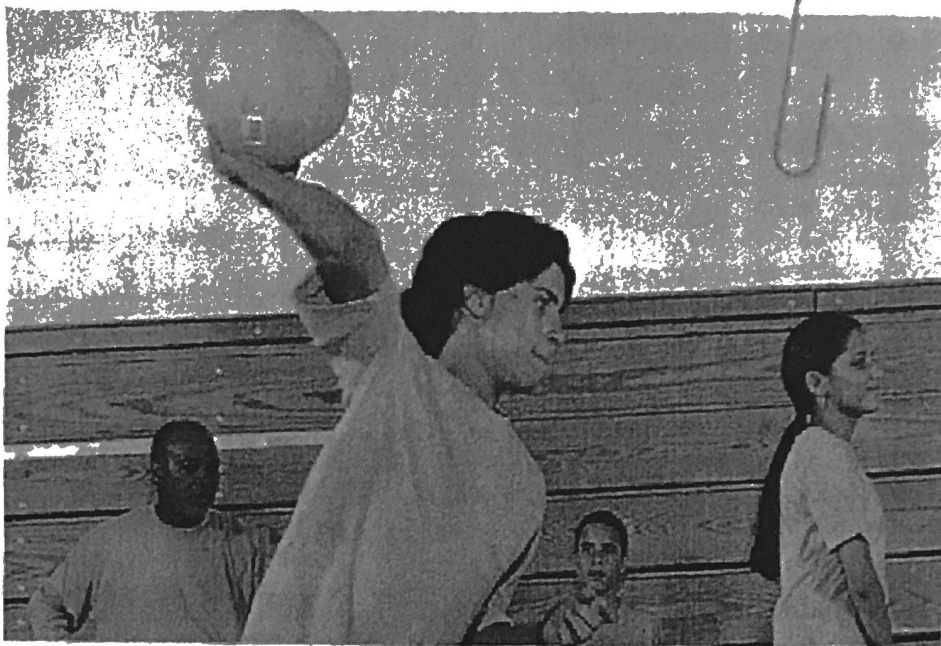
The goals of physical education can be obtained through a wide variety
of appropriate physical activities.

Getting and keeping children and adolescents active is one of the biggest
challenges facing parents and youth leaders.

- 61.5% of children aged 9–13 years do not participate in any
organized physical activity during their non-school hours
and 22.6% do not engage in any free-time physical activity.
- One-third of high school students are not adequately active
and over 10% do not participate in any physical activity at all.
- 16% of U.S. youth aged 6–19 are overweight—triple the
proportion of 25 years ago.

According to NASPE's *Appropriate Practices for Elementary School Physical
Education* (2000), "in a quality physical education class teachers involve
ALL children in activities that allow them to participate actively, both
physically and mentally. Activities such as relay races, dodgeball, and

1. listserv (lĭst-sŭrv): an e-mail list that allows a group of people to hold a discussion by writing
to each other via the Internet.



◀ Analyze Visuals

How many people pictured on this dodgeball team appear to be getting exercise?

elimination tag provide limited opportunities for everyone in the class, especially the slower, less agile students who need the activity the most.”

The students who are eliminated first in dodgeball are typically the ones who most need to be active and practice their skills. Many times these students are also the ones with the least amount of confidence in their physical abilities. Being targeted because they are the “weaker” players, and being hit by a hard-thrown ball, does not help kids to develop confidence. ◊

The arguments most often heard in favor of dodgeball are that it allows for the practice of important physical skills—and kids like it.

- Dodgeball does provide a means of practicing some important physical skills—running, dodging, throwing, and catching.
- 40 However, there are many activities that allow practice of these skills without using human targets or eliminating students from play.
- Some kids may like it—the most skilled, the most confident. But many do not! Certainly not the student who gets hit hard in the stomach, head, or groin. And it is not appropriate to teach our children that you win by hurting others. ◊

In a recent article about the new GSN (games network) TV show called “Extreme Dodgeball,” there is talk of “developing and executing extreme strategies to annihilate opponents” and the use of terms such as “throw-to-kill ratios,” and “headshots.” NASPE asks, “Is this the type
50 of game that you want children to be exposed to?” ◻

eliminate (T-īm'e-nāt')
v. to remove from consideration by defeating

◊ PERSUASION

Reread lines 42–45. What kind of emotional appeal is being made? What is the ethical appeal?

COMMON CORE RI.4

ANALYZE RHETORIC AND REASONING

A leading question is a question that contains its answer. A rhetorical question is one that has such an obvious answer that it does not require a reply. Reread lines 49–50. Is this a leading question or a rhetorical question?

The Weak Shall Inherit the Gym



Rick Reilly

Not to alarm you, but America is going softer than left-out butter. Exhibit 9,137: Schools have started banning dodgeball. ☹

I kid you not. Dodgeball has been outlawed by some school districts in New York, Texas, Utah and Virginia. Many more are thinking about it, like Cecil County, Md., where the school board wants to ban any game with "human targets." ☹

Human targets? What's tag? What's a snowball fight? What's a close play at second? Neil Williams, a physical education professor at Eastern Connecticut State, says dodgeball has to go because it "encourages the best to pick on the weak." Noooo! You mean there's weak in the world? There's strong? Of course there is, and dodgeball is one of the first opportunities in life to figure out which one you are and how you're going to deal with it. ☹

We had a bully, Big Joe, in our seventh grade. Must have weighed 225 pounds, . . . We also had a kid named Melvin, who was so thin we could've faxed him from class to class. I'll never forget the dodgeball game in which Big Joe had a ball in each hand and one sandwiched ☹

ban (băn) v. to prohibit

➤ **PERSUASION**
What words and phrases in the first sentence make Rick Reilly's tone immediately clear?

➤ **PERSUASION**
Why does Neil Williams object to dodgeball? Describe Reilly's response to this objection.

aggression (ə-grəsh'ən)
n. hostile or destructive
behavior or action

COMMON CORE RI.4

ANALYZE
RHETORIC AND
REASONING

A caricature is
a cartoon-like
description of an
opposing argument.
Reread lines 27–30 to
find the caricature.
Then note it on your
chart.

PERSUASION

What widely accepted
value does Reilly use to
make an ethical appeal?
Consider whether he
seems to respect the job
of filling chalupas.

ANALYZE RHETORIC
AND REASONING

Reread lines 34–51.
Sometimes writers try
to convince you that
a position is wrong
because it could result
in a ridiculous outcome.
Identify one ridiculous
outcome proposed by
Reilly in lines 34–51.

between his knees, firing at our side like a human tennis-ball machine,
20 when, all of a sudden, he got plunked. . . . Joe whirled around to see
who'd done it and saw that it was none other than Melvin, all 83 pounds
of him, most of it smile.

Some of these . . . whiners say dodgeball is inappropriate in these
violent times. Are you kidding? Dodgeball is one of the few times in life
when you get to let out your aggressions, no questions asked. We don't
need less dodgeball in schools, we need more!

I know what all these . . . parents want. They want their Ambers and
their Alexanders to grow up in a cozy womb of noncompetition, where
everybody shares tofu¹ and Little Red Riding Hood and the big, bad wolf
30 set up a commune.² Then their kids will stumble out into the bright light
of the real world and find out that, yes, there's weak and there's strong
and teams and sides and winning and losing. You'll recognize those kids.
They'll be the ones filling up chalupas.³ Very noncompetitive.

But Williams and his fellow whiners aren't stopping at dodgeball. In
their Physical Education Hall of Shame they've also included duck-duck-
goose and musical chairs. Seriously. So, if we give them dodgeball, you
can look for these games to be banned next:

Tag. Referring to any child as *it* is demeaning and hurtful. Instead
of the child hollering, "You're *it*!" we recommend, "You're special!"

40 *Baseball.* Involves wrong-headed notions of *stealing*, *errors* and
gruesome *hit-and-run*. Players should always be safe, never out.

Capture the flag. Mimics war.

Kick the can. Unfair to the can.

If we let these PC twinkies⁴ have their way, we'll be left with:

Duck-duck-duck. Teacher spends the entire hour parting each child
softly on the head.

Upsy down. The entire class takes turns fluffing the gym teacher's
pillow before her nap.

50 *Swedish baseball.* Players are allowed free passage to first, second or
third, where they receive a relaxing two-minute massage from opposing
players.

1. *tofu* (to'fō): a protein-rich soybean curd that many vegetarians eat in place of meat.
2. *commune* (kōm'yōn): a cooperative community in which a group of people who are not necessarily related live and work together.
3. *chalupas* (che-lō'pās): fried tortillas filled with meat, a Mexican dish similar to tacos that is served at several U.S. fast-food chains.
4. *PC twinkies*: Reilly's expression for people who are too concerned (politically correct) with offending others by words or actions.