

## Education Trends

# Education In Motion

## Physical Education Philosophies, Strategies Continue To Evolve

BY ROB NIELSEN  
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Stewart Elementary School physical education (PE) teacher Lisa Card has seen a lot of changes in 30 years teaching PE to students — ranging from how it's taught, to the unique challenges based on where it was taught.

"When I first started here, we had two rural schools — so (these were) one-room schoolhouses still: one in Utica and one in Mission Hill," Card said. "That was very unique teaching out at the rural schools. ... The buildings themselves were kind of odd because you just had that one room. I remember, Utica especially, we'd try to go outside as much as possible but inside it was just a room with linoleum floor. On one half, there was a piano and a carpeted area where they had their little chairs to sit on during the music portion of the day, and on the other half there was a big table with chairs around it where they did their class work. There also was an oven and a sink because they did their meals there, too. I just had to be kind of creative with moving chairs around when I got there every day to have enough space to do things during the winter time when we couldn't be outside."

She added that despite some of those unique challenges, she witnessed the mixed class of students helping each other out.

"It was neat because you could see the older kids helping the younger kids. I would always try to do some activity that was in the middle of the road so kindergartners could still do it with the aid of some of the older kids, but yet it wasn't too boring for the older kids to do either. The atmosphere was really cool because the older kids would help the younger kids and it was just a real close-knit family almost even if they weren't technically family."

Beyond the changes in scenery, Card said she's noticed quite a few changes in the curriculum and how PE is taught today.

"We were much more unit-oriented and sport-oriented when I started teaching," she said. "We did a basketball unit; or a floor hockey unit; or a soccer unit; or maybe a Frisbee or football-type unit. At least with



ROB NIELSEN/P&D  
These students at Yankton's Stewart Elementary School took part in a physical education (PE) class recently. PE classes have long been a staple at schools, but the methods and strategies behind them have changed through the years.

me, personally, I have been (teaching) fitness and wellness for probably the last 10 years at least. We do a lot more fitness-oriented activities and not so much units anymore."

Ryan Mors, activities director with the Yankton School District, said the current method is meant to help encourage healthy decisions from an early age.

"We're looking for the wellness and the fitness of the kids for a lifetime of activity," Mors said. "Hopefully what they're taught now can carry over into their adulthood so they're active human beings as they grow older."

He added the changes he's seen emphasize games less and being active more.

"Instead of more rolling out the ball and playing games, there's just lifetime activities the kids can do as they get older," he said.

Card said she's even taken things a step further to help facilitate more active youth.

"Even at the elementary school, we work on life-long habits as far as getting in some type of activity," she said. "We don't say that they have to go work out, but I do a little program here that we call 'Fitness Fanatics' where we try to get the kids encouraged to do something outside of the school day

every day, even if it's only for 15 minutes, to try and get them up off the couch and get them outside."

In some states, such as Minnesota, books on nutrition and sports have started to make their way into PE classes, requiring students to take class time for study, rather than physical activities.

Card said she's not quite as keen on such an approach, preferring to keep the kids active in PE classes.

"I'm not real in favor of books in PE because I want my kids up and moving," she said. "I'm not saying I'm not in favor of them learning more about keeping their bodies healthy and nutrition and fitness and things like that. I also know a lot of that is hit in our current science curriculums in the classrooms. They are talking about nutrition and what makes your body healthy."

She said while they briefly touch on health topics in gym classes, the short time she has with students makes physical activity more important.

"We add that to discussions we have in class but I'm not real thrilled with getting a book in their PE classes when I only see them twice per week," she said. "Kindergarten through second grade, it's only 20 minutes, so in that 40 minutes, I want my kids up and doing some skipping, and hopping, and throwing and catching rather than having to look at a book. Third grade through fifth grade is only 30 minutes twice per week. Again, that's only an hour that I get to see them per week and I'd much rather spend that hour having them move around, doing some fitness games and activities and having fun and getting their pulse and heart-rate up."

Card said through all the evolution physical education has gone through, the day-to-day goal for her students has always been the same.

"They come out of here with smiling faces and a little bit of sweat on the side and they actually had fun," she said. "They worked out and didn't know it because they were having fun playing the game."

You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at [twitter.com/RobNielsenPandD/](https://twitter.com/RobNielsenPandD/). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net/](http://www.yankton.net/).

### Yankton School District

## Activities Vital To A Robust Education

BY RYAN MORS  
YHS Activities Director

In the Yankton School District, where we have a tradition of excellence both in academics and activities, we are focused on providing each student with the best education possible so that they may achieve their personal best.

It is our belief that teaching and learning do not end at the conclusion of the regular school day. Students need activities not only because they are educationally sound, but in many cases to fill idle time. It is well documented that students who participate in activities have higher grade point averages, better class attendance and fewer discipline problems. Many life lessons can be learned through being a contributing member of a team. Dedication, work ethic, teamwork and sportsmanship are all great examples!

The Yankton School District offers a number of activities for students in grades 6-12 in both fine arts and athletics.

When school starts fall activities begin with Marching Band, Color Guard, Fall Sideline Cheer, Competitive Cheer, Competitive Dance, Girls Tennis, Boys Golf, Football, Volleyball, Boys and Girls Soccer and Boys and Girls Cross Country. Production of the Fall Play begins shortly after the first day of school. Many students become



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Activities ranging from athletics to music, theater and oral interpretation are key ingredients to successful scholastics. LEFT: Yankton tennis player Anna Kokesh is just one of many students who participate in athletic programs. RIGHT: Music rings out throughout the schools. Sometimes, it involves a little more than vocals, as these costumed singers — from left: Donald Bonneau, Riley Folkers and Emily Wiesler — displayed at a Lincoln School vocal concert last winter.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

involved in High School Chorus, Orchestra, and Concert Band, which are year-round activities. These students take one or more of these fine arts classes during the regular school day but are also very involved outside of regular school hours with concerts, pep band, singing the national anthem at activities and participating in regional music contests. Those that are selected also get the opportunity to

participate in All-State Band, All-State Chorus and All-State Orchestra. Students may also choose to work on the school newspaper and/or the school yearbook throughout the entire school year. Those interested may also run for a leadership position on the student council or as a class officer.

Winter activities will pick right up where fall leaves off and then we will

roll right into the spring with many more extracurricular choices for our students.

In addition to the many year-round activities previously mentioned, our students have many more options to choose from over the winter months and into the spring such as Boys and Girls Basketball, Wrestling, Gymnastics, Winter Sideline Cheer, Debate, Oral Interp, One-Act Play, Boys Ten-

nis, Girls Golf, the Spring Musical/Play, Boys Track and Girls Track.

As you can see, there is certainly no shortage of activities in the Yankton School District; as a matter of fact, we offer such a wide variety of activities that we not only believe there is at least something for absolutely everyone to participate in, we encourage it as well.



David J. Abbott, M.D.  
Board Certified  
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of many hands but of one mind.**

— Bill Bethel

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