

# One class too many

Business



When it comes to physical activity, one common attitude seems to exist: “No pain, no gain.” While short-lived pain can signify progress, chronic fatigue may suggest overtraining, leading to injury and incomplete body recovery. Often, adolescents endure the effects of overworked bodies engaged in a fast-moving academic lifestyle. To reduce the risk of injury associated with overuse and fatigue, schools should excuse students participating in year-round sports from attending gym class. Students who combine year-round athletics with school-mandated physical education undoubtedly exceed the recommended levels of daily exercise, leading to overtraining, chronic injury, or emotional enervation.

Children and adolescents age 6-17 should perform one hour of moderate or vigorous exercise per day (“At-A-Glance”). Year-round athletes achieve the suggested levels of activity through their sport, whether it consists of practices or games or workouts or off-season training. For example, the average soccer player runs upwards of seven miles in a 90 minute game, and most tennis players run three to five miles per match (Miller).

Sometimes more. Adding gym class to game day will bring early fatigue and decreased performance.

According to Jini Cicero, a Los Angeles conditioning specialist, “a drop in your workout performance is one of the earliest signs of overload” (Bush). Since athletes achieve the recommended amounts of physical activity, the requirements of gym class would exceed healthy levels of fitness. In addition, overtraining can lead to injury. While fatigue after a vigorous workout represents a positive sign, it “should not be excessive” (McFarland). Fatigue that lasts multiple days means that “the muscles and the energy

stores are not being effectively replenished” (McFarland), immensely increasing an athlete’s risk of injury. Overuse or overexertion “ can put stress on the bones” (Ngunovandu) leading to stress fractures, which account for 0.

7% to 20% of all sports injuries (Ngunovandu). Overuse injuries involve an athlete’s cartilage, joints, ligaments, and muscles (Ngunovandu); these injuries can even end careers, causing chronic pain in places such as the spine (Springen). Lastly, excessive physical activity can cause an emotional burnout for athletes. Overexertion can lead to disinterest in the sport, mood changes, and fatigue (Bush). According to nutritional biochemist Shawn M.

Talbott, a state of physical overload often leads to disrupted sleep patterns and insomnia (Bush). Adding gym class to an athlete’s schedule increases the likelihood of overload, injury, emotional burnout, and failure. Although evidence shows that gym class strains year-round athletes to unhealthy levels of activity, some people believe that gym class can only improve one’s state of health and well-being. Indeed, physical activity in gym class positively impacts a person’s health to an extent; however, year-round athletes gain sufficient physical activity while playing their sport.

Participating in sports directly aids the prevention of multiple chronic diseases, including: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression, and osteoporosis (“ The Health Benefits of Sport and Physical Activity”). Year-round athletes receive ample exercise by playing their sport, and gym class is unnecessary.

While the benefits of physical activity remain obvious, success requires moderation. Gym class requirements propel year-round athletes to unhealthy levels of exertion, causing them to exceed recommended levels of fitness, increase risk of possible overuse injuries, and suffer from emotional and mental burnouts. Since everyone wants students to maintain a healthy lifestyle, parents should contact their school board members regarding the elimination of gym class from the schedule of year-round athletes.