

3rd FIEP Asia Conference on Physical Education and Sports (ACPES 2018)
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Obesity Prevention and Reduction in Children and Youth: Physical Education and
Activity in the United States



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Abstract. More than 30 percent of children in the United States are classified as obese or overweight (Ogden, 2015). In addition to an increased risk for type II diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and high cholesterol, there are social and psychological implications such as depression and discrimination that overweight and obese individuals encounter. Although school-based physical activity and physical education are associated with obesity reduction and prevention, few schools in the United States meet the nationally recommended guidelines that specify the amount of time that children should be active during the school day (SHAPE America, 2016). Further, overweight and obese children avoid opportunities during the school day to be active for fear of being bullied, teased, and intimidated by their peers. The purpose of this presentation is to highlight concerns expressed by obese and overweight students in relation to engaging in physical activity and to highlight aspects of programs that have proven to be successful in reducing children's weight and increasing their desire to be physically active (Trout and Graber, 2009). Although federal and state policies have been developed to address the obesity epidemic, few have proven to be effective. Instead, the most effective form of prevention may need to occur in schools at the local level. Therefore, understanding elements of school-based programs that have proven to be effective can provide physical education teachers with powerful new weapons for addressing the obesity epidemic in their classes.

Biography. Dr. Kim C. Graber is a professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health and Director of the Campus Honors Program at the University of Illinois. Dr. Graber completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Iowa, her master's at Columbia University Teachers College, and her doctorate at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Her research interests include children's wellness, legislative policy mandates, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She has authored over 60 chapters/articles, presented at more than 100 national and international conferences, edited three monographs and two special features, co-authored three books as a member of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Assessment Task Force, and co-authored a textbook on physical education and physical activity for elementary classroom teachers that was published by McGraw Hill. She wrote the invited chapter for the *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (4th ed.) and has also published in numerous journals including *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, *Kinesiology Review*, *Journal of Allied Health*, *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education (JTPE)*, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *Teaching and Teacher*

Education, and Elementary School Journal. Dr. Graber has been a member of the review boards for *JTPE* and *Quest* and is a reviewer for many additional journals. She is a Fellow in the National Academy of Kinesiology, and the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America). Dr. Graber is a former President of the Research Council and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education. She also served as Chair of the Curriculum and Instruction Academy. She is a University of Illinois Distinguished Teacher/Scholar and has received the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.