

Fitness Focus

A Brief History of Physical Education

If several hundred years from now archaeologist were investigating our society, they would find endless examples of sport in the United States: stadiums, swimming pools, running shoes, hockey sticks, skis, baseball gloves, posters of sports stars, etc. Even today a basic survey of our country would reveal sports and physical education everywhere: Little League baseball, Physical Education classes, Special Olympics, neighborhood basketball, jogging, and televised professional sports. Various forms of sport and physical education have been around since the late 1400's and have only gained momentum and recognition in the centuries that followed.

One of the first men to recognize the importance of physical activity in school curriculum was **Johann Bernard Basedow** in Germany. He included gymnastics as part of the daily curriculum devoting up to three hours per day to educating through the physical. Basedow required a specific uniform for his students so they could have unrestricted movement. He also offered a camp for two months during the summer for his students.

In 1810 **Friedrich Jahn**, "the father of gymnastics", began working outdoors with his students using simple exercises and games sometimes taking long hikes. The thing that motivated Jahn to develop a system of physical training was his deep sense of patriotism. Germany had been soundly defeated in the Napoleonic wars. So, he developed his system with the hopes of creating strong, sturdy and fearless youth who would help secure Germany's freedom and could defend the Fatherland from outside forces.

Charles Beck who was a student, friend and follower of Friedrich Jahn teamed up with a friend and they made their way to Switzerland, France and eventually America. George Bancroft who had opened the Round Hill School in America had been looking at and studying the German system and immediately hired Beck to teach Latin and Physical Education in the form of German gymnastics. So, Beck became the first official Physical Education teacher in America in 1825.

Historical Timeline (1800's)

Below is a timeline of important historical events of the 1800's for Physical Education:

776 BC:	First ancient Olympiad is held
1814	Denmark's Bill of 1814 establishes first ever mandatory physical education
1823	Catherine Beecher founds Hartford seminary for girls with American Style Calisthenics (early form of aerobics)
1823	Round Hill School Opens
1825	Charles Beck becomes first Physical Education Teacher at Round Hill School.
1861	The Normal Institute of Physical Education is founded in Boston.
1866	California becomes first state to pass Physical Education legislation
1891	James Naismith invents Basketball
1896	First Modern Olympics is held in Athens, Greece

Lesson Review/Critical Thinking:

1. If archaeologists were to come to Lakeview 100 years from now to investigate the current year, what sort of things would they find? What conclusions could they draw about physical education in the 21st century (present day)? Explain...at least 5 sentences.
 2. Who were the three men mentioned above as the founders of physical education and in your own words, explain what their contributions were to Physical Education? In other words, what did they do for Physical Education in the 1800's?
 3. Interview a parent/guardian and ask them what Physical Education was like when they were in school. Then compare it to **your** Physical Education experience at Lakeview. Explain what the differences are and why **you** think Physical Education has changed since your parents went through school. (at least 3 paragraphs, 5 sentences each, including topic sentence).
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