The Healthy Child:

Returning PE to Schools

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In recent years, the childhood obesity crisis has reached epidemic proportions. The easy accessibility of high calorie, low nutrition foods in schools, homes, and communities has combined with an increasingly sedentary lifestyle for American youth. The result is a perfect storm of risk factors sapping the health and vitality of America’s children. Indeed, if the current trend continues, the rising generation is expected to be the first to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents’ generation. If children are to regain the health and strength that once seemed to be a precondition of childhood, they must get moving. Research has shown that today’s children are far less physically active than previous generations, due primarily to the proliferation of entertainment technologies, from gaming systems to computers to the ever-present cell phone. While it is impossible to control what children do with their families in their own homes, there is one recourse which may be taken to help get children moving again: to combat the effects of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle among American youth and to reduce the risk of childhood obesity, physical education must be reinstituted in all public schools and at all grade levels.

1. Lack of physical activity is a leading cause of obesity
   1. As average activity levels decrease, obesity rates rise
   2. Just one hour of physical activity daily is linked to a significant reduction in body mass index
   3. The majority of American children use their leisure time working with technology, meaning that physical activity levels among American children are the lowest they have ever been
   4. Physical education programs have been cut from most schools due to increasing academic pressures on school systems

Transition: This will enable me to move from the decision to cut PE to the discussion of the benefits of PE.

1. Reinstituting PE will provide numerous health benefits
   1. Children who engage in daily physical activity have on average a lower BMI
   2. Children are more likely to pursue additional opportunities to be physically active if they engage in at least one hour of activity per day.
   3. Children who engage in at least one hour of physical activity per day are at a lower risk for health complications, including those which lead to school absences and decreased academic performance.

Transition: This will enable me to move into a discussion of the psychological and cognitive benefits of PE.

1. Physical education programs benefit children not only physically but also psychologically and cognitively.
   1. Children who have PE class daily demonstrate better concentration and overall improved academic performance.
   2. Children who engage in one hour of physical activity daily report higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.
   3. Children engaged in PE or sports demonstrate better social skills, including cooperation, teamwork, and relationship-building.

The conclusion will summarize the essay’s main ideas without presenting anything new. The intention is to reiterate the highlights of the argument that has just been made in order to provide readers with a satisfying sense of closure while ensuring tat the standout ideas from the body paragraphs remain uppermost in their minds after they finish reading. The conclusing here, ideally, will revisit the essay’s key ideas but perhaps with a bit more emotion than is appropriate to the body paragraphs in order to help readers identify on an emotional level, as well as an intellectual one, with the urgency of the obesity crisis and the potential that PE programs have to help combat it.