

## Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education

Position Statement by the National Association  
for Sport and Physical Education

## The Weak Shall Inherit the Gym

Opinion Piece by Rick Reilly

# Are all **GAMES** worth playing?

### COMMON CORE

**RI 3** Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events. **RI 4** Determine connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices. **RI 8** Evaluate the argument and specific claims, assessing whether the reasoning is sound.

You're about to read two very different opinions on whether the game of dodgeball is fun or torture for those who play it.



## Meet the Author

### ● TEXT ANALYSIS: PERSUASION

Writers often rely on more than arguments to be convincing. They may use a tone that encourages readers to take their side or use **persuasive techniques** such as these:

- **Emotional appeals**—the use of words, descriptions, or images that call forth strong feelings, such as pity, fear, or anger. “Innocent puppies are horribly mistreated in puppy mills.”
- **Ethical appeals**—attempts to gain moral support for a claim by linking the claim to a widely accepted value. “We need this law because animals deserve decent treatment.”

As you read, notice the ways the authors try to convince you.

### ● READING SKILL: ANALYZE RHETORIC AND REASONING

When reading an argument, look for fallacies. A **rhetorical fallacy** is writing that is false or misleading. A **logical fallacy** is an error in reasoning. Here are three common fallacies:

- **Loaded terms**—words or phrases with strongly positive or negative connotations. Using *immature* to describe a teenager casts the person in a more negative light than using *young*.
- **Leading questions**—questions that contain their answers, such as, “You don’t want all the forests to disappear, do you?”
- **Caricatures**—cartoon-like portrayals of opposing arguments, such as, “They want you to go around hugging trees.”

As you read the selections, jot down any fallacies you find and note their locations with the text’s line numbers on a chart.

	<i>“Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education”</i>	<i>“The Weak Shall Inherit the Gym”</i>
<i>Fallacies</i>	Loaded terms: lines 47–49	

### ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced words help to convey opinions about playing dodgeball. Try to figure out each word’s meaning.

1. If you witness someone cheating, report the **impropriety**.
2. Students are not **adequately** prepared for competition.
3. We were able to **eliminate** the other players one by one.
4. Is dodgeball a safe way to take out **aggression**?
5. The school is going to **ban** the game.



Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

## Rick Reilly

born 1958

### Funny Man with Serious Talent

Many *Sports Illustrated* readers turn to the last page of their magazine first in order to read Rick Reilly’s weekly column “Life of Reilly.” The column, along with his novels and essay collections, has earned Reilly the reputation as “one of the funniest humans on the planet.” Reilly has written about everything from ice-skating to the Iditarod, the Alaskan dog race. His adventures include facing fastballs from eight-time All-Star pitcher Nolan Ryan, cycling with seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, and playing 108 holes of golf in one day. He began his sports writing career as a sophomore at the University of Colorado, taking phoned-in high-school volleyball scores for his hometown newspaper. After graduation, he moved on to stints at the *Denver Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*, eventually landing at *Sports Illustrated* in 1985. He has been voted National Sportswriter of the Year 10 times.

### National Association for Sport and Physical Education

The NASPE is made up of gym teachers, coaches, athletic directors, athletic trainers, sport management professionals, researchers, and college faculty. The association provides a way for all of these professionals to help one another to improve physical education in schools. By researching, developing standards, and spreading information, NASPE helps students learn about fitness and stay active all their lives.

Author  
Online



Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML8-1005



1005

# Position on Dodgeball in Physical Education

National Association for Sport  
and Physical Education

**impropriety**  
(ĩm'prē-prĩ'ĩ-tē) *n.*  
an unsuitable or  
inappropriate act  
or quality

## GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

In line 4, the writer uses parentheses to let you know the abbreviation for the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

## A PERSUASION

What is the NASPE's position on dodgeball in school physical education programs?

**adequately**  
(ăd'ĩ-kwĩt-lē) *adv.*  
enough to satisfy a  
requirement or meet  
a need

## B PERSUASION

Reread lines 18–24. Based on these lines, how would you describe the **tone** of this document?

With the recent release of both a movie and television show about dodgeball, debate about the game's merits and **improprieties** has escalated in the media and on the NASPE listserv.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) would like to reiterate its position about including dodgeball in school physical education programs. ♦

NASPE believes that dodgeball is **not** an appropriate activity for K–12 school physical education programs. The purpose of physical education is to provide students with:

- The knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to be physically active for a lifetime
  - A daily dose of physical activity for health benefits
  - Positive experiences so that kids want to be physically active outside of physical education class and throughout their lifetime
- The goals of physical education can be obtained through a wide variety of appropriate physical activities. A

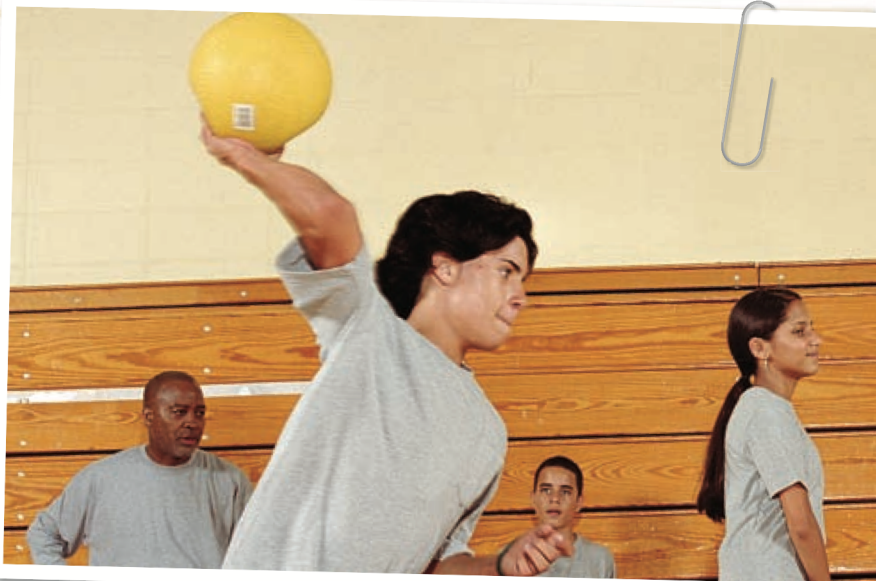
Getting and keeping children and adolescents active is one of the biggest challenges facing parents and youth leaders.

- 61.5% of children aged 9–13 years do not participate in any organized physical activity during their non-school hours and 22.6% do not engage in any free-time physical activity.
- One-third of high school students are not **adequately** active and over 10% do not participate in any physical activity at all.
- 16% of U.S. youth aged 6–19 are overweight—triple the proportion of 25 years ago. B

According to NASPE's *Appropriate Practices for Elementary School Physical Education* (2000), "in a quality physical education class teachers involve ALL children in activities that allow them to participate actively, both physically and mentally. Activities such as relay races, dodgeball, and

1. **listserv** (lĩst-sũrv): an e-mail list that allows a group of people to hold a discussion by writing to each other via the Internet.





### ◀ Analyze Visuals

How many people pictured on this dodgeball team appear to be getting exercise?

elimination tag provide limited opportunities for everyone in the class, especially the slower, less agile students who need the activity the most.”

The students who are **eliminated** first in dodgeball are typically the ones who most need to be active and practice their skills. Many times these students are also the ones with the least amount of confidence in their physical abilities. Being targeted because they are the “weaker” players, and being hit by a hard-thrown ball, does not help kids to develop confidence.

The arguments most often heard in favor of dodgeball are that it allows for the practice of important physical skills—and kids like it.

- Dodgeball does provide a means of practicing some important physical skills—running, dodging, throwing, and catching.
- 40 However, there are many activities that allow practice of these skills without using human targets or eliminating students from play.
- Some kids may like it—the most skilled, the most confident. But many do not! Certainly not the student who gets hit hard in the stomach, head, or groin. And it is not appropriate to teach our children that you win by hurting others. ©

In a recent article about the new GSN (games network) TV show called “Extreme Dodgeball,” there is talk of “developing and executing extreme strategies to annihilate opponents” and the use of terms such as “throw-to-kill ratios,” and “headshots.” NASPE asks, “Is this the type  
50 of game that you want children to be exposed to?” D

**eliminate** (ĭ-lĭm’ə-nāt’)  
v. to remove from consideration by defeating

### © PERSUASION

Reread lines 42–45. What kind of **emotional appeal** is being made? What is the **ethical appeal**?

COMMON CORE RI.4

### D ANALYZE RHETORIC AND REASONING

A **leading question** is a question that contains its answer. A **rhetorical question** is one that has such an obvious answer that it does not require a reply. Reread lines 49–50. Is this a leading question or a rhetorical question?



# The Weak Shall Inherit the Gym



*Rick Reilly*

**Not to alarm you, but America is going softer than left-out butter. Exhibit 9,137: Schools have started banning dodgeball.**

**ban** (băn) v. to prohibit

**E PERSUASION**  
What words and phrases in the first sentence make Rick Reilly's **tone** immediately clear?

**F PERSUASION**  
Why does Neil Williams object to dodgeball? Describe Reilly's response to this objection.

I kid you not. Dodgeball has been outlawed by some school districts in New York, Texas, Utah and Virginia. Many more are thinking about it, like Cecil County, Md., where the school board wants to **ban** any game with "human targets." **E**

Human targets? What's tag? What's a snowball fight? What's a close play at second? Neil Williams, a physical education professor at Eastern Connecticut State, says dodgeball has to go because it "encourages the best to pick on the weak." Noooo! You mean there's weak in the world? There's strong? Of course there is, and dodgeball is one of the first opportunities in life to figure out which one you are and how you're going to deal with it. **F**

We had a bully, Big Joe, in our seventh grade. Must have weighed 225 pounds, . . . We also had a kid named Melvin, who was so thin we could've faxed him from class to class. I'll never forget the dodgeball game in which Big Joe had a ball in each hand and one sandwiched

**aggression** (ə-grĕsh'ən)  
n. hostile or destructive  
behavior or action

COMMON CORE RI 4

**G ANALYZE  
RHETORIC AND  
REASONING**

A **caricature** is  
a cartoon-like  
description of an  
opposing argument.  
Reread lines 27–30 to  
find the caricature.  
Then note it on your  
chart.

**H PERSUASION**

What widely accepted  
value does Reilly use to  
make an **ethical appeal**?  
Consider whether he  
seems to respect the job  
of filling chalupas.

**I ANALYZE RHETORIC  
AND REASONING**

Reread lines 34–51.  
Sometimes writers try  
to convince you that  
a position is wrong  
because it could result  
in a ridiculous outcome.  
Identify one ridiculous  
outcome proposed by  
Reilly in lines 34–51.

between his knees, firing at our side like a human tennis-ball machine,  
20 when, all of a sudden, he got plunked. . . . Joe whirled around to see  
who'd done it and saw that it was none other than Melvin, all 83 pounds  
of him, most of it smile.

Some of these . . . whiners say dodgeball is inappropriate in these  
violent times. Are you kidding? Dodgeball is one of the few times in life  
when you get to let out your **aggressions**, no questions asked. We don't  
need less dodgeball in schools, we need more!

I know what all these . . . parents want. They want their Ambers and  
their Alexanders to grow up in a cozy womb of noncompetition, where  
everybody shares tofu<sup>1</sup> and Little Red Riding Hood and the big, bad wolf  
30 set up a commune.<sup>2</sup> Then their kids will stumble out into the bright light  
of the real world and find out that, yes, there's weak and there's strong  
and teams and sides and winning and losing. You'll recognize those kids.  
They'll be the ones filling up chalupas.<sup>3</sup> Very noncompetitive. **G H**

But Williams and his fellow whiners aren't stopping at dodgeball. In  
their Physical Education Hall of Shame they've also included duck-duck-  
goose and musical chairs. Seriously. So, if we give them dodgeball, you  
can look for these games to be banned next:

*Tag.* Referring to any child as *it* is demeaning and hurtful. Instead  
of the child hollering, "You're it!" we recommend, "You're special!"

40 *Baseball.* Involves wrong-headed notions of *stealing*, *errors* and  
gruesome *hit-and-run*. Players should always be safe, never out.

*Capture the flag.* Mimics war.

*Kick the can.* Unfair to the can.

If we let these PC twinkies<sup>4</sup> have their way, we'll be left with:

*Duck-duck-duck.* Teacher spends the entire hour patting each child  
softly on the head.

*Upsy down.* The entire class takes turns fluffing the gym teacher's  
pillow before her nap.

*Swedish baseball.* Players are allowed free passage to first, second or  
50 third, where they receive a relaxing two-minute massage from opposing  
players. **I**

1. **tofu** (to'fōō): a protein-rich soybean curd that many vegetarians eat in place of meat.
2. **commune** (kôm'yōōn'): a cooperative community in which a group of people who are not necessarily related live and work together.
3. **chalupas** (che-lŭ'pās): fried tortillas filled with meat, a Mexican dish similar to tacos that is served at several U.S. fast-food chains.
4. **PC twinkies**: Reilly's expression for people who are too concerned (politically correct) with offending others by words or actions.

