

## **Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum**

### **Lesson title:**

Women and Sports

### **Grade level:**

6-8

### **Subject Area:**

Health

### **Duration:**

Two class periods (spread out over at least one week)

### **Objectives:**

Students will do the following:

1. Explore how women's involvement in sports has changed over the past 50 years
2. Research the health benefits of being physically active

### **Materials:**

- Newsprint and markers
- Internet access (optional but very helpful)
- Tape recorder (optional)

### **Procedures:**

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what famous female athletes they can think of. Write their ideas on a sheet of newsprint. Examples may include Mia Hamm (soccer), Brandy Chastain (soccer), Serena and Venus Williams (tennis), and Marian Jones (track). Ask students how they learned about these athletes.
2. Tell students that in the past women's sports weren't as important as they are today, and girls weren't often encouraged to participate in sports. Explain that famous female athletes of the 20th century helped elevate women's sports to a more prominent level. Also, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments prohibited discrimination by any educational program receiving federal financial assistance. This amendment made it much easier for young women to participate in college sports.

As more women became involved in sports, girls were encouraged to participate as well. In addition, as more people became aware of the importance of exercise, sports for girls took on greater importance.

3. Explain to students that they will have a chance to see for themselves how women's involvement in sports has changed over the past 50 years. Have students interview

women of three different ages to learn about their perceptions of women's involvement in professional sports as well as their own involvement in sports. One woman should be 40 to 60 years of age, one should be 25 to 40 years of age, and one in her teens or early 20s.

4. Give students the interview questions provided here to ask each woman. Students may use a tape recorder or take written notes. Allow students a few days to complete their interviews.

*Interview Questions*

- a. What female athletes were you aware of when you were growing up?
  - b. Was there any newspaper, radio, and television coverage of women's professional sports when you were growing up?
  - c. Did you play sports during your regular physical education classes?
  - d. Did you have an opportunity to play on sports teams when you were growing up? If so, which sports?
  - e. Was there a sport you wanted to play that was not open to girls? If so, what was it?
  - f. When you were growing up, were you aware that being physically active was important to stay healthy? If not, when did you become aware of this?
5. After students have completed the interviews, have them write an article explaining their findings. Students should include reasons women have become more involved in sports over time, such as the growing awareness of the importance of exercise to staying healthy.
  6. After students have written their articles, discuss what they learned. What was the role of sports for women the age of their grandmothers? Did women the age of their mothers have more opportunities to participate in sports than their grandmothers did? Did the youngest women have even more opportunities? Compare students' findings. Did the students discover similar trends?
  7. Conclude the lesson by asking all students to think about the role that sports play in their own lives. If they are involved in a sport, how does it affect their lives? If they do not participate in a sport, what do they do for exercise? Finally, ask students what benefits they notice from being physically active and fit.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Imagine being a young girl in the 1960s. You really want to play basketball in school, but there are no teams available. What would you do about the situation? If you wanted to start a team, what obstacles would you face? What would you do to overcome them?

2. If people had been aware earlier of the importance of physical activity to maintaining good health, would more sports have been open to girls? Give reasons to support your ideas.
3. How do you think sports for boys and girls, as well as men and women, will change over the next 50 years? Will girls be playing football? Will boys be playing field hockey? Give reasons to support your ideas.

### **Evaluation:**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students conducted interviews, wrote an article based on their interviews, and discussed changes and trends over time:

Three points: demonstrated strong interviewing skills; completed a well-written and informative article; displayed strong ability to discuss trends and changes over time.

Two points: demonstrated average interviewing skills; wrote an on-grade-level article that included an adequate amount of information; displayed an average ability to discuss trends and changes over time.

One point: demonstrated below-average interviewing skills; wrote a weak article that included a minimal level of information; had difficulty discussing trends and changes over time.

### **Extension:**

#### **Female Athletes**

Have students choose a female athlete from the present or past to research. The following Web sites provide helpful information:

<<http://www.distinguishedwomen.com/subject/sports.html>>

<<http://school.discovery.com/schooladventures/womenofthecentury/phenomenalwomen/sports.html>>

Have students make a visual display showing the high points of the chosen athlete's life. The display should include information about the athlete's childhood, how it and adolescence influenced her decision to get involved in sports, and her major accomplishments.

### **Suggested Reading:**

***Whatever It Takes: Women on Women's Sport***

Jole Sandoz and Joby Williams, editors.

Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1999.

This is a wonderful collection of essays, poems, diary entries, and other reflections on women's participation in sports, written by women. Most entries were written in the 1990s, although a scattering of older entries (1854, 1923, etc.) adds dimension to this splendid and inspiring book.

***Winning Ways: A Photohistory of American Women in Sports***

Sue Macy.

Henry Holt, 1996.

Arranged chronologically, starting in the 1800s, this book chronicles the history of women's involvement in sports using numerous black-and-white photographs. It discusses the barriers that great female athletes have had to face, including racial discrimination. Many famous women athletes, like golfer Babe Didrikson and tennis star Althea Gibson, and teams such as the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, are highlighted, as are more recent athletes such as speed-skater Bonnie Blair and the 1995 America's Cup women's sailing team. This is a terrific and inspiring book!

**Vocabulary:**

**athlete**

Definition: An individual who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina.

Context: Mia Hamm is an excellent **athlete**, and she is a leader and a role model for young girls.

**exercise**

Definition: Bodily exertion for the sake of developing and maintaining physical fitness.

Context: People of all ages benefit from regular **exercise**.

**perception**

Definition: An observation or awareness of a particular event.

Context: Caroline's **perception** was that her mother had never been athletic or interested in women's sports.

**Title IX**

Definition: A law passed in 1972 stating that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Context: When **Title IX** was passed, girls had a considerably easier time participating in sports at school.

### **Academic Standards:**

The following standards are from the American Association for Health Education for students in grades six through eight:

1. Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

This lesson plan adheres to the standards set forth in the *National Science Education Standards*, in particular the category Science in Personal and Social Perspectives.

**Credit:** Marilyn Fenichel, freelance writer and curriculum developer.

This lesson plan was created in consultation with Nancy Hudson, health educator.

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