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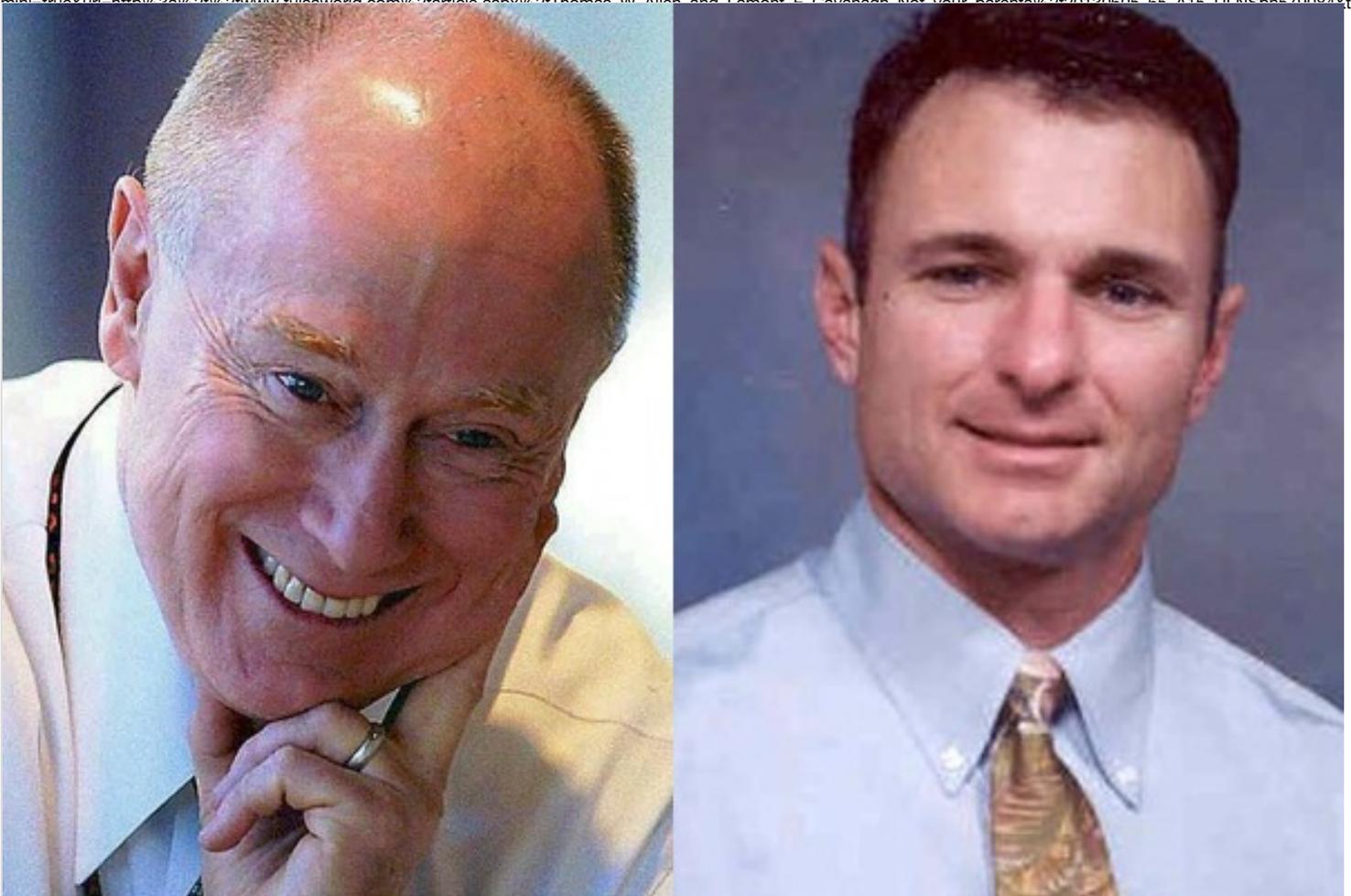
### Thomas W. Allen and Lamont E. Cavanagh: Not your parents' physical education

By THOMAS W. ALLEN & LAMONT E. CAVANAGH on Jun 5, 2013, at 2:01 AM Updated on 6/05/13 at 3:22 AM

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Thomas W. Allen (left) and Lamont E. Cavanagh: LRPE focuses on students' individual fitness, as contrasted with traditional team sports activity, during physical education classes. This PE is not your parents' PE, where the best athletes got to play while others often simply stood around or sat and watched.

For far too long we Oklahomans have lamented the unacceptable state of our public education. We try one thing after another without appreciable impact.

The solution, in our opinion, is clear: A simple new approach to learning through a physical fitness orientation will work wonders

here in Oklahoma. This new approach to PE has an impact that educators are just now beginning to recognize and appreciate. This impact is on the brain.

Dr. John Ratey writes in his book "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain" that exercise is "Miracle Gro" for the brain. Ratey describes a new type of PE - Learning Readiness Physical Education (LRPE) - which is now part of the curriculum in a growing number of elementary and high schools throughout the nation.

In every school - inner-city, suburban or rural - where LRPE is a part of the curriculum, academic achievement soared, absenteeism decreased and discipline incidents decreased.

An example of the impact of Learning Readiness Physical Education comes from Naperville, Ill. The new physical fitness education was described by its director, Paul Zientarski, in his recent visit to Tulsa. The results attained by Zientarski's students speak volumes. Gym class has transformed the student body of 19,000 into perhaps the fittest in the nation.

Among one entire class of sophomores, only 3 percent were overweight, compared to the national average of 30 percent.

Their PE program also has turned those students into some of the smartest in this country. In 1999, Naperville's eighth-graders were among some 230,000 students from around the world who took an international standards test called TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), which evaluates knowledge in math and science. In recent years, students in China, Japan and Singapore have outpaced American kids in these crucial subjects, but Naperville is the conspicuous exception - when Naperville's students took the TIMSS, they finished first in the world in science and sixth in math.

LRPE focuses on students' individual fitness, as contrasted with traditional team sports activity, during physical education classes. This PE is not your parents' PE, where the best athletes got to play while others often simply stood around or sat and watched. No, this PE gets every student involved in and responsible for his and her personal fitness.

The key is to exercise until each student's heart rate is increased to a prescribed level over several minutes. Students regularly run a mile at a predetermined heart rate during the PE class several times a week. Then they are more prepared to learn in their subsequent classes. Students are also permitted, even encouraged, to take activity breaks during class - get up out of their seats and ride the stationary bicycle in the back of the class room.

And, how does exercise improve the brain? Neuroscientists have demonstrated that new neurons are formed and neural connections are strengthened through the release of several proteins released into the blood from actively contracting muscles. One of these proteins, brain-derived neurotrophic factor is the "Miracle Gro" Ratey describes.

The report in the Tulsa World on May 24, "PE should be core subject in schools, health group says," summarized a landmark study developed by the Institute of Medicine. The IOM calls upon the Department of Education to recommend that physical education be adopted as a core subject.

We agree with the recommendation since regular physical activity has been shown to be the cornerstone of health and the key to longevity.

However, to simply add traditional PE classes to the current curriculum as a core subject would be a mistake. As school administrators consider the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine, we call on them to adopt Learning Readiness Physical Education.

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**Internet sales tax threat to small business**  
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In the most recent election campaign voters made it pretty clear that high taxes are among their biggest concerns, along with the need to keep our economic recovery on track.

**Visitors, city buses and Tulsa's economy**  
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Here's something readers probably can agree on: Every visitor to Tulsa who comes from out of town for purposes of shopping, dining and entertainment contributes to Tulsa's prosperity. I am one of those out-of-towners; the small town where I live is equidistant from Tulsa and Oklahoma City. What civic attractions would lead me to advocate Tulsa as a destination rather than Oklahoma City?



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