

Scientific article

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371.7+316.6+371.8.061+314.925.2+314.922+371.8+791.7+372.32+394.014+331.32+791.9

doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-628-639

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Education through “Balance of Spirit and Body.” Physical Development of Children in Orenburg
at the Turn of the 20th Century through the Prism of Regional Press

Abstract

The article addresses notions of the provincial society of Orenburg at the turn of the 20th century on the need for physical development of children by studying publications in the

regional press. Leading teachers and public figures of the era unanimously declared the need to improve children's health through organization of outdoor games, walks, and excursions. Children's health itself was considered a key component in the formation of a person. The article is based on the ideas of A. I. Tarnavsky, who became the director of public schools in the Orenburg gubernia in the early 20th century. In Orenburg of the turn of the century, the key position in the improvement of children's health through physical education belonged to the Society for the Promotion of the Physical Development of Children, which developed a system of “promotion of correct views on goals of physical education of younger generation and introduction of various methods of physical education and health promotion.” The society organized trips and festivities for children with outdoor games, built playgrounds, ice rinks. The organization of various events contributing to the strengthening of children's physical health was perceived by publicists as a function not so much of parents as of educational and public institutes taking care of the younger generation. The goal of raising fully functional citizens, who were capable of successful work, patience in enduring life's hardships, creating large families, and ensuring stable social development, was a priority of the post-reform transformation of society. However, Orenburg society at the turn of the century treated these initiatives without enthusiasm. Therefore, it was teachers and educators who became main initiators of physical education for children, as they were by virtue of their profession interested in strengthening of both the physical and moral health of their pupils. To this end, teachers arranged nature trips for students, organized excursions, noting beneficial effect of these events on health and mental abilities of children. The study is relevant due to increased attention to physical health of modern children and adolescents. Addressing this problem at regional level is a new research task, never before set in the regional scientific community. Obtained scientific results can become a basis for practical actions to improve children's health through organization of recreational activities.

Keywords

Historical sources, everyday life, children, regional press, physical development, health improvement, outdoor games, walks, excursions.

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Grant information

The article has been prepared with financial support of the Russian Science Fund (science project no. 22-28-00763 “Children and childhood. Everyday life of a child in a provincial urban society (based on materials from the post-reform era Orenburg)”).

Submitted 5.07.2022, published (for citation):

BURLUTSKAYA, E. V. Vospitanie cherez “ravnovesie dukha i tela”. Fizicheskoe razvitie detei v poreformennom Orenburge skvoz' prizmu regional'noi pressy na rubezhe XIX-XX vv. [Education through “Balance of Spirit and Body.” Physical Development of Children in Orenburg at the Turn of the 20th Century through the Prism of Regional Press. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2023, no. 2, pp. 628-639. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-628-639

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