

**You Don't Have To Keep Score!
A Teacher's Journey to a New Way of Being**

By © Glenn Barbour

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Abstract

Researchers in the field of health and physical education have long been concerned about the physical education experiences of female students in their middle and high school years. The purpose of this research was to examine how teaching a female only physical education class deepened my understanding of teaching female students in physical education. In an attempt to meet the needs and interests of female students, a girls-only physical education class was offered. This project used the principles of existential action research. Qualitative data collection methods used for this study included teacher journaling, descriptive “field notes” and a critical “friend”. The following themes emerged from this experience: autopilot, students looking for something new, opportunities for leadership or ownership, guest instructors, changing perspectives on teaching high school physical education, a positive classroom environment, and physical education and life. The findings are not intended to be generalizable to other physical education teaching situations. However, given that there are many ways of being a teacher in physical education, an approach focused on building relationships with students and meeting the needs and interests unique to each class may be more appealing to students. As a result of this research, specifically through the emergence of the themes, I believe I have gained a deeper understanding of teaching female students as it relates to their experiences in physical education.

General Summary

This research project was undertaken in response to the issue of low enrolment of female students in high school physical and the challenges of teaching physical education. A girls-only physical education class was offered to help meet the needs and interests of female students and explore ways to improve my teaching of physical education. As a result of this experience my way of teaching physical education changed from a more traditional sport-based approach to one which is now focused on the relationships with my students and meeting the needs and interests unique to each class.

Acknowledgements

As I write this the world is enduring a global pandemic. All over the world people young and old are trying to make sense of a “new normal”. Like so many others I find myself trying to find my way in a rapidly changing world. So, as I pause to reflect, it is clear to me that the key events in one’s life are overwhelmingly dependent upon the support of others. The end product is often an extrinsic reward but the real value lies in the journey where the pathway is rarely a straight line but more likely a winding road. And when you can’t see around the bend and the way forward is unclear, it is the support of others that gets you through. Support brings stability, hope, energy, confidence, and a belief in what is possible. Such is the case for me in my academic journey, I would not be this close without the support of a number of individuals.

I would like to thank my co-supervisor Dr. Michelle Kilborn. In meeting Dr. Kilborn my first impression was that there is hope for the field of health and physical education. I consider her to be among the most knowledgeable in the HPE field. She inspired me to rethink what is possible in physical education. I have benefited so much from this experience and I am forever grateful for all that I have learned from Dr. Kilborn.

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I would like to thank my students past and present. They are both my challenge and my reward. There is potential in all of them. I believe in the benefits of physical education for all students now more than ever. I have seen what is possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is much information reported on the health and well-being of Canadian youth that supports the need for physical education in Canadian schools. This is evidenced by the extensive research that outlines how children's overall wellbeing is declining and health concerns such as obesity and mental health issues are on the rise (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2011; O'Brien Institute for Public Health, 2018; Participation, 2018; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2011; Unicef Canada, 2019; World Health Organization, 2020a). In addition, physical activity rates among children and youth in Canada show that only 39% of children aged 5 to 17 are meeting national physical activity guidelines (Participation, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2019). Other concerning trends show a 7% decrease in physical activity level each year for the 10-19 age group (Participation, 2018). Furthermore, boys are twice as likely as girls to meet recommended levels of physical activity (Participation, 2018). The 2014 Active Healthy Kids Report Card reports similar low physical activity rates and also highlights how rates in Newfoundland are some of the lowest in the country (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2014).

Physical education is one way to help combat the declining health of young people. There is considerable research that emphasizes the many benefits of physical education that may be realized across the physical, affective and cognitive domains. Regular exercise and physical activity in physical education contributes to the development of a healthy cardiovascular system, healthy musculoskeletal tissues and neuromuscular awareness (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016; WHO, 2020b). Additionally, psychological benefits for youth have been linked to regular physical activity such as helping control anxiety and depression, and improving mental health and well-being (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016; WHO, 2020b). Physical education may

also positively influence social development by helping build self confidence and encourage social interaction (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016; WHO, 2020b). Youth who are physically active generally achieve higher academic performance in school (WHO, 2020b).

However good in theory mandatory physical education is, implementing and teaching it has its challenges. Research has indicated that physical education class can be a negative experience for many students, particularly female students. This often results in female students choosing not to enrol in non-compulsory physical education courses (Kirk, Lamb, Oliver et al., 2018). As noted by Derry (2002), “adolescent females are participating less in physical education classes while an increasing number of girls are dropping out of physical activity participation at the high school level” (p. 1).

Some reasons for young girls disengaging from physical education include: lack of positive learning experiences (Derry, 2002; Humbert, 2006), previous negative experiences in physical education classes (Ennis, 1996; Van Gyn et al., 2000), impact of sport-based pedagogies (Ennis, 1996; Kirk, 2010); teacher-student relationships (Mitchell et al., 2015), limited embodied learning opportunities (Fisette, 2011; Lambert, 2018), unequal power relations in physical education (Fisette, 2013), and socially constructed gender roles (Fisette 2013; Oliver et al., 2009;).

The delivery of high school physical education courses in Canada varies from province to province and is offered either as an elective subject or a mandatory graduation requirement. Prior to 2005, physical education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador was non-compulsory in the high school curriculum and students were not required to complete any physical education credits for graduation. In September 2005, all high school students in Newfoundland and Labrador were required to take 2 credits in physical education as partial

fulfillment of their high school graduation requirements. To meet this requirement, students may use two credits from Physical Education 2100/2101, Physical Education 3100/3101, or Healthy Living 1200, a multi-disciplinary curriculum with a focus on key areas of healthy eating, active lifestyles, personal dynamics, and controlling substances. The credits may be completed in any year of their 3-year high school program.

At the high school where I teach, enrolment in high school physical education remains high among male students and very low among female students. In fact, just prior to the start of this project in the 2013-2014 school year, the total combined course enrolment in both Physical Education 2100 and 3100 showed only 16 females were enrolled in physical education versus 115 males. The school population for the 2013-14 year was 719 of which 356 were male and 363 were female. Although female enrolment and participation has declined in high school physical education, female students are choosing the Healthy Living course to fulfill their 2-credit graduation requirement. While the healthy living course provides students with a broad-based multidisciplinary curriculum to help them pursue active healthy lifestyles, the reality is that in most schools the healthy living course consists of spending sixty to eighty percent of course time in a sedentary classroom setting.

It is clear that declining participation and negative student experiences in physical education at my school are following the trends found by other researchers. Despite reports of the clear benefits of physical activity and physical education, students, in particular female students, are choosing not to participate. As a physical education teacher, this concerns me and I wanted to find out what I could do to help change this situation.

The reason for the selection of this topic originated from a combination of several factors: my own personal experiences with sport and physical activity, as well as my experiences as a

physical education teacher, and coach of adolescents. Through my own lifetime participation in sport and physical activity, I have benefitted in many ways. Examples of these benefits include maintaining a high level of physical health, learning to persevere through a variety of challenges, developing lasting friendships, and gaining self-confidence. As a physical education teacher and coach, I have also been able to help youth experience the joys and benefits of sport and physical activity. Together, these experiences have had an enormous influence on who I am today and have strengthened my views of the importance of sport and physical activity as part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle.

It is troubling to me however, that many of my students have not realized these same positive benefits that were ultimately my calling to the profession. It is clear that a large majority of female high school students are not availing of the opportunities for regular physical activity and learning provided in the physical education course. Instead, most female students are choosing to enrol in a healthy living course to fulfill their graduation requirement as opposed to a physical education course. I have been a physical education teacher for 13 years and have seen first-hand many participation issues with female students in the required high school physical education classes. I have also noticed that increasingly, many female students resist or refuse to be physically active in and out of class.

As a mid-career physical education teacher, I had been finding it increasingly difficult to motivate students to be physically active and engaged in class, particularly female students. When I looked at the enrollment numbers in physical education class with only a few female students in each class, I began to question myself: what I was doing wrong? I had tried new approaches like introducing new lifestyle activities and games but student participation issues still continued. Coincidentally, as my challenges continued with teaching, I also began my

Masters of Physical Education program and through the study of issues in the field of physical education I learned I wasn't alone in my struggles. As I finished my graduate coursework, I shifted my focus to facing my own struggles in teaching physical education. It was always my inherent belief that physical education was for the benefit of all students, yet I felt I was failing my students as enrolment and participation kept declining. My female students were a subgroup I really struggled to understand and meet their needs in physical education, so that was a good place to start my journey of renewal and possible change.

Reading articles about projects that introduced a girls-only physical education class and how that structure was helpful in encouraging female students to participate gave me the idea to explore this as an option in my school. To further understand this issue of female participation in physical education in my school, we developed a female-only physical education course for the 2014-15 school year in an attempt to increase the enrolment of females in high school physical education courses. This new course provided the context for this research project. It was hoped that this would provide female students, particularly those who are hesitant or reluctant to take physical education with the opportunity to increase their participation and physical activity in a safe learning environment.

Purpose of the Project

Even with a curriculum that has moved from teaching the skills of traditional sports to cooperative games, individual activities and fitness pursuits, there is a significant percentage of students who do not want to participate in class activities/physical education. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine how teaching a female only physical education class deepened my understanding of teaching female students in physical education. This project involved an in-depth look at how a teacher's way of teaching physical education can impact

students, with a particular focus on female participation in physical education. In addition, this research explored how the current model of physical education curricula may not meet the needs of all students and how my own way of being a teacher contributes to female students' decisions to participate/not participate in physical education. Specific recommendations will be made for practice, policy, and future research as possible ways to better meet the needs of female students in high school physical education.

Research Questions

There are several research questions that guided this study:

- 1.) How can this experience help me gain a better understanding of how my teaching can better meet the needs of female students in PE?
- 2.) How does teaching a girls-only physical education class impact my way of being a teacher?
- 3.) How can this inquiry help me change or improve my teaching of PE?
- 4.) What do I notice about female student participation from teaching this girls-only physical education class? What is the same and what is different than my co-educational classes?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following literature review will outline the current health status of children and youth as well as the benefits of physical activity and physical education. It will also explore the research regarding female students' perceptions about physical education and present the factors affecting student participation in physical education and physical activity in general. Following this, a review of the teachers influence on female participation will be given. The literature review will also outline the process of teacher reflection in an action research approach.

Physical Activity Habits of Children and Youth

Physical inactivity is a growing concern in today's society, especially among adolescents despite the existence of clearly established guidelines for exercise. According to the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology's (CSEP) Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (2016), "for optimal health benefits, children and youth (aged 5–17 years) should achieve high levels of physical activity, low levels of sedentary behaviour, and sufficient sleep each day" (p. 1). Specific recommendations encourage at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily, while including at least three days per week of muscle and bone strengthening activities and vigorous physical activity (CSEP, 2016). In addition, regular physical activity is associated with many health benefits for children and youth resulting in improvements in physical fitness, bone density, body composition, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, mental health, and academic achievement (Janssen & Leblanc, 2010).

There is also growing concern among health professionals about the increase in levels of sedentary behavior and poor physical health of many of today's youth. Research indicates that most youth are not reaching the recommended levels of daily physical activity to achieve the optimum health benefits. As stated by the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical

Activity for Children and Youth (2018), “only 35% of 5 to 17 year-olds are achieving the recommended activity levels for their age group” (p. 7). These concerning physical activity rates are confirmed by the Canadian Health Measures Survey which reports that only 31% of youth aged 12-17 achieve 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per day (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Not only are children and youth not engaging in MVPA but this generation’s young people are spending more and more time being sedentary in their leisure time. According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018), “only 8% of 10- to 17-year-olds in Canada are meeting the screen time recommendation within the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth” (p. 50). Specifically, physical activity trends throughout the teenage years are not encouraging. Findlay et al. (2009) report, “physical activity participation tends to decline throughout adolescence, particularly in the midteen years” (p. 708). Similarly, this trend is evident among Canadian youth as 47% of children aged 5-11 met the recommended physical activity target whereas only 31% of youth aged 12-17 met the same target (Statistics Canada, 2019).

The lifestyle of today’s youth has changed dramatically when compared to previous generations. Advances in technology have changed how adolescents spend their leisure time. According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018), “12- to 17-year-olds in Canada spend 4.1 hours per day, in screen time pursuits” (p. 50).

Furthermore, as stated by the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018), “77% of 5- to 19-year-olds in Canada report watching TV, playing computer or video games, or reading during the afterschool period” (p. 50). This

alarming statistic represents a large proportion of Canadian youth who are physically inactive in the after-school period. Further, the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018), reports screen time in the amount of an average of six hours per day outside of school (Active Health Kids, 2011) and that this greater screen time can be “associated with unfavourable body composition, higher scores on indicators of cardiometabolic risk, decreased physical fitness, and lower scores on indicators of emotional and social health” (p. 52).

Unfortunately, there seems to be little improvement in recent years in many of the areas which negatively affect the health of our youth. The 2018 report card reveals that there has been little to no change in the MVPA levels in Canadian children and youth since 2007 (Participation, 2018) and that this age group continue to have daily sedentary time in excess of 8 hours per day (Participation, 2016). Additionally, the percentage of children and youth reaching the recommended 60 minutes of MVPA is basically unchanged from previous research with only 9% of 9-17 year olds accumulating the recommended level (Participation, 2016). If this is a trend that is going to continue, then physical education during school hours becomes even more crucial for students to help meet the recommended levels of daily physical activity and contribute to better health among young people.

Physical education may have even more value in light of recent Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2011) established by CSEP which state,

For health benefits, youth (aged 12-17 years) should minimize the time they spend being sedentary each day. This may be achieved by limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day; lower levels are associated with additional health benefits and by limiting sedentary (motorized) transport, extended sitting and time spent indoors throughout the day (p. 1).

It is also important to note that since students are sedentary for a large portion of the school day, a course where students are physically active would help reduce sedentary time during school.

Lifestyle changes have also resulted in higher rates of obesity among youth. In the last 30 years obesity rates among youth in Canada have tripled. Childhood obesity may increase the likelihood of developing physical health problems such as bone and joint problems, high blood pressure, heart disease, sleep apnea or other breathing problems, type II diabetes, missed or abnormal menstrual cycles, reduced balance as well as emotional problems such as depression, being teased or bullied, feeling judged, and low self-esteem and body image (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019). A study of childhood obesity trends in Canada by Rao et al. (2016) reports that close to one in seven Canadian children are obese, they are increasingly diagnosed with obesity related health problems previously seen among adults, and that childhood obesity often continues into adulthood. These rates have tripled in Canada in the last 25 years and with obesity comes many potential health consequences such as poor body image, low self-esteem, type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and certain cancers (Gibbons & Naylor, 2007; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019; Rao et al., 2017). Furthermore, today's youth have more access to calorically dense foods and when combined with physical inactivity often leads to obesity at earlier ages than ever before. In fact, teenagers consume more foods which fall outside Canada's Food Guide's recommended categories than any other age group and these foods often contain higher amounts of fat and calories (Gibbons & Naylor, 2007; Rao et al., 2017). Issues related to obesity can be improved by changes in both eating habits and physical activity levels.

Unfortunately, poor physical activity rates and other health-risk behaviours in childhood often contribute to long-term health problems such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and

diabetes. This has led to many predicting that this generation of children will be the first to not outlive their parents (Canadian Health Workforce Network, 2012).

As this study is focused on female students, it is important to acknowledge the specific concerns about lower levels of physical activity among adolescent females. According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018), “boys accumulate approximately 28% more daily MVPA on average than girls (60 vs. 47 minutes), and the proportion of boys meeting the MVPA recommendation within the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth is nearly double the proportion of girls (47% vs. 25%)” (p. 30).

Physical education can be a valuable source of physical activity for girls given that they are less active than boys. Pate et al. (2007) found that 12th grade girls enrolled in physical education reported more moderate to vigorous and more vigorous physical activity than girls who were not enrolled in physical education. It is interesting to note that when offered as an elective subject, many girls simply will not enroll in physical education. Increased physical activity is just one of the many benefits of physical education, which will be further outlined in the next section.

Benefits of Physical Activity and Physical Education

There is consistent evidence that shows that physical activity provides great health benefits. Some of the benefits of physical activity include improved self-confidence, a healthy body weight, growing stronger, feeling happier, doing better in school, improved fitness, and learning new skills (CSEP Physical Activity Guidelines, 2011). Other researchers point out that physical activity contributes to a healthy lifestyle for children in many ways. Specifically, physical activity has been shown to help young people develop a healthy cardiovascular system,

healthy musculoskeletal tissues, neuromuscular awareness, maintain healthy body weight, and lessen the risk of health problems and chronic disease (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016 ; WHO, 2020b). Often overlooked are the lifelong benefits of making physical activity a habit at an early age as research shows that adults with higher levels of physical activity are better able to maintain balance, coordination, flexibility and strength later in life (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). Aside from these physical benefits, physical activity has been linked to psychological benefits for youth by helping them control anxiety and depression, and making them feel better each day through improved mental health and well-being (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016; WHO, 2020b). Physical activity can positively affect self-esteem and overall well-being in youth. For instance, social development of young people can be impacted through participation in physical activity which builds self-confidence, encourages social interaction and integration and provides opportunities for self-expression (WHO, 2020b). Furthermore, young people who are physically active are more likely to adopt other healthy behaviours such as avoiding the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, as well as achieving high academic performance in school (WHO, 2020b).

Physical education has many benefits and contributions to make to students and society. Physical education advocates have outlined many positive outcomes including the International Council for Physical Education and Sport Science, who explain that physical education helps children to develop respect for the body – their own and others’, contributes towards the integrated development of mind and body, develops an understanding of the role of aerobic and anaerobic physical activity in health, positively enhances self-confidence and self-esteem, and enhances social and cognitive development and academic achievement (Bailey et al., 2009, p. 2).

Physical education can, in part, help adolescents meet the recommended levels of physical activity. For instance, several components of a quality daily physical education program include but are not limited to 30 minutes of curriculum instruction each day to all Kindergarten to grade 12 students, as well as participation in activities aimed to enhance flexibility, cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance (Physical & Health Education Canada, 2020).

Numerous other physical health benefits may be derived through participation in physical education such as improved physical fitness and motor skill development (PHIT America, 2017). High school physical education plays an essential role in the development of motor skills, good body movements, and the development of healthy body posture (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2016). Physical education has been viewed as the entry point for lifelong participation in physical activity (UNESCO, 2015).

In addition, it is well documented physical education has many other benefits and presents a unique opportunity to enhance the development of students across multiple domains. Perhaps no other subject area can contribute to the physical, lifestyle, affective, social, and cognitive domains the way physical education does. In terms of the physical domain, physical education in school provides the main opportunity for the development of physical skills and regular physical activity. Some research has shown that activity in youth often carries on into later life and that inactivity in youth also leads to inactivity in later life (Bailey et al., 2009). Furthermore, it has also been reported in the literature that physical education helps development in the affective domain since physical activity can positively affect the well-being and self-esteem of youth and physical activities can enhance social development and promote prosocial behavior (Bailey et al., 2009). As well, participation in quality physical education has been shown to decrease the chances of young people engaging in risk behaviour (UNESCO, 2015),

and may lead to improvements in sociability, self-concept, and psychological well-being (Physical & Health Education Canada, 2016). Finally, many studies have shown a link between regular physical activity and improved intellectual functioning (Bailey et al., 2009). Other research suggests potential social and academic gains for students who achieve recommended levels of MVPA (UNESCO, 2015).

A number of factors contribute to the fact that children do not have the same opportunities for physical activity. As stated by Trudeau and Shephard (2008), “many children from low-income, urban families have no access to physical activity facilities outside of school, making PE their only opportunity to experience and develop skills in a variety of physical activities” (p. 265). Similarly, physical education may provide the only regular physical activity for children from less advantaged backgrounds (UNESCO, 2015). In addition, for adolescents who live sedentary lifestyles, physical education in school may provide their only regular opportunity to participate in moderate-to vigorous physical activity (Fairclough & Stratton, 2005).

Physical education in the school is a logical setting for the promotion of adolescent health for a variety of reasons. According to Gibbons and Naylor (2007), “the average teen spends almost half of their wakeful hours in school. Schools also reach teens from varied racial, social, and socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 10).

Female Student Participation in Physical Education

Broadly speaking, there are many factors overall that can contribute to turning any youth off of physical activity and physical education. For example, a curriculum which focuses too much on exercise and fitness runs the risk of emphasizing weight, body shape, and size as the most important components of being healthy. Kirk and Colquhoun (1989) explain that programs

that focus around concepts such as daily physical activity may be unintentionally promoting healthism where an individual achieves health by controlling the size and shape of the body. The authors state that “the implicit belief among many physical educators is that exercise, through the mediating notion of fitness, leads to health, that exercise is essential to health, and that being fit and having a slender body are proof of health” (p. 426). This belief among physical educators can lead many to place the utmost importance on the physical aspect, possibly at the expense of other important aspects of physical education such as developing social and emotional wellbeing.

Other research has examined factors that affected whether or not students chose to enroll in high school physical education in an elective based system. Lodewyk and Pybus (2013) found that those who enrolled in PE were considered to have higher levels of exercise beyond PE, self-efficacy, domain value, perceived autonomy support, autonomous regulation, and PE grade. Furthermore, those who did not enroll in PE stated reasons such as a lack of enjoyment and value for PE, a dislike for certain activities, and social concerns (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Lodewyk et al. (2009) also explain,

In addition to feeling dissatisfied with one’s body, factors such as having negative experiences, perceiving one’s ability as low, learning in an overly competitive environment, and facing social evaluation pressures that induce anxiety in physical education can also have harmful long-term effects on the activity levels of students (p. 362).

Furthermore, Ryan et al. (2009), state “students will also choose to participate in physical education based on their own body-image. For example, student’s concerns about the appearance of their physiques during exercise may deter some from participation” (p. 22). Other

research indicates that body image affects the motivation of both girls and boys in physical education. As noted by Lodewyk et al. (2009),

girls who were amotivated for physical education reported body image as a cause for their amotivation. On the other hand, boys who were amotivated for physical education attributed lower levels of perceived competence in physical education to an inadequate physique, in particular a lack of strength and speed (p. 364).

Cardinal et al. (2013) also reported that negative teaching practices, such as captains picking teams, can have long-term effects on children and youth which affects their perceptions about physical activity and physical education, as well as their desire to participate.

Overall, there are many factors that impact both male and female student participation in and perceptions about physical education. However, when considering how to specifically engage female students, it is important to review literature about girls' experiences in physical education and what instructional strategies might better meet their needs.

Humbert (2006) revealed that both the PE environment and "having fun" were influential factors in making the PE experiences of students positive or negative. In terms of the PE environment her main findings included having a teacher who is supportive and approachable as well as providing a harassment free atmosphere where all students feel comfortable and safe. Humbert (2006) says that "these feelings are particularly evident in discussions with girls who report that the pressure to have the ideal body is frequently magnified in physical education settings" (p. 8). Her research also revealed that the concept of "having fun" is linked to positive experiences in physical education. "Having fun" was associated with factors such as participating in activities appropriate to students' skill level, having opportunities to be physically active with friends, opportunities to try new activities, and to participate in activities

which are not overly competitive (at least for girls but not boys). These findings are important in that they support the notion that the current delivery of many physical education curriculum may not meet the needs of all students. In fact, these findings seem to indicate that the delivery of physical education curriculum may better meet the needs of boys. As Humbert (2006) states: “unlike girls, for many boys, having an opportunity to compete and win is often cited as an important factor in their enjoyment of physical education” (p. 16).

Further to Humbert’s (2006) inquiry, Garrett (2004) points out the limitations of physical education curriculum where “ironically, while the nature of the curriculum content is seen as ‘neutral’, healthy and inherently valuable for all, in reality it can serve to perpetuate competitiveness, motor elitism and meritocracy” (p. 226). In this way the physical education curriculum does not meet the needs of female students. Garrett (2004), further states “while standards for success are set mostly around the achievements of boys, girls and young women can be seen and spoken into existence as less able, less strong, and less competitive” (p. 226).

Additional research exploring the perceptions of female students about physical education suggests that students begin to develop these perceptions in the elementary years. Oliver et al. (2009) undertook a study of 5th grade girls attempting to understand their self-identified barriers to physical activity and to help them overcome these barriers. Among their findings was that these girls used the construct of a “girly girl” as a barrier for physical activity. They further elaborate, “the girls explained that being a “girly girl” hindered their activity participation because a “girly girl” does not want to “sweat”, “mess up her hair and nails”, “mess up her nice clothes”, and sometimes “wears flip-flops”” (p. 90). However, the researchers worked with the girls in the study to create their own games that allowed them to take ownership over their physical activity practices. As stated by Oliver et al. (2009),

it centered them as physically active through the games they created, and played, and repositioned them as girls who were willing to possibly sweat, get dirty, and mess up their hair or break their nails... It may be that when girls are put into physical activities in which they are forced to abandon their cultural values and practices, are offered no choices, are forced to be competitive, are at risk for getting injured, or are denied opportunity to participate they use wanting to be girly girl as an excuse for not playing (p. 108).

Similarly, Gibbons (2008) explored the perceptions of female students in fifth grade physical education and noted that the girls were clearly dissatisfied with the program content, frustrated with the learning environment and felt pressure to be physically competent. Additional researchers in the field have focused on the PE environment and self-identified barriers to participation for females in PE. For instance, research examining disengaged adolescent girls in physical education by Mitchell et al. (2015) involved a physical activity intervention which included choice of activities, improved relationships with teacher and single sex class structure resulting in increased engagement for most girls. Research on girls in a high school physical education class explored how the girls had to develop strategies to thrive or survive as they attempted to navigate their self-identified barriers in a co-ed physical education environment (Fisette, 2013). A study involving the use of a health club approach as an alternative high school PE experience for grade nine girls indicated the students appreciated a single-gender experience, valued a positive relationship with the health club leaders, and placed importance on choice, variety, and novelty (Timkin et al., 2019).

Other research studies have examined the negative experiences of adolescent female students in physical education. A study of grade seven and eight girls by Olafson (2002), found

that many girls had a strong dislike for physical education and used avoidance strategies such as skipping class, not wearing gym clothes, taking long breaks in the change room, providing a note from a parent to be excused, and non-participation (Olafson, 2002). Even at the senior high school level female students reported a number of reasons for choosing not to enroll in high school physical education. In a study by Van Gyn et al. (2000) female students in a focus group cited numerous reasons for not enrolling in physical education, including prior physical education experiences which they described as boring, repetitive, skill-oriented, and not much fun, evaluation based on skill development, being ignored and excluded by boys during games, and scheduling conflicts (Van Gyn et al., 2000). All this research clearly indicates that physical education has not been meeting the needs of at least one subgroup of students, and this seems to begin in elementary school and continues through high school. Children who experience or perceive negativity during interaction with peers in physical activity environments may develop greater anxiety or negative feelings associated with involvement causing them to become non-participants. Moreover, environments created within physical education classes are critical to the development of girls' positive or negative feelings towards physical activity. Derry (2002) also explains that

research studies have indicated that adolescent females are participating less in physical education classes while an increasing number of girls are dropping out of physical activity participation at the high school level. Factors that affect girls' continued participation in physical activity include engaged skill learning time, level of enjoyment with participation, self-esteem, health benefits received through participation and perceived athletic competence (p. 1).

Despite the negative experiences of female students that have been reported in the literature, attempts have been made to improve the physical education experience for female students, a number of which have shown success in helping the subject area better meet the needs of female students. In a study by Felton et al. (2005), results of a school-based intervention in physical activity in high school girls showed that 90% of ninth grade girls considered themselves to be more active and liked physical education. The essential components which contributed to the success of that physical education program include: gender separation opportunities exist in class, students are physically active in PE classes, non-competitive activities are offered, lifelong physical activity is emphasized, classes are fun and enjoyable, appropriate instructional methods are used (eg. small group interaction), behaviour skills for physical activity are taught (Felton et al., 2005). Another relevant study by Gibbons (2009) examined the features of 32 high school physical education courses in British Columbia which maintained a high level of enrollment of female students. Among her findings were the features which contributed to the success of the courses could be placed into the following six key themes: focus on lifetime physical activities, student involvement in course development, authentic assessment, gender as a course design feature, value added options, positive and respectful class environment (Gibbons, 2009). More in-depth research on this topic examined nine courses specifically developed for the needs and interests of female students and report the following themes: choice in what to learn and how to learn it, all-female learning environment, lifetime physical activities, personalized assessment, responsive and flexible planning (Gibbons et al., 2014). This reinforces the importance of developing a supportive PE learning environment.

Goodyear et al. (2014) challenged the traditional instructional discourse of physical education by using a student-centered approach and the cooperative learning model with female students to create a physical education learning environment which promoted student engagement. The key features of their approach were an emphasis on the cognitive and social learning domains in addition to the physical domain as well as the students engaging in roles based on their interests and identities.

Recent research has focused on a different pedagogical model for physical education as opposed to the more traditional multi-activity approach (Kirk et al., 2018). This model uses an activist approach which contains the following four critical elements: student-centredness, pedagogies of embodiment, listening to respond over time, and inquiry- learning centred in action (Kirk et al., 2018; Lamb et al., 2018; Oliver & Kirk, 2016). In a study involving girls aged 13-14, Lamb et al. (2018) reported that variety and choice allowed the girls to enjoy a range of novel activities, emphasized relationships between students and also between student and teacher. These were important factors in the girls' engagement and contributed to the creation of a supportive learning environment.

Although much of the research on the experiences of females in physical education has made valuable contributions to the field, the significance of research by Enright and O'Sullivan (2010) needs considerable attention as it was one of the first examples of a student-centred curriculum approach geared towards female students. It is significant in that it positions students directly in the research process as active participants. The girls were provided with increased involvement in curricular decision making through a process of curriculum negotiation which engaged them in phases of naming inequities, broadening horizons, and change agency. This curricular involvement impacted positively on the girls' engagement in physical education

resulting in an increased sense of ownership of their learning, and more meaningful and socially relevant experiences.

Another study by Guadalupe and Curtner-Smith (2020) described a teacher's attempt to purposefully negotiate the curriculum with her middle school class. This study reported that the girls were more motivated to take part in physical education regardless of whether they were considered high-skilled or low-skilled passive. Contributing factors to success were the use of a single-sex class, support of the school's leadership team, and the teacher's skill, energy, and thoughtfulness (Guadalupe & Curtner-Smith, 2020).

Teacher Reflection in Physical Education

Graham et al. (2013) characterize reflective teaching as “recognizing that children are different – and doing something about it” (p. 49). This means that reflective teachers must become aware of their own values, be willing to observe and analyze their own teaching practices, understand the nature and abilities of their students, and take into consideration the context of the school and community.

The practice of reflection in teaching physical education is useful for both pre-service and in-service teachers alike. However, there appears to be a lack of literature on teacher reflection in physical education. For instance, Standal and Moe (2013), undertook a review of literature since 1995 on the topic of reflective practice in physical education and found only 33 articles. Furthermore, the majority of the research, 22 studies focused on physical education teacher education whereas only 11 studies examined either novice or experienced teachers (Standal & Moe, 2013).

Within the research on reflective practice in experienced physical education teachers, a study by Tsangaridou and O'Sullivan (1997), involving four experienced teachers, attempted to

understand the role and function of teacher's reflection from the perspective of what it is instead of what it should be. As stated by Tsangaridou and O'Sullivan (1997),

Findings indicated that the participants' microreflection, the type of reflection that informs teachers' day-to-day practices, addressed pedagogical, content, ethical, moral, and social issues. Their reflections were situationally driven and contextually bound. Macroreflection, the type of reflection that informs teachers' practices over time, influenced changes in the teachers' classroom practice and professional development (p. 2).

A more recent study by Jung (2012) examined the use of reflective teaching by three exceptional physical education teachers. Among the findings were that the teachers reflected on four key areas including the students, context, instruction, and critical incidents (Jung, 2012). As well, the process of reflection influenced their teaching by helping them make sense of unforeseen events, make on-the-spot decisions, develop knowledge-in-action, and contributing to reconstructing teacher's belief systems (Jung, 2012).

In summary, this literature review has provided an overview of a number of broad areas relevant to the field of physical education including the physical activity habits of children and youth, the benefits of physical activity and physical education, female student participation in physical education, and teacher reflection in physical education. The first three areas are characterized by several trends which each pose problems for physical education. Namely, children and youth are not achieving the recommended amount of physical activity for optimal health, and physical education as a subject area has many benefits but not all students are availing of these benefits. Within the group of students who are less likely to avail of the benefits of physical education, female students are of particular concern as they have lower

levels of physical activity as well as low enrolment in elective physical education courses. It is these female students on which this research project is based. If these trends are to be reversed it should follow then that increased engagement in physical activity would lead to increased participation and physical activity levels among female students in physical education. It is these alarming trends which in part informs the research design and purpose of this project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This project used the principles of educational action research, including existential action research. There are many different definitions of action research, one of which is stated by Mills (2003, as cited in Hopkins, 2008):

Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes (p. 3).

There are a number of different models that have been proposed for the action research process. However, the one most useful for this project was Stringer's *Action Research Interacting Spiral* that uses a simple framework of "look, think, act." During each of these stages an individual observes, reflects and then takes some action, leading them into the next stage (Mertler, 2012). Given that the focus of the research was on myself as a teacher, the Stringer model (see Figure 1) became an important factor throughout this project.

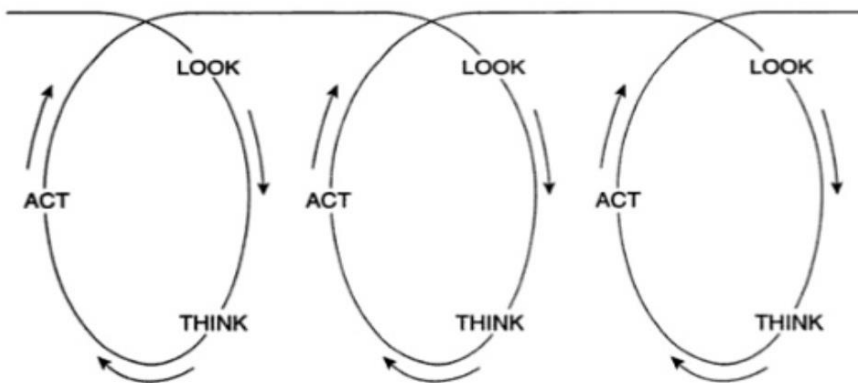


Figure 1. Action Research Interacting Spiral
Source: Stringer, 2007, p. 30

I had developed many habits and routines in my teaching that I was either unaware of or reluctant to change. However, the look–think–act routine allowed me to start to become aware and/or begin to change some of these habits. For example, whenever the activity was a game, I always kept score for all my classes. With the girls-only class, I went through a process of recording and announcing the scores, to recording the scores only because they were not asking, to eventually not keeping score at all for the games. This process took place over the course of several classes and led me to the realization that the students did not care for the keeping of score and the potential element of competition that goes with it, that they were participating for other reasons, fun, exercise, socialization to name a few. In Stringer’s model this action leads into the next stage, so in my case the action of not keeping score, which in turn, contributed to creating a safer, non-competitive environment in the gym.

Since this project was interested in the teacher’s way of teaching physical education, existential action research was also considered, as this is considered an effective method of inquiry for examining the teacher perspective. As Feldman (2002) explains, “the existential approach to action research is derived from research that suggests that teachers’ actions, intentions, and beliefs are manifestations of their ways of being teachers” (p. 233). Therefore, the existential approach was very applicable to this project as my purpose in undertaking action research was to gain a greater understanding of my own perspectives of teaching physical education which may ultimately lead to positive changes in my delivery of the physical education curriculum for all students, male and female.

The female-only physical education course I developed in collaboration with the students, offered me a unique opportunity to explore my perspectives of teaching physical education. According to Feldman (2002), “an existential approach to action research takes the position that

one cannot separate what a person does from who the person is, and that the teacher must question who she is as a teacher in order for action research to be happening” (p. 242). By conducting this action research, it was possible that many of my past teaching practices and strategies, as well as activity selections may very well change as new strategies and activities would be adopted based on the needs and interests of the students. It should be noted that I have in the past tried many different teaching strategies, activities and ways to motivate female students to more actively participate in physical education class with only moderate success. Therefore, this research was focused on the teacher perspective of teaching physical education with the notion that it may lead to change or improvement in teaching practice. This is supported by Feldman (2002) who points out that “existential action research happens when people work together to research their own ways of being a teacher to increase their capacity to choose freely and to act responsibly for themselves and those they care for” (p. 244).

Further to the point about trying many different strategies in the past to motivate female students with only moderate success suggests that this issue may need to be viewed differently. There is evidence in the literature to support an alternative approach to this issue. According to Feldman and Weiss (2010),

In short, despite major efforts to change teachers’ practice through professional development activities, much remains as it always was. Our claim is that this rarely happens because significant change in how one teaches can only come about as a result of some realization about oneself as a teacher, and the resulting changes in identity, or what we have described as a teacher’s way of being a teacher (p. 33).

Participant

This research was focused on myself and my way of being a teacher in a newly designed girls-only physical education class. I have been teaching physical education for 13 years, the past nine of which have been at the senior high school level. However, I have experience teaching physical education at all grade levels from kindergarten to grade 12. As well, I have been highly involved with the school's extra-curricular athletics program since I began teaching and over the years have coached both male and female teams in a variety of sports including softball, basketball, soccer, cross-country running, volleyball and hockey. My teaching assignment at the time included three slots of Healthy Living 1200, two slots of Physical Education 2100/2101 Co-ed, and one slot of Physical Education 2100/2101 Female Only. My extra-curricular involvement in the school year that I completed this project included coaching the boys' and girls' softball teams, girls ice hockey team, as well as the boys' and girls' ball hockey teams.

Context

This study took place in a school district in an eastern province of Canada which consists of 259 schools and a student population of approximately 67,000 (Newfoundland & Labrador English School District, 2014). The school is situated in a large urban area and consists of grades 10 through 12. The physical education department offers a variety of different courses including Healthy Living 1200, Physical Education 2100/2101, Physical Education 3100/3101. The school has a well-developed extra-curricular athletics program with 11 different sports, 19 teams and over 240 student athletes. The facilities available to the physical education department include one gymnasium and one fitness centre.

The physical education program at my school offered all of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education authorized courses which included Physical Education 2100/2101, Physical Education 3100/3101, and Healthy Living 1200. All of these courses were co-educational although the ratio of boys to girls was much higher in the physical education courses and more balanced in the healthy living course. There were two full time male physical education teachers at the school and both teachers taught all the course offerings. With only one gymnasium and 12 classes of physical education or healthy living a variety of facilities were used. The main facilities used for the classes were the gymnasium and the fitness center located off the gymnasium. For offsite activities, classes made use of nearby walking trails, a baseball field, and an arena.

Girls-only PE Class

Since I began teaching physical education courses at this school in 2006, there was always very low enrollment among female students in these courses. As each school year passed female enrollment remained consistently low when compared to male enrollment in physical education in this school. An average physical education class of 30 students would often only include four or five female students for a ratio of one female to every six male students. This was always a source of frustration for me as a physical education teacher as I could not find a way to get female students to benefit from these classes in the same way that I perceived the male students did. While completing graduate course work in 2011-2013 for a master of physical education degree, I examined many issues that exist within the field of physical education but the one that concerned me the most was the low enrollment of females in my high school physical education courses since I was personally experiencing this in my classes. At the start of my graduate degree, I had selected a project route, so upon completion of all my graduate

course work I was able to collaborate with a university professor who had extensive knowledge and a research background in the area I intended to pursue for my research project. After some research and discussion with my supervisor during the winter of 2014, the idea of teaching a girls only physical education class seemed a viable and worthwhile option to further explore the issue of low female enrollment in physical education. I then proceeded to meet with my school principal to discuss my concerns with the low female enrollment and to request permission to offer a girls-only physical education course. I received permission to offer the course conditional with a minimum enrollment of 20 students. Next, I developed a course description for the course selection sheet and it was presented at course selection assemblies for the grade nine students at the junior high school and for the grade 10 and 11 students at the high school (see Appendix A). Interestingly, physical education requests for the 2014-15 school year totaled 147 students of which 51 were female or 35%. By comparison, physical education enrollment in the previous school year totaled 131 of which 16 were female or 12%.

The next step in the process was to design the course. Since the course was to follow the Newfoundland and Labrador Physical Education curriculum guidelines, that part was already determined. A number of activities would have to be selected from set themes within the curriculum guidelines. However, there was flexibility with respect to activity selection within the themes and that would be co-constructed with the female students at the start of the school year. A course outline (Appendix B) and a movement themes and physical activities chart (Appendix C) were provided for the course. As well, evaluation remained consistent with curriculum guidelines and sample course evaluation information (Appendix D) was also provided.

Data Collection

The forms of qualitative data collection that were used for this study included my own journaling, descriptive “field notes” and a critical “friend”. The journaling consisted of daily reflections on myself as a teacher as well as my teaching. The use of a journal can be an effective form of data collection, as Mertler (2012) explains, “teacher journals can similarly provide teacher-researchers with the opportunity to maintain narrative accounts of their professional reflections on practice” (p. 128). Furthermore, the use of a journal is well suited for the study of teacher perspectives on teaching physical education. Mills (as cited in Mertler, 2012) explains how journaling helps teachers “to systematically reflect on their practice by constructing a narrative that honors the unique and powerful voice of the teachers’ language by reflecting not only observations but also the feelings and interpretations associated with those observations” (p. 128). Key questions were developed to help focus the content of the journal on the teacher perspective. The descriptive “field notes” described items such as the scene, and lesson plan. The critical “friend” consisted of a monthly conversation to discuss reflections with another colleague who is currently teaching high school physical education. The use of a critical “friend” served as a form of professional learning community whereby teachers may connect and network to learn from practice (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppy, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

This project was only focused on the teacher’s perspective. As such, I did not collect any information about individual students. No information about individual students was included and was not part of the scope of this particular project.

Analysis

I analyzed my observations and notes using qualitative data analysis within an action research model. The process of qualitative research is inductive where the “researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details” (Brooks, n.d., p. 5) and the focus is primarily on meaning making—how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their situations. According to Thomas (2003), the inductive approach allows for findings to “emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes...without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (p. 2). Mertler (2012) also emphasizes that “when conducting qualitative data analysis, the researcher begins with specific observations (i.e., data), notes any patterns in those data... and finally develops general conclusions and theories” (p. 157). With the action research process, this type of analysis happens throughout the semester, where I constantly reviewed and identified themes that then circled back into the ‘look-think-act’ spiral. The final analysis of my experience teaching the girls-only class represents the common themes that arose throughout the semester.

My experience teaching the girls-only class actually aligned quite well with qualitative researchers such as Mertler and Feldman. In teaching my classes I made observations of certain situations which caught my attention and stood out to me because they were unlike anything I had previously experienced in teaching. In turn, I noted these observations or ‘ah-ha moments’ through the journaling process. But it was through the discussions with my critical friend where I couldn’t wait to share these observations that I realized they were emerging themes.

Chapter 4: The Findings

The purpose of this project was to gain a better understanding of my own perspectives of teaching physical education and how my teaching can better meet the needs of female students in high school physical education. Teaching the girls-only physical education course provided me with some truly memorable experiences. With 13 years of teaching experience I didn't think I would feel pressure to succeed with this class, but it was always there in the back of my mind. I don't know why, perhaps because I had stepped further outside of my comfort zone than ever before. This wasn't just introducing a new activity for a class or a couple of classes and hoping it would work and then going quickly back to the usual activities. This was a new group of students each with their own expectations of how this "girls-only" class was going to go. This was real and I felt those student expectations were going to be there on the first day of classes through to the last day of classes. I did not feel that same pressure teaching my co-ed classes—likely because for the most part I had the co-ed class planned out basically the same way as in previous years with the activities in the same order, taking the same approach to routines and activities as I had always done. The truth is, as I was attempting to co-construct the girls-only class with the students I learned very early in the course that the students did not want to be told what activities to do. I know this because I tried that a few times in the beginning days of the course and met some resistance. Instead, they wanted to be decision makers in choosing which activities would be done on which days of the week and they had their reasons for it! Ironically, as the students became more involved in the direction of the course, I actually felt less pressure to succeed as we were all in this together. When things went well in class it brought moments of happiness to me as a teacher because you see growth, independence, responsibility, cooperation and so many things right in front of you that you just stop for a moment and think, "Wow! We

are achieving some things beyond just the psychomotor component!” The psychomotor domain has often been my main and sometimes only focal point for physical education. But I now realize that when I only accomplish the physical activity component in physical education, you can only experience limited satisfaction with teaching. There were times when activities themselves did not succeed and this was a source of the pressure to succeed which I felt going into the course. Interestingly, this time, when activities were unsuccessful it didn’t bother me as much as I thought it would, perhaps because I was sharing some of the responsibilities of the course with students. This was the beginning of many important insights.

As I reflect on my experiences of teaching a girls-only physical education class, I have identified successes, struggles, triumphs and several areas where I feel change has occurred. I have organized these areas of change into several themes which outline my perspectives of teaching physical education after teaching a girls-only physical education class. These themes include the following: autopilot, students looking for something new, opportunities for leadership or ownership, guest instructors, changing perspectives on teaching high school physical education, a positive classroom environment, and physical education and life.

Autopilot

The first theme I have named “autopilot” because it basically refers to “old habits” that I have developed over years of teaching mandatory co-ed physical education. It was my routine for teaching all my physical education classes. For example, for years I have started each PE course with an activity selection sheet where students selected activities of interest to them from a bank of activities. After reviewing activity selections from co-ed classes, I often eliminated activities for which I was not comfortable teaching or for which I did not feel I had adequate background knowledge or if I just didn’t think it would work well for that particular group of

students. In a way, I believed I already knew which activities the students would or should like because maybe it worked well for a previous class or it was an activity I thought the class would benefit from, and so I relied on those activities to makeup the content of the course. If I included new activities in my co-ed class, it was often because I had learned it during my undergrad PE degree or during a teacher in-service. My reluctance to change my routines was a challenge for me. As I stated in my journal,

Today I talked a lot with class about activities and how they would have some choice of activities for this course. I am expecting them to choose many activities that will be challenging for me. Traditionally, I have always only had to introduce maybe one or two new activities in any given course. But I mostly kept to my routines. I did not want to turn off the students who actually were participating so I stayed with the popular sport-based activities even when some students did not seem to be engaged.

Over the years the teaching of PE had become habitual for me. It was entirely focused on getting through the lesson plan structured almost always as warm-up, activity, time on task, etc. It had to be ‘go-go-go’ since society constantly reminds us that today’s youth are sedentary and unhealthy and there is an urgent need for them to be more physically active. As a PE teacher, I felt an obligation to get the students moving and active as much as possible. With this approach, if most of the students participated, then I considered the class a moderate success. For those who did not participate they either had an excuse, which was often taken at face value or I made several attempts to encourage them to participate, but I had to move on with the lesson. This routine just repeated itself over and over. However, this singular focus on the activity and time on task meant that some students would exhibit low engagement or none at all.

In recent years, I have been finding it increasingly challenging to motivate students to be active and engaged participants in physical education. I had reached a point in my teaching where I had just about abandoned teaching some of the activities that I used to teach which required extra effort and organization such as canoeing and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing—citing a lack of effort and willingness to participate by my students. Not only had I also become discouraged by the low enrollment of females in physical education classes (a typical PE class often consisting of 25 males and five females), but with so few females in the class I found it challenging to get them to be regularly engaged in class. Although teaching mandatory co-ed physical education had become more challenging for me, I maintained my belief that physical education had many benefits for students not only during the class but throughout their lives. When I began a master's degree in physical education, the graduate courses allowed me think more critically about many aspects in the field of physical education such as the obesity discourse, PE for persons with disabilities, violence in sport, and gender issues. Some of these issues may be considered broad societal issues but I began to think of them in the context of my own teaching of physical education. The most concerning element of my teaching was the imbalance in class enrollment with such a low number of female students. This bothered me because I felt most of the female students were missing out on the benefits of physical education.

So, I decided to begin the journey to break my autopilot habits and I was keenly interested in something to make me a better teacher and offer a better physical education program for the students of my school. I was able to align myself with a faculty professor at MUN who had a strong knowledge of curriculum change and teaching in the field of physical education. I also obtained permission from my principal to offer a female-only physical education course provided the provincially prescribed curriculum would be taught. I needed a

minimum of 20 students enrolled in the class and as it turns the class was full at 35 students and there were others to wanted to take the class but could not fit it in their schedules. I couldn't really put my finger on why there was such interest in the class. Were they that much more comfortable in a female-only class? Did they believe that the activities would be different and of more interest to them? Would I be a different teacher in this type of class? In any case, I wanted this class to be successful if I was ever going to be able to get more females consistently selecting a high school physical education course. Knowing I struggled in the past with the engagement level of female students I certainly felt a lot of pressure with the course. I was doubtful that my "autopilot" routines would work for this class so I knew I would have to change my approach.

Teaching the girls-only PE class conflicted with some of my old habits. With the girls-only class I noticed early-on during the activity selection process that I was listening more to the students and what they had to say, specifically their thoughts, feelings, attitude and opinions regarding the course and activities. Before the course had even begun, I was already expecting them to choose many activities for which I have no background or knowledge and that would be challenging for me. I wondered what was different for me in my view of the activity selection process for the girls-only PE class versus what I have already done with my co-ed classes. Why would I eliminate activities for the co-ed classes yet listen to the girls' activity selections with the purpose of acting on it?

For me to even offer a girls-only PE class I was putting myself out there. It meant a risk for me professionally in that it may not prove to be successful or that it may be perceived as going against school district norms. I wrote in my journal that,

I strongly believe there is a need for this course, but it has to succeed. I mean, I was the one who requested it to be added to the course offerings so if it doesn't work well it's on me. I have a lot of questions that I don't have answers to at the moment and I don't know of anyone else who has taught a girls-only PE class, so I do feel that pressure.

This new course was however, intended as a solution to the problem of years of low enrolment of female students in high school physical education courses at this school. From my previous experiences teaching female students in co-ed classes, I had developed a belief that many of them had negative experiences in PE in the past. I also knew that many females in my own co-ed PE classes regularly displayed low levels of participation and engagement in activities, and often used avoidance techniques to get out of the activity such as sickness, injury, bathroom breaks, or lack of necessary clothing and footwear. As such, when I walked into the girls-only PE class my awareness of their PE experience was more heightened. I was determined that this would be a positive PE experience for them and not just “more of the same.” As predicted, they chose activities for which I had no background or very little experience—yoga, dance, and rock climbing, to name a few.

Instead of eliminating or ruling out these activities, I listened to the girls talk about these activities and observed their enthusiasm for them. Although in my mind I expected the students to choose some of these activities I have mentioned (e.g., yoga and dance), it made me uncomfortable and nervous. I wrote in my journal and continually asked myself,

“How am I ever going to deliver these activities in a way that was meaningful and fun for students?”; “How will I do this”; “I have little to no experience in these activities and definitely no expertise.”

The fact that this was a large class size only added to stress levels. However, I decided that I would make an attempt, at some point throughout the year to provide those activities. It was important to me that their PE experience would be a positive one and I believed this was the beginning of that process.

When I started with an actual activity, I wanted to start some organized activity with a game that I thought they would all be familiar. In this case, I chose soccer baseball. I knew most students have played this game at some point throughout their PE experiences. It also gave me the opportunity to divide the class into two larger teams so all students would be involved and part of a team. I intentionally made teams that kept students together with some of their peers and separate from others and were composed from a mix of skill levels. Many of them had selected baseball/softball on their activity selection sheets so I thought this would work well. I played 3 classes of soccer baseball and during this activity made two key observations which have contributed to a big change in my perspective of teaching physical education. First, I used the same rules/arrangement for this activity that I have always done when playing it with my co-ed classes, specifically the aspect of keeping score. The activity in this case is irrelevant as I have always kept score when my classes are playing games of basketball, soccer, hockey, etc. This was a carryover from my old “autopilot” routines. I started keeping score and regularly announcing it with the girls-only class as I had always done. Sometime during the second class of soccer baseball I came to the realization that the girls were not really asking about the score or focusing on it. It was such a surprise to me at that moment that I didn’t really believe it. How could they play the game without knowing or keeping the score? The next class we played soccer baseball again, and again I recorded the score on my clipboard but they didn’t ask me the score, so I didn’t mention it. When we played it again the following class I neither recorded nor

mentioned the score, and just like that, over the course of three girls-only PE classes, keeping score—which was once front and center of game days in my PE classes—was gone and replaced with participation and having fun. As I recorded in my journal after discussing with my critical friend,

There's just something nice about putting the score in the background so to speak. It's just more relaxing for everyone and maybe it allowed me to notice other things move to the forefront like their enthusiasm, enjoyment, teamwork.

Keeping score seems irrelevant and unnecessary to me now. Yet it was such a habitual, routine part of playing games in my PE classes, that I continued this practice in my co-ed classes for a long time after that. It has gradually faded to the point where I rarely keep score now in any of my classes. By removing the focus on scorekeeping, I feel the class environment is less competitive and therefore less threatening to students who may feel stress or worry about making mistakes. It also promotes more equity since the keeping of score inherently implies that one group or student is “better” than others. To me now, it just seems to go against the values of physical education such as teamwork and establishing a safe environment. Interestingly, I had never previously questioned “keeping score” in my teaching nor perceived it as a potential negative. Instead, I had always thought the students wouldn’t like to participate without it.

This carried onto to our next activity – line soccer. Not only did I see a difference in the students when I was not keeping score but also my focus as a teacher changed. Instead of my usual routine of pushing through the lesson – activity, teams, score – I paid attention to the students’ interactions with each other and was able to notice the students having fun and enjoying the activity. The girls were having fun and actually breaking a sweat without even realizing it. This was the type of classroom dynamic I was hoping to have with the girls-only

class, one of having fun and active participation in activities of interest to them. It was much different from my experiences with female students in the past. Often times in the past, female students were conscious of breaking a sweat and this would result in low engagement or non-participation. One of my perceptions going into teaching the girls-only course was that there would not be any conflict or discipline problems. Almost all of my challenges with female students in the past had only to do with refusal to participate in an activity or a lack of effort. Thus, I was completely surprised when the classroom dynamic began to change.

A second change that occurred for me was when I noticed during several classes that students were not really getting along. It happened once in a soccer baseball activity and again in a game of line soccer. In the past, I would have maybe addressed this with individual students or with the class and continued on with the activity. I could sense some tension and a sort of disconnect between some of the younger and older students. With the girls-only class, I was so aware of the environment and how much I wanted it to be safe and caring where the students could participate in any game or activity without fear, failure or conflict that I changed the activity. The very next class I introduced some team building activities so students could get to know others in the class a little better. I deliberately grouped students with some other students they knew and some others they didn't know. I did this because I did not like the direction the class was going. It was beginning to look like more of the same, in other words like my co-ed classes of the past where there was sometimes conflict among students and a lack of effort. I knew I did not want to return to past experiences of having discipline problems or students just standing in the field going through the motions, so my response was to change the activity to one intended to promote acceptance, kindness, tolerance and support. I never would have changed activities like this in my co-ed classes. I would have tried to address it with the students and

continued with the activity. This experience made me realize that if I was going to use the same approach that I have been using in the past I would likely get the same results.

As I reflect on it now, my past routines which I thought were working for most students seem to have contributed to an environment which was probably too competitive for some, too stressful for others, or viewed by others as irrelevant to their daily lives or personal well-being. In this respect, with the girls-only class it became less about the activity and more about my approach. So instead of rushing into the lesson, I took more time to talk about the activity we were going to do more in terms of what we could take away from the activity such as cooperation, teamwork, having fun, exercise (aerobic, anaerobic, feeling good, energized) socialization, positive interactions, respect for others, and developing healthy lifestyle habits. If that meant 10 less minutes of activity, but the activity was overall more meaningful and engaging to the students, than I was willing to accept that.

I also paid much more attention to the organization of groups and I felt I needed to do this with the girls' class to make the environment as comfortable and emotionally safe as possible. In this area there was a clear distinction between my teaching of co-ed PE and the girls-only PE. In co-ed PE, I composed groups/teams with the goal of keeping the score as close as possible, so the "strongest" players were divided up. In the girls-only class I gave more consideration to who was in each group and whether I felt they would be comfortable with the activity or not. This was also about knowing my students. For example, in line soccer, students who I felt were comfortable with the game played on smaller groups such as two vs. two and those I felt would be intimidated or uncomfortable with the game played in larger groups such as four vs. four or five vs. five. Seeing that actually work in class was powerful and impactful for me and I wondered why I always had to have even numbers in groups before when I could achieve a

better result this way in terms of knowing what best suits the needs of the students based on their experiences, background and level of comfort with the chosen activity. I suppose it was a part of a structured approach to maximize physical activity time so I would put as many participants in the activity at one time.

Students Looking For Something New

Throughout many of my interactions with the girls-only PE class I began to notice the emergence of a theme. The students really wanted activities which were new or uncommon. For example, on many occasions they asked to go rock-climbing or skating, or to participate in yoga. This was further reinforced in one conversation I had with a student where I had indicated that many students selected badminton on the course selection sheets and the student's reply was "yeah but we do badminton every year". This began very early in the course just after I had reviewed the activity selection sheets as I noted in my journal,

Having reviewed the activity selections sheets of the students I have noticed several things. My co-ed classes which consisted mostly of males would not have selected dance or yoga as activities. I feel this is an important component of offering this course to provide the opportunity for students to participate in these types of activities. I also think volleyball would not have been selected in a co-ed course, it seems to appeal to female students. This could just be a local thing as volleyball is popular at our feeder school.

Of course, the activities which were new or uncommon for the students were also new or uncommon for me. The introduction of new activities was not really an issue for me as I have done this many times in my co-ed classes before with new activities such as Kinball, pickleball, ultimate Frisbee. However, although these activities were new to students, I had some experience with them either through my undergraduate physical education degree or through

teacher professional development days. So, two things about this were stressful for me. First, I had very little experience with dance and no experience with yoga. The thought did enter my mind that these activities may be seen by some as not being masculine but that was less of a factor for me as I was more concerned by the fact that I had very little experience in these areas. I was also thinking that there would be students in the class that would have much more experience in dance or yoga than me so if I tried to teach these activities and made mistakes the students would pick up on it. But my thought process going into the course was that it was going to be about the students and not about me. After all, these were the students I finally got to choose to take physical education classes after years of low female enrollment in my school. But I had this struggle with myself of trying to deliver the activities they wanted and not feeling very confident with them.

My response was to introduce the only types of dance I had any experience with, multicultural folk dance that I had done as part of an activity course during my undergraduate degree. It also helped me that I was pretty sure that none of the students had any prior knowledge of these dances. I divided the class into groups and took them through a variety of multicultural dances and by my account it was a great success. I breathed a huge sigh of relief after that which boosted my confidence a little in my ability to provide these types of activities. Unfortunately, I never did get to include yoga in the class. With my family and extra-curricular coaching commitments, it was unrealistic for me to attend yoga classes to try and learn it and I did not find a guest instructor for the class. I was disappointed about that as I thought I let the students down. My university supervisor brought to my attention some iPad apps for yoga which I thought was a wonderful idea, although I was not able to arrange having that setup on the school iPads in time for the course. If I had to teach a class again that wanted yoga as an

activity, I think I would certainly make use of a technology resource like this. There is a part of me that doesn't want the students to know I'm not good at everything, maybe that is why I didn't do certain activities. In teaching PE, I have always relied on demonstrating skills, so as a physical education teacher I felt pressure to be good at the chosen activities which is why I held onto many of the activities which were familiar to me.

The other new activity was rock climbing. I was concerned that the students only selected it but were not serious about it. Before proceeding with this I had to ask them again and I told them I had to be sure because there was considerable organization involved. The class confirmed their willingness to do this activity, so I put a lot of time and effort into organizing a rock-climbing field trip to a local facility. Even up to the day of the field trip I was concerned that some students would skip it, however that was not the case. The positive response of the students exceeded my expectations and during this field trip I observed several students "come to life" as they had clearly found an activity which caught their attention. Seeing the reaction of these students was a great feeling and a moment when I realized that I could let go of power. I have always tried to be a role model for my students but why would I expose them to only one role model when I could expose them to many more who may inspire them. The rock-climbing field trip was an amazing connection with the real world/community. Although I did not lead this activity (there was qualified climbing instructors to do that), I did facilitate it and made it a reality for my students, so I was satisfied with that. Sometimes I think we have to do this in our subject area.

My reluctance to introduce activities outside of my comfort zone such as dance was definitely associated with my lack of experience and confidence with these activities and a very real fear that it would not be successful. From my interactions with these students, I was certain

that they wanted to try different activities which brought forward mixed feelings. On one hand I'm satisfied that I did follow through with some new things but disappointed that I didn't deliver on some others.

Opportunities for Leadership or Ownership

Providing opportunities for leadership was an area which I had moved away from for a long time in my teaching. I'm not sure why but I was probably disappointed in the past with the level of cooperation from students with respect to leadership roles. Another reason is because I have always been very reluctant to give up control of anything in class, even the making up of teams, setting up of equipment, etc. I had a routine and certain way I wanted things done and I was unwilling to involve students in this process. This may also have contributed to me deciding not to bring in guest instructors very often in the past. As I have said several times, I was focused on maintaining a positive classroom environment. I always had reservations about allowing students to pick teams because of that old school demeaning approach of lining people up against the wall to choose teams. If I ever did allow students to choose teams it would be done away from the others on paper. Even then, I would be concerned about the teams being competitively unbalanced. However, in the girls-only class, because I was concerned with their comfort level in the class, I asked several students to help me make teams and they seemed to really enjoy a small responsibility like that. My co-ed class had been begging me for a game of dodgeball to which I finally agreed (I use modified rules to avoid it being a shame game) so I thought I would offer it to the girls-only class not really expecting them to want to play dodgeball at all. To my surprise they wanted to play it. Knowing it had the potential to cause conflict among students, I approached several influential Grade 12s, took them aside, gave them my clipboard and told them I needed "fair teams" chosen for dodgeball game and the grade 10's

11's and 12's had to be divided up. As I sat back and watched them look around the gym and listened to their conversation about who should be on the same team and why, I was amazed at how careful and responsible they were even though I didn't tell them why the grade 10's 11's and 12's had to be divided up or anything like that. That was a small display of leadership by the students but an important message to me that students often understand what is going on in class and can handle moments of leadership responsibly. When I asked them to do that small task it was like their focus changed to what was going on in the class instead of talking about something else waiting for me to make teams. Sharing some control was something I had to make a conscious effort to do and I noted this in my journal,

One of my weaknesses as a teacher is that I don't share/delegate responsibility very well probably because it was more structured for me to have control. Because of the way this course is designed though I'm gradually letting go of that. The students now have a voice in many aspects of the course like the selections of activities, the teams, the music. Overall, it hasn't been perfect but from my perspective I'm satisfied with how it's turned out and pleased that they have some ownership for what we are doing.

Another example of students taking ownership was when I allowed for the use of music in class and for students to choose the music. Students jumped at the opportunity. Since so many students wanted to choose the music, I had them take turns on different days to make it fair. At the time I couldn't understand why I actually had a conflict with the music but I think indirectly it was a message to me that music was important to them and choosing it was an opportunity for leadership in the class and an opportunity for them to take more ownership of what we were doing in the gym. I think they were actually starting to realize that this is more student-centered where they were getting to make decisions.

Guest Instructors

Very early on I realized that I did not have a background in every activity my students wanted to do. Even though I was expecting this, I felt discouraged that I did not have a strong knowledge of some of the activities that were selected. In this case, it was clear that if I was going to offer it, I would probably need to bring in a guest instructor. I know I have always leaned more toward activities in which I had a good knowledge, ability, and that I could easily demonstrate. So, if I couldn't do that for a particular activity, I either did not do the activity or felt an obligation to get someone who could. In this case, I believed it would be beneficial for my students to have some female guest instructors that might act as female role models in the health and physical education field. This also helps students see and understand that they can continue lead a physically active lifestyle after high school and there are so many ways to do that. Furthermore, if the students are to have a genuine voice in the direction of class with respect to activities, then guest instructors would be required. This, I believes was necessary if the course experience was going to be meaningful for the students. To elaborate, if the students indicated an interest in an activity and I ignored it because of my personal concerns then what voice was I really giving them? So, to give value to the voice of the students I either had to deliver the activity myself or arrange for a guest instructor. For example, not having much of a background in jump rope, I arranged for a former female student of mine who I knew had an extensive background in jump rope to come in and lead the class for that unit.

The class response was extremely positive, and I was very satisfied to have been able to arrange for her to help our class. After the first class of jump rope, I had a conversation with my critical friend about what it was like to use a guest instructor.

It was amazing in so many ways to have her come in and lead the class in a jump rope lesson. First of all, she is so good at jump rope, it's impressive. She is young and the students liked her. I myself learned a lot from that jump rope class. It was a real highlight for me as a teacher, especially to bring back a former student of mine. I'm really proud of this, it was definitely worth it!

I felt it was important exposure to a female role model for the students but also made me think about the expertise of the students that were right in front of me. I often joked with students in the class about passing them my keys and whistle so they could teach an activity. As I reflect now, why didn't I use the expertise in the class? After all, there were students with experience in hip hop dance, gymnastics, soccer, and many other activities and I could have helped facilitate cooperative learning activities that they lead.

Changing Perspective on Teaching High School Physical Education

Since I began teaching the girls only PE class, my perspective on teaching PE has changed. At present, my approach to teaching PE is highly influenced by a desire to make PE class a positive experience for students. It is my intention to make PE class a place where students look forward to participating, feel they belong and have a voice in the direction of the class. I also now give consideration to making authentic connections between the subject area and the daily lives of students. It is my goal that students will begin to see benefits of physical education classes other than the health benefits of physical activity and exercise. I believe that if we start that conversation with students in PE classes, seizing the teachable moment in an activity to focus on how they feel when they are active and having so much fun that they don't even realize it. This occurred on several occasions throughout the course. One occasion was during a game of line soccer not long after I abandoned keeping score. The entire class was

participating, and I was kind of surprised how much fun they were having that I let the activity continue for a few shifts longer than usual until suddenly in the middle of a shift the bell rang and the students had to rush to their next class. The next day I jokingly apologized for making them exercise too much and one of them replied it wasn't too much exercise, it was too much fun!

Another time was after we had spent a few classes playing soccer baseball and I had planned to move on to a new activity, but the girls stopped me and requested that we play another game of soccer baseball. I said I had planned for something else but agreed to the request. The girls took over from there setting up, arranging teams and getting the game started. I didn't really do much in this particular class, but it reminded me what a group of people outside of a school setting would do just organizing and participating in an activity which served as both a physical activity and a social activity! From my experiences with the girls-only class, if they have been given a voice in what direction of class takes, and consideration is given to the class environment, then opportunities will exist during activities to make broader connections to living life. These moments of opportunity are characterized by groups of students enjoying their participation in activity so much that they don't even realize they are sweating and their interactions with others, both teammates and opponents, are positive. Conversations with my critical friend were also important in bring this realization to the surface. When speaking on the topic of how I was shifting my focus from technical to a more humanistic approach I noted,

I thought I was doing good for students in co-ed by modifying activities. I realize that changing one factor independent of others will keep you in the same place. If you could put them all together, the class environment, the modifications, the non-competitiveness, the lifestyle-related activities, that would be powerful.

Although much of my attention was now focused in this area, it was my most challenging transition in teaching, and I'm still not there yet. It was a new learning process for me, and I often slip back into old habits where getting through the lesson/activity becomes the focus. Part of this challenge was that to be able to focus the students' attention towards making broader connections to living life, the students have to feel some ownership to the direction of the class, the activities need to appeal to them, and a safe class environment has to be established.

Teaching a girls-only PE class was new to me and so these areas evolved as the course progressed and I really only recognized them because they were in contrast to my usual teaching experiences with co-ed PE classes which had become routine and habitual. The other part of the challenge for me was the broader view of the subject area as less relevant, unimportant, and less meaningful than "core" subject areas such as Math, Science, and English. That, I believe is still the perception of physical education among many education stakeholders including policy makers, educational leaders, administrators, teachers, parents and students. It is the same challenge that the subject area has faced for many years to attain credibility and value in the eyes of members of the general public although progress has been made for the better. Although this perception of the subject area makes it more difficult for me to focus student attention towards the influence of physical education on their daily lives, it highlighted the need to keep trying.

To further explain, I began this year feeling like I had lost my connection to the subject area. I didn't feel like I had my finger on the pulse in my classes—in other words I could not provide the PE experience that I wanted for the students or the kind of experience that I felt physical education should provide. The more I remained the same in my habits and approach, the less engaged and enthusiastic the classes became, or so it seemed. As each year passed, I felt less connected to the subject area. Having tried some different activities in my coed classes with

only moderate success, I was out of ideas. I wasn't enjoying teaching PE as much as in the past. It was about this time that I was also completing course work for my MPE, which involved discussion and reflection with other MPE students and instructors on a variety of different topics. I began thinking about my classes and about which students in my classes I found most challenging to have engaged in activity. As I mentioned before, it was for the most part my female students, who were far outnumbered by males in the class and who were often reluctant to participate. The enrollment of females in the PE classes was extremely low compared to males and I wanted to see that enrollment increase so females could benefit from what the subject area could offer as much as males.

As I mentioned previously, I also believed from my experiences teaching females in a coed class, a number of them had negative PE experiences in the past. So, my initial focus was on the class environment being supportive, welcoming and safe for students which I hadn't paid much attention to in the past. In the past, I was more focused on choosing the schedule of activities for the course, getting through the lesson and getting students active. I was very sport driven in my teaching of PE and as I reflect, I think that contributed a lot to my "autopilot" routines. In the co-ed classes you know you will get that "group" of male students who want to play team sports and truthfully, they are not difficult to teach. Somewhere along the way I came to rely on a sport-based program. It is really what you feel most prepared to teach when you start teaching either through your own personal background or what you experienced in the school system. However, with a sport-based competitive program, you know you going to lose some students in the class and those students are generally females and the "unathletic" males. It is not that I didn't care about those students, more than anything I wanted all the students in the class to be engaged. I tried several different teaching strategies with those students, alternative activities,

non-competitive games for them but only with moderate success. Often, they would have “excuses” or reasons to avoid participation. I think a lot about that now and they probably were not “excuses” as much as they were an attempt to tell me that the class structure was not meeting their needs and would never meet their needs the way I was teaching it. I realize now that teaching the girls-only class allowed me to move away from the sport-based delivery of my program without the pressure from that group of “athletes” to just play team sports. Did I move away entirely from a sport approach? Not completely, as my teaching habits and routines were very strong and powerful and hard to change. Instead, it has been a more gradual process as I slowly began to realize what was possible.

A Positive Classroom Environment

As much of my early focus was on a positive classroom environment, I made several positive changes to improve the atmosphere in the class. As previously mentioned, during many activities, I allowed for the use of music in class. Before this semester, I did not let students play music in class. I don't really have a good reason why I didn't allow music previously but it probably had to do with my preference to maintain full control of the classroom and that I wanted my classes to appear highly educational. I perceived music in the gym as taking away from the learning experience of students by distracting them from instruction and skill development. Ultimately, my belief was that music would interfere with my ability to direct the students and the activity as I wanted it done, as I expected it done. This was mostly a command-style, teacher-centered approach which likely had a negative effect on many of my students and the overall class environment.

During the course of the semester, I decided to change this rule and allowed for the use of music in class, and music chosen by my students. At first, I was very nervous as I didn't know

what to expect. I gave them parameters about what type of music was allowed. Many students wanted to choose the music so I had them take turns on different days, so it was fair and wasn't dominated by one or two students. I was surprised the difference it made. From my experience, the music seemed to not only have a relaxing effect on students, but also a motivating effect towards physical activity. I think music also helps support a non-competitive atmosphere. It takes the focus off skill level and performance and you notice that the class is actually engaging in physical activity. I noted this difference between my co-ed and girls-only class in my journal,

I use music with them so much more than all my other classes. I guess I'm more concerned with the class environment and everyone being comfortable...I can just put the whistle away and let them play.

While it is important to teach them how to play a sport, it's not so critical that we can't play music!

Another way I changed my teaching, which impacted the atmosphere of the class, is that I focused on listening more to students and giving them a voice. I gave them choices of what activities they were more comfortable with and asked them what they wanted to do within the curriculum guidelines. There was a diverse number of activity selections made. The most popular selections were yoga, badminton, archery, various types of dance, rock climbing, skating, swimming, risk taking, baseball/softball, bowling, volleyball, and soccer. I tried to provide as many of them as I could. I listened more to what they said, and it was clear they wanted to try some new activities. One such activity was rock climbing.

Rock climbing was a student choice activity and for me as the teacher, student choice activities translated into risk and an uneasy feeling. I first noticed it on their activity selection sheets and when I discussed it with the class I shared my concerns that if we book this rock

climbing field trip at the local facility there would be an associated cost for the activity and bussing and we would all need to be committed to the activity. This was the part where I expected interest to drop off and students to start backing out of the activity. I must have asked them 10 or more times during that class. “Do you seriously want to go rock climbing?” After the 10th time of them replying “yes,” I finally agreed to organize the activity. Even days later when the students had brought in their consent forms and money, I was still feeling nervous right up until we loaded the bus and departed the school parking lot. At the rock-climbing facility, the girls were divided into smaller groups and began the activity. It turned out to be a huge success with some wonderful participation, excellent group work as well as individual students challenging themselves by attempting more difficult climbs. It really seemed to bring the girls together. Several of the girls remarked to me that they enjoyed it so much they would like to return again. Honestly, it was one of the highlights of the course for me as well just seeing everyone engaged and having fun with an activity new to them and I left that day very happy with our accomplishment as a class. A success like this certainly gives me motivation to provide more experiences like this for the students. To me, it was an example of what I truly strive to achieve in physical education.

I was also more careful with the arrangement and modification of activities. As previously mentioned, students who were more comfortable/self confident in a particular activity/sport played in smaller groups (e.g., two vs. two). I believe this approach allowed more students to participate whereas in the past they may have sat out. I also think this is better suited to the individual needs of the students as the more confident students were more challenged by this arrangement.

Another area I de-emphasized was competitiveness. I came to the realization that there was no need to emphasize winning and losing and I stopped keeping score during games. This also affected my assessment practices where I became less focused on skill performance and more concerned with the affective domain. Instead, we played for the other benefits that sport could provide such as teamwork, physical activity, socialization, and having fun. This shift in focus to more affective learning outcomes also helped make those crucial connections to the real world for my students and made classes more meaningful for them.

I also added more team building activities than I did in the past so students would hopefully get to know each other better and feel more comfortable in the class. In addition, there was less emphasis on team sports and more individual/small group activities included such as skating, jump rope, and dance. Another benefit of the small group approach was that the students could participate in physical activity within a group they were comfortable with away from the spotlight, so they didn't have to be self-conscious or fearful. Furthermore, I often slowed the pace of class, so it wasn't always 'go-go-go' where the students were feeling forced to be active. Time was given for explanation of activities and for students to give feedback.

So much of what I experienced became about knowing my students—what they liked and didn't like, what group or partner they were comfortable with, what activities they excelled at or struggled with, and generally what in their lives might influence their behaviour, attitudes, actions in class. This makes me think of my co-ed classes in the past where I had often chosen the activities for all my classes. For example, if canoeing was an activity I chose, then all my classes would go canoeing. Some classes liked it and some didn't and so it just became this struggle with all the effort I put into the activities like canoeing (e.g., scheduling, consent forms, arranging transportation and facilities, etc.), and I would ask myself is this really worth it? The

end result was that my program just became narrower and narrower because I started to believe that students didn't want to do these activities. But after teaching the girls-only class where I had them choose activities and I found success with field trips like skating and rock climbing, I believed once again that it is worthwhile. Reflecting back, making all my classes do the exact same activities was really about not knowing my students. I think if I paid more attention to knowing my students, I would have recognized which classes would appreciate and be motivated by certain activities and which ones were not.

Only one of six of my classes went on the rock-climbing field trip. It may seem unfair to the others, but I am comfortable with it. The girls-only class convinced me to go and any doubt I had was erased by their enthusiasm every time we discussed it. I didn't have the same impression from my other groups. It takes a lot of organization and is time consuming so I think the key is to recognize which group/s would appreciate it the most.

Part of this comes down to relationships with students and really listening to them and trusting that they will be honest about their likes/dislikes. The other part of it comes from understanding ourselves and why we make decisions we do as teachers. After all, I was making decisions that all classes would go canoeing with the belief that it was beneficial for the students and because I liked canoeing (why wouldn't they?). I suppose I've changed in that respect. The activities take on less of a meaning for me, what is important is the students' perspectives not just mine. So, things like "this class has to do it because the other class is" – that doesn't matter anymore, it is less about my schedule. I used to say you're all going to do it because the badminton nets are set up for the day. Did I really want to struggle through an activity with a class if they don't like it? During a conversation with my critical friend about the classroom

environment, I noted that I perceived it as positive in part because of their participation in the class activities:

As a group they participate more in more activities. Females in my co-ed class would pick and choose, some will participate, and some avoid. There's very little avoidance in this class, a few times some are not as interested in some of the activities, but these would be non-participants in my co-ed classes. They're not going to be active for the full hour but when I say it's time for the activity they don't resist, they play. In my co-ed class I know there'll be five or six students that I have to encourage, that will use tactics to avoid or resist like bathroom, sickness, or no shoes.

Through all of this, I also became more reflective in my teaching and understood that it was important to consider the individual qualities of each student and class. So, when an activity doesn't work well, I didn't automatically think it was the activity because it could also have been other factors such as the arrangement, environment, dynamics, and competitiveness. Overall, this came back to setting up an atmosphere for the girls to want to participate. By focusing on factors other than just teaching the activity, such as relationships and how I taught, it set up a positive environment where students wanted to be.

Physical Education and Life

As time went on teaching the girls-only PE class I began thinking more and more about connecting their PE experiences to life situations. I felt the subject area had a lot to offer as it related to authentic experiences. I was referring specifically to times during teaching when you can focus their attention to how they feel and the connection to what's going on in their bodies. Sometimes, it was intense physical activity releasing endorphins and making them feel good or a good display of teamwork providing socialization or having fun and feeling good about

themselves. In these scenarios, the chosen activity was less important, and the resulting experiences were of greater value. During my teaching, I recognised some opportunities to make these connections but often I did not see them, or I just let them pass. As much as I wanted to make those connections, I really struggled with this as I noted in my journal,

I have really tried to be a role model for the students and to promote a lifelong healthy active lifestyle, but it is a challenge to get them to make that connection, to take what we learn in class and apply it in their daily lives. This may be the only PE course they take in high school, so they need the skills and knowledge to take care of their own health and wellness beyond this. Sure, it's fine when they are in class with me where I can provide them guidance and I have seen some encouraging behaviours but soon they will have that responsibility for choosing their lifestyle on their own. I have thought more about this during this course and it's been difficult to balance all the things I wanted to accomplish but I think every phys. ed teacher wants to see their students leading healthy lifestyles.

I think the combination of the influence of my old routines of getting through the lesson and getting the students active and the pressures of having “new” activities, trying to make the environment safe, supportive and welcoming, making PE “fun” again, it was difficult for me to also focus on PE as authentic life experiences. My teaching in co-ed classes in the past was largely focused on the physical benefits of exercise and physical activity (psychomotor) versus the affective or cognitive benefits. I struggled with this shift in focus from a more technical approach to a humanistic approach. This will be an area I will continue to work on as I grow as a teacher in this new way of teaching PE.

Chapter 5: Lessons Learned

The discussion to follow is embryonic in nature as my ideas continue to develop and I anticipate that I will always be more reflective in my position based on this research experience. The original idea for this study arose from my concern about low enrollment of female students in my high school physical education program. However, over time it became a more about taking an in-depth look at my personal and professional beliefs as a physical education teacher and my inner struggles with who I am/was as a teacher. These struggles centered primarily on the perspectives through which I viewed physical education as a subject area, and how they influenced my teaching. At times in my career, I viewed physical education as critical in providing the level of physical activity that students so desperately needed according to the large volume of research that can be found citing the decline of children's health and the subsequent need for more exercise. This resulted in me prioritizing exercise as the focus of the course and my main goal was to maximize physical activity by limiting class discussion, setting up as quickly as possible, and choosing activities which involved exercise and required physical exertion. For the most part, classes were rushed so that the physical activity time was maximized, and I could say I did my part to improve the fitness levels of students. Other times in my career, when I felt I was struggling to provide a good program, I incorporated different approaches to physical education by adding more non-traditional and cooperative activities to my program. When this didn't work well or lost its appeal, I moved to incorporate more student choice into my teaching. As with the other approaches, sometimes it worked well and sometimes it didn't.

What was my reason for starting a female-only physical education course? Partly it was a response to low enrollment of female students in physical education but perhaps it was a

continuation of my inner struggle to make sense of the different perspectives of physical education as a subject area and what I believed to be important. In light of all my past experiences teaching physical education, whether positive or negative, undertaking this action research project has been a catalyst for positive change and has influenced my way of being a teacher. As a result of this experience there are several “lessons learned” about teaching physical education, which I will share. It is important to note that these ideas are simply the result of my experiences in the context of my own teaching situation and are not necessarily generalizable to other physical education teaching situations. I offer these insights so that others can learn from my experiences and perhaps find the courage to reflect on their own ways of teaching.

First, the use of journaling and a critical friend were extremely powerful. It enabled me to look beyond the technical aspects of class, to look for a deeper understanding. In fact, although there were things I noticed during class activities, many of my realizations occurred during the journaling process. Some examples of these realizations include moving away entirely from keeping score and changing the activity schedule to include some classes of team building activities immediately after noticing some tensions between groups of students in class. I considered the journal so valuable that I continued journaling even after the study was completed. This strategy is emphasized in the action research process where observation and reflection (Mertler, 2012; Stringer, 2007) are often accomplished through journaling and discussion with colleagues, or in my case, a critical “friend.” Feldman (2002) also recommends going beyond the typical professional development activities and challenging ourselves to question and reflect about ourselves as teachers—to better understand a “teacher’s way of being a teacher” (p. 33).

Second, I've learned to expand my horizons about traditional physical education and let go of control. The girls-only physical education class was a new experience for me, and I learned very early in the course that if I taught it the same as I always have it would not be successful. The course needed to be customized to that particular group of students and in this case, that particular group of girls. I knew it had to follow the requirements of the provincial curriculum, but it needed to be different from other classes by focusing on the interests and needs of that group of students. This meant there were activities that I was neither knowledgeable nor experienced at and I had to learn new activities, arrange guest instructors, and plan field trips. This was a very powerful learning experience for me as it represented a major shift in my teaching from relying on activities which were chosen by me and consistent with my background to activities chosen by the students and of which I had limited knowledge and experience. As the course progressed, I felt relieved that I could go into physical education class and work with students on activities they perceived as relevant rather than trying to convince students to play basketball or some other sport. I was encouraged to read the literature that also found similar insights. Kirk et al. (2018) and Oliver and Kirk (2016; 2018) used an activist approach that emphasizes variety and choice, listening to your students, and relationships (between students and between students and teachers). Goodyear et al. (2014) used a student-centered approach to create a positive learning environment that promoted student engagement.

Third, I no longer feel pressure to rush through class activities incorporating as much physical activity as possible. I now understand that it is unrealistic to expect that physical education class provides the only opportunity for students to exercise and be physically active, some of that will ultimately have to be done on students' own time. I believe it doesn't have to be 'go-go-go' and that it is alright to slow down to allow for understanding of the power of

physical activity and its benefits (physical, emotional, and social). There's going to be movement and physical activity during class activities and when you add discussion and understanding to those activities it becomes more powerful. Asking students during an activity how the exercise made them feel helped them better understand and connect to the benefits of movement and physical activity. This was a focus I would have ignored in the past in favour of more activity. This idea of embodied learning is also shared by Lambert (2018) who offers ideas for 'embodied pedagogies' that help girls to "understand what to move feels like, to sense their own moving body" (p. 733).

A fourth lesson of this project is that the experience has taught me to learn again. Early in my career coming out of university I felt I had lots of knowledge and novel ideas about teaching physical education. Upon entering the profession, I developed teaching habits and routines that worked for me for a long time. However, I relied very much on these habits and routines, and when they were no longer effective, I struggled with my teaching. Teaching this course has helped me realize that a contributing factor to my struggles was that I had stopped the process of continuously learning. My experiences in this project have shown me I can learn not just new activities, but new ways of doing things, of interacting with students. Students are supposed to learn from me but actually I am learning just as much from them as well. The principles of action research (Mertler, 2012) – look, think, act – have helped me in this journey, but more importantly the focus on the existential perspectives of being a teacher (Feldman, 2002; Feldman & Weiss, 2010) has allowed me to question who I am as a teacher, to question the status quo and to accept my students as co-constructors of the learning environment. Kim Oliver's work (Oliver et al., 2009; Oliver & Kirk, 2016), as well as Enright and O'Sullivan

(2010) support the notion of negotiating the curriculum with your students and giving adolescent girls a voice as important to meaningful participation in physical education.

A fifth lesson learned from this project for me is the value of understanding my students/learners. I feel this is important because I have seen how the small details affect them. For instance, knowing students lack confidence in their physical abilities in some activities are better placed in small groups so they are not in the spotlight of a full gym activity where they might be fearful of failure. I also have benefitted from stepping back and paying attention to students so I could better understand their point of view, thoughts and beliefs and ideas.

Future Directions

The development of the girls-only physical education course was never intended to be a permanent course offering in my school, but because it has led to a substantial increase in the enrollment of females in physical education, the course remained in place. However, after one additional year the course was no longer offered due to scheduling constraints. In the next school year female enrolment in physical education subsequently declined from 50 to 24. While it was a valuable learning experience for me personally and professionally in how it helped change or improve my teaching of PE, how it impacted my way of being a teacher and how it helped me better understand the needs of female students in PE, I do not believe single gender physical education classes are the only way to have a successful physical education program. In fact, I believe that a co-educational class balanced with males and females can be an excellent option for class arrangement as long as you focus on the unique needs of students, including the gender-specific socially constructed factors in physical education and pay attention to *how* you teach.

While this project helped me gain additional confidence in my teaching no matter what configuration, co-ed or girls-only, there are some key success factors that I recommend. First, an approach to physical education which contains repeated competitive team sports is almost certain to result in low enrollment or minimal participation of both female students as well as male students who are uncomfortable with movement and physical activity. Instead, creating a physical education environment which is fun, safe, and supportive of students and which provides students opportunities to participate in new activities appropriate to their skill level will likely lead to an increase in student enrollment in physical education and participation in physical activity. Second, a physical education program which is overly focused on physical activity as a solution to the obesity epidemic is likely to reconstruct the discourses of “healthism” and “cult of the body” and may have in fact have long term detrimental effects on the health and well being of students (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989).

I would also offer the recommendation to any teacher who is struggling to motivate students or who is not feeling successful in their teaching that the process of reflective journaling might be beneficial in leading to positive change. In addition, as part of that journaling, pay more attention to the students in front of you. Work more *with* the students, give them a voice, empower them by giving them some choice in activities, and some leadership roles in class activities.

Physical education is a unique subject area because it involves the body, movement and social interaction and as teachers we need to respect that not all students identify with physical activity the way we do. This requires us to think openly and differently than how we may have originally been trained. There are many ways of being a teacher in physical education, but the

right approach to teaching physical education for me is now focused on the relationships with my students and meeting the needs and interests unique to each class.

While the aim of this research was to see how my perspectives of physical education may change as a teacher, I will also offer a few thoughts on my perception of how the students reacted to the class. This is based on my observations and interactions with the students and does not necessarily reflect their own individual perceptions. I feel that the fact they were all signing up for a “new” girls-only physical education class maybe allowed them to feel some ownership of the course right from the beginning, as it was developed just for this group of students. Also, with this being a “new” physical education course I think they could let go of some of their concerns of past physical education experiences. Overall, I believe that the students had an overall positive experience because of certain observations that repeatedly come to mind, such as seeing the students “breaking a sweating” without realizing it, laughing and having fun during activities, never asking about the score of games or who won, and never using avoidance tactics like claiming to be injured or sick, or needing to leave the class during activity. In addition, as the course progressed it became increasingly clear to me that this group of students valued intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment, personal accomplishment, instead of extrinsic rewards such as winning.

To conclude, I am forever grateful to this group of students who so willingly co-constructed the girls-only physical education course with me and allowed me to learn how to *be* a better teacher. Through this experience I feel confident in saying we all learned there is physical education beyond team sports and competition. And yes, you don’t have to keep score!

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Appendix A

Course Selection Sheet Female Only Physical Education 2100 Description

Course Selection Sheet Female Only Physical Education 2100 Description

For the upcoming school year our school will be offering a female only physical education 2100 class. The aim of the course is to provide an opportunity for female students to engage in physical activity more closely suited to their needs and interests. Research in this area shows that many female students want to lead a healthy active lifestyle but do not choose physical education in high school. Students who choose this course will be directly involved in the selection of activities from a broad range of both traditional and non-traditional fun activities, which may not be offered in a co-ed class. Emphasis will be placed on participation in activities which promote lifelong physical activity rather than competitive team sports.

Appendix B

Physical Education 2100/2101 Course Outline



Newfoundland & Labrador
English School District

Physical Education 2100 / 2101
Course Description

Updated September, 2013

Level of Instruction: Senior High

Physical Education 2100/2101 is an activity-based course designed to provide a variety of movement experiences that contribute to motor skill development and focus on an active healthy lifestyle.

Students will:

- Develop movement skills that contribute to personal wellness and an active lifestyle.
- Use the *Active for Life* student resource to complement work in the gym/outdoors.
- Participate in a variety of activities while working with the teacher to select the activities.
- Develop physical literacy and movement competency in a variety of activities

Some of the key components of Physical Education 2100/2101 that will appeal to students are:

- The variety of rhythmic, teambuilding and cooperative activities.
- The emphasis on fitness development.
- Student input into the selection of activities.

The Physical Education 2100/2101 activity-based course incorporates the three dimensions of movement:

1. Moving and Doing (Psychomotor)
2. Understanding and Applying (Cognitive)
3. Cooperation and Responsibility (Affective)

The PE 2100/2101 curriculum is organized into the following three Movement Categories:

1. Individual/Partner Games and Activities
2. Games/Group Activities
3. Alternative Activities

Two activity choices from each of the movement categories are mandatory. Additional activities can be chosen from the list only after the minimum requirements are met (6 choices in total). This provides an opportunity for teachers and students to develop a program unique to their class. It is through guided participation in the activities that students will meet the curricular outcomes.

Appendix C

Movement Themes and Physical Activities

Chart

SECTION 1: PROGRAM DESIGN AND COMPONENTS

Movement Themes and Physical Activities Chart

Individual/Partner Activities	Alternative Activities	Games/Group Activities
<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Fitness</i></u></p> <p>Aerobics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Agility Ladders <input type="checkbox"/> Body Weight Exercises <input type="checkbox"/> BOSU Balls <input type="checkbox"/> Calisthenics <input type="checkbox"/> CPR <input type="checkbox"/> Circuit Training <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging <input type="checkbox"/> Pilates <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping <input type="checkbox"/> Strength/Resistance Training <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Ball Training <input type="checkbox"/> Tae Bo <input type="checkbox"/> Tai chi/Yoga <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Athletics (Track and Field)</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Runs: sprints; mid and long distance <input type="checkbox"/> Jumps: high; long; hurdles <input type="checkbox"/> Throws: shot putt; discuss; hammer <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Combatives</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Judo <input type="checkbox"/> Martial Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Defence <input type="checkbox"/> Wrestling <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Creative Movement (Gymnastics)</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Olympic <input type="checkbox"/> Rhythmic <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Net and Wall</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Badminton <input type="checkbox"/> Handball/Racquetball/Squash <input type="checkbox"/> Paddle Tennis/Pickle Ball <input type="checkbox"/> Table Tennis <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Other</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Archery <input type="checkbox"/> Golf <input type="checkbox"/> Hacky Sack <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Rhythmic</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aerobics <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerleading <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping Rope <input type="checkbox"/> Ballroom Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Folk Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Jazz Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Jive Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Line Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador <input type="checkbox"/> Social Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional Dance <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Alternative Setting: Outdoor</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Backpacking <input type="checkbox"/> Camping <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking <input type="checkbox"/> Orienteering <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Climbing <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing <input type="checkbox"/> Kayaking <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing <input type="checkbox"/> Survival techniques <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Alternative Activities: Individual Outdoor</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Running <input type="checkbox"/> In-Line Skating <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Biking <input type="checkbox"/> Roller Biking <input type="checkbox"/> Rowing <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding <input type="checkbox"/> Skiing <input type="checkbox"/> Snowboarding <input type="checkbox"/> Skating <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming <input type="checkbox"/> Water Games 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Leadership/Cooperative Games and Activities</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure Games <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative games <input type="checkbox"/> Initiative Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Lead-up <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Taking <input type="checkbox"/> Team Building/Team Challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural Games and Activities <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Fielding</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cricket <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball/Softball/Rounders <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Line</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Broomball <input type="checkbox"/> Disc Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Rugby <input type="checkbox"/> Touch/Flag Football <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Target</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bocce <input type="checkbox"/> Bowling <input type="checkbox"/> Curling <input type="checkbox"/> Croquet <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Net</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sepak Takraw <input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball <input type="checkbox"/> Eclipse Ball <input type="checkbox"/> Tchoukball <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Territorial</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball <input type="checkbox"/> Broomball <input type="checkbox"/> Field Hockey <input type="checkbox"/> Lacrosse <input type="checkbox"/> Netball <input type="checkbox"/> Ringette <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer <input type="checkbox"/> Team Handball

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM GUIDE - 2100 & 2101

Source: (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2011)

Appendix D

Physical Education 2100/2101 Sample Course Evaluation

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE COURSE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

2100 & 2101 Sample Course Description and Evaluation

A student's evaluation reflects the extent to which curricular outcomes have been attained, and it is based on active engagement in various activities/experiences. The evaluation is personal and specific to the individual allowing the student an opportunity for personal success in PE.

Evaluation Breakdown

All three domains are evaluated through participation in activities, games, and various movement experiences, either individually or with fellow students.

Moving and Doing	50 %	(25% dedicated to health/fitness)
Understanding and Applying	25%	
Cooperation and Responsibility	25%	

➤ **Moving and Doing—50% (25% dedicated to health/fitness)**

Moving and Doing curriculum outcomes form the psychomotor elements of a student's evaluation. It is the actual active engagement in activities that is the main determinant of a student's success and the focus of this evaluative criterion.

➤ **Understanding and Applying—25%**

Understanding and Applying curriculum outcomes form the cognitive elements of a student's evaluation. It is the knowledge acquired and applied through movement in a variety of activities, games, and pursuits that is the focus of this evaluative criterion.

➤ **Cooperation and Responsibility—25%**

Cooperation and responsibility curriculum outcomes form the affective elements of a student's evaluation. It is the personal and social behaviours demonstrated by students during activities that are the focus of this evaluative criterion.

Notes on Fitness:

- Criteria include student's demonstration of personal fitness, participation in a variety of "Fitness Pursuits," personal goal setting, and understanding of fitness components.
- Fitness weaves throughout all activities.

Notes on Fitness Appraisals (tests)

- Fitness appraisals may be chosen to fulfill the fitness requirements of the curriculum.
- Fitness appraisals should be done with the utmost care and sensitivity.
- The level of fitness (or score) students have achieved or gained in any particular fitness appraisal is not the determining factor or criteria for their overall evaluation.

Source: (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2011).