

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY

CONFRONTING OBESITY IN YOUTH:
A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATORS

LINDSEY A. HECK

Spring 2010

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the Baccalaureate Degree
in Kinesiology
with honors in Kinesiology

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

R. Scott Kretchmar
Professor of Exercise & Sport Science
Thesis Supervisor

Stephen Piazza
Associate Professor of Kinesiology
Kinesiology Honors Adviser

Karl Newell
Kinesiology Department Head

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

Abstract

There is little question the United States is suffering from what some have labeled “an obesity epidemic.” According to Allison (as cited in Kobayashi, 2007), at least 280,000 premature deaths occur every year due to obesity and the complications caused by being overweight. The onset of obesity continues to accelerate with many children now facing the health and social consequences of being overweight. With the problem continuing to expand, it is clear that current approaches for promoting healthful diet and exercise have not been effective. Melville noted, “...Unless something changes, more of the population will become overweight or obese and suffer from debilitating and life-threatening diseases” (2009, p. 54).

This study targets obesity in youth and presents a holistic method for physical educators to aid in reversing and preventing current obesity trends. Explanations are provided for the causes of obesity, the validity of various methods for measuring obesity, and the barriers to active living many individuals face. Additionally, current physical education programs are evaluated for their efficacy in addressing the obesity problem. This analysis revealed potential weaknesses in current approaches. Physical education programs are not designed to promote or enhance meaning. A more holistic approach toward a physical education curriculum is presented that not only allows students to be active, but provides an environment that encourages the opportunity to “have an experience” and develop a sense of meaning within a particular area of physical activity. This method involves spending more time in a particular domain of physical education, encouraging the development of intrinsically motivating experiences, and being the guide to leading youngsters on a lifetime journey of meaningful, life-changing, and rewarding physical activity.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Understanding Obesity	3
III. Barriers to Active Living	7
IV. Current Physical Education Programs & Assessment	
A. Barriers Physical Education Courses Face	11
B. Evaluation of Goals & Attitudes of P.E. & Physical Activity	12
V. Responses to Obesity: Present Physical Education Models	15
VI. A Move toward an Intrinsically Motivated Ground to P.E.	
A. Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Living – A Key to a Holistic Educational Approach	19
B. The Sport Education Model – A Curriculum Aimed at Personal Meaning	22
C. Present P.E. Models vs. the Sport Education Model	25
VII. Teaching toward Having an “Experience”	
A. Defining an “Experience”	27
B. What Leads to or Produces an Experience?	28
C. A Personal Example of an Experience in Physical Activity	30
D. Growing Movement Playgrounds	33
E. Leading Students to Experiences in PE	35
VIII. Conclusion	37
References	39
Academic Vita	43

I. Introduction

Obesity, defined as “a condition characterized by the excessive accumulation and storage of fat in the body,” is an epidemic that is continuing to spread across the United States and the world (Obesity, 2009). As cited in Futoshi Kobayashi’s (2007) article in the *Nutrition and Food Science* journal, Hedley and Nicklas claim that “approximately two-thirds of American adults and one-fourth of American children are currently overweight or obese” (p. 329). The mean age of these afflicted individuals continues to decrease. Due to this earlier onset of obesity, the children of today are under great risk of developing certain diseases and health problems much younger in life than in recent history. Not only are obese children more likely to become obese adults, but the severity of obesity in adulthood increases if overweight begins before eight years of age (Childhood overweight and obesity, 2009). According to Allison (as cited in Kobayashi, 2007), at least 280,000 premature deaths occur every year due to obesity and the complications caused by being overweight.

However, obesity is not simply a biological issue. It is a cultural issue as well. In fact, when obesity first began to emerge as a problem in the 1850’s, it was more common among those of higher class and wealth. At that time, being overweight was often a sign of success and prosperity (Segrave, 1944). Over the next 150 years, the ideal body type gradually shifted from “well-fed” to trim and slender. In fact, under the influence of the media, the “perfect body” as currently portrayed on television and in magazines (although airbrushed and unrealistic) has become difficult to achieve without doing damage to one’s overall health. Since the 1850’s, the gap between the ideally slender “haves” and the obese “have nots” has grown.

So what has led to the United States to become such an overweight country? The most common answer to this question is poor diet and lack of exercise. Although these are valid

factors, a wider variety of causes have been found to play a role in obesity. Additional contributing factors include metabolism, genetics, environment, culture, behavior and socioeconomic status (CDC, 2009). A family history of obesity and slower metabolisms may place children at higher risk of acquiring these traits in addition to unhealthy behavioral patterns. Also, those who live in an unsafe area, have homes where there are no sidewalks, and/or have a very sedentary career are more likely to remain inactive. Economics also plays a role. Some individuals cannot afford the healthiest food, a membership to the gym, or the latest exercise equipment. In sum, obesity is a multidimensional problem. Because of this, the problem requires a multidimensional solution.

The increasing prevalence of obesity is troubling. It is troubling because, in spite of many efforts at intervention, little to no improvement has been shown. This is particularly true for youngsters. Previous research has focused on how America has become obese, the serious health risks that obesity generates, and interventions related to healthier dietary choices coupled with more exercise. In spite of these efforts, we are now, more than ever, the fattest country in the world. As stated by Melville (2009), “The United States is experiencing a health crisis...Unless something changes, more of the population will become overweight or obese and suffer from debilitating and life-threatening diseases” (p. 54).

Additionally, obesity may be on the path to becoming the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. According to Surgeon General David Satcher, “Being overweight [or] obese may soon cause as much preventable disease and death as cigarette smoking” (Sibbald, 2002). Tobacco use still remains the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S. with approximately 400,000 deaths annually. With obesity ranked second in preventable deaths with some 300,000 deaths each year, the Surgeon General’s prediction may well come true.

In order to reverse this trend, we need to redouble our commitment to finding effective interventions and employing new strategies to solve the problem. This study will investigate subjective factors that drive individuals to move – specifically, how the discovery of meaning in physical activity can play a role in school-based interventions. Progress with school-aged youngsters is important because, as noted, this population too is struggling with problems related to obesity. Also, because many habits and lifestyles begin to form during these earlier periods of life, interventions aimed at children carry additional significance. The recommendations that emerge from my research are aimed at physical education curricula and methods of teaching in order to develop good habits at a young age and produce lifetime movers.

II. Understanding Obesity

Before devising an intervention, we must first gain a better overall understanding of obesity, current methods used to determine what is considered obese, and whether or not we should place the obesity label on individuals based solely on these tests and scales. The most popular method of measuring weight status used by health care professionals is the Body Mass Index (BMI) (How is obesity measured?, 2005). One's BMI is determined by using height and weight values in one of the BMI formulas. The ending value can then be interpreted using the BMI scale to determine weight status as either underweight, normal, overweight, or obese (See Tables 1, 2, and 3 below.).

BMI Formulas

Measurement Units	Formula and Calculation
<p>Kilograms and meters (or centimeters)</p>	<p>Formula: $\text{weight (kg)} / [\text{height (m)}]^2$</p> <p>With the metric system, the formula for BMI is weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. Since height is commonly measured in centimeters, divide height in centimeters by 100 to obtain height in meters.</p> <p>Example: Weight = 68 kg, Height = 165 cm (1.65 m) Calculation: $68 \div (1.65)^2 = 24.98$</p>
<p>Pounds and inches</p>	<p>Formula: $\text{weight (lb)} / [\text{height (in)}]^2 \times 703$</p> <p>Calculate BMI by dividing weight in pounds (lbs) by height in inches (in) squared and multiplying by a conversion factor of 703.</p> <p>Example: Weight = 150 lbs, Height = 5'5" (65") Calculation: $[150 \div (65)^2] \times 703 = 24.96$</p>

Table 1. BMI Formula table from www.cdc.gov

BMI Scale

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

Table 2. BMI classifications from www.cdc.gov

BMI Scale with Sample Height

Height	Weight Range	BMI	Weight Status
5'9"	124 lbs or less	Below 18.5	Underweight
	125 lbs to 168 lbs	18.5 – 24.9	Normal
	169 lbs to 202 lbs	25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
	203 lbs or more	30.0 and Above	Obese

Table 3. BMI Scale Sample from www.cdc.gov

Waist circumference has shown to be a predictor of obesity and related health risks when used in combination with BMI. The risk for most weight-related illnesses is said to increase if the waist size is greater than 40 inches for men and 35 inches for women. Another common method for measuring obesity involves the use of a skin fold caliper in order to determine one's total percentage of body fat. The caliper clamps to various areas of the body (eg., triceps, abdomen, thigh) measuring subcutaneous fat in order to estimate overall body fat. Men measuring more than 25% and women more than 30% are categorized as obese (2005). Underwater weighing and dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) are two other methods that are broadly regarded to be more reliable and accurate than BMI, waist, or caliper-based measurements (CDC, 2009).

The BMI and skin fold methods and scales have been, and continue to be, used most often when attempting to determine obesity. However, many concerns have been raised regarding the reliability and validity of these methods. A drawback to the BMI method is the simple fact that only height and weight are taken into consideration. The weight used for the BMI is not divided into muscle and fat weight, but is presented as a single figure. Therefore, an

athlete with a high percentage of muscle mass and very low percentage of body fat could still fall into the overweight category. The waist circumference measurement may be able to help predict risks for certain diseases, and the skin fold caliper may provide us with an estimated percentage of body fat, but individuals can and do live an active, healthy lifestyle despite having larger waistlines and higher fat percentages (2005).

A unique difficulty in defining obesity arises when highly athletic, active, or otherwise healthy individuals are categorized as overweight. As previously stated, many athletes, such as individuals on football, wrestling, and track teams, may very well be skilled athletes and enjoy a fully active lifestyle, while body fat and composition measurements still deem them to be overweight. This raises questions about the validity of our classifications and the stigma that are often attached to individuals who do not fit within certain norms. People tend to focus too much on numbers and too little on the exceptional mobility, enjoyment and passion these athletes may have for their sport or activity hobby of choice.

It is possible that our current determinations of obesity are inadequate. One scale or one set of numbers certainly does not fit all in this case. This is so because risks from obesity are difficult to determine. Genetics, human function, and mobility may have greater importance than fat or waist measurements in determining who is deemed “at risk” or who carries the stigma of being “overweight.”

These categorizations, like many other labels placed on individuals, can do damage to self-esteem and motivation and can actually promote undesirable outcomes. A lineman on a high school football team very well may be considered obese based on one of the above scales, but because he is aware of and content with his athleticism and strength, he may regard them as irrelevant. On the other hand, individuals in a Physical Education class who are tested and shown

to be overweight or obese can be very troubled, and possibly offended, by these tests. How we understand, measure and categorize obesity may affect whether or not people, including youngsters, will view exercise and movement in a positive manner. However, there are many other barriers to active living these children face other than just a weight categorization. Understanding these obstacles is imperative in order to discover a way to overcome them.

III. Barriers to Active Living

As previously mentioned, obesity has been labeled a multidimensional problem due to the variety of factors contributing to it. Similarly, the obstacles and barriers youngsters face that would keep them from developing an active lifestyle may also involve a variety of factors. These barriers can range from spending numerous hours a day with various types of technology, to living in a neighborhood that is deemed too unsafe for outside play and activity to socioeconomic factors that limit resources for active living. “Research has found,” in other words, “that physical activity levels in children can be influenced by both internal or ‘personal’ and external or ‘environmental’ factors” (NASPE, 2005, p. 14).

Internal influences on physical activity can be broken down into biological and psychological factors. Further yet, we can look deeper and discover that gender, age, race, competency, and a feeling of satisfaction during activity also impact participation (NASPE, 2005). For example, as cited by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2005), a study in 1999 performed by Jackson et al. (2004) reported that physical activity levels decline with age, and rates drop off even further when individuals enter the workforce. About 65 percent of teens reported engaging in vigorous physical activity, but when

age twenty-one was reached, these rates dropped to 30 percent for women and 40 percent for men.

Additionally, with regard to psychological factors, many children (and adults) lack feelings of competence and confidence in physical activities, and “research clearly demonstrates that children and adolescents must feel generally competent in physical activities and must feel confident in their ability to achieve a specific goal (self-efficacy)” (NASPE, 2005, p. 16). If youngsters are unable to experience some form of success during physical activity, the likelihood they will discover meaning and enjoyment in the activity is limited.

External factors also play a role in keeping children from being physically active (NASPE, 2005). One common factor is the easy accessibility of technology that consumes the lives of many children and effectively encourages children and adolescents to spend a considerable amount of time in a motionless state. Also cited in NASPE (2005), a survey performed in 1997 by The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) revealed that two-thirds of parents blame the lack of interest in physical activity and competition on TV, video games, and computers. Years ago, this technology was not nearly as common, or simply did not exist. At that time, children equated having fun with playing outside with neighborhood friends, getting fresh air, and running around until they were forced to come inside for dinner. Currently, many youngsters would rather be glued to the television or to computer games than be active like our earlier generations (NASPE, 2005). This, of course, contributes to this generation’s struggle with obesity.

Various people in a child’s life can also have an effect on activity level. Children with inactive parents and peers are more likely to be less motivated to become physically active as well. Conversely, the ILSI survey also revealed that very physically active parents also have very

physically active children (NASPE, 2005). If a child is exposed to activity early in life in a family that regularly hikes, plays catch in the backyard, or goes swimming, the child is much more likely to feel competent in these areas and enjoy them. Peers also play a large role in influencing behavior, especially when children become teenagers. Peer approval and acceptance is crucial at this age. Children tend to participate in the same activities as their friends. Teachers, especially physical educators, can also have a huge impact on encouraging students to be physically active. In 1994, Sallis (as cited in NASPE, 2005) wrote that, “It is likely that physical educators who are active and enthusiastic about teaching will be more successful in stimulating their students’ enjoyment of physical activity” (p. 18).

Along with influences from technology and various people in their lives, children are also faced with many other factors that hinder their participation in activity. Being physically active often involves commitment of time and energy, transportation, and costs. Some families cannot support these activity-related expenses. In NASPE’s book on Physical Education for Lifelong Fitness (2005), Pate and Hohn explain that environmental factors such as the day of the week, season, setting, and organized programs also influence the activity level of children. Children who have free time on the weekends, live in a warmer climate, are able to play outdoors, and have access to organized programs in the community are all more likely to become active. As noted before, parents also may be reluctant to allow their children to play outdoors due to safety concerns, especially in urban communities. Similarly, those in rural areas may be faced with a higher transportation demand when facilities and friends are several miles away. These factors are more likely to encourage children to stay immobile indoors. Furthermore, some children (called latch-key kids) have become accustomed to coming home from school to an empty home where they must stay inside without supervision, often because a parent/guardian is still at work.

Some youngsters in these kinds of circumstances may have no choice other than entertain themselves indoors.

While a variety of roadblocks discourage children from being active, many of these barriers can be overcome if a strong enough desire to be active is present. In numerous cases, however, this motivation is lacking. Thus, an underlying concern related to all these internal and external barriers is lack of motivation. Motivation can be defined by the direction and intensity of one's effort: direction referring to whether an individual seeks out or is attracted to something, and intensity referring to how much effort he/she puts forth in a particular situation or activity (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). Additionally, Lochbaum, Bixby, and Wang (2007) state that motivation toward exercise is an obvious determinant of participation in physical activity. It would appear that the majority of children and teens today are simply unmotivated (or at least under-motivated) when it comes to active living.

Motivation can be broken down into two types – extrinsic and intrinsic. With extrinsic rewards, motivation comes from receiving reinforcement through such factors as medals, trophies, T-shirts, and money. People who are intrinsically motivated focus on having fun, they want to learn skills and become competent in a particular task, and simply participate for the love of sport and exercise (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). More detail will be provided later on these two attitudes and ways of approaching activity.

Even deeper than motivation, a lack of meaning can be considered a barrier to active living. Many children have never truly discovered personal meaning in relationship to activity. Being active has never become particularly significant to them. Fortunately, physical educators have an opportunity to promote such meaning for students. By creating physical education environments that motivate students, encourage positive attitudes toward physical activity, and

provide opportunities for students to succeed, youngsters may begin to experience enjoyment in being active, a desire for continued physical activity, as well as increased and richer meanings related to activity. The importance of meaning is underlined by the following logic: Without meaning, activity is not personally significant. Without personal significance, motivation wanes. Without motivation, movement comes to a halt.

IV. Current Physical Education Programs & Assessment

A. Barriers Physical Education Courses Face

Physical Education (PE) programs have the potential to affect activity levels of youngsters. Given the steady increase in obesity in the U.S. and relatively depressing statistics on childhood activity levels, the efficacy of these current programs is uncertain. This is not surprising given the educational barriers that discourage the development of deep experiences of meaning in physical activity.

With significant limitations of space, time, and lack of equipment, traditional PE programs present less than ideal experiences for the students. PE curriculums also commonly focus on exposing students to a plethora of activities without providing a chance for any one of them to have a lasting effect. This situation may seem even more prevalent in schools where students only have PE once a week and for very short periods. Other schools may have PE more often throughout the week, but only allow students to take a PE course one of the two semesters. Teachers often have no choice but to go through units quickly in order to cover everything in the curriculum in such a short time. According to the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* [as cited by Dr. George Graham (2008)], in the 36 weeks of school in a year, if students had PE twice a week for 30 minutes each time, they would only have approximately 16.2 hours

of learning time per year assuming that 50 percent actually was active learning time. Education that is confined to 16.2 hours does not provide teachers with sufficient time to promote movement as personally meaningful.

Additionally, another barrier PE teachers may face are the students in Middle School or High School who have already formed habits and attitudes that reflect little or no interest in physical activity. Furthermore, the lack of interest in PE may also parallel the lack of interest in after school programs that encourage activity programs such as club and organized sports. PE teachers frequently are given coaching positions as well, and this too could be a barrier within PE. Rather than developing the curriculum or PE units, coaches may focus more on preparing their teams for competition. Little time and even less creative energy is spent on regular physical education students.

Despite these barriers, some students really enjoy PE and begin to develop a passion for movement during this time. Not all programs are completely ineffective, but many students fail to discover meaning in a particular activity. These obstacles may contribute to the limited effectiveness of these programs. The following section will provide further information on current PE interventions and programs in place today.

B. Teacher/Student Evaluation of Goals & Attitudes of P.E. & Physical Activity

In order to gain some first-hand information on motivation and meaning in a current PE program, I conducted interviews at a High School in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Two high school Physical Education teachers and two high school students were asked separate questions regarding what the PE curriculum encompasses, how the teachers strive to engage the students, and how the students feel toward PE and physical activity in general. A third interview was

conducted with an adult who experienced physical education earlier in her life. This woman was encouraged to look back on her days in PE to see if any interesting differences emerged between the attitudes of a middle-aged woman and those of students in tenth grade.

When asked if the PE curriculum was focused more on preventing and/or reversing obesity or encouraging students to find the joy and pleasure in being active, neither teacher hesitated. The goal they reported was to help students find joy in exercising and develop a commitment and desire to engage in activity for a lifetime. With the intention of accomplishing this goal, one teacher explained the importance of being a good role model – that is, being very excited and enthusiastic about what she is teaching. When she is excited, the students are as well. The other teacher described how her program allows for student choice between various individual and group activities throughout the semester. She underlined the importance of teaching in a creative and artistic way and providing skill practice and lead-up games in order for students to experience success and eventually achieve the goal of finding joy in physical activity.

The two students (one boy and one girl) shared a common interest in sports and PE class. However, tenth grade is still on a structured PE program where student choice is not factored into the activities offered. Not being able to choose an activity and being required to participate with peers who have no desire to be involved was frustrating for these two students. Being active is a part of their lives and is something they enjoy, but their experiences in PE were associated with being bored, unhappy, or forced to do something in which they were uninterested. The two students claimed that, for the most part, PE does help boost their motivation to want to continue being active outside of PE. The teenage girl stated that units that are fun and rewarding for her motivate her to continue with them. Her fear of heights initially held her back from rock climbing, but after scaling a couple climbing walls successfully, she now considers rock

climbing to be one of her favorite activities. Both students have discovered they enjoy more individual sports and activities; however, they also enjoy participating in them with friends. Very little, if any, time is spent being active with parents/guardians. During this tenth grade stage, peer and social approval is very important for students, so participating in popular activities by themselves or in the same activities as friends is very common. If majority of the day is spent within the school with peers and teachers, schools may play a large role in developing a positive attitude and desire for activity for children and adolescents.

Although there is only about a thirty year gap between the students and the adult, attitudes toward physical activity appear to have changed in that relatively short period of time. The adult explained that being active was just what everyone did. Her family had no televisions, computers or video games. She loved PE, went on family hiking and camping trips, had a membership to a pool every summer, and immediately went outside to play with friends as soon as she got home from school.

This was not the life enjoyed by every child in the 60's, but it was certainly more typical than current patterns. Her PE program taught the students to appreciate and understand the importance of being active, and teachers presented the activities in a fun and appealing way. Something must have been effective with this adult, because she maintains an active lifestyle today in the midst of being a working wife and mother. However, because her family and friends were also very active, early childhood experiences outside of PE could have brought about the lasting desire for activity.

The goals of the interviewed teachers sound like a good foundation for an effective PE program, and hearing the students and adult express their enjoyment of physical activity is encouraging, but there are still areas of PE seen in a negative light by these individuals. In spite

the goals described by teachers, their perception of PE does not correspond exactly with student views. The district in which the interviewees attended school appears to be striving to provide enjoyable and meaningful experiences for the students, yet many students are not achieving the goal of finding joy in movement. Teacher perception does not match student reality. Although teachers may have good intentions with the goals for their students and believe they are teaching for joy and meaning, students are not receiving it this way. More effective strategies are needed for physical education to be taught for meaning. This school district is not alone in this respect.

How then does this relate to my study? To reiterate, the aim of this study is to discover a way physical educators can make their PE programs more intrinsically enjoyable, rewarding, and meaningful for all students. Before devising an effective intervention, it is imperative to realize how schools are delivering PE today in order to discover which strategies stand in the way of meaning-related changes. The following will provide examples of additional physical education models and curricula currently in place in schools today to see how others are approaching their students in PE.

V. Responses to Obesity: Present Physical Education Models

Although many models for PE programs are used nationally, four basic styles will be highlighted in order to describe the various ways PE is delivered. These include the “fun” or Affective Curriculum, the Fitness Education Models, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, and Teaching Games for Understanding. The following will provide a brief description of each model.

The idea behind the “fun curriculum” is fairly simple. The main objective for teachers is to make sure their students enjoy themselves and have fun while in PE. As cited in the JOPERD

article “What Does ‘Fun’ Mean in Physical Education?” by Griffin, Chandler & Sariscsany (1993), Bain states that the central purpose of the program is student enjoyment of movement participation. Kretchmar (2005) includes fun in a three-part sequence relating to health and overall life stating that “if an activity is not fun, people will not persist. If people do not persist, they will not receive the health benefits that come from activity. If people are not healthy, they cannot get what they want out of life” (p. 233). In this case, fun is at the start of a cycle leading to a healthy, happy life.

No one questions the importance of fun in a PE curriculum. But people do raise questions about its sufficiency. Fun in itself is not enough in order for physical activity to be maintained throughout life. Kretchmar (2005) states that living without activity goes against the grain of our capabilities as human beings. Our bodies have been built to move, and we need to find the meaning that is available in movement. Without meaning, how can the “fun” factor last? What happens when the “fun” novelty wears off? It is possible that something more sustaining than fun must be present if students are to make activity a lifelong priority.

Another currently popular method is called Fitness Education or programs in which the *FITNESSGRAM* and/or *ACTIVITYGRAM* are used. This curriculum focuses on improving overall physical fitness by concentrating on the five components of fitness. These components include muscular strength, muscular endurance, body composition, cardiovascular endurance, and flexibility. Not only do students participate in activities that can help improve these areas of fitness, but assessments and fitness tests are also frequently administered using this model to measure each of the components. The *FITNESSGRAM* is a comprehensive fitness assessment that includes a variety of health-related physical fitness tests that are designed to measure the five areas of fitness (Meredith & Welk, 2007). The *ACTIVITYGRAM* is a detailed three-day

assessment that provides students with personal information about their general physical activity levels and helps them learn strategies to be active both in and outside of school. Based on the physical activity pyramid, the *ACTIVITYGRAM* also shows a graphical display of students' activity patterns and different types of activities they perform (Meredith & Welk, 2007).

The feedback given through both kinds of fitness assessment can allow students to analyze their individual strengths and areas that may need improvement. With so much time devoted to improving physical fitness and performing these tests, students are often able to make progress, which in turn can be very rewarding. Yet, despite potential improvements in fitness levels, personal experiences have proved that fitness testing was typically the least anticipated unit in PE. If students dread the approach of fitness testing, what makes us think they will have the desire to improve their physical fitness outside of school? Seeing a few improvements in test results may provide a bit of motivation, but is this motivation coming from receiving praise and a better grade or from a deep personal feeling of pleasure and satisfaction through participating in these activities? It is possible that very few students discover any deep form of motivation through this fitness centered approach to physical education.

Don Hellison introduces an additional approach to physical education in the second edition of his book, Teaching Responsibility through Physical Activity (2003). He entitles his method Taking Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR). Rather than focusing directly on fitness activities and motor skills, he concentrates more on the responsibility, respect, and effort that can be built through participating in such activities. Hellison's (2003) program assumes a pedagogical commitment to help youngsters with social problems overcome them and take responsibility for their lives. This approach boils down to teaching values through physical activity. TPSR is made up of five components or levels. The levels include respecting the rights

and feelings of others, participation and effort, self-direction, helping others and leadership, and incorporating these ideas and what has been learned in other areas of life (Hellison, 2003).

The TPSR approach is very different from other methods in that more emphasis is placed on values than the physical health, fitness and activity levels of the students. A PE class comprised of students who set personal goals, care for and respect others, and put forth significant effort and self-control would be expected to run rather smoothly. However, even though students may be building social values, character and responsibility through PE class, they may never develop a personal commitment to some form of physical activity. Meaning may be attached to social gains, but not to the activity itself. Yes, producing a setting that encourages personal and social responsibility can benefit the students and the teacher, but if there is no goal for students to also discover a deeper personal value or meaning for physical activity, this model may be less than fully effective. Developing a mixture of responsibility and values as well as meaning in physical activity could be even more helpful for the students.

Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) is yet another model that has been used for developing current PE programs. The model focuses on the theory, game appreciation, and understanding of tactics and decisions to be utilized and made during game play, and providing students with significant time to practice (Griffin & Butler, 2005). In turn, this deeper understanding, use of decision making, and ability to use information in a variety of situations, encourages students to construct meaning in games education. The underlying educational philosophy of constructivism is also evident in this model. This theory suggests that comprehension and meaning be gradually fostered using experiences and circumstances that encourage students to become willing and able to learn. This method allows for individual student discovery and less direct teacher instruction.

Although the TGfU model is one that is beginning to direct more attention toward discovering meaning within activity, it is not clear that an understanding of games and game strategies and principles is enough to promote personal meaning and significance in each student. A student may very well understand and be able to execute the various tactics and skills involved in the game of volleyball, but still not find this personally meaningful. TGfU promotes meaning, but it may not be the right kind of significance.

Physical education teachers are aware of the severity of the obesity issue in America, and as a result, new curriculum models have been created and incorporated into current PE programs. Yet, we do not have clear evidence that these models are making a significant difference in the lives of our students. Meaning-focused and affective qualities of physical activity are largely missing from this literature, as well as from the strategies being employed to address the obesity problems. Youngsters are now, more than ever, suffering from being overweight. A program that motivates only a few kids should not be regarded as adequate. We need a deeper and more powerful intervention in order to influence a greater number of students. Stronger methods of intervention are needed in order to turn these young people on to a life of movement.

VI. A Move toward an Intrinsically Motivated Ground to P.E.

A. Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Living – A Key to a Holistic Educational Approach

In order to establish a more effective approach, an understanding must be gained of the internal drives and motivations students possess. We categorize these as intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivation comes from external rewards individuals receive through positive and negative reinforcement rather than being internally driven (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). This form of motivation may come from awards such as trophies and money or even less

tangible things like praise from a teacher. Extrinsic motivators may also be goals individuals have accomplished such as completing a marathon or meeting a target body weight. The “activity is important because of a valued outcome rather than interest in the activity solely for itself” (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p. 139). For example, one may train diligently for the achieved outcome of completing a marathon, or an exerciser may work out to stay in shape in order to impress someone of the opposite sex. These individuals are not participating because of a sheer pleasure and satisfaction in the activity. There is an alternative, exterior motive for engaging in them. Therefore, engaging in activity for these reasons may feel a lot more like work than fun and enjoyment. People endure training and working out in order to achieve a desired result, much like working in order to receive a paycheck.

On the other hand, those who are intrinsically motivated in relation to physical activity “strive inwardly to be competent and self-determining in their quest to master the task at hand” (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p. 139). Individuals engage in activity for the pleasure and satisfaction they experience while learning, understanding, or mastering task, or when experiencing desirable sensations such as excitement or aesthetic pleasure. However, this motivation can be differentiated even further into a lower level of intrinsic satisfaction (fun) and a higher order attachment to activity (meaning). We can participate in a particular activity simply because we enjoy how we feel in the process, yet this enjoyment and novelty may eventually wear off to the point of stimulating no further participation. Conversely, some individuals are able to not only take part in an activity they deem pleasurable, but find a true connection, value, and personal meaning in the activity. This type of intrinsic motivation is not temporary, but can last a lifetime. The chosen sport or activity becomes a part of one’s identity, personal development, and unique life story rather than something an individual does occasionally for

mere recreation or amusement. This form of deep intrinsic meaning is the backbone of teaching physical education for meaning. The difference between the two forms of intrinsic motivation is captured by the following two reports. The person with the lesser level of intrinsic motivation reports, "I enjoy riding a bike." The person for whom biking has become a personally meaningful activity states, "I *am* a biker."

A distinct difference can be seen in these two forms of motivation, and in fact, individuals can experience both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the same time. However, deCharms' research (as cited in Weinberg & Gould, 2007) has revealed that the more extrinsically motivated an individual is, the less likely it will be for the person to be intrinsically motivated. When external outcomes are more prevalent, emphasis is placed on achieving these rewards rather than being inwardly driven. Thus, when rewards are removed, the desire to remain active is often lost since little participation is due to intrinsic motivation. It is for this reason that intrinsic motivation must be emphasized when targeting the youngsters in physical education classes.

Extrinsic and intrinsic motives can transcend the realms of physical activity and physical education and can relate also to individuals' overall attitude toward themselves and life in general. How people conduct their lives is often based on end values, the things they genuinely want to experience. These values help people build their character, their identity, and develop a way of thinking about themselves and their lives. Kretchmar (2005) argues that intrinsic values count more than extrinsic ones, and intrinsically valuable experiences involving lasting satisfaction count more than those that lack it. Additionally, experiences that promote a meaningful existence count more than those that are merely pleasurable but are less connected with a person's life (Kretchmar, 2005).

If this is correct, significance is not found solely in discovering intrinsic motivation and fun physical activity, but also in connecting activity experiences with one's life. There is something to be said for those who are happy in their own skin and have developed a joy not just in exercise, but an overall joy of living. As Kretchmar (2005) stated, intrinsic values and experiences count more than the extrinsic ones. Thus, in order for a physical education program to be most effective and lasting for the students, emphasis must be placed on this aspect of life and activity. The following model is a step toward a more intrinsically grounded approach to physical education.

B. The Sport Education Model – A Curriculum Aimed at Personal Meaning

The Sport Education (SE) model was created by Daryl Siedentop in the 1980s in response to his frustration with how sport activities were currently being taught in physical education (Siedentop, Hastie, & van der Mars, 2004). PE classes consisted of short units of skill drills followed by games that were poorly played. As a result, more-skilled students dominated play and many students were left frustrated, bored, or even embarrassed. Seidentop, along with his doctoral students, conducted a number of research studies to better understand effective teaching in PE (Siedentop et. al., 2004). Most programs used these short units, and although classes were often very well organized and students stayed on task, he noticed an absence of real excitement among the students. Thus, Siedentop (2004) created SE in order “to help all students be successful, enthused, and committed to doing better for themselves and their team” (p. 2). He aimed to develop a physical education model that would produce authentic sport experiences for students, was developmentally appropriate, and provided opportunities for all students to participate equally. With this in mind, he broke the model into six categories which each

extended learning unit would address. These categories include seasons, affiliation within the team, formal competition, record keeping, festivity, and a culminating event (Siedentop et. al., 2004).

The idea of sport in Sport Education does not include only mainstreamed sports such as basketball and softball for example. This model recognizes all playful competitions whose outcomes are determined by strategies, physical skill, and chance (Siedentop et. al., 2004). Activities such as weightlifting, dance, orienteering, and Frisbee have all been used in a SE model as well. These activities are not typically found in most PE programs. This is due, in part, to the fact that the United States has placed a narrow definition on the term *sport*. Throughout most of the world, *sport* includes a much wider range of physical activities, and this gives SE an important degree of flexibility. This model can be adjusted to include a variety of activities that are popular within a community, are interesting for local students, and accommodate local equipment and facility resources.

Along with the development of this new way of thinking came Sport Education goals and objectives. The overall goal is “to educate students to be players in the fullest sense and to help them develop as competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspersons” (Siedentop et. al., 2004, p. 7). The competency involves having adequate skills, understanding and being able to execute strategies and tactics during appropriate situations, and being comfortable and confident performing in a variety of physical activities. One who is literate understands the foundations of rules, rituals, and traditions in sports and activities, and as a result, can distinguish between good and bad practices whether he or she is a participant, spectator, or fan (Siedentop et. al., 2004). Lastly, enthusiastic sportspersons have discovered value through the experiences and enjoyment they have had through participation. These individuals want to continue to actively participate

and give back to a particular sport or activity so following generations can also experience these joys and benefits (Siedentop et. al., 2004). Additionally, Siedentop (2004) believes long-term goals are able to be met through consistent achievement of more short-term objectives.

Therefore, objectives were put in place for each season of Sport Education such as developing sport-specific techniques and fitness, participating at a developmentally appropriate level, and providing responsible leadership. Seasons also focus on appreciating principles that give sports their meaning, working effectively within a group, making reasoned decisions, and becoming involved in sport after and outside of school.

One particularly noticeable difference between SE and a traditional physical education curriculum lie in the amount of time spent on each unit. SE emphasizes providing a sufficient amount of time for students to really develop an understanding of the activity and improve throughout the season. The length of these seasons can vary based on how frequently the students have Physical Education, but seasons may last for seven to ten weeks rather than the standard two week units found in traditional curriculums. The sport or activity chosen for the seasons may depend on the actual season in which the unit is taking place, student interest, available equipment and resources, and so on. Within these longer seasons, teams are formed within the class, and each individual is assigned a role within the team. Based on the type of season or sport, roles may include such roles as coach, manager, referee, scorekeeper, and choreographer (Siedentop et. al., 2004). Students may change roles throughout the season, thereby providing an opportunity for everyone to develop a greater understanding of all aspects of the sport or activity. Along with providing a festive atmosphere, the seasons are comprised by various technical practice opportunities as well as formal competitions in preparation for the culminating event. Sport Education encourages student involvement and responsibility as they

take on various roles and leadership positions. Following a season of hard work and dedication to their team, the culminating event such as a World Series, team gymnastics competition, or a round-robin softball tournament, is a very festive way to celebrate the successes of all the students and teams (Siedentop et. al., 2004).

Siedentop has introduced a new way of thinking about physical education curriculums. While traditional models largely focus on students having a good time, Siedentop (2004) makes the point that not every day in the Sport Education curriculum will be fun. However, the overall season is built up to be very important, rewarding, and meaningful for each and every student. Through the ups and downs, a long-term, intrinsic satisfaction is developed during the SE seasons in contrast to short-lived units of traditional programs that are often forgotten with time. This idea is similar to learning to ride a bike. Every time we practice will not be fun and painless, yet we continue to persist despite the falls and scrapes on our knees. This persistence and determination over time finally leads to accomplishment, and this success provides us with the motivation and desire to continue riding. Various arenas of life that define us, including biking, are considered meaningful and have been patiently cultivated over time. The same goes for units in physical education. Sport Education aims to lead students toward a life-long appreciation, understanding, and participation in regards to sport and activities by slowly and patiently cultivating a student-sport relationship.

C. Present P.E. Models vs. the Sport Education Model

As previously discussed, deep intrinsic motivation establishes a foundation for successful physical education programs, those in which the main goal is for students to find meaning within physical activity and desire to continue in an active lifestyle. The four current PE models detailed

above appear to have differing ulterior motives in contrast to this deep intrinsic motivation toward physical activity. Although the intrinsic side of movement is not completely ignored, extrinsic factors seem to be at the forefront. The Fitness Education Model focuses heavily on students improving health-related levels of fitness and fitness tests scores, and TPSR aims toward students developing more responsibility and character through activity. Likewise, the fun curricula attempt to simply bring about enjoyment on a day to day basis, while TGfU concentrates on providing opportunities for students to really grasp the logistics and tactics behind games. These are fine goals if they do not constitute the entire focus of the curriculum model. And, to be sure, instructors who employ these models hope to influence students in a way that encourages them to live an active lifestyle outside of school as well. However, the quality and strength of the intrinsic motivation developed does not seem to be sufficient.

Alternately, Sport Education makes a move in the right direction by providing long-term, intrinsically satisfying experiences in PE. Within Sport Education, students develop a bond through being affiliated with a team and a greater understanding of all aspects of the particular sport or activity. Additionally, long seasons offer opportunities to improve skill level and take on various roles, and the festivity throughout the season and in response to the culminating event helps build an exciting and meaningful environment. Effort and hard work are not avoided. Building up to a more rewarding and memorable event or experience takes time, and in turn, the memory and impact on the students is also more likely to remain a part of them following the conclusion of the season.

VII. Teaching toward Having an “Experience”

A. Defining an “Experience”

Reminiscing on past experiences is something we often do, whether the experience involves a memorable vacation, eating a bowl of ice cream, or graduating from college. Negative experiences may also be recalled such as having a car accident or losing a loved one. However, John Dewey, an American pragmatist and philosopher of education, has provided an alternative view toward an experience. In Art as Experience (1934), Dewey provides a further explanation of what makes something *an* experience in contrast to simply experiencing things...as indeed we do everyday. Dewey states that “things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into *an* experience” (1934, p. 36). Rather than being distracted, unmotivated, and unwilling to finish what has been started, *an* experience occurs when the matter experienced runs its entire course to fulfillment. Such an experience is complete and is integrated yet differentiated from other experiences. The experience “carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience” (Dewey, 1934, p. 37). The experience is often considered an unusual or unique adventure, involves a long-term goal being accomplished, and is meaningful and memorable for the individual.

Dewey also reveals ideas of unity, aesthetic quality, and meaning in regards to these experiences. He states that “every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives” (Dewey, 1934, p. 45). This interaction forms the harmony and unity that characterizes an experience. The unity present within an experience is represented by a single quality that encompasses the entire experience despite the presence of other essential parts. However, an experience does not establish unity unless an aesthetic or

artistic quality is present. There is an element of passion in aesthetic perception where one will continue to put forth effort until he can deem an experience as good (Dewey, 1934).

In a commentary on Dewey's book, Wahl (2004) states that an attribution of meaning to an experience is what produces an aesthetic and/or artistic quality. However, with a lack of time for the interaction to take place and grow, meaning and an aesthetic quality will not materialize (Dewey, 1934). An experience requires a process, the development of unity through completion of the process, and an emotional response (Wahl, 2004). Once a relationship is formed, discovering meaning over time may create an experience where aesthetic quality and unity are integrated.

There is a clear distinction between *an* experience and, in Dewey's words, merely experiencing things (1934). An experience is goal-oriented and orderly, where merely experiencing things involves no real goal or recognizable process to achieve the goal (Wahl, 2004). There is also no particular order or beginning and end to experiencing things. However, Wahl (2004) declares that every experience can have an artistic, creative, and/or aesthetic quality as long as one can attribute meaning to the experience. Without meaning, an event or occurrence is not considered a true experience.

B. What Leads to or Produces an Experience?

As in Sport Education, the focus for "having an experience" is placed more on long-term goals and satisfaction rather than on the here and now. Regarding experiences within physical activity, a long-term goal or event is set in place prior to beginning the adventure. Students are concerned with more than just immediate results that arise through the course of the experience. Dewey (1934) states that at each point along the journey one must "sum up what has gone before

as a whole and with reference to a whole to come” (p. 58). He suggests reflecting on what has been achieved thus far, but also keeping the end in sight and continuing to look at the big picture of the experience. Students need to keep the entire adventure in perspective and remain focused on the goal. Not every step along the way en route to this goal will be enjoyable and easy to negotiate, yet the overall satisfaction and meaning produced at the conclusion of the adventure makes every step along the way worthwhile.

Having an experience in relation to some form of physical activity is unlike the idea of love at first sight. Although two people may be immediately attracted to one another, love is unveiled after a great deal of time is spent learning about one another, making memories together, and discovering one another as individuals and as a couple. This too is often how an experience is revealed in physical activity. One may enjoy an occasional jog on a nice spring morning, but when this person embarks on the journey toward running a full marathon and then actually accomplishes it, an “experience” in the Deweyian sense is the result. The journey of training for a marathon often produces pain, exhaustion, and second thoughts about carrying through with the challenge. Yet the outcome is such an amazing and rewarding accomplishment, it will not be forgotten. Similarly, a couple in love may also encounter bumps in the road of their relationship that are not enjoyable at the time. Yet these situations may make the relationship stronger and provide insight on how to deal with similar incidences in the future. Individuals, such as the marathon runner, discover that a form of activity is part of their identity rather than merely something in which they participate. Instead of stating he or she goes for a run every now and then, this person can now say, “I am a runner.”

C. A Personal Example of an Experience in Physical Activity

A personal example of an experience comes to mind, one that took place in my 11th grade year of high school. After growing out of my chubby toddler years, I developed into a very long and lean child and teen that enjoyed being active, yet, to say the least, did not possess a great deal of coordination and strength. Because I spent much of my time in high school playing a part in the musical realm of performing arts, choruses and vocal ensembles, and dance, little time was left for improving these other areas. As I progressed through high school, I became more interested in the capabilities and mechanics of the human body. Knowing that I tend to enjoy more individualized sports and activities, I chose to register for the 11th and 12th grade Fitness and Weight Training course, rather than the traditional PE class. This course laid a firm foundation for the active person I am today.

I spent one class period every day for an entire semester in this, and in turn, learned proper techniques of lifting, the components of physical fitness and how they are measured, how to use a variety of equipment, and how to lift and exercise based on desired results. I also performed fitness testing and used heart monitors during the course in order to keep track of my progress throughout the semester. Although the course was hard work, I thoroughly enjoyed pushing myself to levels I was unaware I could achieve, meeting goals I set for myself, and seeing my work pay off through my progress. I worked hard, but I became more aware of the life-enhancing benefits this hard work yielded. While other students were participating in a two-week table tennis unit and other short-term activities, I was running, lifting, or biking in the weight room week after week, and I loved it. Each time I was able to run a little further, lift a little heavier weight, and perform a few more repetitions, I became even more motivated. However, I

was not encouraged merely by the satisfaction of seeing myself improve, I was really enjoying myself in the process.

The following year, I registered for Fitness and Weight Training once again, and had another great semester of PE. Many of my peers enjoyed the idea of simply “playing” in PE class and not taking the course very seriously. Although I have always enjoyed being active even prior to my experience in Fitness and Weight Training, these two semesters placed a much greater value on my overall personal health and fitness. My long-term goal is a lifetime of strength and wellness, so I believe my experience is still continuing. However, 11th grade is where I feel my journey really began. To this day, I remain very active, not only for the health benefits I receive, but because I truly do enjoy living an active lifestyle. And as a future physical and health educator, my passion is to help others discover these personal experiences that will consequently encourage them to continue in a lifestyle of physical activity and health consciousness as well.

An additional example comes from a PE course in West Virginia led by Bane McCracken, a highly honored and recognized physical educator. In response to many recent critiques aimed at the irrelevance of secondary physical education, Bane McCracken (1997 NASPE Secondary Teacher of the Year) provides an example of a physical education teacher who has helped his students “have an experience” in their environment and community in mountainous Ona, West Virginia (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999). McCracken’s hope of connecting curriculum with unique community activities and student interest has been a success and has progressed into “a nationally recognized outdoor recreation class that seems to be relevant to the lives of his students” (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999, p. 35).

The students at Cabell Midland High School are able to choose between five different semester-long elective courses after having a previous “Introduction to Physical Education”

course. McCracken's outdoor recreation is one of these electives offered in the high school. The course began during one of McCracken's softball lessons. As a way to minimize waiting time, he brought two of his own mountain bikes to school so students could ride around the field rather than wait for their turn at bat. The enjoyment these students experienced prompted McCracken to take advantage of the West Virginia environment and develop a course based solely on those outdoor activities accessible within their community. McCracken summarized his thinking as follows: "In our backyard we have the possibility of engaging in some of the finest outdoor recreational opportunities in the country. It would be crazy not to teach our students how to take advantage of all of these opportunities" (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999, p. 35). The course includes a variety of activities such as mountain biking, white water rafting, downhill skiing, and fly fishing. Students have also been introduced to backpacking, orienteering, and wilderness survival (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999).

Pennington & Krouscas (1999) also shared insight from students who were part of McCracken's outdoor recreation class. The students explain that the course does not have the same year-to-year schedule that football, basketball, and other team sports usually have in PE. Instead, outdoor recreation provides opportunities to learn new things, explore the outdoors, and develop a real interest in unique activities within their community. Students who once had very little interest in adventure activities, now go skiing and biking on weekends, have taken up new adventurous hobbies, and have redefined who they are (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999).

Participation in an activity outside of school is cultivated by working hard over time, recognizing individual progress, and keeping a long term goal in mind. During a mountain biking unit, students are aware of the bike race they are going to experience at the conclusion of the unit, yet they continued to persevere. McCracken instilled in the students the importance of

becoming physically fit, and they persisted in spite of the pain. Many stated the class was difficult and painful at first. However, after pushing through the aches and pain, they were able to accomplish more and have fun in the process.

Not only did students improve physically, McCracken made sure they thoroughly had the knowledge background behind the activity as well. Although the majority of the student reflections state how strict McCracken was, they explained his good intentions and were appreciative of the knowledge they gained through the worksheets and readings he assigned. One young lady who claimed McCracken to be very demanding also declared that, “he’s probably about the best teacher that I’ve had” (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999, p. 39). To conclude the student interviews, one student stated that outdoor recreation is not PE. Rather, “PE is where you play basketball and do stuff you have done for years and do not like. In this class you get to learn new stuff that is fun and that you can do after school” (Pennington & Krouscas, 1999, p. 39). McCracken has succeeded in making a PE curriculum relevant to the community and environment students are exposed to, as well as providing a semester-long opportunity to more thoroughly develop and experience meaning, success, and accomplishment through unique activities. Both McCracken’s students and I learned what it is like, in Dewey’s terms, to “have an experience.”

D. Growing Movement Playgrounds

Before explaining what is meant by movement playgrounds, an understanding of the nature of play itself must first be gained. Kretchmar (2005) provided an in-depth analysis of the nature of play, different forms of play, and how players can grow and develop movement playgrounds. Children often come to mind when hearing the word “play,” and rightfully so.

Kretchmar (2005) explains that play is not the consequence of fear, duty, or even courageous self-sacrifice, but “it is what those who have a light and adventuresome heart *want* to do” (p. 147). Although children are not the only people who need and want to play, they portray this kind of adventuresome spirit that is required in order for play to take over one’s life (Kretchmar, 2005). Play can provide the drive and motivation behind an active lifestyle. However, many individuals seem to lose this sense of play as they age. Or better said, the quality of their play declines. Whether an experience will yield meaning or not is influenced by the quality of play involved.

Play can range from being weak, shallow, and superficial to that which is more personal and deep. Shallow play may be intrinsically motivated and something that is considered fun and enjoyable, yet it acts as a brief form of entertainment or distraction without producing lasting effects. This form of play may generate a small amount of fun during activity, but does not inspire us, engage our imagination, or yield a lasting motivation. Alternatively, deep play is personal and identity changing (Kretchmar, 2005). Rather than participating in an activity that produces little enjoyment, those who experience deep play have discovered a more profound sense of meaning within the activity, and it is now a part of who they are. Their identity has changed (Kretchmar, 2005). These individuals long to play and have developed an intimate relationship with their particular movement practice.

One may wonder how this deep play transpires and how playgrounds are formed. Similar to having an experience, playgrounds are not often formed immediately as a product of love-at-first-sight. This section was titled “Growing Movement Playgrounds” because that is exactly how personal playgrounds emerge. If one plans to take the approach of wandering about in hopes of finding a playground with which they will immediately fall in love, they may end up

searching for a tremendous amount of time and finding no such thing. Rich play relationships must be given time to develop. Such playgrounds must patiently be grown rather than found (Kretchmar, 2005). In fact, during the first encounter with a potential playground the participant may view it unattractive, intimidating, and not particularly enjoyable.

Those who become players in a particular playground can overcome a possible unappealing activity or environment by first taking small steps, ideally with someone acting as their guide who is already familiar and comfortable with the playground (Kretchmar, 2005). As these learners begin to acquire knowledge and skills, overcome fears, and challenge themselves to step out of their comfort zones, they gradually begin to experience a playground that personally attracts and reflects the individual. As the player changes in the course of growing a playground, the playground may change as well. The once intimidating environment has now become a part of the player in a way that life without it becomes unimaginable (Kretchmar, 2005). Individuals can become players within a playground by becoming more skilled in the particular playground domain, becoming motivated to participate in the specific area of play, and valuing the achievements and meaning produced through the playground. As players persist in their journey, alterations in the playground can continue to occur as goals are met, as difficult becomes easy, and as more challenges present themselves. Players can develop even deeper play and can continue to add new and motivating chapters to their story (Kretchmar, 2005).

E. Leading Students to Experiences in PE

Growing playgrounds and promoting meaning are at the heart of my PE curriculum, however, this new focus does not require that all other pedagogical strategies be abandoned. Students often respond well to physical educators who allow student choice and motivate

students by creating learning environments in which the tasks and activities are success-oriented, intrinsically motivating, and developmentally appropriate (Graham, 2008). Components of the traditional PE curriculum may also play a role in the new curriculum. A time and place may still remain for explanations about health and movement as well as the introduction to a smorgasbord of different activities in PE. Students also may benefit from a curriculum that promotes the physical fitness components, recognition and understanding of proper skills and techniques, and the participation in activities relative to the surrounding community and environment. Although these strategies can be beneficial and yield enjoyment for students, my curriculum centers around different priorities, ones that do not end or stop here, but take the subjective part more seriously.

The emphasis in the priorities of the new curriculum shift from mere fun (shallow play) to discovering a genuinely personal meaning (deep play). This method goes beyond instruction, emphasizes high demand, and provides curricular opportunities that increase chances for students to “have an experience.” “Experiences” in relation to physical activity are crucial if there is to be a lasting impact on the individual. Therefore, many encounters with the new environment and activity must be provided in order for “experiences” to occur and meaning to develop. Over time, students will begin to recognize the development and growth of personal and meaningful playgrounds and will desire to take up residence there and remain a part of the playground.

A playground is ultimately formed within and by an individual through persistence and determination. A physical educator, however, can make the student’s PE experience more lasting and memorable by providing constant encouragement, support, and a positive attitude. Quality physical educators have the tools to help students cultivate meaning and significance behind physical activity, but if and how they utilize these tools can determine the level of value students find in these activities. Physical educators who are dedicated and passionate about their career

and their students have the opportunity to make an impact on how their students view physical activity for the rest of their lives. Based on theory and a holistic approach, as well as the inactivity levels and unhealthy situations in many lives of children today, this holistic and meaning-centered curriculum is worth trying.

VIII. Conclusion

Childhood obesity in the United States has become a widespread epidemic. Obesity among children has tripled in the last two decades (Graham et. al., 2007), and according to Katz (as cited in Graham et. al., 2007), the children in our schools today are predicted to be the first generation *not* to outlive their parents. With today's youth being considered the most inactive generation in history, physical educators can play an important role in the treatment and prevention of obesity in children by giving them the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to become lifetime movers (Graham et. al., 2007).

First, attitudes toward obesity must change. Rather than focusing entirely on the current scales, tests and measuring methods used to define obesity, the concentration should center more around human function, mobility and unique factors and dynamics that define each individual. One size does not fit all regarding obesity measures. Each individual has different genetics, abilities and attitudes – all of which join together to help determine in what they will participate, seek out and enjoy. Defining obesity should go beyond the standard methods and consider other determinants such as the capabilities and lifestyles each individual possesses and lives.

Secondly, curricular options need to be expanded. Aiming directly at “fixing” obesity when devising a PE curriculum is not a recipe for success. Obesity is not only a health issue, but an emotional, social, and psychological issue as well (Graham et. al., 2007). In order for change

to occur, the proposed solution must take all aspects of the problem into account – hence, a holistic approach. Instead of planning a curriculum that specifically aims at weight reduction, physical educators should allow weight loss to be the byproduct of a program in which students build personal playgrounds. The goal of physical education should be for students to become knowledgeable, skillful and confident in their abilities during their journey of discovering meaning, value, and identity within a particular domain of physical activity. This goal will not be met if one participates in activity with the exclusive mindset of losing weight. The activity will only seem like a chore. Conversely, if one discovers deep meaning within an activity and truly loves to move, the weight loss will take care of itself.

This way of thinking seems paradoxical in relation to current physical education programs and methods designed to produce weight loss. However, according to the plethora of obesity findings today, the United States is in more of an obesity crisis now than ever. As the epidemic continues to worsen, this raises serious questions about the current methods being implemented. A new approach is needed if this deadly trend is to be reversed. Physical educators have an opportunity to make an impact on the nation's children, but people of any age have the ability to discover personal value and a passion for some form of physical activity. They just need to allow time to take its course and give the playground the chance to grow.

References

- (2005). How is obesity measured? *Health-cares.net*. Retrieved August 11, 2009, from <http://mens-health.health-cares.net/obesity-measurement.php>
- (2009). Health weight – it's not a diet it's a lifestyle! *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved August 24, 2009, from http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/index.html
- (2009). Childhood overweight and obesity. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*. Retrieved February 26, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov>
- Byers, T. & Sedjo, R. L. (2007). Public health responses to the obesity epidemic: Too soon or too late? *The American Society for Nutrition*, 137, 488-492. Retrieved February 10, 2009, from Google Scholar. <http://jn.nutrition.org/cgi/content/full/137/2/488>
- Dawson, K.A., Schneider, M.A., Fletcher, P.C., & Bryden, P.J. (2007). Examining gender differences in the health behaviors of Canadian university students. *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 127(1), 38-44. Retrieved March 7, 2008, from ProQuest Direct database.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Evans, W.D., Finkelstein, E.A., Kamerow, D.B., & Renaud, J.M. (2005). Public perceptions of childhood obesity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28(1), 26-32. Retrieved February 8, 2009, from Google Scholar. <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
- Faulkner, K. *Attitudes toward obesity*. Retrieved April 22, 2009, from <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/psychology/research/psy302/spring96/KevinFaulkner.html>

- Graham, G. (2008). *Teaching children physical education: Becoming a master teacher, 3rd Edition*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Graham, G., Holt/Hale, S.A. & Parker, M. (2007). *Children moving: A reflective approach to teaching physical education, 7th Edition*. New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Griffin, L., Chandler, T. & Sariscsany, M. (1993). What does 'fun' mean in physical education? *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 64(7), 63-66.
- Hellison, D. (2003). *Teaching responsibility through physical activity, 2nd Edition*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Kretchmar, R. (2005). *Practical philosophy of sport and physical activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Kobayashi, F. (2007). Assessing body types, diet, exercise, and sedentary behavior of American and Japanese college students. *Nutrition and Food Sciences*, 37, 329-336. Retrieved March 11, 2008, from ProQuest Direct database.
- Lochbaum, M.R., Bixby, W.R., & Wang, C.K.J. (2007). Achievement goal profiles for self-report physical activity participation: Differences in personality. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30, 471-490. Retrieved January 24, 2008, from ProQuest Direct database.
- McCracken, B. (2001). *It's not just gym anymore: Teaching secondary school students how to be active for life*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Melville, S. (2009). Implications of the physical educator's broadened wellness role. *JOPERD*, 80(2), 48-55.
- Meredith, M.D., & Welk, G.J. (2007). *FITNESSGRAM/ACTIVITYGRAM: Test Administration Manual, 4th Edition*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

- NASPE (2005). *Physical education for lifelong fitness: The physical best teacher's guide*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Obesity. (2009). In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/obesity>
- Pennington, T.R. & Krouscas, Jr., J.A. (1999). Connecting secondary physical education with the lives of students. *JOPERD*, 70(1), 34-39.
- Reilly, J.J. (2006). Obesity in childhood and adolescence: Evidence based clinical and public health perspectives. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 82, 429-437. Retrieved February 8, 2009 from Google Scholar. <http://pmj.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/82/969/429>
- Segrave, K. (1944). *Obesity in America 1850-1939: A history of social attitudes and treatment*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Sibbald, B. (2002). Obesity may soon be leading cause of preventable death in US. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 166(5), Retrieved March 31, 2009, from <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=99423>
- Siedentop, D., Hastie, P.A., & van der Mars, H. (2004). *Complete guide to sport education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Storlie, J., & Jordan, H.A. (1984). *Nutrition and exercise in obesity management*. Jamaica, NY: Spectrum Publications, Inc.
- Veugelers, P.J., & Fitzgerald, A.L. (2005). Effectiveness of school programs in preventing childhood obesity: A multilevel comparison. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(3), 432-435. Retrieved February 8, 2009, from Google Scholar. <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/95/3/432>

Wadden, T.A., & VanItallie, T.B. (1992). *Treatment of the seriously obese patient*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Wahl, Shane. (2004). *Dewey and experience as an aesthetic quality*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from <http://www.froyd.net/philosophy/phil026.htm>

Weinberg, R.S., & Gould, D. (2007). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Schreyer Honors College
Academic Vita of Lindsey A. Heck

Name: Lindsey Anne Heck

Address: 601 Maple St., East Earl, PA 17519

E-Mail ID: lah5079

Education Major: Kinesiology

Honors: Kinesiology

Thesis Title: "Confronting Obesity in Youth: A Holistic Approach to Physical Educators"

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. R. Scott Kretchmar

Work Experience

Date: June 2009 – August 2009

Title: Summer Day Camp Counselor

Description: Supervised and participated in field trips, daily activities (games, crafts, trips to the public pool and library, etc.), and first aid treatment when needed.

Institution/Company (including location): YMCA of Reading & Berks Co.

Supervisor's Name: Rick Wagner

Date: June 2006 – April 2009

Title: Customer Service Representative (Teller)

Description: Process customer requests (check cashing, deposits, bond purchase/redemption, etc.), handle large sums of money daily, perform bank opening/closing procedures, answer telephones, etc.

Institution/Company (including location): Susquehanna Bancshares, Inc.

Supervisor's Name: Jennifer Ross

Grants Received:

Pheaa Grant (Academic Year 2006-07)

Awards:

Pyle Leslie & Anna Memorial Scholarship (Academic Years 2006-07, 2007-08)

The President's Freshman Award (4.0 GPA First Semester)

Health Advocates Alliance Scholarship (Academic Year 2009-10)

Richard Albanus Smith Scholarship (Academic Year 2009-10)

Professional Memberships:

AAHPERD Member

Publications:

Will be featured in the Summer 2010 edition of the Health & Human Development Alumni Magazine regarding my student teaching experience.

Community Service Involvement:

Assistant Coach for Girls on the Run of Lancaster
Hempfield High School MiniThon Volunteer
Vacation Bible School Leader
Philadelphia Homeless Shelter Volunteer
Mission Trips to Chicago, IL and Juarez, Mexico

Language Proficiency: English