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Runner

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Teacher–Educational Assistant Collaboration: A Two-Way Street

Nurturing Health and Harmony: Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Canadian Physical and Health Education

Purposeful Practice: Physical Education for Every*body*

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Supporting the Well-Being of School Communities

Contents

Editor's Message

Lisa M Taylor

Thank you for picking up the 55th volume of the *Runner*. My name is Lisa Taylor, and I am the editor of the *Runner: The Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council* of the Alberta Teachers' Association. After spending nine years with the Calgary Board of Education as a physical and health education specialist in K–12 schools, I transitioned to the postsecondary setting, where I am fortunate to teach and learn with the leaders and teachers of tomorrow.

While reading the following articles, I encourage you to (re)consider how physical and health education involves a systems approach. It involves children, teachers, educational assistants, school leaders, curriculum, and the list goes on. Perhaps another way of describing this work is to rework the old adage, *it takes a village to raise a child*, to *it takes a village to support and educate a child*. However, while the focus of this statement is arguably on the child, it is also imperative to recognize the wellness of all those players that make up the village.

The articles within this volume of the *Runner* include consideration for many of the different individuals and nuances involved in this important work. For example, you will find an article that acknowledges the importance of supporting and mentoring preservice teachers to become great inservice teachers. You will also find an article that identifies the opportunities for developing strong relationships with educational assistants. Furthermore, you will find an article that focuses on the wellness of the teacher.

Additionally, in this volume of the *Runner*, you will find articles that focus on the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion in physical and health education. In the current political climate of Alberta, where the autonomy of transgender youth has been compromised, dedicating time to exploring equity, diversity and inclusion is (and continues to be) paramount. In this context, it is important to support the wellness of our learners and all those throughout the education system.

I hope you enjoy reading these articles as much as I have enjoyed putting them together. I want to express my gratitude to the authors of these articles. Thank you for taking the time to write these pieces, for your dedication throughout the editing process and for sharing your expertise with our physical and health education community.

For everyone reading, you all have an important role to play in the content that is published in the *Runner*! Whether you are a postsecondary student, a teacher, a community partner, a leader or an academic, if you have something to say that can support physical and health education teachers, we want to hear from you! Please connect with me at hpecrunnereditor@gmail.com.

Wishing you well,

Lisa

President's Message

Jodi Harding-Kuriger

Dear HPEC readers,

I hope this message finds you well. As we navigate through the challenges and triumphs of our time, I am delighted to connect with you through the pages of the *Runner*. I am delighted to extend my sincere gratitude to Lisa Taylor, the editor of the *Runner*. This publication continues to be a valuable resource for our community, providing insightful perspectives and fostering a collaborative approach to physical and health education.

The articles within this volume exemplify the intricate web of relationships and systems that contribute to the holistic development of our students. Lisa's call to (re)consider physical and health education as a village effort resonates deeply, emphasizing the interconnected roles of students, teachers, families, educational assistants, school leaders and the broader curriculum.

To the authors, your contributions are invaluable in enriching our physical and health education community. Your commitment to advancing the field inspires positive change in classrooms and beyond, aligning seamlessly with our collective goals.

To all readers, I encourage you to actively engage with the content of the *Runner* and consider how you, too, can contribute to the ongoing dialogue. Your individual and collective perspectives are vital in shaping the discourse around physical and health education.

Finally, it's a great honour to have served as the president of HPEC for the past four years. I've truly enjoyed working with such a dedicated and talented team, and I'm grateful for the support and collaboration of all members. I am confident that HPEC will continue to thrive and achieve even greater success in the future and encourage you to join the HPEC executive team.

Thank you for the trust you placed in me and for the dedication you've shown to HPEC. It has been a privilege to work alongside such an exceptional group of individuals.

Enjoy the read,

Jodi

Student Teachers in Secondary Physical Education—Consider Taking One On!

Erin Melrose

Taking on a student teacher can seem like a daunting task. I know that, for me, the idea of it brought up a lot of questions: *have I been teaching long enough? Do I have time? Will it impact the quality of teaching given to my students? I really like my class; do I want to give up control?* These thoughts are valid, but upon reflection, I started to change my thought process. I remembered how grateful I was during my practicums for the cooperating teachers that I got to work with. They trusted my instincts and provided thoughtful feedback that really helped me improve as a young teacher. Every year, when the email comes out looking for placements for student teachers, I am reminded of my appreciation for those teachers and feel like I want to pay that forward to a new up-and-coming teacher. In this article, I touch on a few strategies to support a student teacher in secondary physical education, including transferring control, making time to communicate and reflect, giving meaningful feedback and modeling behaviour.

Transferring Control

It is hard to give up control of your classroom to someone who is still learning and building their confidence as a teacher. This is something that I continue to work on each time I take on a student teacher, but I know it is crucial to create an environment that encourages them to try, fail, succeed and grow. Observing their lesson without stepping in—unless you have a safety concern that needs immediate attention—can be difficult but is a great way for them to learn. Remind them that no matter how long you have been teaching, not every lesson will go the way you thought, and that is okay. It can be easy to forget that they are still new and do not have the experience that you may have—giving them permission and grace to make mistakes is valuable. I am constantly reminding myself that they are still in the early stages of issues like classroom management, flow of a lesson, time management, and in general, the ability to see the hundreds of things that we notice as teachers everyday.

Depending on where they are in their practicum, finding a method of team teaching that works best for you is important. Baeten and Simons (2016) refer to three methods of team teaching that could be beneficial for you as a cooperating teacher: (1) the coplanning and coevaluation model, (2) the assistant teaching model and (3) the teaming model. These methods have varying degrees of collaboration and may be beneficial for you to try as a cooperating teacher. Sitting back and observing as they teach is crucial. It may be a lesson in patience at times, but in the end, it is extremely rewarding to see their progress throughout their practicum and watch them grow and evolve as a teacher.

Making Time to Communicate and Reflect

Making sure to set aside time to communicate is very important to me. With how fast our days move, this cannot always happen immediately after teaching a lesson. Sitting down at the end of a day or on a prep period to debrief is a great way to gain insight into their thought process and views on how the day went. I often find this very eye opening as I am reflecting on what I would do in certain situations in order to help support my student teacher. According to Danny Balderson, assistant dean, Education Student Program Services at the University of Lethbridge, "it allows the teacher to re-examine their own teaching practice [...]. As they explain their philosophy and teaching practice strategies to the student teacher, they engage in the process of self-reflection and examination, which can help their teaching practice improve" (personal communication, August 29, 2023).

Having open communication as well as being receptive to new ideas or ways of doing things that may be different from my own are all key for me to have a positive experience with my student teacher. I have even learned a few interesting new games and drills that I continue to use with my classes.

Giving Meaningful Feedback

Giving meaningful feedback is important. This is something that I had a hard time with at first. I was always concerned about coming across as being overly critical. No one wants someone picking apart their teaching, and I did not want to be the one doing it. One thing that helped me was being aware as to where the student teacher was in their training. I tailor my feedback based on whether they are completing their first practicum or their last one before becoming a certified teacher. If they are new, I tend to focus on classroom management and starting to work on lesson progression and flow. Whereas if they have done one or two practicums and are on their final one, I often spend more time fine-tuning the small details, for example, seeing the big picture of everything happening in a class (that is, who left, who did not change, equipment left out on the floor during game play, self evaluations during class, evening out teams and walking around giving feedback as students participate). Being mindful of where student teachers are, and remembering that they are still young in their teaching career, has been the best reminder for me and allowed me to provide meaningful feedback.

Modeling Behaviour

As cooperating teachers, we have the platform to pass on more knowledge than just how to teach a lesson. According to Weasmer and Woods (2003), student teachers learned from their cooperating teachers how to interact with school employees such as custodians, office staff and administrators; how to dress and how to relate to parents. I often hear from teachers that new teachers to our profession are not getting involved like we did when we started out. Maybe taking on a student teacher, having conversations with them and modeling behaviour about what opportunities are available to them within a school to connect with students, teachers, support staff and other individuals is a great way to guide them. I know that I plan on being a teacher for a long time, so I want to help guide new teachers into becoming the supportive, collaborative coworkers that I would want to work with!

I will always be grateful for the cooperating teachers who took the time to make me feel valued and included. According to a study by Whitney et al (2002), teachers reported overwhelmingly that their cooperating teachers had the greatest impact on how they teach. Their support and encouragement are the reasons why I have worked and will continue to work with student teachers throughout my career. As teachers, we are lifelong learners, and one of the best ways to grow is to work with people who have a new perspective that allows us to reflect on our own practice; for me, student teachers are a great way to do just that.

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Erin Melrose is a high school physical education teacher and basketball coach in her 14th year of teaching. Throughout her career, she has taught sports medicine and fulfilled the role of high school athletic director. Erin's lifelong love of activity is something that she hopes to pass on to all of the students that she is lucky enough to interact with each year.

Teacher–Educational Assistant Collaboration: A Two-Way Street

Jennie Burton and Hayley Morrison

Introduction

Jennie Burton: I started my teaching career in a kindergarten classroom with an experienced educational assistant (EA). At first, I was concerned because we seemed to have different approaches. Oftentimes, it felt like I would go one way and they would go another. The confusion and tension became a barrier to our classroom atmosphere. Deciding things had to change, we rallied our courage and purposefully worked to improve our partnership. After that, things changed dramatically! I felt inspired and excited to go to school every day, and by the end of the year, we seemed to just know what the other was thinking. It was this foundational year that I became aware of how fun teaching and learning can be when you are able to share it with a partner; without that person, I would not be the educator I am today.

Hayley Morrison: I would not have gotten through my first teaching contract without the help of the EA that worked in the classroom with me. As a new teacher, not knowing the lay of the land at the school and coming in on a short-term contract partway through the year, I had a great deal on my plate beside dealing with student behaviour and disengagement in my Grade 11 co-ed physical education (PE) class. Even though I was keen and had extensive experience working with students as an adapted movement consultant in K–12 classrooms, it was the EA that showed me the ropes and was my teaching partner in that class. Since that experience, and completing my master's and PhD focused on the inclusion of students who experience disability in PE, I made the commitment to help teachers and EAs work more collaboratively to improve the experiences of students in PE.

Reflecting on our own experiences, we asked ourselves what advice we could share with teachers to help them work collaboratively with EAs in the PE context. Our conversation resulted in five tips that we are eager to share with you.

1. Personal Commitment

Building collaborative relationships with EAs can only be achieved by making a personal commitment to a team approach. This requires the motivation and desire to build and nurture an authentic, supportive and mutually beneficial partnership that moves beyond simply working together (Conoley and Conoley 2010). Letting EAs know you are willing to collaborate and interested in their perspectives, experiences and contributions will provide opportunities for EAs to engage with you. Breaking down barriers and providing opportunities for engagement is best achieved when you present yourself as approachable, present and willing. Once you have laid the foundation for communication, you will naturally learn to trust and respect each other as you engage in shared experiences. This is critical because understanding who the EA is, as a person, helps to understand their intentions. When you interpret the EA's intentions within a positive and grateful lens, you create a safe space to have authentic conversations that can strengthen your relationship (Cramer and Stivers 2007). To get to know the EA and encourage them to get to know you, ask yourself:

- What do I need to commit to a collaborative team approach?
- How can I get to know the EA in my classroom, and how will I tell them I am committed to working collaboratively?

You should also keep in mind that favourable relationships are not always something that *just happens* and not all partnerships are going to include complementary personalities or temperaments (Jardí et al 2022). That is okay: collaborative relationships can be extremely beneficial, especially where there are different viewpoints involved (Paju et al 2021). Differences help you focus on the things that are in your control; you can then enhance your capacity to actively listen and respond to different ideas (Cramer and Stivers 2007). Ultimately,

committing to collaboration regardless of temperament or personalities will allow you to see and share your perspectives, a common and mutually beneficial outcome of collaborative relationships. Begin your relationship by being sure you are communicating information to parents and to the EA in your classroom. To showcase the team approach you want to bring to the classroom, you could ask the EA if they have anything they would like to add to a letter home to parents, or if they would like to sign the letter and endorse your comments. You can also touch base with the EA before, during and after class about the content being shared and making sure you address any of their questions to support the learning environment.

2. Balancing Leadership, Joint Responsibility and Roles

Now that you have made a personal commitment to working as a team, it is also important to remember your role as a teacher and the joint responsibility of the team. This means that you are the leader and need to find opportunities for engagement and encouragement. Consider adding the EA's name to your whiteboard or door to demonstrate their value in the classroom and for students to see it (Lytle et al 2007). Having a conversation with the EA to find out how students should address them tells the EA that you value their identity and that you are interested in knowing about them. It is also a sign of respect by ensuring students acknowledge the EA as a valued member of the classroom.

Feeling valued and having a sense of purpose is a common and embedded human need that can be achieved through intention and reflection. Consider a warm-up or cool-down activity the EA might like to take part in or lead to demonstrate their positive relationship with PE; be sure to ask them if this is something they are interested in and support them, rather than making it mandatory. Providing opportunities to engage in the activities gives EAs permission to grow in their role and contribute to the classroom community. For example, finding time and space for EAs to share their feelings, knowledge and belief systems creates opportunities for them to contribute to the learning environment in productive and meaningful ways (Morrison and Gleddie 2018). Consider inviting the EA to join you for lunch to explore your shared experiences or set up a regular meeting time to engage with one another. When time is constrained, you can try and find opportunities to quickly check in with one another. Taking opportunities to show EAs their thoughts and feelings are important to you establishes a sense of camaraderie that supports exploration and reflection that helps build plans for the future (Jardí et al 2022).

3. Building Each Other Up

Effective teams are enhanced by inserting energy, optimism, creativity and hope into the work. Building resources such as knowledge, persistence, hopefulness and compassion can contribute to the bidirectional relationship between happiness and success (Conoley and Conoley 2010). Happiness and success can be built into the community by establishing a reciprocating network where members feel grateful for help and notice the needs of others (Paju et al 2022). Simple questions like "What was the best part of your weekend?" can show your interest in the EA's life. Furthermore, finding out the EA's hobbies that relate to PE can foster an opportunity for them to share that with students and support students' interests. Consider working with EAs to put on a short skit to demonstrate how partners can use positivity, energy and encouragement to support each other, similar to the skills needed in many physical activities! You could even add in a dramatic scene to demonstrate the wrong way! Using humour can make your skit engaging and memorable for students and provide opportunities to model tolerance, acceptance and gratitude for each other. Positive and humorous energy can be extremely infectious and inspire others to join in the fun (Cramer and Stivers 2007).

One of the most effective ways to enhance your relationship with EAs is to find ways to highlight wins and celebrate successes (Cramer and Stivers 2007). However, it is also important to remember that things may not always go smoothly, and tensions can arise. Consider making a commitment to check in with EAs to see how they are feeling. A check-in could look like a meeting after class where you discuss how the class went in terms of student engagement and learning, the EA's comfort level with the content and their role in the class, and how you could support one another to enhance student learning. In addition, it is important to acknowledge the intersectionality of EAs, who may be coping with factors that are beyond your relationship. Developing an awareness for how EAs experience the interconnectedness of socially constructed identity categories (such as race, gender and class) can strengthen collaboration by providing opportunities to develop a better understanding of EAs' values perspectives (Pliner et al 2011). Be brave and reflect upon how your intersectionality impacts your behaviours and actions and remember that collaborative relationships are continuous and dynamic and will ebb and

flow throughout the year. Even unintentionally, we all sometimes offend, overstep or make mistakes. As you and the EA navigate day-to-day issues, your relationship will grow and flourish if you can find gratifying and mutually satisfying ways to work together (Cramer and Stivers 2007).

4. Being Proactive and Responsive

Clearly communicating your priorities, intentions and expectations is essential to creating a healthy relationship because it reduces ambiguity and misunderstandings (Morrison and Gleddie 2018). When EAs understand the rules and routines of your classroom, they can coordinate their efforts, build on your ideas and establish a sense of autonomy to engage in responsive teaching and learning. For example, knowing the answers to students' common questions and concerns creates a predictable and comfortable set of routines, rules and expectations. You can invite the EA to set up and manage everyday routines, such as entering and exiting the gymnasium. Consider organising and planning meetings to design and set up the physical environment into four or five activity stations. You can ask the EA if they would like to be in charge of a particular station or if they would like to move and try different stations. In addition, decide on the ways you will group students and the ways they will move between the stations. This is a good opportunity for EAs to contribute their own strengths, interests and ideas to the learning environment.

5. Balancing Professionalism and Constructive Feedback

Professionalism requires an ethical commitment to uphold the roles and responsibilities of EAs while taking seriously the importance of honest, meaningful and authentic feedback. Open communication and building rapport are essential to constructive feedback and can be accomplished by getting to know the unique characteristics, interests, preferences and experiences of the EA (Morrison and Gleddie 2018). However, there is no one way to do this, and it requires an understanding of the dispositions, communication styles and priorities of the EAs you work with. Establishing the best ways you can provide feedback, and the ways that you would like to receive feedback from the EA at the beginning of the relationship, can reduce misunderstandings in the future (Morrison and Gleddie 2018). For example, EAs might feel more comfortable receiving feedback in private, while you might prefer immediate, in-the-moment feedback. Knowing and attending to the EA's preferences is critical to ensure feedback is constructive and respectful. This is best accomplished when you have personally committed to a team approach as it can set the stage for authentic interactions. In addition, having honest and authentic conversations helps everyone grow and strengthens trust and appreciation in the relationship. If you find that feedback is uncomfortable or tense, it is essential to have a conversation to remediate any misunderstandings or hurt feelings. Although it can sometimes be difficult to engage in tough conversations, it is important to find space and time to listen by asking the EA if they have time to talk with you. By setting up a meeting, you can provide time for both you and the EA to clarify and mediate your own emotions to ensure you are in a supportive mindset. By preparing and committing to active listening, difficult conversations help reconcile misunderstandings, set you and the EA up for success and strengthen your collaborative relationship.

Conclusion

Creating collaborative working relationships is a worthwhile endeavour because it establishes a pleasurable atmosphere where you and the EA can learn and grow as educators. When you start with a personal commitment to developing a team approach, you can cultivate your capacities as a leader and engage in responsive teaching and learning. Throughout your team-building journey, be flexible to weather the ups and downs that come with teaching and learning. Stay positive and assume EAs want to learn and grow. Plus, showing gratitude and building others up can enhance your own sense of well-being because helping others feels good!

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Jennie Burton is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Jennie is a graduate research assistant, principal instructor for preservice teachers and an elementary school teacher. Jennie's teaching and research is rooted in equitable access to inclusive learning opportunities for children with disability labels. Jennie is interested in the ways language is used to normalize educational practices and how dominant narratives intersect with the learning needs of diverse learners.

Hayley Morrison is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Hayley teaches preservice teachers their health and physical education curriculum and pedagogy courses and instructs graduate courses in educational research and inclusive health and physical education. Hayley's teaching and research are interconnected as she aims to support educative and inclusive experiences at all levels of teaching and learning in health and physical education. Hayley's research areas include inclusive/adaptive physical education, health and physical education teacher education, and professional development.

Forget the Sit-and-Learn Model of Professional Learning: Try a HEARTcare Walk and Learn!

Astrid Kendrick and Nadeen Halls

Since 2020, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), Werklund School of Education and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) have partnered on a comprehensive research study gaining insights into compassion fatigue, burnout and emotional labour within Alberta's education workforce. This multi-year research study has provided crucial insights into the emotional and mental health of education workers as well as pointed to the need for immediate intervention to promote positive occupational health.

A finding that has emerged from the most recent data analysis in May 2023 has been the desire of educational workers, such as teachers and educational assistants, to learn about workplace well-being through physical activity in natural spaces rather than in the traditional format of an online lecture or classroom-based workshop. As a result, Astrid Kendrick secured seed funding from the Werklund Endowment Fund to support the design, pilot and development of a well-being walk in collaboration with local Calgary teacher, Nadeen Halls. This initiative aims to enhance educators' occupational well-being through HEARTcare planning.

In March 2023, Halls and Kendrick began to construct a three-hour professional development walk in a Calgary natural area, known as the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area (www.crossconservation.org), and since then, they have led several pilot walks with teachers, educational assistants, assistant principals and preservice teachers, and are looking forward to their first professional learning HEARTcare Walk and Learn, sponsored by ATA Local 38.

During these five- to eight-kilometre walks, the group stops at regular intervals to discuss some of the sources of stress and distress educational workers face, highlighting the differences between compassion stress,

compassion fatigue and burnout, with Kendrick and Halls providing guidance for walkers to begin creating their own HEARTcare plan. The result for participants is that they have some exercise, have a chance to talk with colleagues or other walkers about their workplace experiences and feel the stress-reducing effects of walking through a beautiful natural area.

As hosting these walks continues, Kendrick and Halls hope to answer the following research questions through interactions with the participants:

- Did the Walk and Learn workshop influence the participants' understanding of burnout and compassion fatigue? If so, how and why?
- What, if anything, was the longer-term influence on the workplace well-being of participants after completing the Walk and Learn professional learning workshop?

Details and registration for upcoming walks can be found at www.heartcareeducators.ca, where you can also find evidence-based information about workplace well-being for educational workers.

Astrid Kendrick, PhD, is an assistant professor at the University of Calgary and Academic Director, Professional Learning and Outreach, for the Werklund School of Education's Centre for Well-Being. Prior to moving to the University of Calgary, she was a K–12 physical education and ELA teacher for nineteen years.

Nadeen Halls is a PHE Canada award-winning physical education teacher who currently teaches in an elementary school in Calgary, Alberta.

Purposeful Practice: Physical Education for Every*body*

Lisa M Taylor, Oliver W A Wilson, Elizabeth Tingle and Shelly Russell-Mayhew

Physical education in K–12 schools plays an important role in promoting physical activity, which is associated with numerous physical and mental health benefits (Bull et al 2020). However, considerable physical activity participation inequities or barriers are evident among children and adolescents (Public Health Agency of Canada 2018; ParticipACTION 2022), impacting the way student experience physical activity in the school. These physical activity inequities, and associated health outcome inequities, can persist over the course of people's lives (Government of Canada 2001).

Weight bias, or the negative treatment of those in larger bodies, is an important but often overlooked form of inequity for students in K–12 settings. Weight bias contributes to inequities for children in larger bodies in K–12 settings (Nutter et al 2019). Weight stigma and weight-based victimization can negatively impact adolescents' physical and mental well-being (Gmeiner and Warschburger 2022; Puhl and Lessard 2020; Puhl and Luedicke 2012). There are numerous ways in which adolescents may cope with such bias (Li and Rukavina 2009), including the development of disordered eating behaviours and avoidance of physical education and school (Puhl and Luedicke 2012). Physical educators are not immune to bias and have a responsibility and opportunity to minimize the prevalence and magnitude of weight bias within physical education settings (Ehlert et al 2015; Peterson et al 2012). Ensuring that physical education fosters a healthy lifelong love of physical activity for all children and adolescents is essential for public health.

The purpose of this article is to identify practices in physical education that may contribute to weight bias and offer practical strategies physical educators can implement to achieve inclusivity when promoting physical activity, with a particular emphasis on strategies pertaining to body size and shape. This article and the strategies communicated were informed by the literature and inspired by conversations between the authors, who have varied experiences as researchers and educators. The article covers topics including body measurement, organizing students into groups, clothing for active participation, units of instruction and activities and locker rooms.

Body Measurement

Given the links between physical education and both health and sporting performance, some physical education programs implement what are considered "indicators of health" or performance in physical education classes—a practice that is debated (Jones 2020). As with other subjects, measurement and assessment plays a role in conveying the value of certain skills, knowledge and attributes (Penney et al 2018). With respect to health, measures of body composition such as height and weight have been utilized in sporting performance programming, while a variety of indicators of physical fitness are also assessed (Cooper Institute, nd). Examples of these measurements include having individuals record their weight on a scale, measuring height, calculating body mass index, measuring waist circumference and/or utilizing calipers for the purpose of skinfold measurements (Wilson et al 2023).

However, in the context of physical education, engaging students in body measurement practices is problematic. Though monitoring body measurements may be necessary and valuable in some sporting and high-level competition contexts, measuring all students in schools is less so. It is now well established that bodily measurement in school has the potential to do more harm than good (Evans and Sonneville 2009; Ikeda et al 2006; Portilla 2011; Soto and White 2010; Thompson and Madsen 2017), via embarrassing children, causing teasing, increasing body image sensitivity and unhealthy dieting. Furthermore, the size of a student's body is not a reliable indicator for health (Jones 2020).

Instead, physical education teachers can support their students by focusing on and celebrating what students can *do* with their bodies, rather than focusing on how their bodies compare to others or to some standard. Body measurements have no place in physical education,

especially with curriculum that advocates for fostering a welcoming space where students can develop confidence, competence and motivation to be active for life (see Alberta Learning 2000; British Columbia Ministry of Education 2016, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education 2015). For example, the Alberta program of studies have advocated that students "acknowledge and accept individual differences in body shapes and how different body types contribute to positive involvement in physical activities" (Alberta Learning 2000, 19), and that "physical growth is different for everyone," and "bodies are special and unique" (LearnAlberta 2022). Compassionate and inclusive class settings are more important than calculated measurements that put students at risk through comparisons and a focus on numbers and appearance.

Organizing Students into Groups

Pairings, groups and teams are common in the organization of physical education classes (Barrett et al 2016). A variety of methods can be used to separate students into groups. The methods by which student groups are formed can have implications for student well-being.

For example, when students are chosen as captains to select their teams in game-based activities, inevitably, there are students who are picked last by their peers. Students tend to demonstrate preferences as to who they would like to affiliate with (Grimminger 2014) and thus, leaving team formation to students risks exclusion of those with lower perceived skill, and fewer or weaker social connections (Grimminger 2014; Munk and Agergaard 2015). This potential outcome is particularly concerning for students in larger bodies who may face negative assumptions about their physical abilities due to widespread stereotypes (Spech et al 2022) or may be socially isolated or bullied for their size (Waasdorp et al 2019). Similarly, designating leaders/captains to pick groups can have negative outcomes when students do not want to join a group they were selected for (Grimminger 2014).

Another example of problematic team or group selections occurs when students are organized by size or height. Organizing students based on these characteristics places a focus on body appearance and invites social comparisons and ranking, which can be discouraging and prime some students for body dissatisfaction (Tatangelo and Ricciardelli 2017). Instead, norms for selection and forming practices should be established to help students to understand how and why selections will be made (Barrett et al 2016). Moreover, educators should aim to group students in a manner that places them in the best possible situation for success, which may lead to different grouping based on the activity. To achieve this, educators can plan teams in advance to avoid last-minute selections. Alternatively, when groups are randomly selected, opt for criteria that do not involve bringing attention to body characteristics. For example, teams can be selected by birthdate or birth month, by the first letter of their last name or by numbering them off.

Clothing for Active Participation

Clothing is an important consideration when attempting to avoid physical activity inequities. All students deserve to wear clothing that allows for comfortable movement. Concerns pertaining to athletic clothing among children in larger bodies include body exposure (due to clothing being tight and/or revealing), clothing size exposure (that is, having their size publicly announced), a desire to quit due to unavailability of appropriate clothing options and limited positive experiences with athletic clothing (Reddy-Best and Harmon 2015). Among adults, functionality, fashion and cost are barriers to acquiring exercise clothing suitable for women in larger bodies (Greenleaf et al 2020). Furthermore, factors such as cost may also influence what a student has access to wear in physical education class, when considering socioeconomic factors for families.

Many secondary physical education programs require students to change into active clothing with the rationale that changing clothes for physical activity supports good physical hygiene, despite active clothing often going stale in lockers and not being taken home for regular washing. Taking this into consideration, the authors of this article encourage physical educators to communicate the benefits of good hygiene while allowing students to be active in what they feel most comfortable in. For example, girls have been found to prefer shorts over skirts, dark-coloured bottoms over light coloured, and clothing that is stretchy and hides sweat (Victoria University, nd). While some physical education programs may require specific gym attire or gym strip (for example, clothing with school logos), prioritizing the physical and emotional comfort of the student will offer a more welcoming environment in class.

Additionally, when school active attire or gym strip is made available to students, the authors encourage educators to include students in design choices and to avoid commenting on, or even disclosing, the size of clothing. Furthermore, if gym strip is a school

requirement, educators should ensure all sizes and a variety of colours are made available to students.[1]

Units of Instruction and Activities

When units of instruction and activities are predetermined and rigid or repetitive, students may become disengaged in physical education (Tudor et al 2019). Furthermore, requiring students to perform tasks or engage in units that they are not comfortable with can be discouraging. Activities where student bodies are on display are particularly concerning, which may be common practice for activities that are assessed for skill and/or time, such as track and field (for example, various throws, jumps and sprints), or fitness testing (for example, 20-meter shuttle run, also known as the beep test). Obstacle courses that require students to fit through small spaces or under low tables without touching anything can turn a seemingly fun challenge into a public display of how bodies differ in class. Additionally, units or activities such as swimming may involve further attention to bodies that can feel threatening and undesirable to students (Kerner et al 2018).

Instead, the authors advocate for offering students choice. For example, a grade cohort with multiple teachers available to plan and coordinate supervision could collectively offer students the choice of participating in either a yoga or swimming unit, as opposed to requiring all students to swim. Or, within a single class, students can be given the choice to simultaneously participate in different activities at various stations in a gymnasium or on the field, all within view of the teacher.

When student autonomy is fostered regarding types of activities to participate in, students feel more engaged in physical education (Gray et al 2019). Additionally, listening to student interests and implementing activities they enjoy can encourage students to participate in physical education class and to have a more positive relationship with their body (El-Sherif 2014; Mitchell et al 2015; Piran 2018). Therefore, units that students indicate dissatisfaction with should be critically examined for connection to the curriculum, considered for replacement and/or redesigned with students to foster student encouragement and participation.

One strategy to collect student feedback is offering anonymous surveys to students who can then freely comment on their satisfaction with units of activity in physical education. For example, Google Forms are excellent for designing free surveys to obtain student perspectives and offer *all* students a voice in their programming (not just the students who are comfortable to raise their hand in a class group discussion). Data from the surveys can be reviewed and changes can be implemented the following semester.

Locker Rooms

Conversations regarding locker rooms in the secondary physical education space can be difficult to navigate due to the infrastructural design that exists in schools; while physical educators may be keen to offer students more privacy and flexibility, they may be limited by the design of the school facilities. That being said, physical educators need to rethink what students are required to *do* to participate in physical education and how to approach and best support students as individuals.

When students are required to change their attire for participation in physical education, and they do not have a private space of their own to do so, they can find themselves in situations where their undressed bodies are exposed and socially compared with peers (Kerner et al 2018). The process of undressing in a change room can be uncomfortable for students and can create opportunities for comparisons and conversations about bodies that increase feelings of body dissatisfaction (Kerner et al 2018; Piran 2018). However, while some students may experience discomfort with their bodies on display, others may not (Åsebø et al 2022).

To avoid student discomfort, consider offering students choice regarding changing for physical education and assess the risk/benefit to changing in conversation *with* students. It may be that light to moderate activities, such as walking or hiking outdoors, do not require changing clothes. Letting students know ahead of time what activities will occur can help them make an informed choice. Additionally, consider what other facilities students might access within the school (for example, washrooms with individually sectioned toilets) to change. Furthermore, when consulted for recommendations on how to design new schools, physical educators can advocate for change room infrastructure that offers more privacy, more effectively meeting the needs for all forms of diversity among students.

Closing Thoughts

The intention of this article is to communicate to teachers the opportunities available to them to better support students of all body shapes and sizes in physical education programming. By critically reflecting on body

measurement, how students are organized into groups, requirements for clothing, how bodies are placed on display in certain activities and requirements for changing and locker room infrastructure, we hope to inspire further consideration for how every*body* can feel safe and supported in physical education.

Note

1. The above clothing strategies refer to tops and bottoms worn by students in physical education class. Footwear, while sometimes considered part of gym strip, needs to be safe for active spaces. For example, flip flops, heavy boots, platforms and heels compromise student safety.

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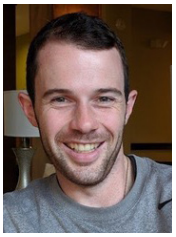

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Nurturing Health and Harmony: Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Canadian Physical and Health Education

Jo Sheppard, PhD

Introduction

In Canada, the field of Physical and Health Education (PHE) stands at a critical crossroads, where the adoption of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles transcends moral obligation and becomes an educational imperative. Canada's reputation as a bastion of multiculturalism and dedication to social justice demands that we take a leading role in cultivating inclusive PHE environments. This article delves into the profound significance of EDI within the Canadian context of Physical and Health Education, underlining its role in enhancing individual well-being while simultaneously fortifying the rich tapestry of our diverse society.

The Foundation of EDI

Before we delve into the specific relevance of EDI in physical and health education, it is essential to understand the foundational principles. Equity involves recognizing that every individual has unique needs and circumstances and actively working to ensure that everyone has the resources, opportunities and support they need to succeed. Diversity acknowledges the rich tapestry of identities, backgrounds and experiences that make up our society, while inclusion entails creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected and empowered to contribute (Richards 2022).

EDI in Canadian Physical and Health Education

In this section, I offer several perspectives regarding equity, diversity and inclusion in physical and health education in Canada. These considerations include:

- Representation
  One of the core tenets of EDI in education is representation. Canadian physical and health education schools must reflect the diversity of our nation. Having diverse faculty and staff provides students with role models and mentors who understand their unique perspectives and challenges (Gonzalez-Calvo and Gerdin 2023). It fosters a sense of belonging and demonstrates that careers in physical and health education are attainable for individuals from all backgrounds.
- Curriculum Relevance
  The curriculum in physical and health education should be inclusive and culturally responsive. It should incorporate diverse perspectives on health, physical activity and wellness. By doing so, we not only prepare students to thrive in a multicultural society but also equip them with the knowledge and skills to address the specific health needs of a diverse population (Chhin 2015).
- Inclusive Learning Environments
  Inclusive classrooms and gymnasiums are spaces where all students feel safe and valued. Educators should be trained to recognize and accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín 2022). This includes providing appropriate resources for students with disabilities and adapting teaching methods to reach all learners.
- Challenging Stereotypes
  Physical and health education schools play a crucial role in challenging stereotypes about gender, ability and body image. By promoting diversity in sports and activities and encouraging all students to participate, we break down the barriers that have traditionally limited opportunities for certain groups.

- Intersectionality
  It is crucial to recognize that individuals have intersecting identities. For example, a person may be both Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ or have a disability and belong to a racial minority. Canadian physical and health education schools must be equipped to address these complex intersections of identity and provide support that is genuinely inclusive (Larsson et al 2009).

The Benefits of EDI in Physical and Health Education Schools

In the evolving landscape of education, EDI serve as foundational components driving progress. These principles create an environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive, unlocking the boundless potential of education. EDI principles impact the domains of physical and health education, where their resonance extends across multiple dimensions. As we embark on exploring EDI in these educational realms, we find ourselves at the crossroads of significant transformations in learning outcomes, health equity, global readiness, innovation and social cohesion. It is within this intersection of principles and the educational journey that we glimpse the potential for a brighter, more inclusive future, one that extends its promise not only to students but to society as a whole.

- Improved Learning Outcomes
  When students feel seen, heard and valued, they are more engaged in their learning. This engagement translates into improved academic performance and a deeper understanding of the material.
- Health Equity
  A commitment to EDI in physical and health education schools can contribute significantly to addressing health disparities (Klebanoff and Muramatsu 2002). By understanding and addressing the unique health needs of diverse communities, we move closer to achieving health equity in Canada.
- Preparation for a Diverse Society
  In a globalized world, cultural competency is an essential skill. Physical and health education schools that embrace EDI prepare students to work effectively in diverse communities and serve as leaders in promoting inclusivity.
- Innovation and Creativity
  Diverse teams are known to be more innovative and creative. By fostering diversity in physical and health education programs, we prepare students to be future leaders and innovators in the field (Rosenthal 2020).
- Social Cohesion
  Education plays a crucial role in promoting social cohesion. When students from diverse backgrounds learn together and build relationships, it creates a more cohesive and inclusive society (Gerdin et al 2020).

Challenges and Solutions

Introducing the foundational principles of EDI into the realm of physical and health education is an endeavor of profound importance and undeniable relevance. While the potential benefits are compelling, the path to their realization is not without its complexities and hurdles. In navigating this transformative journey, we are not only confronted by the challenges of implementation but also compelled to consider the concept of intersectionality—the interplay of diverse identities and experiences that shape each individual's unique journey. Here, I delve into the clear advantages of EDI principles in these educational domains while meticulously examining the multifaceted challenges they present and the strategies that illuminate the way forward.

- Resistance to Change
  Some educators may resist change, especially if they have been using traditional methods for many years (Flemons et al 2023). Training and professional development can help educators understand the importance of EDI and provide them with the tools to incorporate it into their teaching, recognizing that the challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities may require additional consideration.
- Resource Constraints
  Schools may face budget constraints that limit their ability to provide accommodations and support for students with disabilities. Advocacy for increased funding and creative problem solving can help overcome this challenge, with a focus on addressing the needs of students who may experience multiple forms of discrimination.
- Lack of Representation
  It can be challenging to find diverse faculty and staff, especially in fields like physical and health education where there may be historical underrepresentation (Francis-Edge et al 2023). Schools can actively recruit diverse candidates and create inclusive hiring practices, acknowledging the importance of diverse perspectives, including those shaped by intersectionality.

- Cultural Sensitivity
  Educators may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or be insensitive to the cultural backgrounds of their students. Cultural competency training can help educators develop the awareness and skills needed to create inclusive classrooms, recognizing that students' experiences are shaped by their intersectional identities (Alshuraymi and Wright 2022).
- Inclusive Curriculum Development
  Designing an inclusive curriculum can be complex. Schools can collaborate with experts in diversity and inclusion to develop culturally responsive materials and teaching strategies, ensuring that the curriculum reflects the intersectional experiences of all students.

Conclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion are not optional in Canadian physical and health education schools; they are essential. These principles are the foundation upon which a truly inclusive and equitable educational system is built. When we commit to EDI in physical and health education, we prepare students not only for successful careers but also to be active and informed citizens who contribute to a more inclusive and just society. It is time to embrace the power of diversity and create a brighter, more equitable future for all Canadians.

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Some schools obtain blanket consent under FOIP, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. However, the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) and FOIP are not interchangeable. They fulfill different legislative goals. PIPA is the private sector act that governs the Association's collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

If you can use the image or information to identify a person in context (for example, a specific school or specific event), then it is personal information and you need consent to collect, use or disclose (publish) it.

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Refer all questions regarding the ATA's collection, use and disclosure of personal information to the ATA privacy officer.

Notify the ATA privacy officer immediately of **any** incident that involves the loss of or unauthorized use or disclosure of personal information, by calling Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208.

Maggie Shane, the ATA's privacy officer, is your resource for privacy compliance support.

780-447-9429 (direct)
780-699-9311 (cell, available any time)

Consent for Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

Name: _____
(Please print)

☐ I am giving consent for myself.

☐ I am giving consent for my child/children or ward(s), identified below:

Name(s): _____

_____
(Please print)

By signing below, I am consenting to The Alberta Teachers' Association collecting, using and disclosing personal information identifying me or my child/children or ward(s) in print and/or online publications and on websites available to the public, including social media. By way of example, personal information may include, but is not limited to, name, photographs, audio/video recordings, artwork, writings or quotations.

I understand that copies of digital publications may come to be housed on servers outside Canada.

I understand that I may vary or withdraw this consent at any time. I understand that the Association's privacy officer is available to answer any questions I may have regarding the collection, use and disclosure of these records. The privacy officer can be reached at 780-447-9429 or 1-800-232-7208.

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Today's date: _____

For more information on the ATA's privacy policy, visit www.teachers.ab.ca.

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Contributions to *Runner*

Runner, the journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association, is a professional journal for physical education teachers in Alberta. Authors are encouraged to submit articles of relevance in either a peer review or editorial review process. Topics may include, but are not limited to, personal explorations of significant classroom experiences; descriptions of innovative classroom and school practices; reviews or evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials; discussions of trends, issues or policies; and scientific research.

Manuscripts on other themes will also be considered for publication and may be up to 2,500 words long. References to works cited should appear in full in a list at the end of the article using the author–date system. Photographs, line drawings and diagrams are welcome. To ensure quality reproduction, digital photographs should have a minimum of 300 DPI. A caption and photo credit should accompany each photograph. The contributor is responsible for obtaining consent to use a photo image and written parental permission for any image or works by children under 18 years of age.

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically in Word format. A cover page should include the contributor's name, professional position, address, phone number and e-mail address. A Copyright Transfer Agreement must be completed once a submission is accepted.

Contributions are reviewed by the editor, who reserves the right to edit for clarity and space.

Send manuscripts for future issues to Lisa Taylor at runner@hpec.ab.ca.

Copyright Transfer Agreement

I/we, _____ , the author(s), transfer copyright of the manuscript

entitled _____

to the Health and Physical Education Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association, in consideration of publication. This transfer shall become effective if and when the manuscript is accepted for publication, thereby granting the Health and Physical Education Council the right to authorize republication, representation and distribution of the original and derivative material. I/we further certify that the manuscript under consideration has not been previously published and is my/our own original piece.
I/we understand that the work may be edited for publication.

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Signature Date

_____ _____
Signature Date

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Signature Date

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Two-sentence biographical note about the author(s):

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HPEC Mission Statement

The Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC), as a professional organization of teachers, advocates for quality health and physical education programs and provides opportunities for professional growth and development of its members. HPEC is committed to providing leadership in creating healthy, active school communities.

HPEC Vision Statement

Alberta teachers will provide quality instruction and programs in health and physical education to promote the development of healthy, active lifestyles in students.

Objectives

The objectives of HPEC shall be to

- improve curriculum, instruction and assessment in health and physical education through increased knowledge, skills and understanding;
- develop, study and propose professional resources and responses to health and physical education issues;
- ensure that teachers have access to meaningful professional development opportunities that meet their needs throughout all stages of their career;
- enhance the expertise of members by promoting an understanding of current research to inform professional practice;
- liaise with other organizations that seek to promote healthy, active lifestyles within school communities;
- further the continuous development and evaluation of standards and guidelines within the profession for personnel, programs and facilities in health and physical education; and
- facilitate broad-based, skilful participation in the planning and implementation of effective, collaborative, ongoing professional development.

Beliefs

HPEC believes that

- a well-delivered health and physical education curriculum supported by quality instruction can change health behaviours of children and youth in K–12;
- health and physical education play a valued and vital role in providing a quality, balanced education for all children and youth in Alberta schools;
- all students in all grades in Alberta schools should have the right and opportunity to experience sustained, vigorous physical activity through participation in quality daily physical education programs;
- wellness is an outcome of quality health and physical education programs that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist students to make appropriate choices to live active, healthy lives; and
- comprehensive school health is the framework for the delivery of quality health and physical education programs to promote and develop wellness in Alberta's children and youth.

From the Executive Handbook of the Health and Physical Education Council (*2016*).

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HPEC
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