

EDUC 450B: Inquiry

Inquiry Proposal

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Inquiry Question:

There are some elementary school teachers who are not physical education (PE) specialists and do not feel confident or comfortable teaching physical education; how can secondary school PE specialists practically support and collaborate with elementary school teachers to improve pedagogical practice and improve the physical education learning experience for elementary school age learners?

The significance of this inquiry question stems from the memories of my own physical education experience throughout elementary school and secondary school in British Columbia. Having gone to three different elementary schools in the same school district, I was exposed to a wide range of elementary school teachers and teaching styles from grade two to twelve. I remember some wonderful elementary school teachers who evidently had content knowledge regarding physical education and were able to implement fun and engaging lessons to their class. On the other hand, I also have memories of elementary school teachers who did not feel comfortable implementing PE lessons which in retrospect lead me to believe that those teachers were not physical education specialists. Often those classes were monotonous, dull and as a learner I was disengaged and did not feel like I learned anything for that time period in my school day. As I reflect on my experiences in the elementary school system, I now wonder why there was disconnect in my physical education. I believe that this lack of consistency in the delivery of physical education in elementary schools can negatively impact children's opinions about physical education, physical activity and it falls short in providing students the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes that will eventually enable students an enhanced quality of life as they progress to secondary education and adulthood. I believe that it is crucial to lay down a strong foundation of fundamental movement skills in kindergarten to grade seven and present the concepts of active living, movement, safety, fair play and leadership to these learners using fun and engaging pedagogy early on. We only have one first impression. If we can facilitate quality learning experiences for elementary school students early on, we are paving a smoother pathway between elementary school physical education and secondary school physical education programs.

In looking at some of the recent literature regarding this topic, my concerns have been supported. In Ben Dyson's article commentary on effective physical education teaching, he states that there is a concern that teacher content knowledge on physical education is limited and incomplete (2014). As content teachers, if we do not have a deeper understanding of the content, we are not able to teach meaningful outcomes in the physical education classroom (Dyson, 2014). Elementary school teachers have a valuable opportunity to help develop a positive relationship between the student and physical education early on. If a student does not form connections to the subject content it reduces the learning students actually take on (Dyson, 2014). Physical education teachers are now starting to be held accountable for their student's learning through nationally set standards (Dyson, 2014). These standards should really only be a minimum requirement, but physical education teachers need to teach above and beyond the minimum standards (Dyson, 2014). Having said this idealistic perspective, realistically, physical education teachers are maybe only attaining two of the five standards (Dyson, 2014). While teaching above and beyond the minimum requirements is a valuable ideal, teachers should first be teaching all of the required standards (Dyson, 2014). I believe that if elementary school and secondary school teachers in the same district form meaningful collaborative relationships, we can better prepare ourselves to meet the standards in physical education. This put us in a promising position to go above and beyond the minimum requirements in providing quality physical education for all learners.

In conducting this inquiry, I hope to learn more about the hesitations, fears, and/or concerns elementary school teachers have about teaching their physical education classes and what difficulties they currently face. I would also like to learn about the current strategies or teaching methods and models elementary teachers have found effective in implementing their PE lessons. Moreover, I would like to know if elementary school teachers think it would be beneficial for their practice and for their students to work with a secondary PE specialist and how that would practically look on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis.

During the long practicum, I hope to connect with elementary school teachers to observe their PE classes and if there is interest to have elementary school teachers come to a secondary PE class to observe various methods and models of PE being implemented. Most of my findings will be done through

observation and digging deeper through questions in conversations, for example: *What resources/strategies/methods do you want or need to become successful in teaching PE to your students?* I hope to open the door to conversations between elementary and secondary school teachers in the same district and discover ways to facilitate collaboration. It would also be beneficial to meet with and talk to an active PE specialist working in a district and learn more about their roles and responsibilities. Having an advocate for quality physical education is essential in instilling and sustaining quality programs (Kaldor & Deutsch, 2013). A physical education specialist can aid districts in creating the quality physical education programs students need and provide teachers with the resources they need to do so (Kaldor & Deutsch, 2013). Through all this planning, it is important to gain the support of the administration and fellow colleagues (Kaldor & Deutsch, 2013). During the long practicum, I would like to have conversations with administration staff and discuss the possibilities of having a district physical education specialist bridging the gap between elementary school and secondary school teachers.

Some of the limitations of this inquiry lie in the personal beliefs and motivations of individual teachers. If an elementary school teacher is not interested or simply does not care about collaboration with secondary PE specialists or does not believe in the value it may bring, the inquiry cannot be investigated. Another limitation is that it would involve much more schedule and logistic organization between the two schools and may pose to be a barrier if coordinating schedules does not work out. Lastly, another limitation is that in some districts, the elementary and secondary schools are physically a great distance apart from each other. Unlike districts like Richmond where catchment schools are in closer proximity, other schools can be hour's drive apart.

References for further investigation:

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