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January 24, 2013

**Inquiry Proposal**

*“Can I promote a sense of working together through using social and emotional learning in group activities?”*

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**My Question**

For my question I wanted to take a look at how I could help those that are less fortunate. I began with trying to discover a way to incorporate “at risk” youth into my question and how to help them achieve success in and out of my class. This question had many logistical issues, as I am not in an Alternative School. Any sort of research towards these students in Public School settings involves access to information that is well beyond the scope of this project and puts students at risk of having their personal problems exposed in class.

To avoid causing harm, I began to think of indirect ways that I could help this group of students and I came to the solution that the most effective way to help was to have them help each other. I decided I wanted to promote a sense of unity and teamwork within my class and increase this feeling among students throughout my practicum. Social and Emotional Learning is a trending style of teaching that focuses on preparing students with non academic talents that aid in the application of knowledge and skills and are crucial to their success in life.

In all of the physical education classes that I have been involved in as both a student and a teacher candidate, I have always noticed a major skill difference between students within the class. When teams are divided, these differences are highlighted on the teams within games, and this difference has major effects on the motivation and participation of the less successful. My previous experiences on competitive teams have taught me leadership, goal setting, communication and the importance of every member involved. Successful teams and communities are those with people who look out for each other and are genuinely concerned about each other’s well being.

This all led me to the question:

*Can I promote a sense of working together through using social and emotional learning in group activities?*

For my inquiry question my goal is to increase the feeling of teamwork in a classroom. In physical education classes, nearly every unit in the curriculum offers opportunity to learn in a team setting, whether it be team sports where teams work together to compete, fitness where groups can push each other to strive for more, or track where individual accomplishments are grouped together. These groups can function so much more efficiently when the students pull together and work collectively, and more importantly, it’s more fun. A group that has emotional intelligence will work more cohesively and thus successfully to reach goals or complete projects. For my inquiry project I am going to teach some basic social and emotional learning and attempt to connect the content to the activities covered in class.

**The Significance**

In 2007, UNICEF published a repot that examined children’s well being “an overview of child well-being in Rich Countries.” Surprisingly, the UK, France and US were in the bottom third and Germany was in the bottom half. The report states that there is no definitive connection between wealth and well being. Furthermore, more is involved in success and happiness than knowledge alone. We must be able to apply our knowledge and use it in a way that makes our lives and the live of others better. Self control, motivation and empathy are some “master aptitudes” that actually determine our ability to apply intellect (Pasi, 2001). There have been connections made between emotional skills and one’s success in life. One must develop and work towards a more holistic form of health involving social, emotional, spiritual, and physical health.

Collaborative for Academic Social Learning (CASEL) is a non-profit organization that promotes social and emotional learning within schools through science and evidence based studies. CASEL designed a five-point framework of competencies that consists of Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making. (CASEl, 2013) These five points have been adopted into many models such as MINDUP (2011) to promote group work and cooperation within classes to engage students, increase understanding, and increase sense of hopefulness. Cooperation also considerably promotes greater effort to achieve, and cooperative context is required for students to master interpersonal and small groups skills. (Zins et al, 2004) Social and Emotional Learning programs have also been found to improve social skills and reduce conflict between peers.

**How It Will Look**

The classes that I will be working with during my inquiry class are 2 grade 9 boys’ classes. I am already somewhat familiar with the class as I worked with them in my mini-practicum. For the first two classes I will be finishing a Winter Olympic Unit that is team-taught and includes several classes and a variety of stations. I will begin my research the following week, starting on the 10th of February and continue until spring break. During the time of my practicum I will be placing them into 5 teams that they will participate with throughout the 10 weeks. Each team has a captain and the students will choose amongst themselves. After the groups have been together for a week, they will fill out an exit slip that will assess whether or not they feel that their team works well together. Before spring break the students will fill out the exit slip again and the changes that occur throughout the term will be the first form of assessment.

This study will be measuring the affective component of physical education. The second form of assessment will be assigning daily self-assessment and reflection sheets that will be based upon Hellison’s model. Each day student’s will number themselves from 0-4 according to the cumulative level table above. They will then write a sentence or 2 describing why they deserve this number. As level 5 is impossible for the teacher to assess it will not be included, but there will be a separate section to record any level 5 actions to encourage students to take the lesson outside of the class. Following group activities there will be opportunities for group discussions and reflections on the activities and students will be encouraged to link discussion to the lecture.

The CASEL five-point framework mentioned above will be the guiding framework used in my inquiry project. The components will be taught in lessons throughout the practicum, and alongside each a tool that students may use to improve on that point.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Point** | **Tool** |
| 1. Self Management | Goal Setting – SMART goals |
| 2. Self Awareness | Stress Management/Self regulation– Visualization – alternative solutions |
| 3. Social Awareness | Use of roles – Trust building exercise chairs |
| 4. Relationship Skills | Conflict Resolution –The I statement |
| 5. Responsible Decision Making | Self Management – Daily self reflections assessments |

**Theory**

Courses that teach physical activity hold potential for teaching social and personal qualities (Hellison, 1995). Educators of all kinds must be concerned about the development beyond the physical well being of their students and also try to work with the emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual well being. Through participation in games exercises, drills, discussions and informal student actions there is opportunity to analyze and teach skills and knowledge related to the game, but also traits and attributes.

“Kids show more of themselves in physical activity settings, and in the gym or on the playing field intervention can be more closely tied to immediate experiences than in traditional therapy sessions.”

(Hellison, pg 1, 1995).

However, for the lesson being taught to go beyond that of skills in the game requires an educator to come up with a plan of action. Desired behaviors and their benefits must be specifically defined and explained to the students. To do this Hellison (1995) designed a model featuring cumulative levels of Social and Personal Responsibility that outlines levels 0-5. These levels are based around cooperation, helping others, fair play, doing your best, involving others, encouraging others, equal opportunity, and being sensitive to the need of others. The levels are defined in table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Description** |
| **0** | Egocentric, lack of self-control, non-team player. |
| **1** | Respecting the Rights & Feelings of Others Self-control and peaceful conflict solving |
| **2** | Effort and Cooperation: Getting along, being self– starter, trying new tasks. |
| **3** | Self-Direction: Being on-task, setting and sticking to personal goals and resisting peer pressure. |
| **4** | Helping Others and Leadership: Showing caring, sensitivity and concern for others in the class |
| **5** | Taking TPSR Outside the Gym: Integrating TPSR values into other areas of life—being role models. |

(Hellison, 1995)

In order for a teacher to effectively implement this model, Hellison highlight four components that need to be present in lessons. The first is teacher must describe the levels and their components to help students gain an understanding and an idea of where they fit in. Secondly, teachers must act as role models and identify others who may be role models. Modeling behaviors gives students a better idea of what the levels look like and can help to convince students of the benefits. Thirdly, Social and Emotional learning must provide link thinking, feeling and behavior to experiences thus the importance of feedback is stressed. This has been found to be most effective if instructors are able to catch a moment of the student’s success and provide positive reinforcement. The fourth and final component is students must be given opportunity to reflect on their performance. Personal reflection provides each student an opportunity to increase self-awareness and improve upon performance. However, reflections should also occur in groups as student sharing opportunities to deepen understanding.

“SEL and Sports: Perfect together” is an example in which Elias et al. (1997) discusses how school in the U.S. has successfully implemented Social and Emotional learning into their athletic program. She continues to describe how the school used goal setting to “become unified.” Social interdependence exists when individual’s actions are affected by actions of others. The difference between positive and negative interdependence in dependent upon the goals of the individuals within the group; similar goals lead to positive interdependence, and different goals lead to negative interdependence (Zins et al, 2004). Common goals are crucial to developing a learning community within schools. Goal setting skills will be practices self-management component of the CASEL model. Effective problem solving skills, which will be included in the relationship component, help foster trust, promote similar behaviors in others, and enhance the emotional climate in which students work (Pasi, 2001). Emotional self management, covered in the responsible decision making component, can lead to higher levels of success both in and out of school (Ellison, 2001). The theory as well as the tools together is intended to increase the students’ ability to work effectively as a group.

**In the Classroom: “5 Perry Talks”**

For my Inquiry I have planned 5 mini-lectures on the 5 core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning as identified on the CASEL website. I will be calling these mini-lectures “Perry Talks.” The competencies CASEL identifies are Self Management, Self Awareness, Social Skills, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making. For each of these components there will be a brief discussion where we will go over the CASEL definition of the competency, talk about what the competency is, how it is beneficial in a physical education class and do an activity.

The first competency that we will be going over in our class will be Self Management. Positive self-change and personal growth does not come naturally, but are things that take dedication and commitment. This effort often makes a task seem unappealing and can lead to procrastination or incompletion of tasks. Goal setting is one of the most highly effective ways to increase motivations and success at individual and group levels when done effectively (CASEL, 2014). This is why for the self-management component we will be going over goal setting. During my inquiry students will be running a lap for warm up before the start of every class. Students will be placed in teams and record their time in their tracker. The first week, students will be introduced to SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and we will discuss how setting goals can students be successful, how goal setting applies to all aspect of life, and other ways to increase the likelihood of success for any goals they set. We will then make a SMART goal for the class to reduce the time to the warm up run. Students will come up with a goal of decreasing their lap time by 5-10%. We will translate this goal into a smart goal; the measurement will be time to complete one lap, the goal is attainable and relevant, and it will be measured from the 11th of February to the 6th of March, giving them 10 classes to make this improvement. For added incentive during these runs, if the students are successful, the last week before spring break we will play games for warm up.

The next core competency will be responsible decision making. The first class I will introduce the students to Hellison’s model of social responsibility and explain the table mentioned about the levels of social responsibility. For every class, students will be asked to perform a self-assessment using the chart and this will be tracked over time. As a class we will discuss what social responsibility is, the CASEL definition, and talk about the role of social responsibility in physical education. Actively reflecting on ones social responsibility and having a clear explanation of how a socially responsible person acts can increase one’s social responsibility (Hellison, 1995).

The next core competency that will be discussed in class will be social awareness. As teams are such a common social structure within physical education and this project, we will be discussing different roles on team. Emphasis will be on how each role is important, the benefits of working together and moving from an “I or Me” attitude to an “Us and Me” attitude. Following the discussion, students get into their teams and form a circle in open space and will attempt to sit down on knees of the person behind them. The task will be repeated in two larger circles, then lastly in 1 circle with the entire class. The task will be concluded with guided questions such as “Is everyone sitting the same way, at the same height?” “What happens to the circle if someone does not support the person in front of them” and “when do we see this in our class?” The goal of the questions is to highlight how every person’s role is different, but how each is important, and how teammates must support each other to achieve success.

The fourth core competency we will discuss is relationship skills. For the Relationship Skills competency I will be discussing conflict resolution. As we will previously have gone over the importance of teams working together, this talk will be about what do when we are not getting along with one of our teammates. Conflict resolution is a very important relationship skill. A useful form of conflict resolution is using “I statements.” I statements are statements that can be use to let someone know their actions are bothering you without increasing the conflict or tension (Macbeth & Fine 1995). “I statements” involve one to state how someone’s actions is making them feel, naming the specific behavior that is bothering them, and suggesting a preferred behavior. Following the discussion, students will work in their teams to come up with I statements to 2 situations.

The last core competency that we will be discussing is Self Awareness. For Self Awareness we will be focusing on stress management. The class will be presented with a stressful situation and as a group will discuss responses and solutions to the situation. The class will be introduced to 4 stress management techniques: Deep Breathing, Progressive Muscular Relaxation, The Relaxation Response, and Exercise.

**Assessment**

I will be using a variety of methods to measure whether or not the lessons are having an effect on the students and, if so, the degree of the effect. The most frequent form of assessment will be observations. My role in the class involves me to be with the students at all times. While in the class I will be watching the students performing various group activities together. Social and emotional learning improves student’s attitudes, increases their motivation to learn, decreases disruptive class behavior such as non-compliance and aggression, reduces anxiety, stress, and depression (CASEL, 2014). Throughout the activities I will have the opportunity to watch and listen for positive or negative behaviors, conflict, problem solving, and leadership among the groups. Throughout my practicum I will constantly be marking down notes and reflecting on the experiences and recording observations of all kinds.

As mentioned in the section above, the students will be performing several activities and we will be having several discussions. After they have finished the activities, I will look take them in to assess the students’ work. I will be looking for whether or not the students have completed every question, if they have filled out their time every day or completed their self assessment and lap time for each day, if they have written out their the details for their goals, and if they have completed two of the three I-statements. I will be assisting students who have questions or are having difficulty completing the assignments. If there is a common problem throughout the class with filling out the sheets, or a concept that was missed, then I will go over it again the next class.

Their daily self-assessments will also be used as a form of assessment. For the first few classes their will likely be some inconsistency in the values and extreme scores. However, as the students practice the act of reflection and become familiar with Hellison’s model they will get into a routine and it is expected that their scores will balance out. Whether or not students feel as if they are participating well in physical education class can be a reflection of their motivation and level of comfort in the class (Hellison, 1995). If a student’s mark gets lower throughout the class then the student than the lessons may be having a negative effect on the students on the motivation. If a students mark increases, then the lesson may be having a positive effect on that students motivation and feeling of belonging to the class.

Throughout the practicum the students will be performing a variety of games and drills. Towards the end of the unit I will have the students complete a form that analyzes the educational value of a drill, a game, and the class. The form will require students to think critically about the class as a whole on factors such as equality, skill level, social behavior, and rules. High levels of fairness equality, and positive social behaviors are positively associated with the level of “working together” among the students.

Lastly, the students will be filling out an exit slip before and after the “Perry Talks.” The form is designed to measure different components of “working together” such as student’s enjoyment level in class, their perceived role on their teams, how well they feel like their team works together, and how well their team communicated. The slips will consist of 4 statements that they must put a value between 1 and 5 on the degree to which they agree with each statement. This will allow for a quantitative assessment on whether or not the students feel their sense of working together has changed. The last question is a written response question that will look at what the students learned from the “Perry Talks,” which is more open ended and will allow the students to write down any material that comes to mind.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study that have come to light during my research. The first is the difference between the context of the study and the research. This study uses a lot of the material created by Don Hellison. Hellison’s research was designed for “delinquent boys, potential dropouts who were turned off by the system and have had more than their share of difficulties with societies rules and regulations” Hellison (1978). For my practicum I have been placed at Lord Byng Secondary School, which is located in a higher socioeconomic neighborhood and the students are very focused on academic success. Hellison’s model, however, is a widely used affective assessment in many physical activity settings and it’s usefulness and educational relevance should not be limited to a particular socioeconomic status.

Another problem that may arise is difficulties with bringing theory into physical education classes. Physical education classes are highly activity based. Students are accustomed to the goal of getting and keeping students active throughout the class. Introducing theory sections will be a disruption to the routine they are familiar with, and there may be some resistance. As theory and lecture are not common, there are very few resources for delivering this type of education as well. The PE department at Lord Byng has a chalkboard in one of the gyms, but no whiteboard projection screens, or any other device to help guide theory classes. To minimize these problems, theory lessons will be short and held at either the end or beginning of class with feedback to highlight examples during class. Handouts will be given with important information for students to follow along or reflect back on.

The next potential problem is the lack of time. Some of the curriculum that I will be teaching has been pre-determined and is not flexible. When school continues following spring break, The PE department will be introducing a track unit that will include a variety of stations and classes. The students will be participating in a variety of stations each held by different teachers. Because of this, I only have the classes before spring break, which is a total of 12 classes and limited lecture time, to cover the material. Hellison worked with classes year round, and CASEL’s 5-point scale is complex, so whether or not the time I have will be enough to determine a significant change remains to be seen.

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Appendix

`5 Perry Talks

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Self Management | Goal Setting – SMART goals |
| 2. Self Awareness | Stress Management/Self regulation– Visualization – alternative solutions |
| 3. Social Awareness | Roles on team – Trust building |
| 4. Relationship Skills | Problem Solving Skills –the I statement |
| 5. Responsible Decision Making | Self Management – Daily self reflections assessments |

Self Management: Goal Setting

S pecific

Measurable  
Attainable  
Relevant  
Time-bound

Relationship Skills - The I statement

You are leaving the house for school and you walk out the door and down the steps only to realize you left your phone in your room. You run back up the stairs, open the door, take off your shoes, and run to your room and you see your mum looking at things on your phone. Come up with an “I” statement that lets your mum know you don’t want her going through your phone.

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You get home from school and sit down on the couch and check your phone you notice that your Facebook status has been changed and says you’re doing something rude, which you aren’t. It already has 4 comments, and you realize that your friend John must have changed your status when you weren’t looking. The next day you see John. Come up with an “I” statement that let’s John know you don’t want him to do this again.

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You are in PE class playing soccer and you have a test next block that you are nervous about. You are trying to play soccer but are not playing very well as your focused on the test. Your teammate passes you a ball and you lose the ball in your feet. He keeps yelling at you and putting you down. After the game you are walking together with this teammate to the change room. Come up with an “I” statement that helps him know that his yelling doesn’t motivate you to do better.

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Responsible Decision Making: Daily Self Assessments

Hellison’s Model

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Description** |
| **0** | Egocentric, lack of self-control, non-team player. |
| **1** | Respecting the Rights & Feelings of Others Self-control and peaceful conflict solving |
| **2** | Effort and Cooperation: Getting along, being self– starter, trying new tasks. |
| **3** | Self-Direction: Being on-task, setting and sticking to personal goals and resisting peer pressure. |
| **4** | Helping Others and Leadership: Showing caring, sensitivity and concern for others in the class |
| **5** | Taking TPSR Outside the Gym: Integrating TPSR values into other areas of life—being role models. |

Exit Slip

**1 strongly disagree 3 neutral 5 strongly disagree**

I get excited about coming to PE 1 2 3 4 5

Our class works well together 1 2 3 4 5

My team works well together 1 2 3 4 5

Our class communicates well 1 2 3 4 5

What did you learn from the “Perry’s Talks”?

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Exit Slip

**1 strongly disagree 3 neutral 5 strongly disagree**

I get excited about coming to PE 1 2 3 4 5

Our class works well together 1 2 3 4 5

My team works well together 1 2 3 4 5

Our class communicates well 1 2 3 4 5

What did you learn from the “Perry’s Talks”?

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**CRITIERIA FOR ASSESSING THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF A GAME**

**ACTIVITY:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA** | **RATING (1-5)** | **COMMENTS** |
| **1** | Does the game allow for active participation for all children? |  |  |
| **2** | Does the game challenge the children to be successful? |  |  |
| **3** | Does the game promote positive social behaviors? |  |  |
| **4** | Does the game flow? |  |  |
| **5** | Is the game safe for all children? |  |  |
| **6** | Is learning occurring? |  |  |

**Describe what modifications could be made to the game to make this game educational.**