

Professional Development in Physical Education

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Professional development for teachers in physical education can take various forms. Some professionals engage in instructor-led workshops, seminars, and physical activity sessions. Others earn bonus certifications through trainings, education, and additional opportunities. Participating in webinars, blogs, and the recently adopted SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators member forum are still other ways to grow as a professional. This may be considered “old-school” by some, but I like to read research articles, practitioner-based journals, and book chapters. That’s right, hardback chapter books (without pictures) are sometimes my form of professional development!

In the physical education teacher education (PETE) program I teach in, the students are also expected to participate in professional development opportunities. We provide chances for the PETE candidates to assist with 5K road races, seek volunteer and/or paid coaching opportunities, referee local sport activities, support Special Olympics events, and participate in recreational and community settings in multiple ways. The program faculty members also promote active participation through the professional state, regional, and national associations. Ultimately, we aim to encourage professional growth and development opportunities throughout the program, hoping to foster a significant level of interest among students both now and in the future. For the most part, none of the professional development opportunities we promote contribute toward the overall academic grades of the students. In other words, the students have ways to grow as professionals, without receiving academic credit for their efforts. We hope to develop in the teacher candidates (our future physical education

teachers) an intrinsic motivation to continue moving forward in an exciting career.

With that said, other professional development opportunities are absolutely necessary within the PETE program during academic hours. We hold our students accountable in areas related to national and state standards; academic content; principles of effective planning, teaching, and assessment; skill and fitness development; and professional

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dispositions. As a result of progressing through the undergraduate curriculum, the students are asked or expected to read and review scholarly articles, book chapters, and other outlets that provide rigor to the program.

Following is a brief description of three scholarly works that I believe are essential for our PETE students. Personally, I reread the content each fall semester as I work with seniors in the physical education methods course. We discuss each scholarly work in detail, and the students submit a summary of the

authors’ work. My perceptions are that the seniors value the readings and gain tremendous insight into the profession as a result of studying these works, and for many the readings motivate them to become more effective teachers.

“Effective Instruction in Physical Education,” by Judith Rink (2003)

I first read this book chapter in 2004 — it is one of many chapters in a book titled *Student Learning in Physical Education* (Silverman & Ennis, Eds.). In this chapter Rink (2003) describes effective teaching in physical education, based on years of research in the field. She begins with a brief review of classroom-based literature and research, guiding the reader through what is considered effective teaching in a physical education program. She articulates that, “the aim of the physical education program is clearly identified as developing students who lead a physically active lifestyle” (p. 166). Based on that information, Rink identifies several teaching functions in physical education from previous works. These include identifying intended outcomes for learning, planning learning experiences to accomplish those outcomes, presenting tasks to learners, organizing and managing the learning environment, monitoring the learning environment, developing content, and evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional-curricular process. The remainder of the chapter focuses on “the critical variables from the effective teaching research in physical education” (p. 167). Several concepts are clearly presented, each containing the research base and implications for the physical education teacher. The concepts include the following:

- Students who spend more time in good practice learn more.

- Practice should be appropriate to the goal of learning and the individual student.
- Students who practice at a reasonably high success level learn more.
- Students who practice at a higher level of processing learn more.
- Effective teachers create an environment for learning.
- Effective teachers are good communicators.
- Effective teachers provide feedback.
- Good content development can increase learning.
- Teachers need to try to understand student perceptions of what they ask students to do.
- Teachers provide direct instruction.

Even though the book chapter was published several years ago, the content remains true. To promote a lifetime of physical activity among students physical educators must demonstrate effective teaching. Reviewing the concepts described in this chapter will motivate any professional to improve their teaching and, ultimately, increase student learning.

“Content Knowledge for Physical Education,” by Daryl Siedentop (2002)

This article was published more than 10 years ago, but I believe it should be read by undergraduate students, graduate students, K-12 professionals, and PETE professionals. The ideas presented assist the reader in evaluating what is currently taught and what should be taught in the physical education curriculum. In addition, Siedentop (2002) challenges the reader to consider the in-depth skills and knowledge necessary for effective instruction in physical education. He uses the term “content knowledge — the knowledge, understanding, skill, and disposition that are to be learned by school children” (p. 368) to convey the meaning. He presents the fictional scenario in which “physical education teachers were good at organizing and managing, but didn’t really know enough about the subjects they were teaching to educate students beyond a very rudimentary level” (p. 369). It is advocated throughout the article that PETE

candidates should invest a significant amount of time in the discipline of the profession, meaning the performance of skills. Physical education teachers may become especially proficient in pedagogy throughout their academic career, but they will fail as physical education teachers if they do not know the content. With this perspective in mind, it is likely that many current physical education teachers are not prepared to teach any physical education unit beyond a begin-

associated with individual and group dynamics of players, and the ethical/moral dilemmas posed by competition. (p. 374)

To me, this means that we as physical educators should pursue sport to a high degree. We are doing a disservice to our profession if we are strong in pedagogical methods but weak in content. Reading this article should motivate all of us (current physical education teachers, teacher candidates, and faculty members within PETE programs) to explore (and practice) the content knowledge of our profession at a much deeper level.

One key message Silverman hopes to portray in the article is that if we want students to learn in our physical education programs, they need more than just physical activity.

“Teaching for Student Learning in Physical Education,” by Stephen Silverman (2011)

The third scholarly work highlighted here is a brief article published in 2011. Similar to Rink’s (2003) work, Silverman (2011) proposes that, “teachers need to maximize appropriate, individual, student practice in order to maximize student learning of motor skills” (p. 29). The article is based on a lecture provided by Silverman, discussing his research program. One key message Silverman hopes to portray in the article is that if we want students to learn in our physical education programs, they need more than just physical activity.

Reviewing John Carroll’s model of school learning and directly applying it to what influences learning in physical education, Silverman describes a five-component model:

- Student aptitude or skill level — how quickly each individual student can learn the material
- The ability of students to understand the teacher’s instructions
- Perseverance — the amount of time the student is willing to engage in learning
- The opportunity to learn — time devoted to instruction
- The quality of instruction — what the teacher does to structure the class and provide learning opportunities for students

Based on what I gained from the article and what I want my students to recognize, I am including direct quotations

ning level, or they continue offering only introductory units in a variety of activities. In conclusion, Siedentop records the following:

The teacher of physical education and the coach of children and youth sport teams need to have a reasonable mastery of the sport activities they will teach to their students and players — that is their content knowledge. They should know the technical aspects of the skills involved, the strengths and weaknesses of various strategic approaches to the sport, the training implications for improved performance in the sport, the developmental considerations, the norms, values, and traditions of the sport, the role it does and should occupy in local and national sport cultures, the developing technologies within the sport, the psychological considerations

from Silverman's work. Perhaps these quotes provide meaning for you.

- "The more time devoted to instruction, the more students learn." (p. 30)
- "Not all time devoted to instruction is equal in helping children learn." (p. 30)
- "The more time that students spend in tasks where the teacher is actively teaching and monitoring how students are progressing, the more students learn." (p. 30)

With the above quotes, and especially the third, Silverman highlights that time spent in scrimmages (game-like situations) does not always relate to student learning. Simply put, the game-like opportunities many physical education students are placed in are often not at the appropriate level for them. Therefore, Silverman believes that "appropriate practice" is essential. He refers to Rink's model of content development (informing, extension, refinement, application, and repeat tasks) as he describes appropriate practice.

Silverman concludes the article with a section devoted to "Student Attitude toward Physical Education." In this section he discusses how motor-skill development is a goal of physical education, but not the only goal. He believes that teachers play a significant role in students' attitude toward physical education, noting how many students' attitude changes and becomes less positive about physical education as they get older. Yet the teachers can foster more positive attitudes toward physical education when their students are learning and developing skills.

Summary

Perhaps you engage in professional development in a variety of ways. I hope you employ different methods to reach your goals. With the influx of so much information available to us, it is often difficult to determine what we can and should read, study, review, attend, or participate in for continued professional

growth. However, I encourage you to review the three scholarly works presented here. I believe each one can have a significant positive effect on your teaching, which may further impact the degree to which your students are learning.

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