



Extra! Extra! Read All about the Shift in High School Physical Education

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Guy Le Masurier

I come from a family with a long history in the newspaper business. One thing that I learned from my father about writing newspaper articles was: “Don’t bury the lede!” So, in honor of my father, here is my viewpoint: physical and health educators need to be developing specific knowledge and skills that support physical literacy among adolescents before students leave our programs. The specific knowledge and skills I will discuss are embedded in a five-part personal program planning (PPP) process that includes: self-assessment, goal setting, choosing activities, developing a personal plan, and self-monitoring. My intention in writing this viewpoint was three-fold:

1. To simply remind teaching professionals of the shift in focus for high school physical and health education,
2. To focus readers on a PPP process that can develop specific knowledge and skills among adolescents that can support physical literacy, and
3. To urge physical and health teacher education programs to train teacher candidates to deliver curricula that integrate the PPP process.

I will address each intention in order, with a “cheesy” newspaper headline for each.

Old News: The Focus of High School Physical Education Has Shifted

“In the high school outcomes, special emphasis is placed on fitness and physical activity program planning as well as self-management skills to prepare students for participation in adulthood” (Roetert & Couturier-MacDonald, 2015, p. 111). This focus for high school physical education (PE) places an emphasis on SHAPE America National Standard 3 (i.e., The physically literate individual



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demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness; SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014). In addition to reminding high school physical educators of the shift in focus, I also want to urge middle school physical educators to incorporate the PPP process as early and as often as possible. I write this because most high school students will get one to three semesters of high school PE before they opt out (Grunbaum et al., 2002). Students who get PE exemptions may not even experience high school PE at all. I fear that, as a profession, the shift in focus happened too late in the game to make an impact.

Like other content we deliver in physical and health education, it takes time and practice to develop the knowledge and skills to be able to work through a PPP process for physical activity, health-related fitness, healthy eating, sleeping, or other behaviors. With practice, students will develop competence and

confidence in their ability to use their knowledge and skills to lead healthy, active lives.

Top Story: The Personal Program Planning Process Develops Physical Literacy

“For maximal public health benefit, school physical education programs should prepare children for a lifetime of physical activity” (Sallis & McKenzie, 1991, p. 124). The PPP process incorporates essential knowledge and skills that support adult participation in physical activity (PA; Trost, Owen, Bauman, Sallis, & Brown, 2002). Figure 1 illustrates a five-part personal program planning model for health, fitness and wellness. I will highlight the knowledge and skills that can be developed during each step of the process (i.e., self-assessment, SMART goal setting, choosing activities, developing a plan, monitoring behavior). As mentioned earlier, I recommend having students work through the PPP process multiple times before they leave the program.

Self-assessment. Self-assessment is a self-management skill that helps people make changes (Corbin & Le Masurier, 2014). Students can self-assess numerous aspects of fitness, health and wellness such as PA, health-related fitness, eating, sleeping, social support, and self-esteem. Self-assessments require knowledge and understanding to interpret the results and to generate *personal* health information. In addition to generating awareness of personal health information, self-assessments develop students’ skills (e.g., physical assessments) and can generate student interest in health and fitness concepts. Following a self-assessment, students can move to the next step in the PPP process. It is critical that educators do

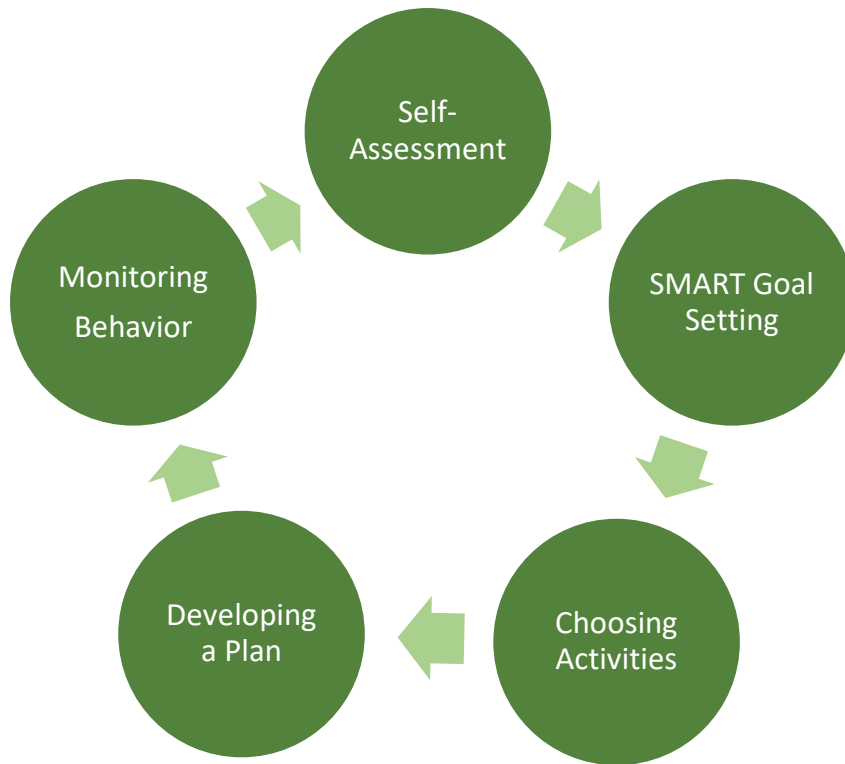


Figure 1.
A five-part personal program planning model for health, fitness and wellness

not equate self-assessments to fitness-testing students. Self-assessments are much more than fitness testing (see SHAPE America’s position statement on “Appropriate and Inappropriate Practices Related to Fitness Testing,” 2017).

SMART Goal Setting. Goal setting is a practice used by people all over the world to accomplish goals. In addition to engaging students in the process of setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goals, physical and health educators should be teaching the difference between process and product goals. Process goals focus on behaviors (e.g., walk 20 minutes at lunch nine times over the course of the next three weeks; consume two more glasses of water per day for 21 days) and are appropriate as short-, medium- and long-term goals. Product goals focus on outcomes (e.g., increase my vertical jump by 2 inches; lose 5 pounds) and are best suited for medium- or long-term goals, because setting short-term product goals sets

people up for failure. When students set SMART goals following self-assessments, teachers and other students can provide social support to meet those goals. Social support is a strong correlate of adult PA (Trost et al., 2002).

Choosing Activities. Engage students in the process of identifying and choosing the kinds of PA they like to participate in, and support them in finding places to engage in those activities. You will be able to accommodate some in PE, and you should be encouraging students to find places in the community where they can engage in activities that suit them. At a minimum, having students identify their PA preferences (e.g., competitive or social, indoor or outdoor, team or individual, alone or with others), and the reasons for those preferences, focuses students on what can support their PA participation. It is well-established that choice enhances motivation in PE (Alderman, Beighle, & Pangrazi, 2006). This is also a great opportunity for students to explore how they can access PA

during school, before and after school, and in their community, and for teachers to engage the comprehensive school PA program model (CSPAP).

Developing a Plan. Once students have performed a self-assessment, set a SMART goal, and chosen some activities that can help them reach their goal, it is time to develop a plan. If students are working on a SMART health-related fitness goal, this is a great opportunity to teach them about the FITT (frequency, intensity, time and type) formula for the health-related component of fitness and some basic principles of training (e.g., overload, specificity and maintenance). Students need this knowledge and understanding to create a safe, personal program that supports their SMART goal. Teachers might need to sacrifice some activity time in PE to provide students with the time and information needed to develop and write down their personal plan. But it is my view that doing so is necessary in order to develop students’ knowledge and understanding of health and fitness concepts. Some people disagree, and they often have students dressing out and listening to fitness instruction at the same time as they conduct some activity.

If we are going to have students dress out for PE, I strongly support maximizing activity (i.e., using techniques like instant activities), minimizing instruction time (i.e., using quality demonstrations that focus on one cue at a time), minimizing management time (i.e., by having equipment ready and effective grouping techniques), providing specific feedback on skills, and having students apply their skills in cooperative and/or small-sided games that provide all students enough repetitions to increase competence and confidence (see Graham, Elliot, & Palmer 2016).

However, I believe that physical and health education have discipline-specific knowledge and competencies that are as important as any subject in school, and I do not believe that this knowledge can be conveyed or those competencies developed with short soundbites squeezed in among bouts of activity in the gym. In my opinion, sacrificing some, *not all*, activity time in PE to develop knowledge

and skills that support PA now and in the future is worth it.

Monitoring Behavior. With the advent of smartphones and fitness technology (e.g., apps, bands, bits and watches), it has never been easier for students to self-monitor their progress. Students have all sorts of tools that enable them to document their activities (e.g., selfies, videos, tracking apps, activity logs, food logs) and generate reflections on their experiences and progress (e.g., video reflections, podcasts, vlogs). Having students engage in discussions about their personal program progress can facilitate the development of self-management skills that students need to learn and practice. For example, sharing positive and negative activity experiences in the community, sharing about the things that support them in reaching their goals, sharing what barriers are getting in the way of reaching their goals, sharing ideas about how to overcome barriers, and sharing effective time-management strategies all support students working together to develop effective self-management skills that develop healthy, active living.

Coming Soon! The Next Generation of Physical and Health Educators

In order to truly shift the focus of secondary PE, the next generation of secondary physical and health educators will need to possess the content knowledge and pedagogical skills and strategies to deliver programs that engage students in the PPP process. Fitness education is the curricular model that focuses on the PPP process, and there are resources such as the instructional framework for fitness education (SHAPE America, 2012) and commercially available programs (e.g., Fitness for Life; Physical Best) to support aspiring educators. In their program, teacher candidates should have experience creating stand-alone units that move students through the PPP process and integrated units that blend the PPP process into existing units

(e.g., cardiorespiratory fitness program integrated with a soccer unit).

Obituaries

We have had decades of secondary PE programs focused on traditional sports and a revolving door of sport units lasting a couple or more weeks, and the results are in! Most students do not elect PE when given the choice (Grunbaum et al., 2002), PE elicits strong negative feelings among some participants (Locke, 1992), students get bored of doing the same things every year (Rikard & Banville, 2006), and eager PE students who enroll in exercise science, physical education, or related kinesiology programs have little knowledge of basic fitness concepts (e.g., FITT formula, principles of training; personal experience and communications with colleagues throughout North America). Oh yeah, we also have one of the most overweight, inactive and medicated adult populations in history. Physical education is not to blame for the aforementioned complex social and ecological phenomena, but it does have a role in public health to address the challenges of obesity and inactivity.

Jobs

Physical activity is important, but it is not what makes physical and health educators unique. Schools could outsource PE to fitness companies and offer group fitness to get our kids active, but physical and health educators are trained pedagogues with discipline-specific knowledge who are uniquely positioned to develop valuable physical and self-management skills, knowledge and understanding, and attitudes that support physical literacy for the majority of children and adolescents in a public health setting. Let us get this word out on the street by delivering quality programs that engage students in the PPP process.

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