

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Meaningful Experiences in Physical Education and Youth Sport: A Review of the Literature. Quest, 69(3), 291-312.

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THE PROBLEM:

Providing meaningful experiences for young people in physical education should be a priority for teachers. Pedagogies that support this goal can offer an important and innovative vehicle for improving students' physical education and sport experiences and may promote lifelong physical activity participation. This review of the literature uncovered what experiences young people identify as meaningful in physical education and youth sport.



Research Summary:

The lack of meaningful experiences in physical education may lead to declining participation rates in physical education and youth sport. Other scholars argue that even if physical education is meaningful, teachers should not assume it will promote lifelong activity. The findings indicate common themes such as social interaction, fun, challenge, motor competence, and personally relevant learning as contributors to meaningful experiences for young people.

Conclusion:

Positive social interaction with peers and teachers is important to meaningful experiences, while negative relationships do not contribute to meaningful experience. Though meaningfulness can be fostered through group interaction, it can also be enhanced through deeply personal and private experiences. Fun is important to meaningful experiences, though it should not take over the learning focus. Meaningful experiences in physical education were predominantly shown to come from challenges, rather than competition. Furthermore, meaningful experiences came from displaying a competent level of motor abilities in class rather than deficiencies. Personally relevant learning was key and consistently linked to meaningful physical education, where students were able to see the relevance of what they were doing in class. Meaningful experiences are contextually bound and take into account social context. Furthermore, what is considered meaningful is influenced by the individual's age, gender, culture, and ethnicity.

Key Take-Away:

Even though meaningful experiences are different for each individual, there are some common themes teachers can try to adopt in their class. Examples include making physical education personally relevant (investigate the culture and community where students live), have an element of fun within class (build student rapport by getting to know them, along with their likes and dislikes), allow students time to become competent in skills/tasks, and give personal challenges rather than focusing on the competitive elements of sports/activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Kretchmar, R. S. (2006). Ten more reasons for quality physical education. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 77(9), 6-9.
- Wright, J., Macdonald, D., & Groom, L. (2003). Physical activity and young people: Beyond participation. *Sport, education and society*, 8(1), 17-33.