

ARTICLE REVIEWED

“Go Where the Big Challenges Are”: Preservice Physical Educators as Change Agents

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THE PROBLEM

A push for Common Core implementation nationwide has left many PE teachers at risk for losing time allocated to their subject area. Working to find new ways to provide children movement in their day, educators have turned to cross-curricular integration, specifically literacy (James & Bullock, 2015; McMullen et al., 2019). Integration can be achieved by adding physical activity into the classroom, adding other content areas into PE, or simultaneously combining two or more disciplines. This study aims to understand how preservice physical education teachers with previous literacy integration experiences comprehend literacy integration.



Research Summary

This study took a socialization approach to understanding how current preservice physical education teachers view literacy as a component of physical education. Twenty-one students from a midwestern university were put into focus groups where data was collected from each participant at three different points, with collection lasting approximately four semesters. Importantly, this particular study was part of a larger longitudinal study on PETE students’ perceptions of literacy in physical education. As part of the required coursework of this institution, students engaged in a content area literacy (CAL) course where they learned and practiced various literacy tools. Data was collected through coursework during the required CAL course and from one focus group interview during the student teaching portion of the program. Data was then transcribed, and three members of the research team individually coded all data before the team met to organize codes into categories. Perceptions of literacy, PE, and literacy integration were among those categories. Four major themes were then developed including preservice teachers feeling a sense of pride and defensiveness for their subject area and their support of collaboration despite feelings of marginalization. A dedication to students and school initiatives and preservice teachers wanting to be agents of change within their future schools were the final two themes.

Conclusion

Many preservice teachers found themselves committing to literacy integration and collaboration despite the intense marginalization they felt within their schools. Further, they agreed physical literacy plays a role in physical education and can be implemented without deterring from the discipline’s purpose. Preservice teachers felt more prepared to move forward as agents of change for students and schools’ missions regarding literacy.

Key Takeaway

The research team acknowledges the role socialization plays in how preservice teachers view physical education and literacy as well as their willingness to change. During this study, preservice teachers faced marginalization within their school environments and still felt strongly about taking on a collaborative approach to teaching. Integration of literacy both within the discipline and interdisciplinary can help teachers feel valued and foster student learning.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

James, A. R., & Bullock, K. (2015). Integrating the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards into Physical Education. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 86(3), 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2014.998391>

McMullen, J. M., MacPhail, A., & Dillon, M. (2019). “I want to do it all day!”—Students’ experiences of classroom movement integration. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 94, 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.11.014>