

## METHODOLOGY

# Curricular Issues in Urban High School Physical Education

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### Abstract

*Urban physical education curriculum articles are sparsely published in major educational journals (Chepyator-Thomson et al., 2008; Culp, 2005). This leaves urban physical educators the daunting task to modify and prepare curriculum based on formal class training and educational workshops and to interpret journal articles to be applied to the urban setting (Constantinou, 2011; Schmidlein, 2008). Moreover, as of fall 2012, only one textbook has been published regarding urban physical education. The purpose of this article was to examine high school physical educators' issues with curriculum. Furthermore, the primary end result was to offer suggestions to practicing educators to help modify curriculum to meet the needs of large class sizes, lack of equipment, and working with diverse populations (Chase et al., 2011).*

According to Pahnos and Butt (1995), the United States is referred to as a “salad bowl” with different racial and ethnic communities. According to Kozol (2005), urban areas are cities with populations greater than 100,000 people, and urban high schools are normally classified as schools that are within city limits, have a high poverty rate, have high free and reduced-price lunch, have a large “student of color” population, and a large English language learner population. In urban schools, these neighborhood schools do not

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receive equal funds, which impacts textbooks, faculty selection, the quality of facilities, and curricula being implemented (Pahnnos & Butt, 1995). The dominant physical education (PE) programs seen in these schools foster the cultural games of the dominant group (European; Chepyator-Thomson, 2001). For example, by using nondominant cultural games, such as *sepak takraw* or *gilli-danda*, the students can learn from others' points of views and acquire critical thinking skills through playing games that would require different strategies than they are traditionally used to in various games played in the United States (Pahnnos & Butt, 1994). Specifically, urban teachers need to facilitate diversity by considering ethnicity and gender in team selection, allowing the students to share their cultural backgrounds and providing students with activities that are authentic and foster the diversity of each city (Gay, 1988). Activities such as dance and ethnic games can add to the growing understanding of content knowledge understanding that is related to multicultural and responsive curriculum. Incorporating "indigenous American" games into the course of study adds to the diversity of the traditional curriculum. Lacrosse and long ball are primary examples of games that make up units that can break away from the traditional urban PE curriculum. Using these Iroquois games can foster understanding of tradition and the indigenous American way of life (Ninham, 2002). Popular PE programs that drive curriculum in urban schools are Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK), Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH), and Middle School Physical Activity and Nutrition (MSPAN; McKenzie, 1998; Sallis et al., 1999; Jensen, 1998; Shephard, 1997). Programs such as the Physical Activity for Total Health (PATH) program can lead to a curriculum that invokes positive health and lifestyle decisions for urban school students (Fardy, Azzolini, & Herman, 2004). Additional programs focus on intervention, such as the "Model for Success," which uses a holistic approach to implement curriculum (Jones & Jones, 2002). Urban school educators need to design and develop multiple methods that create meaningful and engaging experiences for urban, at-risk youth (Knop, Tannehill, & O'Sullivan, 2001). An important aspect of using various programs is fostering an idea of community within the walls of the urban gymnasias (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

## **Teachers' Values**

Value orientations play a large role in what is being taught at a school regardless of the location (Ennis & Chen, 1995). Teachers' values are what teachers think are important in the ways they implement and design curricula. Ennis and Chen (1995) modified a regular education survey (VIO) that polls PE teachers to determine their values on curriculum. In a study of preservice teachers and experienced teachers, the concepts self-actualization (SA), social reconstruction (SR), and ecological integration (EI) were placed over skill mastery in the eyes of the preservice teachers (Meek & Cutner-Smith, 2004). In an additional study, Behets' (2001) survey focused on 1,000 teachers, including preservice and certified teachers, and the results indicated that urban teachers place their greatest curricular concentration on social responsibility orientation, over disciplinary mastery. Going further into the future of a teacher's career in an urban school, a teacher serves as the mediator of culture (Sparks & Wayman, 1993). Multiactivity curricula should allow the teachers' values to show through, thus allowing the teacher to decide to mix the culture of the student with the games and activities in the classroom (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). It is important for the teacher who is implementing the curriculum to build in awareness of activities that the students find authentic and applicable to their day-to-day lives (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003).

## **Students' Values**

Students' motivation and what they value also play a role in developmental approaches to curriculum creation in urban schools (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlmann, & Garn, 2012). According to Kitchin and O'Sullivan (2003), students that are less competitive like less structured games, which would lead a teacher to use modified games and less tournament play. The more the teacher places value on the students' opinions, the more the students will be interested in the school curricula implemented (Chen & Ennis, 2004). The design in urban schools should have a built-in motivation aspect in the curriculum, which would include the students' interests about why they participate in physical activity (Ennis et al., 1999). When the students are motivated, they tend to take ownership of what they are learning, and in urban schools, independence is important to growth and development of the students (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003).

## **Multicultural Physical Education**

Multicultural education has many definitions and connotations. For the purpose of this article, multicultural education will be used in terms of educating multiple ethnicities or races in an inclusive classroom. According to Banks (2003), the first step to multicultural education strives to create a pluralistic society in which many cultures are represented. The traditionally dominant sports should not be the focal point of the curriculum; each unit should use many ethnic games to teach and to provide an opportunity for development of fitness and appreciation for diversity. The lesson should involve strategies that have all students working together to understand each individual's differences (Pahnnos & Butt, 1995). Sutliff (1996) examined teaching strategies that urban teachers used, including content integration, prejudice reduction strategies, and cultural responsive pedagogy. Sutliff built upon Banks' approach to multicultural education and developed ways in which indigenous American could be taught in schools. Culturally responsive pedagogy involves the teacher researching ethnic-specific child care methods that influence how and why students act the way they do. An example of this would be not asking Native American students to look the teacher in the eye when talking to them, as this is not culturally appropriate for many indigenous children (Sadker & Sadker, 2005). Second, prejudice reduction strategies focus on breaking down stereotypes the students and teacher may bring to class. A popular method of prejudice reduction is to have the students work in peer-led groups that revolve around interaction and initiative problem-solving content (Rohneke, 1990). Cunningham's (2004) study centered on possible negative effects of group diversity, and the results indicated that students will often focus on differences and make fun of each other.

## **Underserved Youth in Schools**

Many city school children have been termed *underserved*, leading researchers to define underserved as students who do not receive adequate funds, who have unclear program goals, and whose schools lack community outreach (Martinek, 1997). Lack of discipline and poor social behavior is a key factor that influences what educators feel underserved youth are missing (Lawson, 1997). In 1972, a program in Boston's city schools helped teacher education majors at Boston University to gain valuable field experience working

with at-risk students in movement activities (Cheffers, 1997). The curriculum that has been implemented for nearly 30 years focuses on cooperation, problem solving, and discovery initiatives. Additional research indicates that other programs focus on fitness and teamwork strategies in urban schools (Collingwood, 1997).

Following public outcry of violence in cities, many companies and communities developed after-school recreation programs to keep children off the streets and to allow youth to participate in programs such as Midnight basketball and Nike's PLAY program (Pitter & Andrews, 1997). The key goal of outside recreation is to encourage physical activity participation and give children a productive activity as an alternative to gangs and violence.

### **Teaching in an Urban Environment**

Understanding urban teaching habits involves understanding control and order, in a sometimes chaotic environment, that is found in some inner-city schools. To create an effective learning environment, urban teachers were found to use humor, redirection, and knowing the students' behaviors (Dodd, 1995). Curricula creators need to encourage teachers to add elements of these findings into every lesson, and one way to do this is to research innovation in PE curricula.

### **Methods**

The primary purpose of this study was to interview urban high school PE teachers to find out about their ideas and perspectives on curriculum. Specifically, in this investigation, researchers examined programs to discover and understand how teachers incorporated social change outcomes, multicultural games, and reform strategies in their yearly curriculum. The participants were 10 ethnically diverse high school urban physical educators (seven males, three females). The participants' were 27 to 49 years old, with 5 to 20 years of experience. The ethnic backgrounds included four Caucasians, three African Americans, two Latinos, and one Asian. Institutional review board approval was obtained from a large southeastern university, and the participants completed informed consent. We conducted two interviews; each interview lasted from 30 min to 1 hr with follow-up questions after the participants reviewed the transcript of their interview. Additionally, we collected artifacts such as scope and sequence, unit plans, and lesson plans to be analyzed to support the participants' answers.

## Methodological Procedures

We used hermeneutic phenomenology to analyze the interview transcriptions. Hermeneutic phenomenology refers to a framework used to discover the meanings behind the data collected (Laverty, 2003). According to Heidegger (1962), “Hermeneutic phenomenological reflection, specifically theme-by-theme analysis, enables researchers to delve into the meaning behind the statements that the participants said in response to the interview questions.” Van Manen (1990) said, “The ultimate goal of the dissection of interviews is to gain a better understanding of the ‘essential meaning’ of the responses.” The following quotation lends understanding to what is meant by “essential meaning”:

Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks. (Gadamer, 1998, p. 295)

Several ways exist to develop themes in results: holistic, selective, and line-by-line approach (Van Manen, 1990). Through reflection on the participants’ answers, we used all of these theme development approaches. We read the transcriptions for content and then labeled certain sections for main ideas, which led to the line-by-line approach. An example of using the line-by-line approach would be closely examining several sentences to determine the main goal of a response. Following an exhaustive use of the three approaches, we labeled the answers and used charts to create a picture of the themes found (Van Manen, 1990).

## Criteria for Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has four components: transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability. The extent to which a study is valid has been referred to as trustworthiness, indicating how close reality and the findings match one another (Russell, 2002). Findings that can be used in other situations are said to deal with *external validity*, which is a term used in quantitative research, but in qualitative research *transferability* is used. “The extent to which research findings can be replicated” is what makes studies reliable (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). The primary objective of qualitative research is to ensure that the data are logical and the findings are

trustworthy, instead of attempting to replicate uses in other studies. Qualitative research focuses on the phenomenon at a given place at a specific time, making each experience individualized (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

Examining multiple realities and attempting to make sense of each meaning are key components of qualitative research. The researcher's main goal is to ensure that the participants' views of meaning and reality are consistent and accurate when being thematically reviewed. For the purpose of this investigation, the results are not generalized to other groups of physical educators working in different cities.

**Transferability.** In trustworthiness, the qualitative researcher must look closely at transferability (Patton, 2002). Transferability involves the transfer of the results from this study to another situation. The scope of this investigation is limited to urban high school PE teachers' views, but another investigator may extrapolate the findings to a different group of teachers. This investigation may lead scholars in other teaching fields to look closely at curricula in their specific area. To help ensure reliable data, several techniques can be used: (a) credibility (b) member checks, and (c) peer reviews.

**Credibility.** Credibility refers to the internal validity of the study, or how true the researcher's data analysis is conducted. This is ensured through use of member checks, peer reviews, and subjectivities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Credibility is controlled by the researcher through use of theme-by-theme analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Using quotes is the major way to display the interview answers, and raw data correspond to what is being discussed in the analysis. By using member checks, peer reviews, and understanding the research teams' subjectivities, researchers can share the views of the participants and confirm that what is actually being said is as accurate as possible (Locke et al., 2000).

**Member checks.** We used member checks for accurate portrayal of presentation of the responses that were transcribed. After we transcribed the interviews, we read and coded each interview based on the ideas and perceptions that emerged from the participants recorded data. After the broad essence of the paragraphs was found, we made a note to distinguish their topics (Van Manen, 1990). Member checks were done following the data collection, during the analysis phase. We took data back to the participants and asked them to verify their responses (Merriam, 1998). If we came across an answer that was unclear, we e-mailed the respondent to receive



feedback on the answer that was given. The ultimate outcome of the member check system is to allow the “voice” of the participant to be heard.

**Peer reviews.** Peer reviews involve an outside researcher to help the primary researcher analyze themes. Two doctorate-level researchers with a background in PE analyzed both the transcripts and theme-by-theme analysis. The peer reviewer checks and provides guidance to the primary researcher (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005).

**Triangulation.** Triangulation deals with accuracy in the findings that comes from different data collection methods and examining data in various ways to improve assurance in the conclusions (Patton, 2002). Triangulation occurred through individual face-to-face interviews, artifact collection, and follow-up telephone questions, which led to the same themes from the data sources. Therefore, the data sources displayed the same themes, which strengthen the credibility of the data. Another method of triangulation occurred once we had completed member check procedures. The major adviser was given the answers to confirm the themes and trends that emerged from the transcriptions. The second person’s view of the themes validates the primary researcher’s theme formulation (Van Manen, 1990). Following these steps helped validate the data and increased its trustworthiness.

**Confirmability and dependability.** Confirmability is how the research remains objective in interpretation of the data. This is accomplished using triangulation within grounded theory. The researchers remained objective through constant reflection during the coding of the data. Furthermore, they used dependability, which ensures that participants and the researchers were knowledgeable of the topic being discussed. Finally, reliability in the qualitative paradigm is addressed in all terms by trustworthiness (Locke et al., 2000).

## Results

The results of the study indicate the participants (a) followed district curriculum at their discretion; (b) used health-related fitness and diverse curricula units; (c) employed behavior and social responsibility affective goals in their daily lessons; (d) valued multicultural education, despite lack of content knowledge from either teacher training or professional development; and (e) lacked equipment, had poor facilities, and had large class sizes.



## **Lack of Multicultural Knowledge**

In 2012, many schools in urban areas had students that came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and spoke many languages (Lund & Tannehill, 2011). In relationship to the research questions of this article, we found that the participants infrequently used multicultural units and lessons. The teachers that we interviewed thought that multicultural sports and games were a great idea for their PE programs, but they did not often use such games in PE classes. They expressed the need for more culturally diverse curricula as the students' ethnic backgrounds changed. Miguel said,

Cultural diversity plays a role in my curriculum in that I teach at a very culturally diverse school. I have encouraged each student to research their family history and share their findings with the class. Once this is done, the student will then introduce an individual sport or activity that is specifically related to their culture. Being that some students share the same culture, I encourage that students research cultures that are not directly related to them. In the past, I have had students provide information on the cultures of Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Africa, Jamaica, Italy, Ireland, and the United States. Students that are fluent in other languages are encouraged to share their skills and to teach other students words and phrases that can be used in class for specific activities. The use of culturally diverse activities makes students more accepting and understanding of lifestyles and ideas that they may not be used to seeing in their everyday lives. A culturally diverse physical education curriculum allows students to teach and learn in a comfortable environment that is highly conducive to learning.

Kevon wanted to actively search and add new games to his curriculum:

We try to introduce them to one or two new activities a year or even things we don't know. We will look online and learn how to play them and then we introduce them. We will see how it goes, and if it doesn't work out so well, we will cut the unit short. We want people to learn! European handball, last year we introduced an Indian Sport (Bahk-ra), it was a mix between tennis and soccer. The kids really liked that; the

kids that were into Hacky Sack really got to show off their skills; this stuff is fun for them.

According to Jasmine,

Multicultural education and physical education...to me, that seems like an untouched area in the school district that I work in. The kids are from many different cultures and backgrounds, and they come from other places, where they learn different activities, and I think it would be great and would motivate them to show what they do in their country.

John supports this idea saying that “the main focus will be shifted toward being more diverse not simply skill related.” This next idea shows that the National Association for Sport and Physical Education’s diversity standard is not met in John’s curriculum, and he went on to say at another point in the interview that

multicultural knowledge, not too much from what I know and how it relates to what I know. For example, I can’t teach an activity that I’m not aware of or I don’t know about that comes from another country. Okay. So that’s a limitation based on what I know and my own experiences.

Sasha stated,

We are trying to get [multicultural] because we do have a very diverse population of “Hispanic,” you know, and students who are from Africa so they also share how they do things in their country, too, which makes the whole outcome better and more interesting.

Marilyn’s idea of culture related to the promotion of multiculturalism in her PE class can be summed up in this statement:

I think it’s important to get them involved in other sports; it breaks down a cultural barrier and it’s important for their life to engage in new things, and educationally they will be more open minded as a result of being introduced to these new sports. Sometimes they are a little resentful when playing new sports, but then after they played for a while, they did

begin to enjoy it or they don't like it, but they at least learned about it and can adapt."

Furthermore, she went on to say,

I think it helps to break down the obstacles, whatever stereotypes they have about a different group; it helps break it down and see everyone is part of a family and social situations in the neighborhood; they can all benefit from a different curriculum. Very different multicultural games going on in your curriculum is important.

Howard said that his school had the same Hispanic and African American students, and these are his thoughts about the future:

Working in an inner-city district, [I find that] our demographics do not change much. The biggest challenge I face is getting the students to open their minds and realize there is more out there than basketball. I like to introduce different sports from all different cultures to my students so they have a better understanding of people that may be different from them...In the future, I do not really see the demographics changing. My school population will stay the same. What I like to do is each year to introduce a new game or sport from a culture that the students do not know much about. In doing this, they will learn something new and it will not be the same activities year after year.

In summary of multicultural curriculum, the majority of teachers did not have training on other cultures, but they would attempt to address multicultural games if given the proper training and equipment. If the curriculum is handed down from either the district or the school and the teacher has a \$150 budget a year, we can safely assume that teachers will get the most equipment for the money. In terms of professional development, districts cannot afford to send them to workshops to learn about these games and culturally relevant curricula. This places the burden on teachers to be creative and use students and the Internet to explore what lies beyond health-related fitness activities. It is important to recognize that multicultural lessons were rarely used, teachers viewed the promotion of multiculturalism at the bottom level of Banks' (2003) stages, and most of the participants did not meet the National

Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) goals of standard diversity.

### **Perceived Needed Changes in Physical Education**

Research Question 2 asked the teachers, what needs to be changed in the physical education curriculum? The participants' views on various reforms that need to occur focused on the school and the demographics of the students. Miguel thought,

I feel that it is a mistake for planners to not incorporate diversity into any curriculum goals because as Americans we clearly live in a very diverse place. When devising a curriculum, the location and demographic of a school will always be the first priority. With this being said, certain schools are located in highly populated areas. Curriculum goals for heavy populated city schools would have different curriculum goals than those located in rural areas. By limiting curriculum diversity, we are clearly limiting the way our students learn and think. All curricula should require different and diverse types of activities, teaching strategies, as well as learning environments. Curriculum should contain some concrete standards, but it should also allow the teacher enough flexibility to change and adjust the curriculum so that it meets the needs of the students in a particular location. Flexibility given to teachers would allow statewide and regional curricula the ability to shape lessons and goals to suit the needs of schools and students in their designated area.

Zidane supports Miguel's idea of individual school curricula and addressing students' needs:

Every school is independent in terms of its curriculum; the staff headed by the principal sees how it fits in the kind of curriculum the school should have; ours is a bilingual school, and therefore we are concentrated in ESL English as second language, through implementation of modified exams and lesson plans such as having them interpreted in Spanish for example. The future is more unpredictable and therefore, as teachers, we should be ready for abrupt and long-term changes; remember, everything depends on the type/composition of students at hand.

The evolution of curriculum in PE has now taken a new turn, and many schools are attempting to move away from team sports and move toward lifetime activities and fitness. Curriculum in traditional PE programs focused on sports. Not until after the Korean War did John F. Kennedy start to ask educators to begin implementing the President's Fitness Challenge. Now, nearly 50 years later, PE programs are being designed at the regional and district level and being handed to the PE staff. Most teachers thought that the well-thought-out units are sound and well rounded and drive the entire year, leaving out guesswork. All of the participants thought that a centralized curriculum within a city would be a good idea, though it should be modified based on equipment. Eight out of 10 participants had the curriculum given to them by the school or the district; the two teachers that did not have the curriculum given to them worked at the low-performing schools (self-stated). These teachers felt out of the loop, and one even commented on an article in the paper about a large city PE training program when the new mayor took office. He had to read about it the next day rather than being there because he had no knowledge of the event. The following is a statement based on Reggie feeling "out-of-the-loop":

So a new mayor took office and he comes in with all these changes, like making the Fitnessgram mandatory for all physical education curricula, but then I look in the paper and find out that there was a two-day city wide physical education conference before school started and I wasn't aware of it... How can I implement something when I don't even get an e-mail or a call or a letter; you see what I'm working with here.

The participants that did have the district or school give them a curriculum thought it helped. Previously, the curriculum was "every-man-for-himself" and they had to create how they envisioned a proper, usable PE curriculum. The group generally felt that the new curriculum met either the state or national PE standards, but it was sometimes hard to implement due to behavior problems and facilities. Teachers had their own ideas on state- and nationally mandated curricula. Sasha said, "I think it would be a great idea; I think they really need to strongly implement that [curriculum] and make it 'really' mandatory, starting in kindergarten [through 12th]." To support Sasha's statement, John expressed:

Absolutely, if they were able to create a curriculum and get it right...but to have something statewide that would be universal for physical education would be good and it would give credit to the physical education programs that a state has mandated.

The negative part about having a state- or nationally mandated curriculum was the disparity in equipment and facilities in inner-city schools versus other areas of the United States. Often city physical educators have a small gym and no outside access, so with large classes, issues with space often arise. Jasmine's ideas on facilities were that "... many programs, the state, especially in the city, usually don't take advantage of the outdoor activities, and so they just stay inside, and there are certain things that we can do outside." Although space, gymnasias, and equipment may be different between a city and a suburb or a rural school, the same basic concepts can be the foundation of a well-rounded curriculum. Jasmine also said,

I think in terms of fitness in general, a nationally mandated curriculum would work really well because pretty much that works; I should say we all have the same basic needs. All students' bodies need the same basic things and we can all do the same types of exercises and get pretty much the same results...I think a nationally mandated curriculum would be great, requiring that all students are able to...for example jog...

Furthermore, Howard agreed with a state-mandated curriculum as a guide to be modified at the school level:

I think it does [need to be reformed]; each school does its own thing, and some schools have more advanced equipment than others...but then there's the school where the gym teacher rolls out the ball and sits in his office and reads the newspaper; this is how some schools are; if there was a mandated curriculum schools had to follow, the teachers would start to teach, and in the process, the class would be tougher for the kids...I think a mandated curriculum would in itself lead physical education curriculum reform.

Some teachers thought that the transition between elementary, middle, and high school was not smooth and that the physical

education teachers were not all on the same page. Reggie pointed out,

Many programs classes are so large that no real teaching goes on...It is more like free time. So, you get these kids in high school and they expect basketball all the time and you start to teach volleyball and they are very unused to a PE teacher teaching.

Jasmine showed support for this idea:

I think it does [need to be reformed] because there is not a good transition from each level...[At the] elementary level they don't really transition from the middle school level to the high school...I would say that we don't know exactly what skill level is done at the elementary school...so we waste time at the high school [doing the same thing].

Not having a flowing curriculum can lead to many problems. Students come from a variety of elementary schools, leaving them with different skill sets because curricula are not parallel. More important, all children should know many basic motor movements and basic games or at least be able to participate in them at a minimal skill level. Reggie explained, "Not being able to throw a ball by the time you are in high school should be a red flag that somebody was not doing their job!"

Kevon's thoughts on curricula reform recognized the gap between the "older" generation of teachers and the new physical educators:

I do believe it needs to be reformed; actually, I don't think it needs an entire tear down and rebuild. From my own experiences...the younger generation has a newer approach to physical education, but unfortunately there are a lot of older teachers around that are traditional phys. ed. kind of people and that's what they were taught. I'm not hating on what they're doing right, but right now we need to get out of the basketball, volleyball, and soccer; it can't be traditional sports all the time. Traditional sports are scaring kids out of phys. ed. and making them uncomfortable, and I'll like it



if there is any way we can find more lifestyle activities and teach kids about important parts of physical activities.

Physical education reform needs to be a joint effort, and based on the participants' statements, national and state standards are moving in the correct direction. The problem truly exists among schools, districts, and most of all, the field of physical education. Finally, teachers themselves need to want to change or no reform can begin to occur.

### **Obstacles to Implementing Culture in Curriculum**

The perceived needed changes to reform the participants' curriculum are large class sizes and lack of space. The participants in this study indicated that large class sizes and lack of space led to overcrowding in the gymnasium. Whenever a large group of teenagers gathers together, they want to talk and fool around. However, most teenagers are responsible enough to know that class time is time to learn. The population of inner-city schools that we interviewed seems to have had a hard time deciphering class time from free time. Sasha pointed out, "You get them as teenagers and it's harder because it didn't happen at their younger or earlier grades when they really should begin implementing it [discipline], now it is a problem in high schools." Behaviors that have been present since elementary school are now occurring in high school, which makes trying innovative games and giving more freedom of choice in the gym challenging for many teachers. In an attempt to combat these behavior problems, teachers have set a behavior modification plan as simple as cooperation with others, teamwork, and respect for the speaker. Howard said,

Working together and having respect for each other and the other staff during class. I try and keep the goals simple. The affective and social goals should be geared toward working together throughout the whole year; I follow a couple of standards and they understand they don't follow those rules.

More social and behavioral goals were present throughout the transcripts of the interviews. Jasmine said,

One goal is to get them to focus and get into the team and support one another because they're so young and they like

to make fun of each other. We try to calm them down, and those are proper behavioral goals that we use in our lessons.

These behaviors should have been learned in K–6, but the high school teachers are focused on getting students to focus enough to make teams. In this regard, Jasmine expressed “It takes [boys] a longer time to sit down, and they are very touchy with one another and play fighting and so forth.” David felt that behavior problems may lead to safety problems. If students are messing around, they are probably not paying attention to what is going on. When this occurs in a PE setting, a ball or stick could hit students and hurt them. David said,

One of the main concerns I’ve always had and still have to this day is because of a small gym; we don’t have the outside area so...safety in a sport [becomes a behavioral goal]...concerned with TOO much body contact, especially when you’re getting near the walls...The students need to be careful and just to be aware of their surroundings and get near students without putting their hands on them, so those types of safety social behaviors.

This statement makes a reader wonder how small the gym really is and how many children are really in there. The impact that a simple push or lack of concentration would have on a student getting hurt is hard to imagine, which leads to goals such as working well with others. Zadine stated, “How to communicate within the school. Communicating with all the teachers and everything...This is important because it builds values.” John supported Zadine’s statement:

The important skill is to work well with other people; that would be a huge skill that they can learn, and when they get older and in the workforce, especially if they’re working in a job where you have to work with a lot of people.

If behavior and social skills are prevalent in most PE curricula, PE teachers have the opportunity to provide a positive social climate to foster teamwork and development of cooperation techniques that are applicable to today’s society. The lack of teamwork and cooperation skills affects the curriculum that teachers implement. Howard said he adds teamwork into nearly every lesson of his curriculum:

[Teamwork] is usable outside the gym walls. Working well with others, with partners, is a vital because they are isolated in the classroom a lot of the time and there's not a lot of interaction among them in the classroom, so they come to the gym and they understand that they can work together to accomplish something, and it teaches them that you need to rely on other people to help you sometimes...They are definitely not getting that in the classroom, so I try to focus them and get them to work as a team.

Many teachers have instant activities for when the students walk into the gym. For example, if the unit is handball, the students would walk in and skill cards would be spread out throughout the gym with the equipment ready. The students then go through the stations as individuals or groups. This is an example of a modern warm-up that focuses on skill development and individual direction. Many teachers would love to provide such starter activities, but their students are not responsible enough for these ideas. John had a great comment on the topic:

Some schools and teachers use activities at the beginning of class, or students can come in a class and practice or play with items related to the units...Schools like mine you can't give the activity or equipment because you spend the rest of the day trying to get it back.

David had similar problems with his classes:

I would have to stop the class and have everyone sit down... By stopping the class, [I upset them] and they would have to stop the behavior; it would become less and less because they really wanted to be active.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that if students want to be in the gym, they will stop behaving inappropriately. Therefore, the curriculum and lessons are working if students are willing to stop. Thus by taking time away from them early in the year, the teachers will find that class time later in the year will be more productive.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is Marilyn, who felt that all she could do is encourage sportspersonship and teamwork due to the class size. "Well that's [physical best curriculum] ideal for a small class setting and when you don't have behavioral issues... [With]

our underperforming students, it is very difficult to implement with 50 students.” Reggie had nearly the same problem in his PE class:

Implementing a curriculum with 50 kids in a small crowded gym is often tough; you don’t want to roll out the ball because then they [the students] win. I know a lot of teachers do that...I try to aim for a couple of students at a time, the ones with big behavior issues, and hopefully the others fall into line.

Physical educators attend college (physical education teacher education programs) to learn how to teach, yet when they get to the gymnasium, they are almost starting at a lower level. Even a well-designed curriculum cannot help when educators do not have the space or equipment to implement the curriculum. Adding behavior issues to the equation further limits teachers in terms of what they want to do and what they can actually do. To combat behavior problems, many teachers have inserted teamwork and cooperation sections into their lessons. These concepts can aid in reforming the PE curriculum at the school and district level. We will explore these ideas next.

## **Discussion**

### **Programs and Multicultural Activities**

Curriculum implementation is often based on the values of the individual teacher and PE administrators (Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995). To ensure various cultural inclusions, teachers should consider multicultural activities (Clements & Katz-Kinzler, 2003). When examining the participants’ views of curriculum, we found they supported the idea that it would be an injustice to allow PE curriculum to continue to be largely traditional sport based (Chepyator-Thomson, 2001). Physical educators thought that adding games from different cultures was the baseline of multicultural education (Banks, 2003). Merely incorporating games from a different culture is only the first step of Banks’ stages of multiculturalism. Opening the doors to such games can enable PE programs to think more in depth about the concepts of multicultural education and the role of the cultural relevance cycle (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011).

Several previous studies concluded that a culturally relevant curriculum is needed in urban PE (Kulinna, McCaughtry, Cothran, & Martin, 2006; Rovegno, 2008). The participants of our study

thought that culture plays a large role in the way each lesson unfolds. However, they also thought that multicultural games were not present in their current curriculum. One perceived reason for this lack of multicultural sports was that the curriculum was created at the district level. This finding supports previous urban PE curriculum research that concluded that programs were designed at the district level and implemented by PE teachers (Kulinna et al., 2006). The administrators of each district handed down the outline of the curriculum for each semester. The sports listed were traditional U.S. PE sports and fitness-based activities such as soccer, football, basketball, softball, and fitness units, which were offered throughout the year. This finding supports existing literature; several studies found that physical educators use programs created by other people and merely implement what is given to them (Jensen, 1998; McKenzie, 1998; Sallis et al., 1999; Shephard, 1997).

SPARK, CATCH, MSPAN, and PATH are programs that are similar to the Physical Best program (Fardy et al., 2004; Sallis et al., 1999). The Physical Best program and the aforementioned programs use health-related fitness curriculum and various fitness tests (Jensen, 1998; Masterson & Flynn, 2006; McKenzie, 1998; Sallis et al., 1999; Shephard, 1997). The concept of switching from traditional PE curricula to fitness-based curricula is also present in both CATCH and in the curricula that the participants used in this study. Furthermore, previous research indicated school curricula continues to focus on traditional U.S. sports (i.e., football, baseball, and basketball; McKenzie, 1998). In SPARK and MSPAN, units are set up based on seasons that are heavily represented in the participants' curricula. The teachers in previous studies thought that these programs worked well for teaching sports skills and fitness; teachers interviewed in our study indicated that fitness and game-based curriculum met state benchmarks.

The participants in our study thought that the lack of multicultural games was directly related to their own lack of knowledge and lack of diverse available equipment (Rovegno, 2008). Obviously, if teachers do not know how to play a game and do not have the equipment for the game, they cannot put the multicultural game in their curriculum. These findings show that programs need to incorporate both fitness and multicultural games; moreover, teacher preparation programs need to include diverse games from all over the world. The need for more programs such as these supports the findings of Culp (2005),

who expressed that educational practices should include materials that support multicultural education in urban schools.

The participants from our study valued the goals of multicultural education, which lends support to Pahnnos and Butt's (1995) ideas of diversity and understanding differences. Teachers want their curriculum to meet the needs of their learners. Previous research stated that inner city teachers work with several ethnicities and that each program should incorporate a variety of games (Shen, McCaughtry, Barnard, Martin, & Kulinna, 2006). We also found a diverse curriculum with many games is critical to curricular implementation in urban PE. By including diverse units, teachers can implement a pluralistic and accepting curriculum, thus allowing the curriculum to meet both health-related fitness goals and team sport-based outcomes (Chepyator-Thomson, 2001).

### **Funding and Needed Changes**

Reform is a hot button issue in many educational programs (Grant & Gomez, 2003). The idea of oppression and equity in funding has become important to point out injustices in finance. According to participants, receiving \$150 per year for PE equipment is problematic to the quality of the program and the reform of the education system. For many years, Kozol (1991, 2005) has pointed out the concepts behind social injustice and the plight of the urban school. This study adds to the idea of PE being the "low man on the totem pole" by allowing the participants to tell their side of the story and pointing out how wrong it seems to be expected to run a quality PE curriculum with limited resources and poor facilities.

Lack of funding is a key problem in many urban school districts (Kozol, 2005). PE equipment is expensive and many pieces of equipment are needed to run a well-rounded PE program. Most participants thought that their programs would be positively impacted with more funding. Although they thought that they could improve their programs with more money, facilities were not considered in the money to fund their programs. Having more equipment is only solving half of the problem with urban PE programs. Perhaps a larger problem is having a small gymnasium with no outdoor facilities to engage in sports that need larger surfaces to play. Previous research examined the lack of funding in city schools. The problem in most city schools is that most of the budget is being used for heat and building repairs (Kozol, 1991; Ogbu, 1978; Weiner, 2006). Additionally, school vouchers remove students from the

schools' population, which leads to the removal of funding attached to that student. This affects the budget of the school, which results in a decrease of the PE budget. Overall, money does not solve problems, but it can help physical educators implement a well-rounded curriculum in their schools.

### **Needs of Students and Social Responsibility**

Reproduction of class and democratic participation in society are key principles in the theory of social justice. Teachers need to think critically about how they can help students become active participants in society and become proactive in moving above the poverty line. Teachers can do this by giving them skills that are applicable in school PE and in the outside world. Developing sustainability and responsibility for one's own actions is a key skill that participants wanted to impart on their students. Some teachers think that giving students key social behavior skills and directing them to be leaders can help them become active in leadership roles in society and help them try to better their lives though attaining their affective PE goals.

Affective goals have long been a part of aims and goals in PE. Teachers indicated that their students lacked personal and social responsibility traits in their behavior because previous PE experiences allowed them to develop these traits. Teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR) ideas are a part of the NASPE's goals for a physically educated person and has long been researched by scholars such as Hellison (2003). Many of the participants thought that behavior and safety were important goals for each lesson that should be included in unit planning. Dealing with students that have behavioral issues can be trying for any teacher, and this is especially hard for classes with 50 or more students. Most participants regarded highly activities that foster teamwork, respect, and cooperation. This supports Martinek and Hellison's (1997) research, which displayed that teachers want to incorporate character development into physical activities.

Teachers want students to think about the decisions they make in PE and to think about the consequences of their actions. This is important to participation in society and to overall personal responsibility. Allowing students to make behavioral decisions and own their actions was prevalent in Compagnone's (1995) study with inner-city youth. The findings also concluded that students need to follow directions and should not make fun of others while



participating in activities. These findings support the Timm et al.'s (2003) article about TPSR-based curricula to at-risk youth. Many physical educators think that students lack discipline and have poor social behavior skills, which influence the way the curriculum is implemented (Lawson, 1997). Several participants in the study supported this idea. Researchers can debate whether it is a societal problem or a home problem. Overall, based on the participants' perspectives, including TPSR in every unit is appropriate. TPSR may be useful because if the students are not getting these social skills at home, then the school is responsible for teaching them appropriate behaviors.

### **Priorities and Curricula Development**

When developing a PE curriculum that is multicultural and fitness related, teachers need to look at critical thinking and teaching students how to actively reflect on the class. Once teachers give students ideas of how to look at problems from different vantage points, they give them the skills to accomplish various goals in life. Priorities of the participants were different than traditional physical educators' views. Social justice-driven physical educators may value fitness and cardiovascular activities but not at the expense of multicultural games and critical thinking skills. In an ideal setting, a teacher would have an all-encompassing curriculum that places equal value on several aspects.

Priorities and value orientations on what is considered important in a PE curriculum are topics that give a voice to physical educators who are implementing these curricula in inner-city schools (Jewett et al., 1995). Overall, the question that comes to mind is, what is important to you? The participants in this study, like many others, agree that health-related fitness has great value to them and is in the best interest of the students that they teach. Due to the alarming number of overweight and obese students, the participants thought cardiovascular-based activities, such as basketball, soccer, and running games were essential activities for combating the national obesity problem. The U.S. population is overweight (60%), and 25% of the population is obese, with over 20% of the population being completely sedentary (Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2007). Statistics such as this make it more important for physical educators to use the time they have with the students in the most effective manner possible. "Best bang for your buck!" Activities such as adventure games and softball are great for teaching teamwork and cooperation

and developing social and cognitive skills, yet the heart rate and activity levels of the students is so low during these activities that it does not meet their daily 20 min of target heart rate cardiovascular fitness time (Shen et al., 2006). This idea supports past studies of fitness-based curriculum and the importance of including cardiovascular-based activities in PE (Sallis et al., 1999). SPARK, CATCH, PATH, and MSPAN focus on health-related fitness and the importance of increasing muscle strength, muscle endurance, cardiovascular fitness, and flexibility to maintain an overall healthy body composition (Jensen, 1998; McKenzie, 1998; Sallis et al., 1999; Shephard, 1997).

Teachers value overall fitness levels or health-related fitness and social responsibility in their students, which supports a series of studies by Ennis and Chen (1993, 1995). Additionally, multiactivity curriculum was present in the participants' curricula, confirming previous research that used a variety of units (Culp, 2005). PE teachers, as a group, likely view fitness and being able to play well with others as a high priority. An effective way of accomplishing this goal would be to use many sports and games to keep the students and their interests levels high (Shen et al., 2006). Finally, attempting to have the students become engaged in a "basketball culture" directly affects the amount of resistance to new curricula. McCaughtry (2007) previously explored how to move away from basketball in urban settings. Thus, the physical educator should be apprehensive about appeasing the students' desire to engage in basketball on a daily basis.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the ideas and perspectives that urban PE teachers possess. The findings, as connected to the research goals of the study, are discussed in this section. Our ideas and perspectives of this study are that the participants are not reaching the minimal goals of multiculturalism, as set forth by Banks (2003). Additionally, the driving principles behind social justice are barely on their minds as they implement their curriculum. None of the teachers discussed how they thought they were the least advantaged in the education realm, many PE teachers are thought of as coaches, or the old adage comes to mind, "those who can do... those who can't do teach... and those who can't teach... teach physical education." Even more disheartening was that they did not express the idea that they should focus on power struggles that their students below

the poverty line face. Some participants thought that their students receiving an unequal PE curriculum compared to suburban schools 20 miles away was a travesty. Ultimately, the teacher is responsible for exploring and gaining curricula knowledge of such concepts.

The following ideas center on the main points learned from this study. First, urban school districts are developing curriculum plans, and the teachers are implementing their versions based on available facilities and equipment. Second, an important result was that the teachers thought they were unprepared to incorporate multicultural games into the curriculum and thus did not meet the NASPE standards on diversity. Finally, the participants showed that fitness and cardiovascular activities seemed to be the most important concepts that physical educators wanted to pass on to their students. Overall, the 10 urban physical educators gave us a look into what they are doing with their schools' curricula. The results of this study can be used to attempt to modify current curricula to meet the needs of each student and to remain in line with the NASPE goals. This modification may create a "physically educated" student. Furthermore, teachers should take advantage of the cultural resources that their students bring to the class and help foster an understanding and appreciation of differences and attempt to improve health-related fitness.

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