

Meaningful PE & Fitness



In Meaningful Physical Education (MPE), teachers work with students to identify experiences that are enjoyable, challenging, include a variety of learning opportunities, & are personally relevant which likely lead to a commitment to active participation (Teixeira, Carraça, Markland, Silva, & Ryan, 2012). The following outlines meaningful experiences for school-aged children & youth in a fitness setting. Listed below are 5 of the 6 features included in MPE. Delight is not listed because it is not easily planned for (Fletcher et al., 2021). The hope is that fitness experiences, using the MPE approach, will result in students experiencing delight related to movement in PE &/or outside of PE through engagement in their own personal playground.

Social Interaction

Establish a strong sense of community & plan for social interaction based on the needs & interests of students (Fletcher et al., 2021). Give students the choice of who they are tested with & provide a space that does not put students on display for the whole class (Alfrey, 2023).



Fun



Elementary students often identify playing games as being fun, while secondary students sometimes relate fun to challenge & learning (Dismore & Bailey, 2011). Provide alternative types of exercise such as movement games (e.g. tag) & movement experiences such as hiking, dancing, aerobics, boxercise, & circuits that are fun - they are found to be more appropriate for promoting physical activity (Cale & Harris, 2009).

Motor Competence

PE is more positive when students perceive they have motor competence, while a lack of competence can reduce enjoyment (Fletcher et al., 2021). Too much emphasis on performance can exclude or isolate some students (Fitzgerald, 2005). Teachers can place emphasis on self improvement over time rather than fitness comparisons with others' (Cale et al., 2014). Have students self-record scores & do not have test results published or shared (Alfrey, 2023).



Challenge



'Just right' challenges are essential to attract students to enter & invest in developing their personal playgrounds (Kretchmar, 2006). Too hard or too easy challenges can have harmful effects on participation (Dismore & Bailey, 2011). Students should choose the fitness test(s) they participate in (Alfrey, 2023). Tests should be modified accordingly to ensure the challenge is optimal for each individual.

Personally Relevant



Students should be provided with information on what they are learning, why this learning can be important, & how this learning can be linked to their physically active lives beyond school (Fletcher et al., 2021). Inquire into fitness testing & discover the purpose of each fitness test (Alfrey, 2023). Provide clarity to students on the learning that should be taking place (Alfrey, 2023).

Students can choose their fitness test(s) that connect with physical activity pursuits outside of school.

Inspired by the work of:

Alfrey, L. (2023). An expansive learning approach to transforming traditional fitness testing in health and physical education: Student voice, feelings and hopes. *Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25742981.2023.2183477>

Fletcher, T., Ní Chróinín, D., Gleddie, D., & Beni, S. (2021). *Meaningful physical education: An approach for teaching and learning*. Routledge.