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Physical Education for Life

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### **Abstract**

Physical education (PE) in public secondary schools is not being appreciated as a valuable discipline. Students are not required to meet the state PE requirements due to exemptions from articles of the California PE standards for which districts may apply. Interviews were conducted with local high school teachers and administrators to better understand how the lack of emphasis on PE has impacted the school curriculum and students, and what strides can be made to emphasize the educational value of PE. Evidence and research has shown that the greatest variable in student engagement and the educational quality of PE is the teacher. Some teachers may choose to go above and beyond the requirements of the curriculum while others may choose to follow the loose guidelines laid out by the district. Preliminary data analysis indicates that instructor motivation has the greatest impact on student performance, however, the quality of the lessons are at the teachers discretion. Although benchmark standards are in place for PE at many high schools, these standards only serve the students who have not been omitted from PE by the district's exemptions.

### **Physical Education for Life**

PE is a mandatory part of nearly every high school students' curriculum. Some students enjoy PE and view it as an opportunity to exercise or be outside of the traditional classroom setting. Other students may feel as if PE classes are unnecessary due to active participation in school sports teams or even nationally competitive athletics such as figure skating. Others still do not see the value of the material or may not feel there is any personal enrichment from PE, and consequently have no motivation to participate in any of the activities within the curriculum. The class itself may be an "easy A" to a student with natural athletic abilities, but if this is true then the student is not being challenged by the educational aspects of the course.

During my second year of high school, my tenth grade PE instructor was a weight lifting enthusiast. Weight lifting was an activity I had never put much thought into, but was also one in which I had never actively practiced. Part of our grade was based on steady improvement over the semester by logging our activities into a data recorder. He motivated his students to actively participate by helping each one set a personal goal and a workout routine to achieve that goal. I felt a greater sense of individual accountability for my goals, achievements, and failures and became more invested in the lesson material.

The other students had become more motivated to participate in class activities as well. A clear goal had been placed before the students beyond a passing grade, the goal of personal health and fitness. The instructor also educated the class about the major muscle groups being worked and tested the class on the names of these muscle groups and their placement in the body. The class went beyond any PE curriculum I was aware existed. I was so inspired that I elected to take his PE class for a third year and had the opportunity to work beside him my fourth

year of high school as his teaching assistant. Since leaving high school and entering college, I have done my best to pursue a life of being physically active and have continued to take PE courses as often as possible.

My experience is an example of the benefits of creating an environment in which students can feel motivated, and how that motivation can turn into a pursuit of lifelong fitness. If the educational value is being left out of the physical education class, then students are justified in the presumption that doing the minimum is acceptable. If teachers only require students to show up, dress for the class, and walk laps to receive credit, then there is no inspiration to pursue lifelong fitness goals. It is crucial to leave a positive impression on students at a young age so they may prevent or reverse the damages which can be caused by a sedentary lifestyle, poor eating habits, and obesity. The best way to encourage students is to create a motivating environment where students feel inspired to continue to be active outside of the classroom.

### **What is the Problem and Why is it an Issue**

Over the past decade, numerous studies have produced an overwhelming amount of data suggesting that a high percentage of adolescents are, or are at risk of becoming, obese. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), since the 1980's the rate of childhood obesity has nearly tripled. At the heart of this issue is a lack of student interest in pursuing physical activities and a lack of physical and health science education. *Physical Education for Life* intends to evaluate the quality of physical education (PE) classes offered at local high schools and how PE promotes a lifelong active life style. Obstacles many schools face are the availability of resources a school may have to provide a higher quality and a wider variety of fitness programs to meet the standards set by the state of California's Board of

Education. Another issue is the stigma that PE is not as important to the well rounded nature of a student's education as other academic areas. The cost of not resolving the current trend of inactivity during adolescence will result in to a higher probability of inactivity throughout adulthood. The majority of those who are, or become, obese as adolescents will continue to be obese as adults. Adults who are overweight have a greater likelihood of suffering from heart disease, diabetes, and other such ailments which cost tax payers millions of dollars every year. All of these undesirable outcomes are nearly 100 percent avoidable with regular exercise and healthy diet.

### **The Quality of High School Physical Education and Health Science Classes**

**Physical education.** School districts have requirements for what students are expected to be able to do and know by the end of a section, semester, or school year. Both schools observed in this study follow a block scheduling system. Block scheduling came about as a result of school reform by offering fewer courses in a day for longer periods of time, typically 90 minutes instead of the traditional 55minuts (Scruggs, Mungen, & Oh, 2010). Scruggs et al have found that students in block scheduled PE classes maintained higher activity levels than those in traditional class schedules. However, Scruggs et al's data analysis also yielded results verifying that the majority (more than 50%) of students in the study did not meet the minimum requirements to qualify for moderate activity levels; 60 minutes daily of moderate to vigorous physical activities (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). Therefore, a student's grade should be based on overall activity levels, rather than the ability to dress for class and meet benchmark standards.

**Health science.** All too often the quality of the education on the subject of nutrition in health science is reduced to teaching students how to understand the nutritional facts printed on food packages. Furthermore, the density of the subject is not breached by traditional biology classes which focus on cells, DNA, and the life cycle. By not educating students about how and why it is important to make informed nutritional decisions, students will continue to undermine physical fitness. In an article published by the Journal of School Health (2009), Snelling and Kennard conducted an experiment on student eating habits. They found that by color coding the food available at the school to indicate which were the least and most nutritionally dense, students began to gravitate towards the foods considered to have a higher nutritional value. This evidence would indicate the readiness of students to be self motivated to make better decisions for their health when provided with the methods to do so. Some PE teachers take the responsibility of supplementing health science into the PE curriculum by teaching which foods supply the body with the appropriate nutrients. It is important to stress that this is an additional workload, and not part of the standard PE curriculum.

### **Availability of Resources**

**Physical education and health science.** One obstacle schools contend with is the lack of resources available to motivate students to reach beyond the traditional curricular setting, or to continue pursuing higher education. For example, students who join sports teams or intramural leagues are more likely to lead active lifestyles than those who passively attend traditional PE classes alone (Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001). Therefore, schools which do not have the funding to adequately equip sports teams or lack proper facilities, such as pools or weight rooms are less likely to have students who will engage in these activities outside of the school setting.

Additionally, schools with limited funding may not be able to afford to provide more specialized classes to further educate students about human physiology beyond what they learn in biology. Consequently, classes such as Anatomy and Nutritional Science are not available to further educate and motivate students to have a deeper understanding of their physiological well being. When students have a deeper knowledge of their own anatomy and the threats poor diets and sedentary lifestyles pose, students become more motivated to engage in an active lifestyle.

### **The District Requirements for Physical Education and Health Science Classes**

**Physical education.** Different districts have different standards and practices regarding the expected outcomes of high school PE classes. For example, Principal Skinner<sup>1</sup> (personal contact) of Bay Shore High School (BSHS) stated that the Central Cost Unified School District (CCUSD) has recently instated a new standard requirement. With this edition, BSHS has a total of six PE standards, five of which must be met to receive credit for the class. While this shows a dedicated step towards fitness for students, is one more bench mark the best way to inspire student to pursue a physically active life style?

Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) recognize that properly motivated students are more likely to continue an active lifestyle after high school. While the intention of this new benchmark is to promote health and fitness, Hildebrand and Johnson would suggest that the negative feelings associated with a mandatory, high stakes benchmark are "... contribute to the cause rather than to the remedy of sedentary lifestyles," (p51). This statement is parallel with the notion that the inductions of rewarding and gratifying PE opportunities are more likely to promote lifelong physical activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

However, neither the quality of a PE class, nor the availability of resources a school has mean anything if the students are not required to enroll in PE by the district. Although the California Board of Education (2011) requires high school students to participate in four years of PE, almost every school district in California applies for an academic exemption which only requires students to enroll in two years of PE classes. Even then, there are still some exceptions which allow students to only participate in one year of PE, and sometimes none at all.

**Health science.** In the state of California, health science is required for all ninth grade students in addition to biology. This health class is a combination of several fields of learning, and focuses on nutrition and active living for only as a small segment of the curriculum. Usually, the course is a combination of career counseling, health, and driver's education training. The portion of the class which does focus on health is broad and covers material from the dangers of eating disorders to STI's to how to read the nutritional facts on a cereal box. Such a vast array of knowledge covered in such a short amount of time lends little insight into the specifics of nutrition and how the body absorbs and uses nutrients for different purposes. Additionally, high school biology state sanctioned scripted curricula only covers the details of genetics and offers little about nutritional issues. As an example, the majority of students know of diabetes, but few know the internal causes of diabetes or the differences between type one and type two diabetes.

## **Literature Review**

### **Community Involvement**

In my research, some of the more popular methods of thought regarding how to get adolescents to become more physically active have involved reaching out to the larger

community. As previously stated, more than 50% of high school students do not meet the recommended activity levels necessary for the prevention of obesity and health benefits.

Therefore, rather than only targeting adolescents at school, public health initiatives have begun to involve families, elected officials, and facilities available to the community.

One example of a public health initiative is Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* campaign. *Let's Move!* strives to include parents and communities as facilitators in the prevention of obesity outside of school. The program asks parents to engage in an active lifestyle with their children; to set examples and be the role models. This is fundamental to the healthy development of children, for while school may be an institution for learning, the home environment has the greatest impact on teaching children how to be responsible. Implemented in 2010, *Let's Move!* believes that everyone has a role to play when taking a stand against obesity and encourages citizens to contact their community leaders and elected officials to network for supportive programs and the necessary infrastructure. For example, with the aid of public funding, cities can improve local parks and community centers so families can enjoy having a safe and clean environment to come together and engage in outdoor recreation.

Another unique community based method of combating obesity is the Walking School Bus (WSB) (Kong, Sussman, Negrete, Patterson, Mittleman, & Hough, 2009). The WSB is a throwback to the days when children would walk to school alone or in small groups, only now; parent volunteers occupy groups of children as chaperones on the walk to school. The reaction from participants during the WSB 10 week trial was overwhelmingly positive. The WSB allowed for a safe environment and simultaneously allowed students to engage in a mild to moderate physical activity level before class. The WSB is an effective way of getting some

students to wake up before classes with a brisk walk, while others can use this method of communal fitness to release some energy before sitting in a classroom.

In the same vein of community collaboration to emphasize physical activities, Yetter's article *Exercise-based School Obesity Prevention Programs: An Overview* (2009), from the journal *Psychology in the Schools*, he acknowledges that "Public health initiatives have successfully addressed other areas of health risk, such as tobacco prevention and seat belt use (Egger & Swinburn, 1997; Thomas, 2006)" (p. 741-742). However, although community based programs are more comprehensive, Yetter also admits that when examined on a large scale community based programs do not yield consistently successful outcomes. Participants of public health initiatives do show signs of higher activity levels, yet their overall body mass index continues to remain at unhealthy levels. Information such as this indicates the inconsistent reliability of community based health programs, suggesting that schools, a consistent factor due to daily interaction, should be a primary source of student fitness.

### **School Centered Solutions**

Physical education is part of nearly every student's curriculum. Even if a student is not vigorously active during the class, the school itself is a constant in the student's life. Therefore several methods have been implemented within schools to solicit higher daily activity levels. As a way of complimenting, or compensating for the lack of, pre-existing PE courses, some elementary schools have begun to use recess as a means of increasing the amount of time students engage in vigorous activities.

The Recess Pack Program has been used to instigate play during grade school recess. The purpose is to increase student activity levels and to count the time spent during recess towards the state mandated amount of time the students are supposed to receive from PE (Elliott, Combs, & Boyce, 2011). To promote the success of the program, the schools who participated purchased fitness equipment for students to use as part of the Recess Pack. Although the program had notable achievements in getting students to engage in higher levels of activity, I find the results to be somewhat misleading. One student noted the difference in activities of his peers had changed due to the new equipment available to use during recess. Therefore, this challenges the validity of the program, and whether or not the purchase of new equipment could have the same effect.

Following that stream of thought, evidence shows that having a greater variety of activities for students to involve themselves with results in a greater output of physical activity (Barkley, Ryan, Bellar, Bliss, & Roemmich, 2011). By presenting students with a high number of exercise stations or choices of activities and a low amount of activity repetitions, students were more likely to maintain a higher activity level. However, when the same groups of students were given a very limited number of available exercise options with a high amount of activity repetition, the same level of fitness enthusiasm was not be achieved. Unfortunately, the availability of activities is typically the most fundamental difference between schools of higher and lower socio-economic statuses. Some schools can invest more into their PE programs resulting in a greater variety of activities for the students, meaning less repetition and high levels of activity engagement.

### **Method**

The purpose of this research is to examine the quality of the physical education (PE) in

public high schools. The priority of the study is to determine what improvements could be made to the existing curriculum to increase the educational benefit of the course for the students. In order to characterize the overall quality of PE, the course will be broken into three observable categories from which data can be collected and analyzed.

1. Quality of lesson material; the educational value of material taught during class.
2. Quality of lesson activities; activities student are expected to take part in during class and how they scale in terms of high or low activity levels.
3. Quality of student engagement; how motivated are students to participate? Do students participate in class activities?

High school PE teachers will be interviewed to provide valuable primary data regarding in class participation and curriculum content. Primarily, the objective is to ask the teachers where they feel the greatest problems with PE lie and how they feel the issues should be addressed for greatest benefit to the students. Follow up interviews will then be conducted with both principals. The principals' knowledge of district policy will help to better understand how and why teacher concerns are or are not being addressed. In addition to the interview process, I will also tour the athletic facilities available to students to better visualize the conditions in which students are expected to participate.

### **Context**

One of the primary functions of this research project was to compare two high schools from different districts as well as different socio-economic statuses to better understand how school funding affects the educational value of PE classes. Therefore, a high school from a district with low funding was selected and compared to a high school with a considerably greater amount of funding. The school from the area of lower socio-economic status shall be referred to as Bay Shore High School and the higher

status school will be referred to as Ocean View High School. It is important to emphasize that although the high schools are being referenced by their respective socio-economic status, no criticisms are being made about the schools, students, or the respective cities. Differences in socio-economic status corresponded to differences in the appropriation of funds per student, property values within the city, and mean income level of residence.

### **Bay Shore High School (BSHS).**

Bay Shore is more of a blue collar, “working man’s” area with a dense Latino population of 25 percent and a white population of 39 percent<sup>2</sup>. There is a high volume of newly arrived and first generation immigrants in this particular area. Bay Shore’s median annual income for 2009 was reported at \$48,000 a year, nearly two thousand less than the state median. The city exists in close proximity to the regions large agricultural industry with property values estimated at \$380,000. The school district is considered an “in need” area with schools in their second or even third year of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In fact, BSHS did not meet the APY criteria for the year 2010<sup>3</sup>. Although AYP scores do not have a measurable category for PE, the inclusion of this information is to give insight into the school’s academic standing.

BSHS utilizes an A-B Block Scheduling system where students attend four classes a day for 90 minutes at a time and then four different classes the following day. Therefore, students may only attend PE twice in a week and then three times the following week. The school has a high Latino population with a total school population of approximately 635 students. However, even with the relatively low number of students, BSHS is still cramped with impacted classroom sizes and inadequate facilities as the school was originally an elementary school. While the state does limit the maximum number of students

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<sup>2</sup> Information regarding the city data provided by <http://www.city-data.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Information regarding Unified School District data provided by <http://www.city-data.com/schools-dirs/schools-CA.html>

in a math or English class, there may be as many as 48 to 52 students in a single PE class with only one teacher to supervise.

There is no actual gymnasium, but rather a large multipurpose assembly room. The weight room is a converted classroom with equipment which has been generously donated by the local fire department. The only other PE type facilities are a black top with two basketball courts and the football/soccer field. However the field does not meet the standards of a regulation high school football field and, therefore, cannot play host to any games during the regular season. Despite the inadequate facilities, there is no money to refurbish or expand the school in any way. The school's buildings are noticeably aged and dreary. However even if funds were appropriated to expand or refurbish, it seems very unlikely the PE department would receive top priority.

#### **Ocean View High School (OVHS).**

Ocean View is a much more affluent area than nearby Bay Shore, with an estimated median household annual income of \$80,000. The majority of Ocean View residents, at 91 percent, are white. The area is a tourist hot spot with a wide array of trendy stores and restaurants. In addition to bringing in tourist revenues, the median property value as of 2009 is estimated to be approximately one million dollars. The majority, 52 percent, of the city's population has at least a Bachelor's degree.

OVHS's lowest AYP score for 2010 is 27 percent higher than BSHS's highest AYP score for 2010. Additionally, Ocean View appropriates more money per student than the state median; providing approximately \$18,000 per student to OVHS. With a population of 800 students, this money has allowed for the establishment of a beautiful, brand-new theater. The campus is massive and wonderfully maintained. There is a gymnasium on campus, which can be used for basket ball, badminton, or volley ball. Additionally, the school has four tennis courts, a well equipped weight room, and a nearly Olympic size pool. The school also has a baseball field, a football/soccer field and a quarter mile track around the

field. However the football field is considered inadequate to host any playoff games, but may be used during regular season.

OVHS operates on a nontraditional, modified block schedule. On Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays classes are 50 minutes which allows students to attend every period. On Wednesdays and Thursdays classes are 90 minutes. On Wednesdays, students attend all odd numbered period classes, and on Thursdays students attend the even numbered period classes. This converts to students attending PE four days of the week. Despite the fact that OVHS has a greater student population than BSHS, the PE class sizes are still smaller with an average of 40 students per class. This information comes from one of the OVHS PE teachers, Ms. Armstrong (personal contact). OVHS is part of the Clear View Unified School District (CVUSD) which has applied for nearly every PE Ed. Code exemption available. Principal Martinez feels that with the students are better served by the abundant availability of AP and college prep courses the school is capable of providing, therefore, less emphasis is placed on PE and it is not a college preparatory class. This converts to only 161 out of the 211 freshmen are enrolled in PE at OVHS and zero of the 213 sophomores.

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

The principals from both high schools were interviewed. They were selected for their experience and knowledge of district policies regarding curricular structure, and course requirements. One PE teacher was selected from each school as well, as they are responsible for meeting the requirements set by the state within the limits of what the district and school provides. The two teacher participants were those who replied to an email sent out to all the PE teachers asking for volunteers. Both Principals were male and both teachers were female. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Principal Skinner was unable to meet for one of the scheduled

appointments and the Assistant Principal, Ms. McNeil, was interviewed in his place.

**Principal Skinner:** A white male and has been the principal of Bay Shore High School for the last four years. The whole of his career has been in spent in California and prior to being principal at BSHS, for eight years he was the assistant principal at various junior and senior high schools.

**Principal Martinez:** A male with Hispanic background that has been the principal of Ocean View High School for the last three years. Over the past eight years he has been principal at three different high schools.

**Ms. Heart:** A white female and the only full time PE teacher at Bay Shore High School. She has been teaching at BSHS for two years since moving to the Monterey area from Palo Alto. Ms. Heart also teaches a freshman student health classes.

**Ms. Armstrong:** A white female and one of the PE teachers at Ocean View High School. She was a Physical Education major at Cal Polly and has taught in California her entire career. Ms. Armstrong has worked for the Ocean View district for 11 years and is a strong advocate for the importance of PE for every student.

**Assistant Principal Ms. McNeil:** A white female Assistant Principal of Bay Shore High School. She has been the Assistant Principal for the past two years and has previously worked at the Community Day School.

### **Researcher**

I am a 25 year old male student, attending college to receive a multiple subject teaching credential. As the head researcher of this project my qualifications are as follows:

- Liberal Studies undergraduate honor student at California State University Monterey Bay.

- Associate in Arts: Liberal Arts- Social and Behavioral Science given from Mission Community College; graduated with honors.
- Certified to work as a substitute teacher.
- 30 hours of Service Learning in a 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom at Marina Vista Elementary School.
- 30 hours of Service Learning in a 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom at Del Monte Middle School.
- 20 hours of Service Learning in a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom at Bay View Accademy Charter School.
- One semester designing and teaching PE lessons for a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom at McKinnon Elementary.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

The questions asked were openended and I decided whether or not to pusue a topic metioned by the interviewee. All interviews will be recorded for research purposes. The recordings have not be made public to preserve anonimity and were be destroid after the conclution of this research project.

1. Do you see any problems with the current PE curriculum? Do you feel there is a need for improvement? If yes, then what changes do you feel need to be made, and how would they be bennificial?
2. What is currently being done to improve PE in public schools - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
3. What do you think should be done about to motivate students to participate in PE?
4. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to changing the PE curriculum?

5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about high school PE and/or the improvement of course material?
6. Are there any issues regarding the quality of PE being taught at this school which you feel need to be addressed? Why?
7. What is currently being done to improve upon the conditions deemed to be an issue with regards to the quality of education?
8. What are the biggest blockades preventing improvements in these areas and what step can be made to overcome these obstacles?

## **Procedure**

### **Selection.**

The types of participants needed for the research were clear: high school PE teachers and principals. Given limited resources and time, only two high schools were selected for participation in the study; however, the schools selected were not arbitrary. Both schools selected exist in the same general area approximately ten miles apart, yet each school services a different city and belongs to separate school districts. Each district is allowed to apply for California PE waivers, however not all districts choose to apply for the same waivers. PE waivers vary, and can include allowing high schools to only require two years of PE instead of the state standard of four years or omitting PE classes for involvement in school athletics. This was the driving decision for selecting schools from different districts. The two districts did not have the same state waivers, which could be an indicator of differing emphases on PE. Additionally, the two areas the high schools serve differ significantly in terms of socio-economic status. The differing economic status of the schools serves to establish how differing school budgets affect the quality of PE classes.

### **Recruitment.**

After selecting which school would make for the greatest comparison, appointments were made to meet with each school's principal. During the meetings with each principal, detailed description and justifications of the research project were presented to ensure that this project was legitimate and not malicious. Consenting permission was given before contacting the schools' PE teachers to request for participants and schedule interview appointments. Additionally, assurances were made that the interviews would not interfere with the instructors' professional schedule and all meetings would be made at the instructors' convenience. Anonymity was guaranteed as well for all participants as to protect against reprisals and to ensure honest and accurate statements. The Principals were generally receptive and eager to show support as CSUMB allies. Common discussion topics were the personal relevance and significant of the topic, reasons for choosing the school as a research site, and the intentions and applications of the research. After receiving approval from the Principals, several members of the PE staff were contacted, via email, asking for participants who would be willing to discuss personal insight regarding the current status of PE and how effectively the importance of the class is being conveyed to the student body.

### **Participation and consent.**

One PE teacher was selected from each of the two schools to be interviewed individually at a time which would be most convenient, usually during their prep period. The principals were interviewed as well on an individual basis by appointment. At the beginning of each interview, an audio recording device was set to record and a scripted consent agreement was recited. All interviewees were asked to answer questions as honestly as possible. If they felt a question was related to another issue worth discussing, then that stream of ideas was followed with no

insistence on strictly adhering to the scripted questions.

### **Data collection.**

Data was collected by using a handheld, digital audio recording device placed in-between myself and the participant. The participants' rights were stated, and the participant's consent to the research was recorded on the device before proceeding with the interview. The recorder was used to capture the audio for the remainder of the interview to be referenced as notes later. In addition to the recordings, notes were taken about the interview details such as body language as well as the appearance and location of where the interviews took place; all of the subtleties the recorder could not capture. All the interviews lasted between 30 minutes to an hour; however the interviews were spaced out over a period of several weeks due to the availability of each participant.

### **Data Analysis**

After conducting all of the interviews, the recordings were listened to in order to filter out the similar themes discussed by each participant. The critical themes discussed by all participants were the inconsistencies of PE standards, the push back from administration, and the need to focus on fitness for life. Another theme all participants found vital was motivation. Motivated teachers help to facilitate a learning environment which will promote lifelong interest in pursuing personal wellness. It is difficult for teachers to create an optimal learning environment with limited funds and resources. However, even with financial advantages, if students are not motivated to participate and learn all the new and fun ways to stay healthy during their high school years, they are less likely to pursue a healthy life style as adults.

## **Results**

The issues surrounding physical education (PE) are not difficult to see, however, it is difficult to get first hand information concerning the issues from those most closely involved. When I first appealed to the principal from Ocean View High School (OVHS), I was met with resistance for fear that I was trying to stir up controversy between the teachers and the district. After receiving the Principal Martinez's approval to speak with his staff, Ms. Armstrong was hesitant to be interviewed for fear I was divulging names of discontent staff to higher authorities. After speaking with the participants, I realize that the issues facing PE are more controversial than I initially suspected.

After interviewing my participants, I reviewed the recordings and analyzed their responses for emergent themes. One theme which was discussed at length by all participants concerns the ability of the school to promote lifelong physical fitness. Consistent with the research from the literature review, community partners have an impactful role when encouraging students to become active outside of school. Bay Shore High School (BSHS) has a strong relationship with its community members. According to Ms. McNeil, BSHS's has a close partnership with the surrounding community to supplement for the curricular activities the high school is incapable of providing. One example of this relationship is with the nearby youth center, which has indoor recreational options as well as a skate park. Another example is the inter-district relationship between schools. BSHS's football field is inadequate to host games, as a result games and practices are held at the nearby middle school. Ms. McNeil mentioned several times that BSHS has a strong relationship with the city, however the school seems almost reliant on outside sources for student activities.

One of the greatest differences between BSHS and OVHS is the availability of resources OVHS has on its campus. As Barkley et al's evidence has shown, having a greater variety of activities for students to participate in yields a higher activity level amongst students. Ms. Heart, from BSHS, certainly does her best to accommodate for the lack of resources by splitting her class in two. Half use the available outdoor basketball court while the other half uses the old soccer field or possibly the weight room. Although this allows for a more even distribution of resources to keep all students engaged, Ms. Heart is left with the burden of needing to be in two places at once. Due to the dismal athletic facilities at BSHS, many of the required standards for PE are unobtainable. The California Board of Education content standards require aquatic and tumbling/gymnastic activities, yet BSHS has no pool or gymnasium.

On the other end of the spectrum OVHS has an incredible amount of resources at its disposal. The school recently purchased archery equipment and tumbling mats to further comply with the California PE content standards. However, it is not necessarily the materials that the school is lacking, but the support from the district. Ms. Armstrong's greatest source of dismay comes from the pushback she constantly received from her district and administration regarding the lack of compliance with the state educational codes. This issue was not as prevalent while talking with Ms. Heart, who has the more daunting task of making do with what she has available to her. As a result the expectations from her superiors are relatively low and unencouraging.

The greater issue Ms. Armstrong addressed was the lack of unilateral conformity of class requirements amongst the disciplines as well as across the district. Ms. Armstrong made the comparison between PE and other subjects such as math. Math has a very specific progression

to its lessons and teachers are expected to adhere to the lesson standards and material or face severe repercussions. However, there are no strict compliance reviews for the subject of PE because it is not viewed as a valued discipline due to the fact it does not meet college preparatory standards. The same type of strict adherence to a state curriculum should be expected of all high school classes, not only the core or college prep courses. No school would ever tolerate a core class not being taught to the California standard; therefore, the same expectations should apply to PE.

Ms. Armstrong looks to a disinterested district for the support she feels PE is lacking; however, Ms. Heart took the responsibility upon herself to supplement her PE classes with intrinsic motivation. Ms. Heart is a proponent for infusing health knowledge into her PE lessons and answering the why questions students have when they do not immediately see the value in an activity or lesson plan. She has a portfolio filled with lesson plans, activities, work sheets, and activity logs she has been holding onto since her first years as a teacher. She encourages her students to take personal accountability for their accomplishments as well as their failures.

While some schools may have more resources than others, the students who are enrolled and participate in the fitness classes are the only students who benefit. BSHS does not have the ability to provide extracurricular PE directed classes or even the ability to enroll juniors or seniors in PE as an elective due to class impaction. The school, and presumably other low socio-economic schools, not only lack the facilities to provide elective PE classes, such as cardio kick boxing or yoga, but also do not have the qualified staff on hand to instruct these classes. The same is true for other health science related courses such as Nutritional Science. This is not to

imply that the staff at BSHS is unqualified, only that the staff is already stretched thin meeting the current demands of the school curriculum.

I asked Mrs. McNeil, who is also the master schedule maker for the school's calendar year, what it would take to introduce an inspiring elective class which would promote lifelong physical fitness. She summarized the step by step process of inducting new classes into the school's academic calendar. There first needs to be a teacher qualified to teach the subject matter. However, before the class can be opened for enrolment, research must be conducted to gather data concerning the amount of students who wish to enroll in the class. If not enough students wish to enroll in the course then the process ends there, if there is enough student interest, then it moves for approval from the district. There needs to be evidence of an educational value to the class, a curriculum with standards, and evaluation instruments. If the district decides to permit the class to be taught in a school, and the school has the money to provide for the class, then the master schedule maker inputs the new course into the master calendar for the next academic school year.

When I saw Ms. Heart's activity log sheet, I could not help but remember filling out one of my own when I was in high school. Ms. Heart proves herself to be a dedicated teacher who goes above and beyond what the curriculum requires, and she does it for the love of her field and to inspire her students. She is the true description of a teacher who uses the power of motivation to influence her students. Despite all of the disadvantages and limited resources, her ability to motivate when others would settle for complacency is the true essence of a motivated teacher having the greatest impact on influencing students to pursue a life of physical fitness.

### **Description and Justification of Action**

## **Action**

Unfortunately, I do not have the financial resources to provide every high school in California with the necessary equipment to meet all the standards PE students are expected to be taught. Nor do I have the time or resources to fundraise on even one high school's behalf with the intention of replacing old equipment. I was seeking to take action in a way which would promote physical education at a school setting rather than only encouraging physical activities, such as skateboard at a nearby youth center. I inquired about creating a partnership between Bay Shore High School (BSHS) and the new Fitness Center with the hopes of at least providing an opportunity for students to exercise in a clean and professional environment. However, due to legal reasons, only persons over the age of 18 are allowed to use the. Pursuing an action that would only benefit a fortunate few seemed unfair to the majority of students.

However, I did have a realization and began to focus my attention towards the portion of high school students who were the least likely to be enrolled in a PE class; the juniors and seniors. The sole purpose of this research project has been to bring attention to the need for a greater emphasis concerning physical education for high school students. Researchers Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) have found supporting evidence that students who are not active during high school are the least likely to take interest in physical education upon graduating from high school. This translates to students not enrolling in physical education classes when they enter any type of higher education facility. Therefore, I decided to reach out to the high schools near CSUMB to invite the juniors and seniors to the college campus for an opportunity to take part in the different physical education prospects CSUMB has to offer.

High school juniors and seniors are likely to be at a point in their academic careers where they are beginning to look at potential colleges to attend after graduation. Therefore, inviting these students to take part in collegiate activities is an exceptional way to promote CSUMB to the next generation of students, thereby encouraging higher learning. Even those who decide not to attend CSUMB still leave with a reflective perception of what college has to offer and how profoundly different college is from high school. Some high schools near CSUMB may already have arrangements for campus tours for their senior students, but these tours are chaperoned and in large class clustered groups. This event will allow students to have an occasion to interact with the student body, contributing to a greater enrichment of the overall experience.

My intention has been to work collaboratively with the CSUMB Outdoor and Recreation Club (ORC) to host an event which high school students will be invited to attend. Due to time constraints and scheduling issues, unfortunately, this event could not happen this semester. However, an event is in the works for next semester, which will allow for better preparation, planning, and coordinating between all parties involved. Nevertheless, the projection for next semester is to integrate the typical proceedings of the ORC and Kinesiology classes into an all day event where the students can participate in a variety of activities. This gives CSUMB an opportunity to showcase the diversity of the campus while promoting the variety of physical education classes offered by the Kinesiology department.

### **Description**

The high school students can move to different stations, which will be headed by student club members, and experience the variety of activities available. For example, CSUMB offers a rock climbing class; as a result, the president of the ORC is attempting to rent a rock wall for the

event attendees to climb. The ORC often have weekly bike rides; as a result, a bike ride tour around the campus will be given as well as information about CSUMB's bike rental program. Another prospective station for high school students to enjoy is one where they will learn how to play Disk Golf, another class offered at CSUMB, as well as many other stations. There is also talk of a healthy lunch for those in attendance, and using that time to give a short speech regarding the primary purpose of the day's events; the promotion of physical education.

The technical details of the event are still to be determined, but by allowing the club members, who are typically Kinesiology majors, to instruct each station allows the high school students to hear an individual perspective about the school and the major. As a result, this creates a more informal interaction while still encouraging physical education by teaching proper techniques at each station. The stations available are meant to reflect the opportunities available at CSUMB which encourage the educational value of human kinesthetic. The event is meant to be somewhat like a festival, with a happy and joyous atmosphere.

### **Justification**

The overall effect of this event is to show the variety of physical education classes which are available via the CSUMB Kinesiology department, and to hopefully encourage participation in school athletics or PE electives if the school offers them. The greater ambition is to cause a trickledown effect, starting from the college all the way to the elementary school, to promote PE as a necessity in every school in California. If the promotion of Kinesiology were to become an annual even for CSUMB and local high schools, students may become more avid about going to college to become Kinesiology majors. As of now, PE does not college requirements, and is undervalued at the high school level.

Yet, if CSUMB were receiving recognition for producing the greatest number of highly qualified Kinesiology and Human Movement specialist, the recognition may trickle down to the high schools from which CSUMB students hail. This sort of recognition could create the desire to emphasis PE at the high school level, possibly even promoting some sort of PE college prep course, rather than PE only being required for high school graduation. Following the concept of the importance of PE trickling down to other levels of education, students would need to be prepared for the high school PE expectation. Hopefully this would lead to a greater emphasis of PE in middle schools, and then trickling down to elementary schools where PE have virtually disappeared from the elementary curriculum.

### **Action Documentation**

As stated earlier, this event is only in its preliminary stages and at the earliest will hopefully take place next semester. However, the president of the Outdoor Recreations Club (ORC) is excited to push for the event and is reviewing the feasibility of the festival with his cabinet and the RHA comity. With the proper amount of preparation, we both hope this festival will become a great success. Together we have put together a preliminary flier which would be distributed to inform about the festival either via email or poster flier. The details on the flier are a little sparse, but should convey the overall message of the festival. As the logistics become solidified, they will of course become part of the flier information; such as date, time, location, and events. Below is a copy of the preliminary flier to be distributed as an invitation to CSUMB's first Fitness Festival.

### **Critical Reflection**

I am very excited about the Fitness Festival for local high school students which will hopefully take place next semester. The next steps towards finalizing the event will require cooperation between all of the high schools, as well as CSUMB. First, the ORC needs the approval of the University before any further progress can be made. Then a budget needs to be approved by the student council as to provide for all of the event stations, as well as the lunch for patrons. Next, and probably the most difficult to coordinate, will be to set a date for the festival; a date which neither the campus, nor the majority of the participating schools have prearranged activities that could conflict with hosting or attending the festival. After a date is set, promotional efforts for the event must be made and advertised, such as school notices, emails, and fliers so the attendees have enough time to make arrangements to come to CSUMB for the festival. Then finally, the actual set up and execution of the Fitness Festival can be experienced.

Despite the positive interest people have taken in the festival, there are some immediate issues which create a conflict between the purpose of this project and the likely outcome of the event. The foremost issue considers the target audience of the event. While the intention of the festival is to attract students who are not currently engaged in curricular physical education classes, those who may be the most likely to attend are students who already lead an active lifestyle. Students who do not usually participate in physical activities, curricular or otherwise, may feel this event is not intended for them. Non-athletic students are often less likely to attend an event where physical activities are the highlight of the occasion. If this is the case then the goal of this project has missed its intended target and the need to encourage fitness for life continues unchallenged.

However, the hope is that the festival will be appealing to students who would be interested in something different from typical curricular or recreational activities. By hosting different activity stations which are themed after CSUMB Kinesiology classes, and not typical PE classes, I believe students will show up intending to have fun and will leave with a taste of the education available after high school. Additionally, the stations are not the typical sports team athletics. As the content from the Physical Development and Health Major Learning Outcome (MLO) has taught me, a useful means of encouraging students to become involved in an activity is to be a motivating instructor and by leveling the playing field. For example, if the festival activities consisted of sports such as baseball and basket ball the majority of the attendants would be students from those respective sports teams. However, by choosing activities that the majority of students do not typically engage in, students can expect a more even range of skill levels amongst their peers, and therefore, are more likely to attempt something new without fear of failure.

Overall, I am very satisfied with the potential for what this festival could mean for the local high school students as well as CSUMB. Although, if I could do anything differently, I would try to fundraise in order to supply Bay Shore High School with new equipment to enhance the capabilities of the existing PE program. Influencing a curriculum that students are enrolled in may have greater benefits than trying to entice students with a curriculum they will not experience until they enter college. As a Liberal Studies major, my education has emphasized the importance of promoting Knowledge and Lifelong Learning, another MLO, and one of the best methods to promote lifelong learning is to positively influence students as early as possible. Therefore, beginning earlier than college to motivate students to actively participate in and enjoy

physical education could be accomplished by outfitting the PE department with the appropriate equipment.

Physical health is only one positive outcome of leading a healthy life style. The developmental rewards to living an active life style are equally important to the well being of children as they become adolescents, to young adults, to fully productive members of society. My minor in Human Development has taught me the importance of healthy habits. Exercising on a regular basis can help to reduce stress and anxiety levels in people, and adolescence can be a very stressful period in a person's life (Cobb, 2010). Additionally, regular engagement in physical activities can help to increase a person's self esteem. People who exercise are often happier with their physical appearance which often translates to a greater self image and greater feelings of self efficacy. Together, lower levels of anxiety and stress with higher levels of self worth can equal better developmental outcomes in the formation of a strong self image and healthy relationships with others by being more approachable and having a positive attitude.

Physical education is a subject about which I feel very passionate. In the past I have been self conscious about my body and I can remember that even as a child I was embarrassed to take my shirt off in front of others. It was not until high school when I began weight training that I began to feel better. Not only better about the way I looked, but I had a better outlook about life in general. Friends would ask me to teach them the workouts I was learning so they could look and feel as good as I did. Since then, teaching others has been my greatest aspiration. By teaching others to change their perception about PE, my hope is that they will learn how an active life style can benefit them beyond preventing obesity. I want physical education to be an instrument to change peoples' lives as it did mine during a critical period of my development,

and all the work I do now is a result of and a tribute to the one teacher who changed my perceptions of the educational value of physical education.

**The CSUMB Outdoor Recreations Club Invites YOU to come to the First Fitness Festival**

**Learn to play Disc Golf**  
Relax with some Yoga

**Test Your Skills on the Rock Wall!**

**Come Experience what College can do for You!**

**Learn from Experienced College Students**

**Bike Ride Tour Around the Campus**

**FREE BBQ!**  
Plus so much more

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