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**The Forgotten Subject: PE and the Power of People**

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### **Abstract**

This project focused on student engagement in PE at the middle school level. Student engagement is so meaningful because even though physical education is supposed to educate kids to be physically active while being active in practice, quite the opposite is happening. Middle school is the point at which students begin to lose interest in PE, viewing it as repetitive and pointless, which is why it is so essential to make this forgotten subject fun again. After survey and interviewing students and staff members participating in physical education at a local middle school in Marina, three themes emerged from the analyses of the responses. They were to give students more varied and relevant options to do during class and throughout the year; install a reward system to break down group mentality to motivate students; and do more collaborations with outside organizations like CSUMB. The best course of action out of the three would be doing more collaborations with outside organizations as the extra manpower would allow the teachers of those classes more wiggle room to bond with their students, give them more choices, and install an effective motivation system as they are not so focused on classroom management.

*Keywords: Physical education, student engagement, collaboration, variation, buy-ins, relevancy, student-teacher relations*

### **The Forgotten Subject: PE and the Power of People**

PE, for me, has not always been the most exhilarating subject. I never hated it, but I did not love it either. I just viewed it as a thing that I occasionally did fun stuff in, like playing dodgeball or capture the flag, but other than those, none of the units stood out to me. I never goofed off, but I was never engaged with them; I just went through the motions because PE was required. The PE clothes they provided us from middle school onwards took me a bit to get used to changing in the locker with the other boys, but I eventually did. The best part of PE was never the units or what we did in class but the people or friends I had in those classes, as I would always look forward to chatting with them about random things. But I never realized until last year just how well off the PE programs I experienced were. Through service learning, I saw things that really put things in a different light.

To put it mildly, the PE program at this local middle school was not great, with students constantly talking and messing around. Some boys were very physical with each other but not in a ready-to-fight kind of way; more playful, well-meaning contact, chasing each other around the gym, shoving each other, and putting their friends in headlocks. The girls always talked, barely paying attention to what was happening, sometimes sassing the teacher. It seemed to the students that the most important aspect of that class was not what they would learn but what their friends thought about the subject at hand, making them very reactionary. Nothing really got done in those classes, with the teacher constantly playing a game of whack-a-mole trying to

pipe down the conversations with the students so that they could convey instructions about that day's activities. Even if the teacher was not teaching the class, it was still a mess. For instance, a yoga teacher would come to the school every couple of weeks and take over class for the day, teaching the kids yoga. However, some students hated yoga, finding it pointless and boring, so they would goof during the yoga session in the gym. They would constantly talk, be on their phones, run around the gym, reenact dual of the fates with the mats (hit each other with the rolled-up mats like they were swords), and overall just ignore the yoga instructor disturbing the peace, not respecting the visitor's time. It got so bad that the yoga teacher decided not to return to the school since the kids were so awful and disrespectful. Overall, it was a circus; no one paid attention or participated in the activities. There was nothing notable about the units either; it was just what one thinks of when it comes to PE, like soccer and yoga. As sad as it is, they only did one unit for the couple of months I was volunteering at the middle school because nothing was getting done in class.

That is not to say it was all bad; there was definitely some passion for PE at the middle school. The teacher I was working with while new did genuinely want to help out these students, making PE fun. They struggled to establish class norms since he was new, and the students were still a bit weary of him. While I mentioned how rampant misbehavior in those classes, the students did want to learn. When interested in the subject matter or given the incentive, the students actively participated in class doing the activities. Some of the more well-behaved ones even got to oversee and lead the warm-up activities after roll call. The main issue is that PE was not fun for them; they did not see a point in what they were doing; thus, they sought other forms of entertainment. I realized that the issue was not the student misbehaving; it was the curriculum that was the problem here. The curriculum needed to improve in a meaningful way. There needed to be more open, honest, and respectful communication between the students and teacher/administration, and what better way than to ask those affected by it the most, the students, to figure out how to make them care about a subject they deem meaningless while also making it so that the school sat down and listened to the students. Someone needed to give them a voice, the ones who were suffering in this poor

excuse of a PE program and who better than one in their final year of college starting their capstone. One who just so happened to have worked closely with administrators at that school last semester.

### Literature Synthesis

Student engagement has always been an issue when it comes to education and how to pass on knowledge to the next generation. How does one get a student or child to care to interact with the subject matter at hand without holding them at gunpoint and forcing them to learn the subject matter? This is especially prevalent when it comes to Physical Education. The purpose of PE is to have students learn knowledge and skills that can improve their fitness and lead to a physically active lifestyle (Otundo et al., 2019). Still, if one were to ask students how they feel about PE, most say they do not like it or that they feel it is a useless subject; why does it matter if they can do a pull-up or not if they are just going to be doing a desk job why should they even try in PE when it is so easy to get an A (Phillips et al., 2019). As students get older, their attitude towards PE changes from a positive standpoint to a more negative viewing of it, the turning point happening in middle school. Sure, there are policies and standards in place established by the state that define what PE should look like on paper, like how many minutes of physical education instruction students should have to the number of school days in the year, or what specifically the classes look like with how they operate. These are more general suggestions rather than specific instructions, as the way of meeting these requirements lies with the local school districts to shape how their physical education program will meet these requirements and what areas of content to cover since none are required for the middle school level (CA Dept. Of Education, 2023). So the question becomes what to do about this problem where physical education does the opposite of what it sets out to do? The solutions to this predicament, while not simple, are neither complicated nor complex. They are all centered on the student and making them learn without feeling like they are learning something while also having them feel that their time in physical education matters with someone looking out for them and helping them when they struggle. They should have a say in their learning, helping shape the adaptable curriculum that will teach them the skills and mindset to be physically active not just in school but in their own life as individuals with their values and hobbies. All these will help students engage with PE at the middle school level.

## **Why is it an Issue?**

What does it matter if students engage with the materials before them during PE? They are still exposed to the ideas; thus, it falls upon the student to actually care about their future and whether or not they know how to achieve a healthy and active lifestyle. That line of thinking needs to be revised at best, not moving the conversation in the right direction as it blames the students when the fault lies with the curriculum. As mentioned previously, PE aims to teach the skills and knowledge necessary to live a healthy and active lifestyle through a structured school environment. Still, PE in middle school is achieving the opposite effect, with student apathetic towards it at best, viewing it as an easy A class or, at worst, outright despising it, viewing the curriculum as repetitive and boring, killing any sort of want or desire to engage with the activities before them (Barney et al., 2010). The districts may choose to do the bare minimum or go beyond what is required of them, and they are usually significantly, by the book, implementing a one-size-fits-all approach. However, this leaves out an essential party in the decision-making process, the students, the recipients of this curriculum. Middle school students typically find PE less enjoyable than it once was, finding it boring and repetitive and sick of doing the same stuff. It is just not fun or relevant to them. The team sports they do focus too much on the competitive aspect, while the fitness assessments make them feel like they are on display, causing significant discomfort. Boys tend to be a bit rougher than girls, who just want to look nice and not dirty themselves, which results in girls not participating in PE (Phillips et al., 2019). All these things affect their motivation, resulting in them not engaging or participating in the lesson, instead causing behavioral issues and thus not learning how to be a physically active person, making it a waste of time for all people involved (Pak, 2023).

## **What Should Be Done?**

Now that all that is established, how does one address these issues where physical education is not physical education? The solution is simple: make physical education revolve around the students. Make it about them. Teach students the necessary skills and practices without making it feel like they are being taught anything. Students will not learn anything if



they feel it does not apply to them or that it has any meaning or value to them. If they are taught the same things every year and do these same activities repeatedly, they will lose interest, viewing it as repetitive and pointless since they have already learned what they wanted from those things. There must be new and different stuff that is more relevant to them. That means more than just working on various physical activities, especially not introducing or giving out more paperwork; kids hate that (Phillips et al., 2019). PE should be different from the classroom, so less sitting and lecturing and more games that increase fitness, teaching them the necessary skills and making it fun. These games should focus less on winning, favoring those who are more skilled, but on fun, safe, relaxing games that favor all (Sliwa et al., 2017). The curriculum needs to appeal to both a student's situational interest, short-term interest, focusing on the interaction between the student and the personal attachment or interest to the subject at hand triggered by outside forces and personal interest, the student's preconceived beliefs or feelings about the subject presented towards them based on their own meaning and values which is developed over a long period of time through repeat exposure. Activities should not be about the standards; instead, they should have games involving them (Otundo et al., 2019). Student choice also plays a role in letting them choose what it is they are doing, and learning by giving them a voice allows them to pick what is most interesting to them. Allow them to make their own choices, set their own goals, and determine how they are graded (Maruza et al., 2024). As mentioned earlier, variety is vital in this, not just over the academic year doing different units from time to time but also daily during class have multiple things the students can do so that they engage with what they will not hate, keeping PE fun and exciting for the student increasing their attention. Teachers also play a role in addressing student engagement, for it is not enough for teachers to simply lecture their students while barking instructions and passively watching and/or jotting down notes during activities. No, for teachers to address this issue, they must be active participants in their own classes. Join the students during the game or activity, thus building a connection and removing the space between student and teacher, making them enjoy the game that much better (Pak, 2023). This connection allows for more individual, personalized, relevant, clear, and precise feedback. This helpful feedback promotes

mastery and autonomy in the students, helping them improve at the relevant task while feeling recognized, showing them that the teacher cares for their performance and well-being, fostering interest, and encouraging engagement (Sliwa et al., 2017). Support students in a way they feel matters, with their wants being heard and their issues being addressed. Instead of punishments and constantly managing the classroom for troublemakers, have personal and meaningful interactions with the students that support their own personal and social responsibility and accountability. This will lead to fewer disruptions, increased participation, and greater enjoyment of PE as the students feel that their wants and desires have been satisfied. With the help of members of the community, one can make a PE program that meets the state requirements but also reflects the community, making the curriculum relevant to the students while cultivating an inclusive, supportive environment (Sliwa et al., 2017). This would also allow for greater collaboration in the community, allowing students to experience new things that the school may not be able to provide. With all these suggestions, adaptability is vital to making a good PE program that keeps students engaged. It is essential to listen to the students' feedback; that way, they feel heard and that someone is looking out for them, thus making them want to engage more with the subject matter. Some other small things that help would be shrinking the class sizes. The recommended class size is 40 students (CA Dept. Of Education, 2023); however, the more students there are in a class, the more time the teacher has to spend explaining things and giving out instructions and less time being physically active doing things, so shrinking the recommended class size the teacher can spend more time interacting with the students understanding who they are as a person and how to address their needs best to make a PE they feel matters.

## **Conclusion**

That is why student engagement in Middle School Physical education courses matters so much. When students are not actively engaged, it undermines the very purpose of the curriculum, which is to instill the knowledge and habits necessary for maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle. School districts are failing students as daily enrollment in optional PE classes

plummets. In districts with mandatory PE, the students who participate in them view them negatively as they do not interact with the materials or participate in the activities during the allotted class time. This is for various reasons, from viewing it as pointless/irrelevant to the future career, finding the curriculum boring and repetitive, to not having fun and feeling a great bit of discomfort during fitness assessments. There is something wrong here that needs to be addressed. Therefore, by making physical education relevant to the students, they will view PE as something necessary for them, thus becoming active participants. Bring them into the decision-making process, letting them decide what and how they want to learn and how they will be graded. Change things up to keep things fresh and exciting, thus keeping the students' attention. Teachers can also help address this issue by being active participants in their classes, creating bonds with their students, and allowing them to give specific and helpful feedback, showing their students that they care for them. Finally, with community collaboration, one can make the PE program reflect the area, thus making what will be done in those classes relevant to the students and opening up future opportunities. All it takes is one person for proper change to begin, so is it not time for something to be done to make PE fun again?

## Method

For this Capstone Project, the researcher has investigated how middle school PE teachers and students view student engagement during physical education classes and what they think could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, I used what I have learned to formulate an action that responds to student engagement in PE classes in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

## Context

The middle school where I implemented my project was a part of the local town of Sandune<sup>1</sup>. It has a small population of less than 25k residents, most of whom are white, but has a sizable Latino and Asian population, with the average household making over \$80k. Most have graduated high school, but few have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. The school is located in the suburban part of Sandune with over 500 7-8th grade students, most of whom are minorities, and almost half are economically disadvantaged. It has an 18:1 student-teacher ratio with 22 full-time teachers, only one of whom is a PE teacher. There is another, but they are a long-term sub.

PE most of the time happens in the gym. It is a large rectangular brick building connected to the cafeteria and lunchroom. The floor comprises smooth wooden planks with faded painted lines marking the basketball and volleyball courts. There were two holes in the floor near the middle of the gym where one could plant two old metal volleyball posts, which would then allow an old, worn-out net to be strewn across the middle of the gym. These holes were mostly covered, but sometimes they were not, making them a tripping hazard. There was also a folded-up blind in the wall that one would pull out to divide the gym in half. The walls and doors were painted white, just like the outside, but the concrete bricks were not painted near the ceiling. The basketball hoops jutting out from the walls all had worn-down nets that were gray with dirt. The ballroom that stashed most of the equipment was a disorganized mess,

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<sup>1</sup> All names and places have pseudonyms to protect identity

looking like a bomb had gone off in there with things randomly stuffed and strewn about in the small dark room. The balls and small, beaten-down soccer nets were kept in a shopping cart, brought out to the football field and basketball and volleyball courts outside, the other place PE took place in.

The volleyball and basketball courts were separated but had grey asphalt floors filled with cracks from age and covered in lines that desperately needed to be repainted. The metal, non-painted poles that held up the hoops and nets were a bit scratched with random marks on them. Like inside, the volleyball and basketball nets were also rundown and stained gray by dirt. The paint on the scratched-up white backboards had long chipped away with sand and trash being found everywhere outside. The American football field was in no better condition. For starters, it was not even a football field; it was more like a rectangular field of grass that could be used for football. A dirt/sand track surrounded the field with no lines marking the individual lanes, just one big path surrounding the field. On either side of the field were small metal bleachers that students would sit on. At both ends where the oval track bent, there was a big yellow football goal and a big white soccer goal. While there were also sprayed lines in the grass marking out the football field, they were choppy and uneven. Overall, everything looked like it needed a touch-up.

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

96 participants total, including the non-student interviewees; 93 without

#### **Interviewees:**

**Frank:** only full-time PE teacher at the middle school. Pretty new to the school only started this academic year. Previously worked at a high school as a PE teacher.

**Alice:** assistant principal at the middle school. Oversees all service learners who come to work at the site.

**Bob:** the school aid who walks around the school and helps deal with troublesome

students by pulling them out of class.

**Jane:** female student in Franks 7th period class. Preferred physical activities are dual sports, and their favorite subject is history (they like learning about Greek myths).

**John:** male student in Frank's 7th-period class. He likes basketball and is very active, doing lots of stuff during his free time and hanging out with his friends.

### **Researcher**

PE was never the most interesting subject in school, but at least I enjoyed it. However, after volunteering at that local middle school last semester, working in the PE program, I realized just how nice I had it. These students were forced to participate in something they had no interest in, so I wanted to make PE fun, at least for them, as it was for me. I was the perfect person to tackle the issue of student engagement as I had worked at that school last semester, forming close bonds with the teachers there and familiarizing myself with the students and the current program. Through my education and the time I volunteered at the school, I was able to step back and truly understand the scope of the issue at that school. I stepped out of my comfort zone and discarded any previous biases I may have had, which allowed me to address the problem before me meaningfully. I approached this issue from the students' perspective, which allowed me to give them a voice in their education, one that would be heard by administrators. This project was for their sake, not for the schools, so the solutions were the ones that were most sought after by the students.

### **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

Interview questions:

1. How would you describe PE classes at Los Arboles?
2. What do you see as the challenges with student engagement in PE?

3. What is currently being done to address student engagement in PE - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
4. What do you think should be done to improve student engagement in PE?
5. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about student engagement in PE?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about student engagement in PE and/or the improvement of said issue?

### [Student Survey](#)

#### **Procedure**

Data was collected through the survey linked above. Students were told during their PE class with Mr. PE teacher that it was an anonymous optional survey that wanted to get their thoughts on PE at the school. It was posted in their Google Classroom. Participation was optional, with students having two weeks to fill out the survey and decide what question they felt comfortable filling out. Their responses were anonymous, with no one knowing what their responses were unless they wished to share them with the school and or teacher. Students who did submit responses received extra credit by screenshotting the response submitted page and posting it to the classroom or showing it to the teacher. At the end, there was even an option to schedule an in-person follow-up interview using the questions above, putting down their name and email for those who were passionate about the issue and wished to discuss it further.

#### **Data Analysis**

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

## Results

For this Capstone Project, students, teachers, and school facilities were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve student engagement in middle school physical education. This is important because physical education is supposed to teach kids how to be physically active in their day-to-day lives but does not do that with students hating it, thus not engaging with the material in front of them, causing all sorts of issues in the class, meaning nothing gets done. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: Ease to implementation, Scale/Scope, and Time. Ease to implement because depending on the circumstances of the school, such as staffing and funding, actions can be complex to implement, scale/scope because it's vital in understanding the impact and reach these actions will have on those affected most by the issues and time since it matters how fast the action can be rolled out. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option, an action will be recommended and justified.

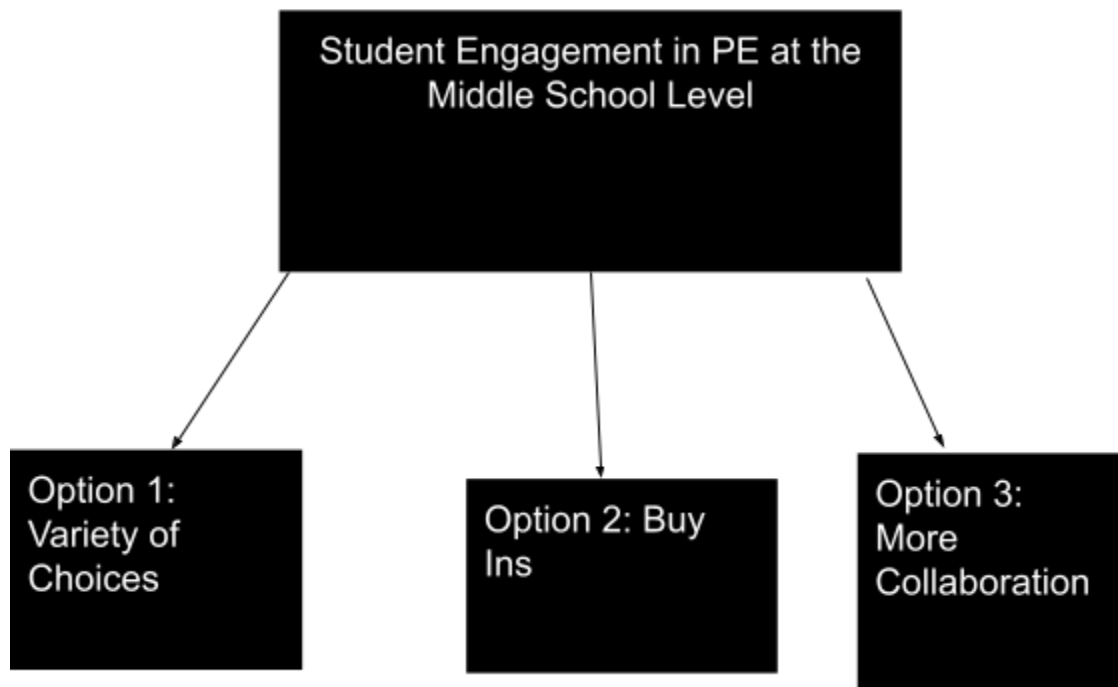




Table 1

*Evaluation of Action Options*

	Ease to implement	Scale/Scope	Time
More options (variety)	Hard	Wide	Medium
Buy-ins	Easy	Medium	Medium
More collaboration	Medium	Medium	Long

**Option 1-Variety**

Having a variety of stuff to do during class can help with student engagement. Most students who filled out the survey and some interviewees described PE at the site as boring, with most students not engaging with the class. They felt like they had done the same things repeatedly, and they were getting bored of it. That is, if they even did anything, as one female student, Jane, reported when asked to describe PE class, said that “they don’t do much. They mainly sit around for the class period as attendance takes 20 minutes, explaining the activity takes another 20 minutes, leaving them only 10 minutes to do the activity.” If students do the same thing every class period, they will lose interest and thus disengage, which is why having options for the students is essential. Most students, when asked how to improve PE, requested more activities/more supplies to do more things. Having a variety of things to do in class and throughout the year keeps things fresh and exciting and allows the students to gravitate toward the activities that interest them the most; thus, when they come across something they would not like or struggle with, they have the option of doing something else. The ease at which more options can be implemented could be difficult as it depends on what interests the students and how they learn. What interests one student may not interest another, so having options that work for most students while meeting state standards can be tricky. Time would also vary

depending on the options students are given or are interested in. However, the scale/scope of this option would be far-reaching as it would affect all students since it would consider what interests them. Students will stay engaged if they find what they are doing enjoyable.

### **Option 2 Reward System**

Another issue that kept popping up was the lack of a buy-in, something to keep students motivated when they hit a roadblock. As mentioned by Frank and Alice during their interviews, if students see that one person is not doing the activity, they will follow and stop doing it. There are various reasons why that individual is not doing the activity, for they may find it difficult or feel under the weather. However, whatever the reasoning is, it does not matter to the other students. In their minds, it would be unfair since they have to do the activity, but that person does not. That is why having a buy-in or reward system for the students would be helpful by having a system that rewards them for their time and participation in class or for their general good behavior. The student would earn points for doing specific things and could then exchange them for something they want, like a piece of candy or a positive note home. The system can be based on different tiers, with the larger groups racing larger rewards. For example, there could be group rewards or even a giant class reward based on the number of points accumulated by the end of the school term. It would be relatively easy and timely to implement depending on the scale of the buy-in, with it affecting all students.

### **Option 3 Increased collaboration with outside organizations**

A third option would be collaborating with outside organizations, preferably those the school has worked with before, such as CSUMB, to address the lack of manpower. Frank, Alice, and Bob mentioned that the site lacks staff to oversee things. While the ideal action would be to hire more certified long-term PE teachers as there are only two PE teachers on campus, one of which is a full-time certified PE teacher; the other is a long-term sub, it seems the school is already aware of this, and as Alice mentioned they are always looking for qualified people they are not going to be able to fix the large class sizes from a lack of staff. With the larger classes, the teacher does not have time to connect with their students properly; as mentioned by Jane,

the teacher does not listen to the students or respond to their needs in a meaningful way as he is too busy running the class but even then mostly sit around for the majority of class as attendance and activity explanations take forever. This makes some facilities inaccessible to the students, such as the locker rooms, as no one can watch the students there. More collaborations, such as CSUMB service learners, would allow for greater organization, enabling teachers to do more things throughout the year and in class with the students besides allowing them access to stuff they did not have before, like PE lockers. The increase in people would also mean that teachers can spend more time bonding with the students, removing the space between them and making them enjoy PE while being given more personalized feedback. Bringing in more collaborators could pose a timely and potentially costly challenge for various reasons, but its effects would be far-reaching.

## **Conclusion**

**Recommendation.** I suggest collaborating more with familiar outside organizations. This would be the best way to combat the lack of student engagement in physical education at the middle school level, and it would open up many more things down the road.

**Concessions.** Having various relevant options that the students can choose from during class and doing many different things throughout the year keeps things fresh and interesting and appealing to the individual students' likes and wants. It strengthens engagement by allowing the students to choose what they want to do and experience new things, ensuring that they will not lose interest in physical education and cause problems. As for the buy-in system, as mentioned earlier, it tackles the group mentality mindset among the students by rewarding individual efforts and behaviors; therefore, they want to worry about fairness. The scope of this system can be expanded with the rewards to the students corresponding to the size of the groups, with class rewards being the most elaborate and lucrative. Both of these options are easy to implement in a timely manner and have wide-reaching effects.

**Limitations.** The main problem with more collaborations would be the details of the collaborations, such as who to work with and how they will be implemented in the preexisting

programs, which could prove to be difficult and costly, taking a great deal of time and money which could pose a problem to the site which seems to have a funding issue with only one full-time teacher who was just brought on and is already leaving. Also the quality and enforcement of the services provided could prove tricky to deal with as the collaborators may not be trained professionals who could adequately address the needs of the students or be at the site constantly for long periods of time. These collaborations would not be a replacement for the lack of qualified long-term teachers but more of a temporary option while actual long-term change is implemented. Finally, the support for the collaborators would be challenging as the site has no one to address those who are not pulling their weight or dealing with outside factors. I encountered this when organizing interviews with the students as they had to be interviewed during school hours and would take place within eyesight of a staff member. Still, they had no one to spare to oversee them, so I had to host them in the gym during class while the other students could see and hear us.

**Potential negative outcomes.** In terms of negative outcomes, I'm not sure. Maybe the students do not get along with the new collaborators or drive them away. Perhaps the collaboration process drains school funds, meaning they would not be able to address more prominent and immediate issues.

**Conclusion.** Despite all the possible drawbacks of more collaborations, it is still better than having a variety of relevant choices and implementing a rewards system. More collaborators would allow for more variety both in class and throughout the year. The increase in manpower per class takes away the stress of dealing with a lot of students, making sure they understand what they are up to for the day. Instead, it allows teachers to focus more on bonding with their students and coming to understand each other and, thus, how to best help the student, closing the gap between teacher and student, which leads to more student involvement in the class and eventually the curriculum. It would also make it easier to establish appealing buy-ins that would motivate the students and grant them access to things they never had before, like PE lockers and uniforms, so they will have a safe place to store their stuff and not have to worry about being dirty and smelly after PE.

### **Action Documentation and Critical Reflection**

Section Introduction - The topic I chose to focus on was student engagement in physical education at the middle school level, interviewing students and faculty members such as teachers, aids, and assistant principals. After the survey and interviews were conducted, three options emerged; the first was having a variety of options for students to do during class and throughout the school year, and the second was implementing some sort of reward system that would act as a buy-in to motivate students and the third was more collaboration with outside organizations such as CSUMB to address the lack of qualified teachers. The one I suggested that seemed more feasible was collaborating with outside organizations in the local community. While hiring more long-term qualified teachers is the ideal solution, the school is already aware of that, and while they are always on the lookout for them, it does not seem like they have had much luck. Collaborating with outside organizations, preferably ones they have had some dealings with before, such as CSUMB, would open up many more options for the school, allowing students to do more things throughout the year and during class and potentially gaining access to facilities they never had before such as locker rooms. It would also allow the teachers to focus more time on doing activities rather than explaining things.

#### [The survey](#)

### **Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection**

I surveyed students on their thoughts about Physical Education at the site via an anonymous optional Google, from which I closed it after two weeks and shared my findings and advice with my collaborators at the school. I did this by giving them access to the survey so that they could view the responses and shared the results section of my capstone report, which served as a written report of my findings. What I found most surprising was just how bad the issue was at the site and how difficult it was to address the issue of student engagement meaningfully. It wasn't just simply students who were bored in PE and thus were acting out, but that there was a lack of support/funding for this failing PE program. For a school with over 500 7th and 8th-grade students, there were only two PE teachers in the entire program, one of

which was a trained professional; the other was a long-term sub. The fact that the site expected them to teach these students PE with little to no support was absurd. It is no wonder the school aid, who had been at the site for a long time and one of the few I interviewed described PE there as experimental because the school could not retain long-term PE teachers willing to stick around dealing with students receiving little to no support from the school resulting in burnout. Teachers quitting because they cannot take the stress, and I would not want to either in their shoes. It saddens me that the site is gutting its PE program, getting rid of the only qualified PE teacher they have, who they just brought on this year, and doing away with elementary school PE. It seems like middle school PE is next; everyone knows it but is not doing anything to stop it. As for changes and modifications I needed to make, there was one as when figuring out action options, I approached them as something the school could do about the issue, not necessarily what I could do about it. Hence, I had to pivot my approach to the action options so that my suggestion would be something I would be capable of doing. So far, responses appear to be mixed; while my collaborators were a bit saddened that the responses were primarily negative regarding PE at the site, they were still happy to receive the honest feedback and are now looking at how they can address the issues based on my findings and advice. Something that would've been helpful at the start that I know now is that the actions/solutions one comes up with from looking at the data and research have to be something I can do as a student, not what would be the best solution the site or benefactors can do about the issue. As for the next steps, I am not sure; maybe I can follow up with the school over the summer to see how they have been using my findings. Did I learn anything about myself and work towards change that I was unaware of? Not really, no, I kind of already did something like this last semester; the difference is that this project had a lot more paperwork to it.

(Pictured below are me sharing my findings with Alice and Frank (my collaborators) and communications between me and Frank, the main collaborator).

## Student Engagement Survey Report/Findings



**Shea Franklin** <sfranklin@csumb.edu>



Print all

Hey M ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ **alice**

It's Shea Franklin. Thank you for allowing me to do my capstone at your school. I probably should've shared this earlier with you, but I've shared the survey with you so you can view the responses and my report/findings with my recommendations on what to do about the issue. I hope this is useful for next year. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to email me. If you would like to share this or give editing access to the survey to view the reponses with any more relevant parties, please feel free to.

Thank you for all this,  
Shea Franklin

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail



I probably should have let you know sooner, but the capstone festival will be happening next Thursday from 9:00 am -12:30 pm at the University Ballroom at CSUMB, where I'll be presenting. Want to see it? Also, you realize you can see the survey responses since I shared them with you as editor.

Hey Shae. Thanks for the invite. I will be working during that time so i won't be able to check it out. I took a look at the surverys the other day. Not very positive as expected lol

Regardless mind if we meet up this week I want to share with you my findings and advice. Also, if you could let [REDACTED] I want to meet with her to share my findings, that would be great maybe we could organize a meeting together. I'll be emailing her later today. Yeah, I figured as much still, let's meet up.



Hey man. Sorry for the late reply. I am very busy this week. I'll let you know if I can meet some time next week

Probably next thursday

Don't suppose you would be down to meet earlier?

I might be able to meet on Monday the problem is that we have a different schedule due to testing. I will let you know

K If you can't, then don't worry about it. I'll type something up and send it to you.

Okay 👍 thanks man

Yeah definitely thanks for stick with me figured I should share my findings with people we would find it useful.

### **Critical Reflection**

As mentioned previously, I did not learn anything about myself that I was not already aware of. Regarding teaching and learning again, not really; no, there wasn't much teaching going on with my project as it was mainly about gathering data, although I did learn that if a student is uninterested in what is going on in front of them, they will look for other things to occupy their time meaning one cannot force someone to learn about something they have no interest in. Finally, I realized that change is not something that can happen overnight. Even though there may be an essential issue that seems easy to address, a lot more behind the scenes makes proper change complicated to implement. For example, with my issue of student engagement in PE at the middle school level, it was not so simple as the teacher was doing a crap job engaging their students. No, there were many more factors at play that made it almost impossible for students to be interested in physical education. Students want to do more things during PE, but for a variety of reasons, most of which have to do with the school the program takes place; it is not really feasible, which sucks.

### **Synthesis and Integration**

The liberal studies program here at CSUMB, with this capstone, has fundamentally changed the way I think and approach teaching. Quality education is not something that is simply measured by a grade. One must do more than just read from a textbook or a school curriculum, giving HW and test kids occasionally. Proper education is when the student truly understands the curriculum and subject matter, using the knowledge acquired to shape the world around them for the better. However, all that would only be possible with a proper teacher. The bond between students and teachers enables the educator to tailor the curriculum to students' interests and support them in their academic pursuits, even outside the classroom. Through my time in the liberal studies program and the bond I formed with my professors, I have come to understand myself better and the world around me, identifying issues important to me, figuring out what technology I can use and address them in whatever manner I deem fit to help improve not just the quality of education in CA but the world around me.

As for what comes next for me to become the teacher so many wonderful people were to me, I will continue my academic career here at CSUMB, having enrolled myself in the mild to moderate SPED credential program starting over the summer, hoping to get placed in one of the residency programs to understand better the community and the students obtaining their education here I now call home. After the two years of the credential program, hopefully becoming a certified teacher in the state of CA, I will get my masters of the arts in education here to widen my reach and hone my skills as a future educator. What comes after that? I am not sure I will cross that bridge eventually, but right now, I have to worry about graduating.

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