

Title of Research Project: Pedagogies of Meaningful Physical Education

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Relevant key words: Physical Education; Meaningful Participation; Student Voice; Democratic Practices; Goal Setting; Reflection; Pupil Diary

Summary:

Promoting personally meaningful engagement is a key way that teachers can provide students with transformative experiences that will influence their commitment to lifelong physical activity (Ennis, 2017). The purpose of this research was to examine teachers and children's experiences of an approach to physical education (PE), 'Meaningful PE' that prioritised meaningful experiences. Five teachers implemented Meaningful PE for 6-8 lessons. The project team supported their implementation in a variety of ways using an on-line resource bank and forum, e-mail, and school visits. Final data sources included non-participant observations (n=10), teacher diary and planning artefacts (n=5) and interview (n=5), pupil diary (n=122) and focus groups (n=5, 21 participants). Findings indicate that Meaningful PE was beneficial to both teachers and children. Meaningful PE helped teachers prioritise meaningful experiences by providing structure and guidance for lesson planning and decision-making. The features of Meaningful PE provided a shared language of learning for the teacher and the children. Children's reflections indicated that they valued being involved in decision-making and appreciated the emphasis on social interaction and fun as priorities for their participation. Children were able to identify what they had learned, as well as how the teacher had supported their learning. Overall, an emphasis on meaningfulness was doable for primary teachers, and well received by the children.

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