



A 'Vitality' Approach to Health-Related, Physical Education Programs

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Health Canada began promoting a 'vitality' approach to healthy living in 1991, however the significance of this approach for physical education programming has yet to be fully realized. The promotion of vitality is assigned to units on health-related fitness which are distinguished from performance-based units on games, sports, gymnastics, dance and adventure pursuits. The presence or otherwise of vitality continues to be determined by body composition tests, cardiovascular timed shuttle or 12 minute runs, muscular strength and endurance tests, and sit and reach indications of flexibility. Through offering new programming ideas that promote health-enhancing movement experiences across the various units of physical education curricula, the article provides both students and teachers with a cohesive, curricular understanding of vitality. A 'vitality' approach emphasizes the locomotor, manipulative and stability actions that are present across all movement disciplines as well as in the interactions of the animated teacher.

Contemporary health-related, physical education programs emphasize active and healthy lifestyles, wellness, generalized movement aptitudes, and those components of physical fitness that have to do with cardiovascular capacity, muscular strength and endurance, joint flexibility, and body composition as measured by percent body fat. Traditional skill-based, physical education programs generally emphasize locomotor, stability and manipulative skill themes (sometimes called basic movement patterns), skill progressions within the disciplines of games, sports, gymnastics, dance and adventure pursuits, and those components of physical fitness that have to do with agility, power, reaction time, speed, coordination and balance. Whereas the emphasis in the former is on achieving a state of well-being, based on energy and vitality, that enables participation in a variety of physical activities, in the latter it is on a set of attributes related to the performance of designated physical activities.

These differing emphases on “physical fitness” and “performance fitness” (Wall & Murray, 1994), and on “health-related” and “performance-related components of fitness” (Gallahue and Donnelly, 2003), are readily apparent in the physical education literature (Charles, Pangrazi & Franks, 2000). They have also been incorporated in the various provincial curriculum frameworks for health education, physical education, their amalgamation in certain cases (e.g. Manitoba Education and Training, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998), and in the program strands in health/wellness, physical education, and recreational leadership that are course options at the upper secondary levels. Across Canada, quite different approaches to physical education programming can be seen to result from focusing on either a state of well-being or a set of performance attributes.

Our aim in this paper is not to accentuate these differences, but to draw attention to that which is common to health-related and skill-based physical education programs—namely a ‘vitality’ approach—and to the implications of this approach for comprehensive physical education programming.¹

A ‘vitality’ Approach

In 1991 Health Canada launched the VITALITY approach to achieving healthy body weight through informed dietary practices, regular physical activity, and positive self image. This VITALITY approach was intended to provide “nutrition, fitness and other health professionals and leaders in schools, workplaces and communities with opportunities to take a more holistic approach by moving beyond weight control, calorie-restricted diets and prescriptive exercise regimes” (Health Canada, 2002). Through offering a website with a variety of resources for physical educators, Health Canada’s VITALITY initiative emphasized “active living” and engagement in activities that “feel good,” are “fun,” and can be “integrated into daily life” (Health Canada, 2002). The success of this approach and the usefulness of the resources developed between 1991 and 1996 have yet to be determined (Health Canada, 2004);

¹ We refer to vitality in three ways: in lowercase without parenthesis to indicate the concept of vitality; in uppercase without parenthesis to refer specifically to a Health Canada VITALITY approach; and in lowercase with parenthesis to refer to the ‘vitality’ approach we are promoting for health-based physical education programming.

however it is clear that this approach has had an impact on Provincial Physical Education curricula. In Ontario, for example:

Students who take the Grade 11 *Health for Life* course will learn to take responsibility for improving their own health and develop the skills needed to encourage others to lead healthy lives. They will examine factors that affect personal health and the health of members of a community, and learn how healthy eating, active living, and a positive self-image contribute to vitality....[Students] will learn about the components of the VITALITY approach to healthy living—an initiative that promotes healthy eating, an active lifestyle, and a positive self image. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000; see, also, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, p. 139).

Health Canada's VITALITY approach provides a starting point for students and teachers to view healthy and active living beyond objective measures of body weight and the currently compelling statistics of child obesity. But there are some stumbling blocks. For instance, the recommendation to use the "body mass index (BMI) and waist-hip ratio (WHR)" as the primary "instruments for assessing weight as it relates to health" (Health Canada, 2002) is incongruent with Health Canada's (2004, 2002) recommendations to turn toward the feeling of joy in everyday movement and depart from quantitative recommendations for exercise prescription. What is missing, in being directed toward the inner feel and bodily sensations of moving with vitality, is direction on how to recognize and assess these potential bases for healthy and activity living. Accordingly, we take to heart the philosophy and VITALITY principles that Health Canada has outlined, and explore the notion of vitality within and beyond a "wellness and health consciousness" (Smith & Lloyd, 2006). In doing so, we now define vitality and outline an approach to health-related, physical education that brings together a number of existing program features to define a vital curriculum and vital pedagogy.

Defining Vitality

"Vitality has to do with energy, motion, and the specific actions of cultivating a state of wellness and health. It is a concept that melds attitude and behavior, disposition and position, satisfaction and action, health promotion and physical motion. Even more than a concept, vitality is first of all an event, a situation, a circumstance that is experienced bodily. It is feeling alive, innervated, animated, invigorated in specific postures, positions, gestures, motions and expressions of the body. Vitality refers, in other words, to the *corporeal* constitution of active and healthy living. It is a motor perception long before it is a curricular conception" (Smith & Lloyd, p. 250).

Vitality, expressing active and healthy living, the experience of becoming fit, strong, and flexible, extends beyond the assumption of the body as an object with attributes that can be quantifiably measured. Students with vitality are

more than mechanistic entities that need to conform to standardized shapes, measures, and motions as if they are just “replaceable cogs in a giant machine,” the latter view being how the body is perceived in western society at large (Robinson, 2002, p. 22). In relation to physical education and health, MacDonald and Hunter (2005) note that the “body-as-machine” and “biophysical explanations and ways of knowing the body in the field of physical education and health [have been] privileged” as “other ways of knowing the body have been correspondingly marginalized” (p. 116).

Let us then ask students to become aware of their joyful, interconnected movement experience as it unfolds so that vitality becomes more than Health Canada’s indexes of “healthy eating, active living and positive self image,” more than the presence of energy, enthusiasm and liveliness, and much more than a generalized organic vim, vigor, or verve. If recent conceptualizations have referred to vitality, along with vigor, as moods or subjective states (MacArthur & McArthur, 1997), then we would complement this ‘subjective’ reference with ‘objective’ referral to the components of fitness and those manifest features of fitness that apply both to a state of well-being and to the performance of physical activity. In short, we regard vitality as an holistic, e-motive² experience rather than simply an attitude or state that needs to be isolated or separated from vital motion.

Approaching ‘vitality’

Physical educators have long touted the ‘needs of the whole child,’ arguing for an education that is not only ‘through’ and ‘about’ movement (see Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, undated), but based ‘in’ movements a child can experience and appreciate. This child-reference has given rise to movement education, educational gymnastics, creative dance, modified games and sports and, more generally, the infusion of developmentally-appropriate practices within physical education programs. Accordingly, we shall approach vitality from a child’s perspective, being mindful of the child’s experiences of movement as points of departure for programming in physical education.

Thinking back to her childhood days of running, skipping, and climbing trees, Rebecca remembers being a child who exuded energy. She recalls her grade three teacher remarking: “You only have two speeds, Rebecca, full-tilt or rest!” Rebecca recalls excelling in after-school dance and gymnastic programs, but when it came to skilled sport performance, she lacked the ability or interest to kick, hit or bat a ball with precision and confidence. She was the kid who was picked last for the baseball team, but didn’t mind since it gave her the opportunity to twirl, kick, or roll around in the far corners of the outfield. Rebecca purposefully selected a distance most grade three children could not

² Glen Mazis points out, “emotions are themselves this kind of motion, hence the name ‘e-motion” (Mazis, 1993, cited in Cataldi, 1993, p. 45; also see Mazis, 2002, p. 72). The correspondence of motions and emotions, the reciprocal influence of mood and movement, and the mutual reinforcements of defined bodily actions and states of mind are core understandings of Laban-inspired, movement education. See Hodgson (2001, pp. 153, 158, 175).

reach with the trajectory of their batted balls, although if one happened to roll her way, she picked it up, ran with it a bit (knowing full well that she was breaking the rules) and handed it over to a keener who could send it through the air so that second base could be tagged. If her fitness level had been assessed in accordance with a definition based on sport-specific skill or the set of attributes required to catch or throw a ball, she would have failed. Conversely, if her sense of well-being, energy and vitality were measured, given that she was in positive state of perpetual motion the whole time she was on the field, Rebecca would have passed with flying colors.

Stephen recalls no less enthusiasm for physical activity, however his memories are of the games that punctuated the elementary years. It was cricket for the summer, football in the winter, and such seasonal playground games of marbles, hand tennis, British Bulldog, and French cricket. While not necessarily the first to be picked on any team, Stephen relished team play, vying for any position that kept him close to the centre of the action. He would tussle with a teammate in fielding a cricket ball and be first in line to bat. He did not understand those classmates who did not want their turn at bat and who kept out of harm's way in the field.

Outside school hours the games continued. Afternoons were taken up with backyard cricket games, although with a tennis ball for fear of breaking windows. A garbage lid became a throwing target for cork balls that ricocheted in all directions. And a ball in a sock, roped to the house rafters, made for a batting practice that could go on for hours. If his fitness level had been assessed in accordance with a definition based on sport-specific skill or the set of attributes required to bowl, throw, catch or strike a ball, Stephen would have passed. If his sense of well-being, energy and vitality were measured, given that he lived and breathed cricket at school, on the playground, in his backyard, and out on the veranda, Stephen would also have passed with flying colors.

Our aim in sharing a couple of pieces of personal experience as fun-loving grade-three students is to suggest that the differences between physical fitness as a set of attributes relating to the performance of physical activity and as a state of well-being that disposes one to participate in a variety of physical activities may be ones of opportunity, practice, and encouragement rather than fundamental differences in vitality. At first glance, separating health-related fitness from skill-related fitness seems to address the child who is active but not a star athlete. Upon closer examination, this distinction overlooks the vitality that is part of 'active and health living' and germane to 'motor skill development.' What is needed is an articulation of how vitality is experienced as a sense of health, wellness and fitness within the parameters of the sports, recreations, pastimes and movement disciplines that give vitality specific expression.

Creating Programs around Vitality

The kind of program that promotes health-related fitness will not just aim to keep children happy, busy, and active while moving to a non-stop, aerobic-based beat for the sake of elevating a sustained heart rate. The foregoing definition and illustrations of vitality, as providing an alternative approach to caloric, expenditure-based, prescriptive programming and as orienting us to more than a

cognitive state and, indeed, to an embodied way of being, show the need for physical educators to give some thought to the embedded meanings, aesthetic registers, and emotive affects of the movements themselves. If students are to fully embrace what it means to experience the world physically, through the skill themes and basic movement patterns of locomotion, manipulation and stability, there needs to be a way of carrying these skills themes and movement patterns across the physical education curriculum.

Consider the main movement disciplines to be covered in physical education that fall within different Provincial curriculum organizers, but can generally be categorized in terms of games and sports, dance, and gymnastics. By embracing a 'vitality' approach to physical education programming, the differences between these organizational categories and between the specific disciplines that comprise them can become less apparent if the underlying motions that exude vitality are brought to the fore.

Recall the two examples of Stephen and Rebecca within the 'bat and ball' or striking and catching/fielding game structures. Stephen was naturally motivated to practice the motions of giving and receiving as he swung his arms and torso back and forth within the context of his sock-covered tennis ball, self-structured, after-school game. Rebecca refined her dance and gymnastic movement preferences in the far corners of the outfield instead of being encouraged to develop a similar relationship with a ball. If she had been taught to embrace underlying movement concepts that connect and transcend all movement forms, she might have learned how to infuse her rhythms and love of movement into dancing with the ball in a way that picked up the vital motions of the game. Similarly, Stephen, who listed a number of playground sports, did not participate or express interest in dance. If he had been taught to embrace the underlying pairings that connect all movement forms, he might have been encouraged to apply his area of expertise in, extending and contracting, twisting and turning as he practiced the movement pairing of 'giving and receiving' as applied to dance and gymnastics.

The various Provincial curriculum frameworks reflect these movement patterns, skills and concepts. What is missing, though, is the specific focus on the kinds of movement patterns and skill progressions that optimize a bodily vitality. For instance, basic locomotion, as in "walking, running, hopping, jumping, leaping, rolling, skipping, galloping, climbing, sliding, propulsion through water" is vitally about running and stopping, leaping and landing, propulsion and resistance. Likewise the manipulations of "receiving e.g. catching, collecting; retaining: e.g. dribbling, carrying, bouncing, trapping; sending: e.g. throwing, kicking, striking" and the stability patterns of "e.g. turning, twisting, swinging, balancing, bending, landing, stretching, curling, hanging" (Alberta Learning, 2000) can be paired in terms of pushing and pulling, giving and receiving, grasping and yielding, venturing and withdrawing, extending and contracting, expanding and condensing. As Cohen (1993) has pointed out, such action pairings are features of human development that are traceable to the "original kinetic bodily pairings – of inhalation and exhalation, for example, of opening and closing (eyes, mouths, or fist), of walking on one foot then the other, and so on" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 157). Objective lists of motions derived from the-body-that-moves, therefore, are conceived as organic life forms or, in other words, as life-giving, vital motions.

Lisa Ullmann, the long-time colleague of Rudolf Laban, wrote in *Modern Education Dance* (Laban, 1948): "The feeling of joy which dance can give helps

us to harmonize ourselves and to gain an increased sense of belonging. For this our inherent movement impulse needs to be vitalized and guided towards a full and structured expression" (p. 134). The same may be said of games, sports, gymnastics and alternative environment activities, and other pursuits, for that matter, that allow for the emergence, cultivation and skilful expression of "rhythmic vitality" (Laban & Lawrence, 1974, p. 6). We glance back to the advocates of modern educational dance, educational gymnastics and creative games (e.g. Jordan, 1966; Lofthouse, 1978; Mauldon and Layson, 1965; Randall, 1961) who have provided a repertoire of basic motions, movement pairings and developmental progressions. This repertoire, appearing across the Provincial curricula, needs now to be cultivated and infused more purposefully with a 'vitality' approach to program planning in mind.

An Integrated, Movement-based Curriculum

Wallhead and Buckworth (2004) make the self-evident comment that "enjoyment of physical activity is a result of successful mastery experiences, which lead to a bolstered perceived competence" (p. 286). If children are encouraged to apply and explore their areas of expertise in relation to diverse movement disciplines, they will begin to make conceptual, movement-based, connections across the curriculum. The presently segmented, conceptually disconnected, "typical unit approach to designing a curriculum—three weeks of volleyball, three weeks of aerobics, three weeks of tennis, etc." (Lambert, 1996, p. 164)—does not accentuate the implicit movement pairings that interconnect each discipline. Without explicit intervention, moving from one unit to the next is simply a 'buffet' sampling of activity. Time for maturing or mastering sport-specific movement appears highly improbable within such short curricular units. According to the theory of acquiring expertise, that ten years or 10,000 hours of deliberate practice is required to be an expert in a particular domain (Ericsson & Charness, 1994), students assessed in relation to three-week units of sport-specific, skill-based performance would only reach expert levels over time if they received highly organized, after-school practice and instruction.

We realize that we are not alone in our critique of the physical education curriculum. Researchers, such as Catherine Ennis (2000) and Daryl Siedentop (1994) also note the lack of time for skill development in the structure of traditional physical education programs. Their solutions have to do with a social constructivist approach to curriculum where themes like 'Sport for All' or 'Sport for Peace' engage the students in working together in an environment of care. Low skilled students, for example, learn caring for the highly skilled by assuming roles that are helpful to the team, such as keeping score. Highly skilled students, in turn, care for the low skilled players by assisting them with skill development. Although this approach to learning has merit as it reflects the Lave and Wenger (1991) periphery to central focus, sedentary tasks such as keeping score, have to be critically assessed from a health-related, fitness perspective.

Changing the program of physical education from sport-specific, skill-based units to a 'vitality' approach centralizes health-related fitness as the all-encompassing theme. Health-related fitness is not just an add on to a game such as "a sport-specific warm-up and cool down" (Bulger, Mohr, Carson, &

Wiegand, 2001, p. 413) or something that separates “lifetime of physical activity.. [goals from] those provided in traditional fitness and sport-oriented programs” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 331). Why dichotomize fitness and sport and set up either/or mandates for the physical education curriculum? That only breeds opinions such as Virginia Overdorf’s (2005) dismay over “the last decade’s emphasis on fitness activities and the almost non-existent focus on skill development” (p. 248). What is unique about the vitality approach is that health-related fitness stems from the movement confidence and competence acquired from conceptually linking all of the movement forms together. Whatever specific domain or application the child experiences, he or she can feel a sense of bodily progression in strength, stamina, and flexibility that naturally resides within the pairings of pushing and pulling, giving and receiving, grasping and yielding, venturing and withdrawing, extending and contracting, expanding and condensing.

Imagine the curricular design of striking and fielding or target games on Mondays, dance on Tuesdays, net/wall games on Wednesdays, gymnastics on Thursdays, and territorial games on Fridays for a period of 12 or more consecutive weeks. We realize that daily physical education is for most schools an imagined luxury. That being the case, lessons occurring on a less frequent basis could integrate dance and games or gymnastics within one period of scheduled gym time. Imagine that the components of health-related fitness form the body of the daily curriculum. In wanting to overlap the components of health-related fitness, namely, cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance as well as flexibility (Charles, Pangrazi & Franks, 2000) with the vital pairings of movement, each class would allocate a section to inclusive, sustained, locomotor movements such as leaping and landing, emphasizing cardiovascular and muscular endurance, stability movements emphasizing muscular strength such as pushing and pulling, as well as flexibility-promoting positions and transitions such as extending and contracting. A program accordingly would transform the understanding that health-related fitness is a unit to cover within a three-week period of time to a way of being vigorous across movement categories and discipline-specific borders.

The benefit to organizing an integrated curriculum based on health-promoting movements of vitality is that students inadvertently have more time to refine the components of skill-related fitness, namely, balance, agility, coordination, power and speed (Charles, Pangrazi, & Franks, 2000). If a focus for the week were power/rising and the pairing of ‘leaping and landing’ as pertaining to jump height with controlled descents, for example, a child who excels at leaps in dance could be encouraged to explore a leap in a basketball lay-up, a volleyball block or a springboard and trampoline bounce. Similarly, children who show agility on the basketball court may feel how pivot turns are basic to dance and gymnastics as they experience the ‘venturing and withdrawing’ pairing in moving from one direction to the next. Organizing the program in such a way would not only inspire confidence in developing cross-curricular competence, but students who gravitate toward one movement form would also have a whole week to refine particular movement skills before the next lesson took place, instead of disliking a three-week unit.

Movement-based Outcomes

A vitality-based program design naturally encourages children to practice particular activity disciplines outside school time. Knowing they have a whole term to work on a certain skill or play their favourite game at least once a week will motivate them to engage in movement-based homework as the benefits and rewards of engaging in regular practice would be felt. Note that physical activity outside school hours is essential for health promotion because, according to Wallhead and Buckworth (2004), "children must be motivated to participate in frequent sessions of moderate to vigorous activity outside of PE classes in order for the Health People 2010 recommendations to be met" (p. 295). To facilitate and support out-of-class physical activity, teachers could assign students who have a passion for a particular movement discipline some responsibility for the class content design and for peer support/leadership. Vitality-based programming would therefore nurture the development of personal and social responsibility in relation to mature movement production.

In addition to these preferences students have for particular movement disciplines, the continual exploration, application, and refinement of cardiovascular and muscular endurance, muscular strength and joint flexibility within the natural pairings of movement support the development of becoming a competent or expert 'mover.' An expert mover is different, more in movement confidence than specificity of body type and range of motions, from an expert athlete. Unless a child is considering professional sport, the continual refinement of one skill-set relating to a particular sport or position tends to limit the overall development of health and fitness as they pertain to quality of life. Imagine what would happen to a highly skilled child who only played and trained for hockey. He or she could respond to a stimulus such as an incoming puck in a forward lunging position with expert precision but, as a result of sustained and exclusive training in a sport-specific fashion, there may be a reduction in the multi-directional flexibility and agility in twisting and turning that would be required in reaching for an overhead pass. Also, imagine the posture of a hockey player—tight hip flexors coupled with a somewhat rounded upper body. What effect would continual sport-specific training have on this child's long-term health and posture? Could it lead to a sustained, forward flexed or bent over position? There is a movement away from sport-specific training in the off-ice training of high performance youth (Twist & Clark, 2004) and the reason we bring this point forward is to support the notion that a cross-discipline, physical education program design would not only develop expert movers, it would also support the holistic development of any high performance young athlete.

What needs to happen for a program design that is based on developing mature movers through enhancing health-related and vitality components of physical fitness is a re-conceptualization of physical education curriculum at large. If vitality-based movement experience becomes the guiding principle to lesson planning, teachers will learn to develop cardiovascular capacity, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance components in ways that both transcend and integrate sport specific units. This means that games associated with the health and fitness section of the curriculum, such as tag with imposed push-ups or sit-ups, will shift so that the design of the game or activity will

become more than a means to an end. Lead-up games that involve variations of tag and strength promoting activity, for example, would serve a particular purpose within the territorial, net/wall, dance or gymnastic genres. In other words, the process of becoming physically fit would have an embedded curricular meaning.

Health-Related Fitness

We realize that the practical task of lesson planning is left to the practitioner when presenting this 'vitality' approach to an integrative curriculum based on health-related fitness. Still, some further guidance is possible. Brian Barrett (2001) is one of several authors who have devised ways to integrate fitness within game structures. He designs activities based on: (a) the recruitment of "large muscle groups"; (b) participants choosing "their own level of entry"; (c) each game providing "an increased opportunity for action"; and (d) allowing participation "in a more or less intermittent fashion according to...individual needs" (p. 36). Situating these ideas within a content area so as to promote inherent meaning and purpose, the acclaimed 'Teaching Games for Understanding' (TGFU) approach "concentrates on teaching students why a skill is needed before teaching them how to perform it" (Hopper, 2002, p. 44). This approach, dating from the late sixties (Thorpe, Bunker and Almond, 1986), transforms the typical part-whole design of physical education lessons and nurtures movement progression through relational awareness as it pertains to interconnection with a team member/ partner and the critical or tactical use of space.

Hopper (2002), Mandigo and Holt (2003), and others have experienced favourable results applying the TGFU approach to traditional territory and net wall games. With a little insight and content knowledge, this approach could also have positive gains in meeting health-related and skill-oriented fitness criteria in dance and gymnastic disciplines. The typical pedagogical approach to learning dance, for example, is very much based on a-stop-and-start technique where the skills or components of the sequence are learned in isolation and the 'dance' is only performed at the end of the class. Within the proposed 'vitality' approach to reaching goals related to health-related fitness, students could experience the fun and enjoyment associated with sustained cardiovascular activity by dancing all the way through class. Sequenced movements may not be performed with comparable technical proficiency at first, but as children move into the strength component of the class, each position could be *slowed down* to heighten body awareness, technical placement, strength, and balance.

A vitality approach to physical education programming therefore enhances the possibility of being mindfully engaged while going through the motions of getting fit, strong, resilient, flexible and comfortable in one's skin. As a child becomes increasingly adept at running, hopping, leaping, balancing, stretching or changing directions quickly, for example, he or she experiences a deeper sense of vitality and an enhanced appreciation of movement as the essence of what it means to be alive. Health-related fitness thus becomes attuned to more than increased scores on cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, joint flexibility and body composition tests. Health-related fitness opens up the vital, movement possibilities of enhancing one's quality of life.

Fitness Indices

There are many positive aspects to programs in place that are not the result of an explicit, 'vitality' approach to physical education programming. Pangrazi and Gibbons (2003) point out that fitness tests, such as the Fitnessgram which combines a progressive timed shuttle run, a push-up, and sit-up test, and a modified sit and reach flexibility test of the lower back, can be motivating if they are used for individual purposes. This means that the results of the tests are the sole property of the student. Students may choose what components of the test they would like to measure and, if they so desire, compare current test results with future assessments in order to nurture intrinsic levels of motivation and improvement over time.

But assessing fitness through clinical-like testing procedures based on numeric reports is insufficient to measure vitality. Although children may well experience a measurable, quantitative progression in the cardiovascular, flexibility, and muscle strength and endurance components of health-related fitness, if such procedures form the base of the physical education program, the gains that relate to quality of life, as the movement is experienced, may well be overlooked. Changes or enhancement in emotional, mindful, and aesthetic experience may not be fully articulated, tracked or understood if our physical health continues to be measured in such a one-dimensional and limited way.

Embracing the transition of health, as it relates to the measurement and understanding of physical fitness, from the 1947 World Health Organization definition of "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" (WHO, 2004) to more recent references to "an essential dimension of the quality of our lives" (Epp, 1986, p. 3) and "a capacity or resource" we have "to adapt to, respond to, or control life's challenges" (Health Canada, 1999), requires a shift away from understanding fitness as a set of objective criteria and taking steps toward understanding health-related fitness as *embodied experience*. The implications of such a paradigmatic shift require that both the student and the teacher attend to the sensation of living the curricular experience over covering and measuring an objective section of the content.

To address this need, that health become "a sense of vitality, renewal, hope, a sense of goal, a sense of efficacy, a sense that 'I can be and do better' and a sense of worth contributing to self and society," Anderson (2000, p. 106) contends that "health is not a static dimension or quality but rather is seen as a cognitive lens through which information may be fitted and ideas projected" (Anderson, 2000, p. 107). Although Anderson promotes several pedagogical activities that promote interactive student learning, such as the formation of small discussion groups to construct 'knowledge,' we feel the need to explore alternative, embodied ways of knowing and being-in-the-world that pertain to deepened somatic understanding, i.e., moving from a language of cognition to one that is rich in motion. Simply deepening cognitive understanding as it relates to physical education (Anderson, 2002), by forming seated or sedentary discussion groups for the construction of knowledge, would be a step removed from the activities that promote physical change. By turning toward a *somatic*³

³ Hanna (1996) recovered the older Christian mystical use of the term, whose source is in the New Testament. Paul distinguishes between the Greek word *sarx*, which as the

understanding of health-related fitness, which is first-person, sensation-based perception (Hanna, 1996), students would be encouraged to become mindful of health-promoting activity as it unfolds. Holistic (amalgamated mind-body-soul), vital movement in this case emphasises what is felt, experienced, and perceived from within. We do not discount Anderson's (2002, 2000) constructivist and cognitive approach to promoting student learning and understanding, but simply take it a step further into bodily action.

A *somatic* understanding of health-related fitness helps students develop a bodily way of being and experiencing the world in and out of the physical education class. Posture assessments can evolve from the criteria of level shoulders, level hips, and a medial ear, shoulder, hip, knee and foot plum line to the somatic positions of confidence, movement competence and self-composure. Cardiovascular-based shuttle runs or other timed distances such as 12 minute runs can evolve from an objective measurement of distance to an appraisal of the sustained effort qualities of vitality associated with the time of 'flow' (Lloyd, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Strength activities that promote pushing, pulling, and reaching motions can be points of departure for understanding the feelings of giving and receiving, venturing and withdrawing, extending, reaching out to others and drawing them close. Flexibility can evolve from a sit and reach measure to a full-bodied propensity to being open and agile to go with the flow of the perpetually moving world. This approach to understanding health-related fitness takes the meaning associated with skill development as it relates to strategy or tactic within a particular movement discipline into a way of being strategic, tactical, tactile and tactful in the greater wholeness of everyday life.

Teacher Vitality

If a 'vitality' approach to becoming physically educated draws inspiration from the motions and enthusiasms for movement of children, then a vitality 'approach' to health-related, physical education programming rests squarely on the shoulders, indeed with the bodies, of those who teach children in gymnasiums and studios, on courts and playing fields, in pools and sporting arenas, and in more open, outdoor environments. The approach, after all, is as evident in the vitality of a teacher's address, manner and style of interacting with children and youth as it is in the energy, vigor, and joy that the latter show for physical activities they enjoy.

Teaching in relation to movement development and understanding of vitality becomes more than a curricular tool "that fosters enjoyment [for the] motivation to continue to participate" (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004, p. 298); it becomes a way of being in the gym and studio, on the court and playing field, in pools and

sense of a "hunk of meat," from *soma*, which Paul used to designate the luminous body transformed by faith. Hanna argued that it was the sacral body, gross and mechanistically conceived, separate from mind and imagination, that dominated Western thought and medicine. In his view, the teachers of embodiment practices were recovering a hidden sense of the wise, imaginative and creative body, thus creating a "Somatics," what Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology called "somatology." (Johnson, 1995, p. xv)

the sporting arenas, or in the outdoors. This teaching requires a deeper level of conscious awareness, beyond knowing when to “evaluate all my lessons....it might be, this works really well – ooh this sucks and I’ll have to change the drill” (O’Reilly, 1998, p. 49). It requires essentially the ability to deepen interactively a child’s movement sensibility.

Cultivating this interactive ability resembles Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) application of flow to the Montessori classroom but the flow he speak of tends to downplay the participation and role of the teacher. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) intent in deepening the connection between the student activity and the flow of independent learning was to address an alternative to the standard lecture approach to education which promotes a performative flow encounter for either the student or teacher who ‘presents’ the curriculum. Although Mandigo and Thompson (1998) have reported favourable results in students independently finding ‘optimal levels of challenge’ in relation to Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000, 1997) skill-challenge model of flow, there is still the need to articulate a somatic understanding of flow as it relates to vitality-based physical education programming, i.e., becoming fit, strong, flexible and comfortable in one’s skin and as it expresses a “kinetic bodily pairing” between teacher and student (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Lloyd, 2004). Accordingly, the flow we wish to explore has less to do with Csikszentmihalyi’s psychological depiction and more to do with the fluid nature of the aforementioned vitality. The *interactive* curricular experience becomes more than a child-centered activity that teachers watch from the sidelines; it is always an unfolding curriculum in motion.

By seeing the teacher as a vital part of the health-related, physical education program, the criteria embedded in the content become more than components to measure or check off on observational checklists. They frame mutual points of departure for teachers and students to explore how they experience the world in a bodily way as they engage in the interactive, flowing, gestural dance to which Mazis (1999) alludes. The benefit of teachers engaging in such bodily experiences of interactive flow is that they are more likely to suggest tips or strategies in relation to the experiential understanding of weight, time, space, and relational connection to their students, and not lapse into teacher-directed moments of interruption. As a child performs an activity based on running aimed at increasing the feeling of vitality, for example, a teacher who exudes a bodily appreciation for running may feel the mimetic impulse of vitality enter his or her stride, gestural movement, or supportive posture. Observational positions of control that create an objective distance, such as the arms akimbo position, or the crossed arm stance depicting a position of authority (i.e. Phillips, 1999), release into open-armed, co-participant postures, ready to move in vital response to the unfolding activity.

The manner in which a teacher jumps in and offers help with movement refinement can be comparable to a double-dutch skipper swaying back-and-forth waiting for the opportune moment to enter the game. Elsewhere, we have elaborated on the motions of physical education pedagogy and concluded that, “A teacher who [...]kinaesthetically connects to a student across lived or sensitive space [...]is more likely to suggest tips or strategies or facilitate meaningful student reflection on the movement experience” (Lloyd & Smith, 2004, p. 7). In contrast to the language of cognition that dominates our field, such as health and physical literacy programs which draw upon notions of

'reading' the game or situation, motion is the central part of our health-related fitness promotion. As O'Reilly (1988) notes, educational institutions "have historically privileged intellectual over physical work and physical education as a subject concerned with bodily practice, has traditionally been marginal to those subjects more closely associated with intellectual learning" (p. 45). Perhaps it is for this reason that our bodily movements of interaction have, for the most part been overlooked in teacher education programs. Teacher vitality represents a corrective physical approach to educating others.

We have explored motions of pedagogy in our studies of the positions, postures, gestures and expressions of teaching (Lloyd & Smith, 2004; Smith & Lloyd, 2003; Smith 2004). These studies pick up the movement education interest in "the significance of bodily carriage and the movement qualities of gestures and words" (Redfern, 1965, p. 22), and situate this body awareness within a "motion-sensitive pedagogy" (Lloyd & Smith, 2004; Smith & Lloyd, 2003; Lloyd, 2004). A pedagogy of teacher vitality goes a step further. It draws upon memories of active childhoods and requires that close attention be paid to vitalizing shapes and motions of the children we teach. Whereas flow has been defined as an effort quality, a 'vitality' approach requires interacting with children in ways that sustain flow as key to the pedagogical interaction. We wish to discern posturally, positionally, gesturally and expressively the vitality-based movements of children and youth which we can cultivate programmatically in order to help them achieve a sustaining vitality.

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