

CAPSTONE PROJECT

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LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER IN P.E AND HEALTH EDUCATION TEACHING IN U.S AND IN FINLAND

Overview

“Schools play a critical role in improving children’s and adolescent’s dietary and physical activity behaviors. Schools can create environments supportive of students’ efforts to eat healthy and be active by implementing policies and practices that support healthy eating and regular physical activity and by providing opportunities for students to learn about and practice these behaviors.”(<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/strategies.htm>) As a P.E and Health Education teacher I couldn’t agree more. Nowadays we have a growing number of overweight adolescents and young people with obesity related diseases. Studies prove that regular physical activity has a lot of positive impacts for example preventing overweight, increasing self-esteem and reducing stress. Therefore it’s very important for young people to learn a health-promoting lifestyle. As I mentioned earlier, schools play a critical role in supporting kids and youth to embrace these principles. We have a lot of work to do in physical and health education. Could teachers in U.S and in Finland learn something from each other concerning these issues?

Bibliography

Centers for disease control and prevention (CDC) synthesized research has presented nine guidelines how to promote healthy eating and physical activities in schools. I present here four of the most interesting guidelines: 1) Establish school environments that support healthy eating and physical activity 2) Implement a comprehensive physical activity program with quality physical education as the cornerstone 3) Implement health education that provides students with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and experiences required for healthy eating and physical activity 4) Provide students with health, mental health, and social services to address healthy eating, physical activity, and related chronic diseases prevention.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education has published six standards for quality physical education and The Joint Committee on National Health Education has developed eight standards to support health-enhancing behaviors for students in all grades. I’d like to find out what kind of teaching methods P. E teachers and Health Education teachers use to reach these goals? Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2000, 1) presents different models of teaching. State and district standards are on increase and many policymaker seem to assume that setting standards is enough.

The fact is that teachers need a range of strategies for dealing with curriculum.

Purpose

As a Capstone project scholarship candidate my main goal is to familiarize myself with the US educational system and way to teach P.E and Health Education. I have five questions:

- 1) What kind of education system there is in the U.S?
- 2) Are there differences between physical education and health education curriculums in U.S and in Finland and how the theoretical differences appear in school's daily life?
- 3) What kind of teaching methods teachers use to meet curriculum goals in physical education and in health education?
- 4) How does the school environment support healthy eating and physical activity?
- 5) How does the multiculturalism appear in school's daily life?

Methods

I'd like to observe P.E and Health education groups from couple of teachers during the autumn. I'd like to get familiar with U.S teaching methods and school culture as well as possible. I think observing will be most useful if I observe the same teaching groups throughout the period. But let's see if it's possible. I also wish I could share information about Finnish educational system and the way we teach P.E and Health education in Finland.

In the university I'd like to take part in the pedagogic courses and to get familiar with the U.S way of pedagogical thinking for example: KNES 245 – Methods of Teaching Physical Education, KNES 290 – Teaching Fitness and Physical Activity, KNEA 292 Teaching Game Concepts and Tactics, KNES 371 – Elementary School Physical Education: A Movement Approach, KNES 491 – Curriculum in Physical Education. I would also like to take part in course "KNES 287 - Sport and American Society" in faculty of kinesiology to understand American society.

I hope I could take part in some conferences example Physical Education Teacher Conference or some others conferences which are organized by National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

Professional development

I look forward to get new ideas during the exchange period in the U.S to fuel the development of my teaching back in Finland. Observing other teachers' work would be an effective way to re-evaluate my own approaches and habits. I'd like to learn some new teaching methods and also get some new educational contents. In university I'd like to take part in pedagogic courses to increase my pedagogical know-how.

My host school is very international. The primary school has The English Classes and the secondary school is trying to increase teaching subjects in English. The goal is that students could study in English trough the elementary school. I'd like to teach more classes in English and that's why it is very important to improve my English.

How does my project benefit a) my host school? B) Schools in U.S?

- a) My exchange period in U.S could benefit my host school in many ways. The school`s most important goal is to give high quality teaching and the cornerstone of this is that teachers are eager to improve their own teaching. And of course I will share my experiences to my colleagues. As I mentioned earlier my host school is very international so I hope I could learn something new about multiculturalism in U.S and share those experiences in my host school.

- b) I hope I could share something about my pedagogical know-how in U.S schools. I believe that teachers in U.S are interested in to hear about the Finnish educational system. This way we can promote cross-cultural dialogue in my home school and in the school where I stay in U.S.

Resources:

Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Obesity

School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/pdf/PAN_Guidelines_Executive_Summary.pdf. Centers for disease control and prevention.

National Health Education Standards.

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/sher/standards/8.htm>.

National Physical Education Standards

<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalstandards/>

Joyce, B., Weil, M. & Calhoun, E. Models of teaching. Sixth Edition. 2000. A Pearson Education Company. Printed in the United States of America.