

Meaningful, Purposeful and Content-Rich PE: Implications for Pedagogy and Practice

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Abstract

Background: Over the last several decades, there has been an increasing research interest in meaningfulness in physical education (PE), with insights from this research informing recent updates to curriculum and policy, including PHE Canada's PHE Competencies (Davis et al., 2023). Much of this research has focused on informing the development and implementation of pedagogies to support the prioritization of meaningfulness for students and has led to the development of the Meaningful PE approach (Fletcher et al., 2021). Research on Meaningful PE has arguably provided insights into *how* PE teachers can prioritize meaningfulness and *how* students may experience meaningfulness in PE (Strittmater et al., 2025). However, there has been little focus in the literature on meaningfulness in relation to the *why* (i.e. purposes) and *what* (i.e. content) of PE despite teachers having to make decisions in all three dimensions (i.e. the why, the what and the how of PE; Quennerstedt, 2019).

Methodology: In this oval table presentation, we theoretically and conceptually explore a greater focus on the intersection of the why, what and how of PE in line with calls to explicitly attend to all three dimensions (Nyberg & Larsson, 2014). We support the importance of PE teaching and learning as meaningful, while also advocating for PE experiences to be purposeful and content-rich. We explore pedagogical considerations for how a focus on all three dimensions might inform teachers' decision-making and students' experiences in PE.

Results & Conclusions: We argue that when a prioritized focus on meaningfulness informs how teachers teach and students learn alongside consideration of the why and what of PE in a broader sense, new possibilities for deep and varied meanings and experiences of meaningfulness are opened to students. These insights can help to support research, practice and policies advocating for a greater emphasis on meaningfulness in PE.

Keywords: meaningful; purpose; content; pedagogy; learning

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