Washington State University
College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: October 18, 2019  Time: 12:30 P.M.
Locations: Spokane – SCRS 222 and Vancouver – VUB 332

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

CLASSROOM-BASED PHYSICAL FITNESS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY

Chair: John Lupinacci

Jenson’s (1998) so called “factory model” is in question in K-12 public education today. It is hard to wrap your brain around this notion that one size fits all, and that if we just work hard enough we will produce students ready to take on our future. Students do not come to school ready to learn in the same ways, nor do they learn in the same ways. Engagement is key to students' interactions with learning and educators have spent decades trying to find out how to keep students engaged. Researchers like Jenson (1998), Gregory and Kaufeldt (2015), and Medina (2014) suggest that student’s brains need physical movement for the brain to learn best. Furthermore, researchers Katz et al (2010), Trost and van der Mars (2009), and Pate et al (2006) suggest that movement is vitally important in the school setting for increased student learning.

The overall purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature regarding how classroom-based fitness activities effect high poverty students’ interactions with literacy and engagement. More specifically, the purpose is to better understand the experiences of first grade students and first grade high poverty students with classroom-based fitness activities, and how those experiences effect their engagement with reading and writing. This action research informed qualitative case study takes place in a large elementary school where qualitative research methods were used for data keeping and analysis. Through interviews of teachers, study team agendas, and student voice shown through drawings, the action research team was able to explore student engagement before, during, and after classroom-based interventions were implemented. The study found four overarching themes: engagement, movement, movement influences all, and teaming for learning.

Implications for school systems include a need for increased professional development for educators working with high poverty students, socially just leadership through collaboration, and a focus on equity throughout the school system. Policy implications include a need for a deeper understanding of poverty and the poverty line and how it effects our students in the classroom, as well as policy referencing the need for movement in our school day.