

# Looking in the Mirror: Teachers' Images and Reflections of Change

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## Introduction

A desired outcome of professional development (PD) is increased capacity resulting in teacher change. In physical education, Sparkes (1990) identifies three levels of change: surface (e.g., curriculum and equipment), the use of new teaching approaches, and the alteration of beliefs.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' depictions and descriptions of change as a result of participation in a PD project designed to implement new curriculum. The research question was: What changes were identified with respect to pedagogical encounters between the teacher and the child?

## Methods

Participants included four elementary physical education teachers involved in a five year PD project. Data collection techniques included four focus group interviews and Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), or teachers' photographs of personally meaningful events, representations, and activities using a visual ethnography approach over a four month period (Pink, 2007).

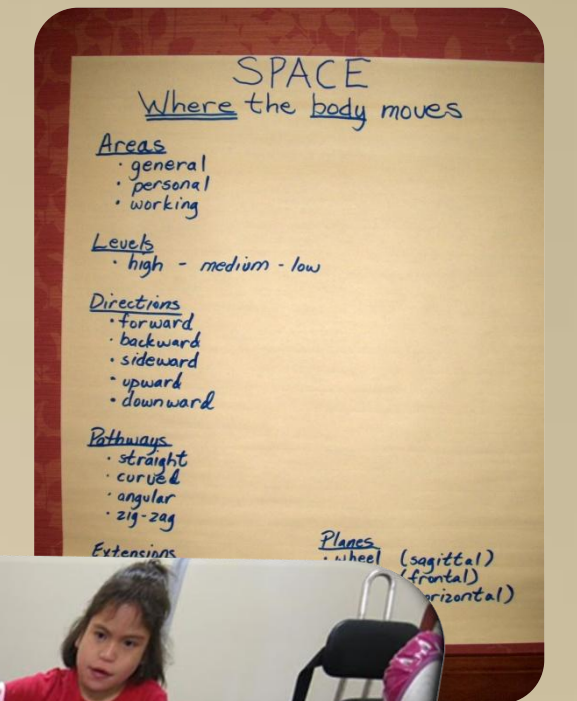
Interviews were analyzed using open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Photographs were analyzed using a reflexive approach combined with methods that recognize the contingency of visual meanings (Pink, 2007). Discussion describing why certain features were photographed was examined. Trustworthiness was established utilizing a researcher journal, triangulation, and a member check.

## Strategies were established to hold students more accountable for learning

• *We have the goals. We have purpose. We want to improve. We want to get better. We want our kids to reach their indicators. We have purpose.* (Lee, 3)

• *We had an IEP meeting with the parents of a very low functioning student. Mom looked at the report card and was very excited because her daughter had finally gotten a one. She'd never gotten a grade in PE before. She's like 'she got a 1! Now maybe she can get a two someday.' I was pretty shocked that mom even paid attention to all that. It just really made me feel good that there's something that we worked on and this mom was really happy that the daughter had done this well.* (Nikki, 2)

• *I am very clear on what I want the kids to know... I feel like I have the tools to do that. I am more confident. I have been teaching now for 11 years so I am a better teacher, but having the road map, especially the written down curriculum is huge. I feel validated. I just have a much clearer understanding of my purpose.* (Karen, 1)



## Results

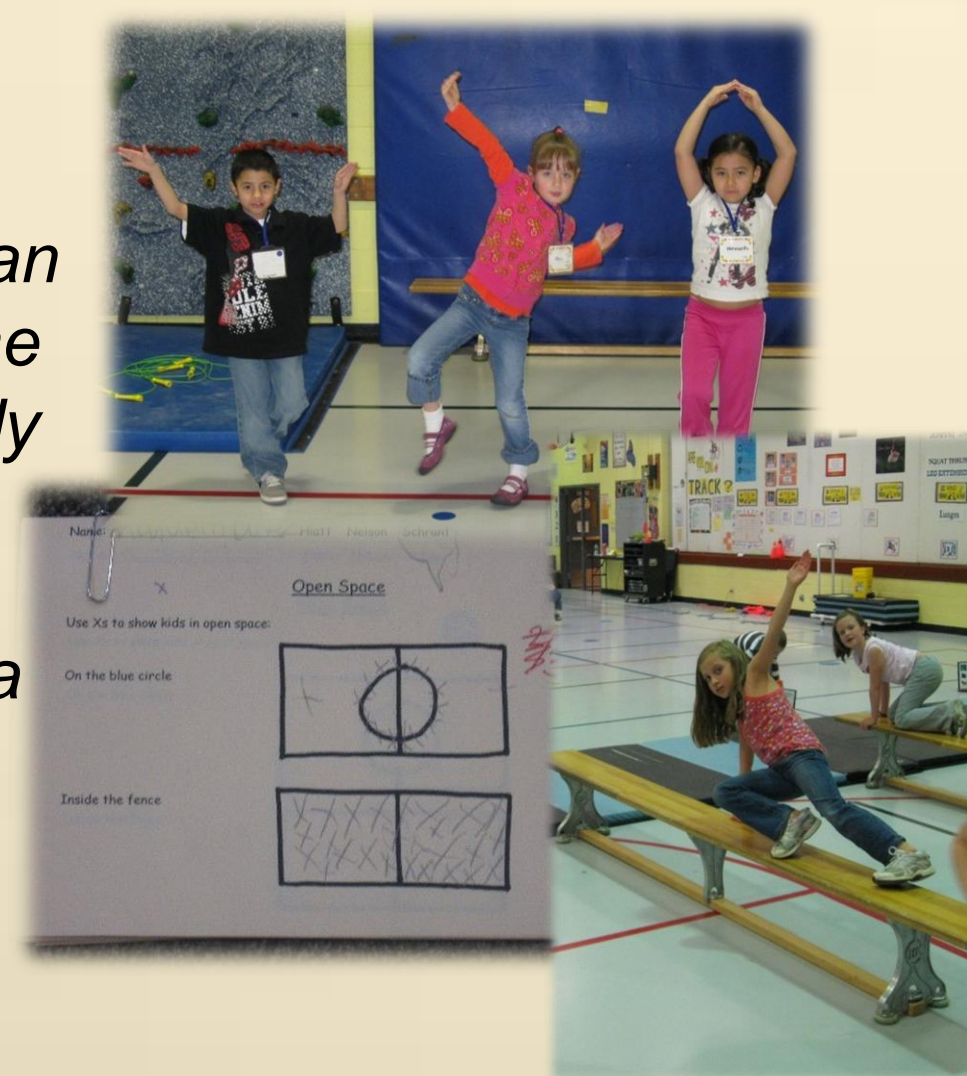
Four themes reflected teachers' depictions and descriptions of change:

- **Increased focus on children's developmental needs & interests = differentiated instructional strategies**
- **Purposeful and discernible emphasis on teaching the 'whole child'**
- **Strategies were established to hold students more accountable for learning**
- **Instruction shifted to a more student-centered approach**

## Increased focus on children's developmental needs & interests = differentiated instructional strategies

• *I like it [new curriculum] because it's a true form of assessment because you can't assume anything when you look at a kid. I mean Your best athlete might be... fit, but you also can't assume that the kid who always plays games at recess or plays sports cognitively understands what you are teaching.* (Karen & Tina, 4)

• *And you can make changes in the progressions. I feel like I was a K-2, 3-5 teacher I taught K-2 exactly the same with maybe a few variations as I did. It doesn't make sense, I feel like I was very separated primary and intermediate. And this [new curriculum] is the guide; it's specific. It builds the background knowledge.* (Tina, 4)



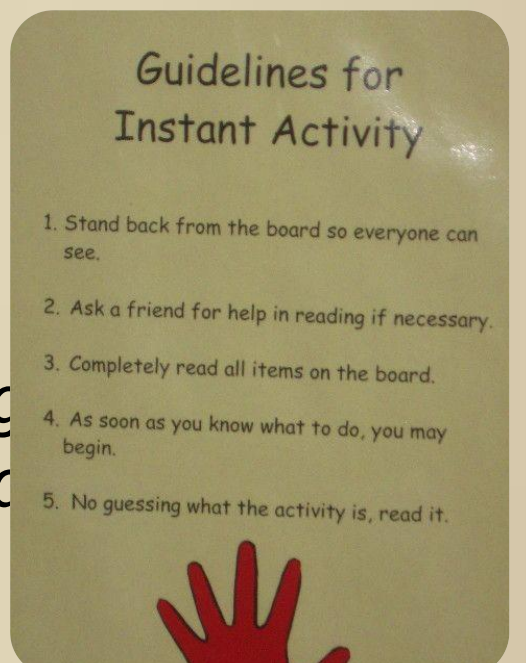
## Instruction shifted to a more student-centered approach



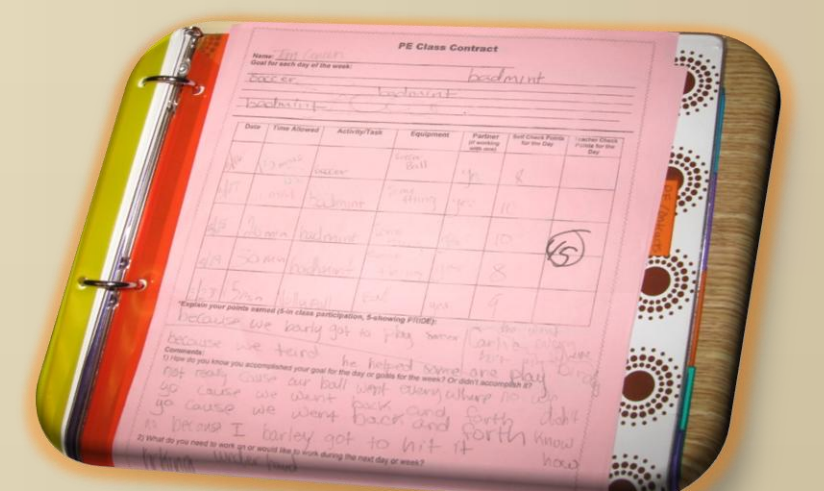
• *This is Cory. Cory makes me want to teach until I am 105. He's the reason I come to school.* (Lee, 1)

• *I feel like my kids are more responsible and that's why I took the picture. I'm actually teaching it. I am not telling them what to do; I am putting it on them. Which is good good.* (Karen, 2)

• *This is a camera. This is my future. As a peer assessment I could video you and you could look back at your own rubric and do an assessment of yourself. So that was a big inspiration to bring technology in for me ... kid peer assessments; for them to start really looking at themselves.* (Lee, 3)



• *I have this picture which represents my middle school (MS) kids. I never had MS kids; never student taught MS... Here are my MS kids working on PE contracts. They have to write their goals, stick with it; then grade themselves...* (Tina, 1)



## Conclusions/Discussion

- Interviews and images depicted the child at the center of learning encounters rather than the teachers.
- Surface level changes to teaching and accompanying changes in teaching practices were clearly evident for these teachers (Sparkes, 1990). These changes indicated a powerful shift in their beliefs that was reflected in terms of meeting the educational needs of students, rather than simply providing activities to keep children "busy, happy, and good".
- This desired outcome of effective teaching and PD is a switch in focus from teachers as teachers to teachers as learners (Armour, 2010).

## Purposeful and discernible emphasis on teaching the 'whole child'



• *This is the affective domain...it comes with our standards too; it just reinforces that you need to develop the whole child. If they can play nice together we can get a lot more done!* (Lee & Nikki, 4)

• *We are feeling that we are very much contributing to the overall well being of the child. We feel like we're doing a good job and the standards are also there in kid friendly terms which are wonderful to refer to. I just took a picture of standards 1 and 2 and 5 and 6. I just brought a picture of Standard 1 for the reason that we are standards-based but also I feel I am doing better at these particular standards.* (Karen, 1)



• *Because if our parents see, for what time we have with the children, they are getting a quality education program...we not just rolling out the ball...my kid is actually responsible for their own behavior and learning skills and they want to be active...* (Tina, 1)

## References

- Armour, K. (2010). The physical education profession and its professional responsibility...or...why '12 weeks paid holiday' will never be enough. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 15, 1-13.
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