

INCREASING STUDENT'S ENGAGEMENT IN PE LESSONS

Past studies have consistently shown the benefits of an autonomy-supportive teacher style on students' motivation, emotion, learning, and performance (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991; Reeve, 2002). However, many teachers tend to use controlling strategies (Newby, 1991), and physical education teachers are not the exception (Sarrazin, Tessier, Pelletier, Trouilloud, & Chanal, 2006; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Smith, 2009).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2002) proposes that social factors – such as a classroom environment – can influence students' motivation and engagement by nurturing basic psychological needs. Research has identified “autonomy support”, “structure” and “interpersonal involvement” as the social factors likely to nourish the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, respectively. When students are engaged, they will invest in understanding their actions (e.g., they solicit attention from the teacher; they ask him/her questions when they do not understand instructions), joyful, interested, energetic, full of fun whatever they are asked to play or learn and show intensity of effort and perseverance for each physical activity (Tessier, Sarrazin & Ntoumanis, 2010).

Autonomy Support

Provide autonomy supportive communications such as giving choices and options, explaining rules and limits or delivering feedback frequently in an informational way (e.g., “maybe you could try different kinds of shots and then choose the best”), provide praise and encourage more individual effort and progress, Avoid controlling communications such as using commands and directives, imposing rules and limits or delivering controlling feedback (e.g., “extend your arm after the shot, I have told you that 10 times!”).

Structure

Develop learning tasks that are more adapted to the diversity of students' physical skills. Try to create a context (i.e., tasks, goals, feedback, and encouragement) that encourages students to take responsibilities, and to take ownership of their own learning. Avoid vague goals, no feedback and no encouragement, and to a learning system which is uniform for all students.

Interpersonal Involvement

Try to be warm, sympathetic, humorous, listening and investing time and energy for students. Be more involved with students, listen to them more and offer more empathic statements. This will help in reducing apprehensions related to engaging in practicing new motor skills. Avoid being cold, distant, sarcastic, and inflexible with students.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Autonomy Support: Refers to behaviors by a person in position of authority that show respect, allow freedom of expression and action, and encourage subordinates to attend to, accept, and value their inner states, preferences, and desires (Deci & Ryan, 1987).

Engagement: Refers to the behavioral intensity and emotional quality of a person's active involvement during a task (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barsh, 2004), engagement provides teachers with an observable manifestation of the quality of a student's motivation (Reeve, 2002).

Interpersonal involvement: Refers to individuals' opportunities to feel related and belonging when they interact within a social environment that offers affection, warmth, care, and nurturance (Skinner & Edge, 2002).

Structure: Describes the extent to which a social context is structured, predictable, contingent, and consistent (Skinner & Edge, 2002).

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