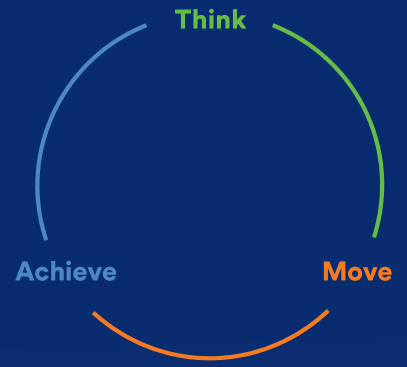


PE STORIES OF CHANGE SPRING 2018

WORKS



PE Works is Mayor Bill de Blasio's unprecedented multiyear investment to revitalize physical education (PE) for every student in NYC public schools. Prior to 2015, the quantity and quality of PE varied from school to school, and very few elementary schools met State PE requirements with certified PE teachers. Building on an eight-district pilot in 2015-16, the New York City Department of Education set out to revitalize PE Citywide in 2016-17 with funding and support in three areas: investing in teachers, building PE into school environments, and developing communities that are proud of PE.

PE Works *Stories of Change* feature principals and staff who are making changes so that PE is a meaningful part of each child's school experience. Their work marks the beginning of developing a physically literate, health-centered generation of New York City students. For this story, we visited PS 79 The Francis Lewis School, in Queens.



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PE in a New Light

Before the PE Works Initiative to revitalize physical education (PE), the principal of PS 79, Mr. George Carter, like many principals, didn't think a lot about "gym class." His school, in Whitestone, Queens, has a great gym—but having a gym doesn't guarantee a vibrant and productive PE class for students. Great PE requires an investment in PE teachers, a central commitment of PE Works that changed Principal Carter's fundamental approach towards PE: "I had a different view before. PE Works opened my eyes."

Seeing PE in a new light started in 2015 when Mr. Carter hired Mr. Benjamin Paquette, one of the first PE teachers recruited, placed, and funded through PE Works. With the help of PE Works Instructional Coach Diana Stein and School Capacity Manager Silvia Silva, Mr. Paquette embraced new resources and professional development opportunities to bring enthusiasm and expertise to the classroom. Mr. Paquette created lesson plans aligned with a modern, skills-based PE curriculum and applied for grants to enhance his PE program with equipment and materials. He also volunteered as one of the first facilitators for newly formed PE professional learning communities around the City, enlisting Mr. Carter to host bi-monthly meetings at the school so that Queens PE teachers could meet and solve problems of practice.

Mr. Paquette's exceptional scheduling abilities motivated Mr. Carter to make even deeper changes to build PE into the school environment. Changes included growing the certified PE team, adding Ms. Meghan McCarthy and Mr. Hank Horton, and

collaborating on best scheduling practices, including using the dance room. Mr. Paquette uses parallel programming to combine both general and special education classes from the same grade in the gym. PE teachers collaborate on routines, activities, skill stations, and the equipment that will best support classes to ensure students can participate safely and productively. The team prepares for classes with clear objectives in five-page lesson plans, carefully laid out materials, and sequenced warm-up, skill-building, and debriefing activities for students. Said Mr. Carter: "Ben came in and said this it's hard not having the same age group in the gym...you might have a fifth grade and kindergarten at the same time which means you have to swap equipment. Now we schedule the same age and Ben can do more."



Benefits of a Strong Team

A strong PE team is especially useful when creating a welcoming school environment for young newcomers. Like many schools in a global city, The Francis Lewis School experiences demographic shifts from time to time, and has recently seen an influx of newly-arrived immigrants in the kindergarten class, some arriving right before school starts in the Fall. PE provides respite and great way for all students to participate with one another, overcoming language barriers. PE teachers partner Multilingual Learners with native English speakers to use pictures and words on screens or laminated signs to support verbal instruction and demonstrations. Positive reinforcements like stickers, high fives, and their “Top Owl” award recognize students for doing a great job. It helps all students warm up and feel like they belong, offering a path to engagement and permission to have fun at school.

The PE team collaborates with classroom teachers to make sure PE routines are an integral part of the school day. To maximize

PE class time, the PE and classroom teachers have classes transition in and out of the gym so that all classes enter through one door, and exit on the other side. Mr. Paquette works closely with classroom teachers to, provide further trainings and coordinate Move-to-Improve, a classroom-based physical activity program for teachers to use daily as a supplement to PE classes. The Francis Lewis School is a Move-to-Improve All-Star school, which means a majority of teachers are trained and using Move-to-Improve every day so students are active learners.

Ask Mr. Carter what he thinks about “gym class” now, and he’ll not only correct you (“you mean PE?”), but he’ll tell you everything you need to know about the impact good physical education can have on a school community: “I think PE has had a positive impact on the whole building. The staff is happy to see that children are happier and more engaged. You see kids leaving the gym with a smile, so that’s something. What’s better than to see smiles on their faces?”



Left to right: Principal George Carter, PE Teacher Meghan McCarthy, PE Teacher Henry Horton, PE Teacher Benjamin Paquette, Adapted PE Teacher Arty Haley

PE to Be Proud Of

On a typical day in May, eight stations are each labeled with pictures and instructions related to the theme of striking. Teachers model each station with the help of a student volunteer. Together, they demonstrate how to take equipment out, do the task, and return equipment safely. Each time the whistle blows, kids either have their hands up to volunteer or clap for their classmate who just completed a demonstration. The preparation of materials and routines early in the school year is evident as students seamlessly rotate from station to station. Students experience a variety of ways to develop locomotor skills (e.g., running, jumping, hopping), manipulative skills (e.g., striking, throwing, catching), and other fitness skills. In between periods, classes moving in one door and exiting another give the appearance of a carnival, but the students flow like a carefully crafted routine.

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