

# *Meaningful PE*

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*“One of the greatest things about physical activity and play is that they **make our lives go better, not just longer.** It is the quality of life, the joy of being alive...” (kretchmar, 2006)*

*“Assisting students to search for meaningful physical activities as part of their search for purpose in their lives and as part of the **decision-making process that they encounter each day**” (Ennis, 2017)*



## Overview:

- *Current landscape*
- *Challenges*
- *Importance of PE that connects with experiences that are meaningful for children*



## What are we aiming for?

- More young people enjoy being active
- Young people are involved in developing opportunities that are right for them
- An early focus on developing the skills and confidence to lead an active life
- Resource and capacity is proportionately focussed on young people experiencing the greatest inequalities

# MAKING OUR MOVE

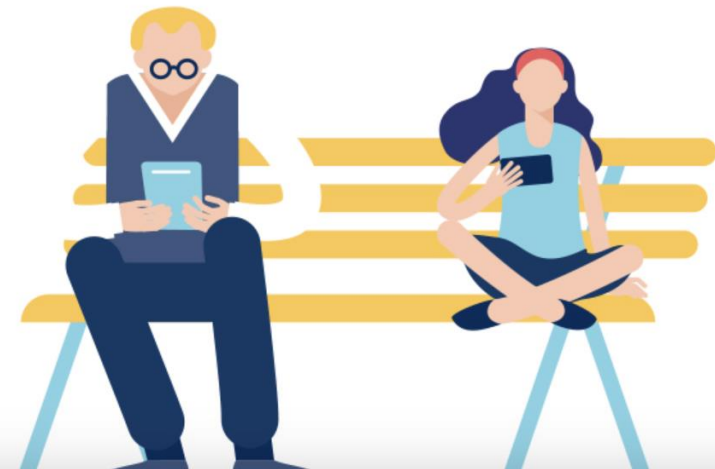
## Shared Vision for Movement in Notts and Derbyshire

1 in 4

adults across Derbyshire  
and Nottinghamshire  
are inactive.

1 in 3

children and young  
people are inactive.



# Children in the North of England

- A child of the north of England is more likely to be living with obesity than a child elsewhere in England.
- Children in the north of England are lonelier than children in the rest of England. 23% of parents in the North reported their child was 'often' lonely compared to 15% of parents in the rest of the country.
- Children in the north are more likely to be living with obesity at reception age: 10.7% of children in the north compared to 9.6% of children in the rest of England. By year six, or age 11, this has grown to 22.6% in the north compared to 20.5% in the rest of England.
- 30% of children are active for less than 30 mins a day.
- 47% of children are active for more than one hour a day.

Child  
of the  
North

Building a fairer future  
after COVID-19



# Generation Inactive

- The area around the home where children are allowed to go unsupervised has shrunk by 90% since the 70s.
- Children's activity levels decline during school holidays. Research from UK active suggests that children return to school in September less fit than when they broke up in July, with children from poorer areas most affected.
- School holidays should be spent playing with friends, but for many children they have become an unhealthy, disengaged and even lonely period of time that can have repercussions on their physical and mental wellbeing.



## **The main findings:**

- Only a 'small number' of schools have a clearly defined aim of their Curriculum that is broken down into clear progressions.
- The best schools prioritise less physical activities and sports.
- 'it is not always clear how what is being taught or the order of teaching supports all pupils to know more and do more in PE. As a result, many curriculums lack coherence'.
- Only just over half of schools are catering well for SEND.
- A small number of pupils routinely miss PE for extra support in other subjects and that is not good practice as it undermines the importance of PE.

# *Dominance of Sport in PE*

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Team games/sport continues to dominate much of what is taught in PE. The justification for this is not often pupil voice or the promotion of active lifestyles.

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Whilst PE can educate children and inspire them to lead active lives, it would be misplaced to say that PE can address childhood obesity.

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In order to inspire children to move more, form an enjoyment of movement and lead active lives, PE needs to be meaningful.



# Is PE Fit for Purpose?

It is suggested that PE has failed to keep up to date with changes in wider physical culture, leading to a **lack of connection** between what children do in school and what they choose to do in their own time and out of school.

The process of engagement in PE and sport by young people is **complex** and the wider cultural and social context must be taken into account when developing physical opportunities for children to reflect the unique interests of *all* young people.

PE curriculums around the world are unpinned by the principle of lifelong participation in physical activities however, PE continues to be dominated by **sport based games that don't necessarily reflect the choices made by children or adults.**

*(Coulter & Ni Chroinin, 2011)*

A group of children in school uniforms are playing a game on a grassy field. One boy in the center is sitting on the ground, looking towards the camera. Other children are standing around him, some with their backs to the camera. The scene is outdoors on a paved area next to a grassy field. The text is overlaid in white, italicized font.

*What do you think children want to experience in PE and how do you know this?*

# *How fit is PE?*

*What informs your curriculum?*

*Why do your children move?*

*Where they like to move?*

*What shapes the choices they make?*

*Do your children choose to move for health, competition, social contact or for several reasons?*

*Is there anything that your school does that prevents children from being active?*



# *The Purpose of PE*

PE is a socially constructed activity that is formed by and informed the wider physical culture (sport, physical activity, exercise and health). Therefore, it is an area of the curriculum that is continually being shaped by what is done in its name.

**However, it is suggested that PE has failed to keep up to date, leading to a lack of connection.**

The terms PE and sport (& games) continue to be used interchangeably and sport and health have increasingly shaped what is taught in PE, why certain activities are chosen and in some cases who is identified as best suited to teach/coach PE.

(Kirk 2010)

When we consider the broader objective of PE, teaching PE more nuanced

## Harmful Experiences in PE (from Twitter)

### Embarrassment

- Of lack of competence / poor performance
- By teachers and/or peers
- Chosen last when picking teams

### Bullying

- More often by peers (when playing or in changing rooms)
- Less often by PE teachers

### Lack of enjoyment

- Fitness testing in front of peers
- Overt focus on competitive 'win at all cost' traditional team sports

### Injury

- Experienced bad injury in class and teacher showed no compassion

### Anxiety of body image

- Body evaluated in front of peers
- Having to change in front of peers

### Lack of teaching/education

- Never explained why they were doing something, what to do and how to improve at it.

Do competitive activities contribute to the educational outcome in lessons or does it affect the experience and attitudes of some learners?  
*Character building or crushing?*

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# Constructing A PE Curriculum

We want our children to walk into a PE lesson, a dance lesson, a gym, a sports club, field or play space and be filled with a sense of excitement. Joy rather than dread, boredom or fear or failure.

In order to provide these environments, we need to continually question how and what we do. One way in which we can do this is through the promotion of democratic classrooms that encourage children to make a contribution, make choices and negotiate choice.

Co-constructing a curriculum isn't easy but when children are involved in decision making, ownership, responsibility and inclusion becomes central to learning.

# Physical Literacy Consensus Statement:

## Why physical literacy matters – keeping the end goal in mind

- The quality of our relationship with movement and physical activity profoundly influences our choice to be active.
- Having a positive and meaningful relationship with movement and physical activity makes us more likely to be and stay active, benefiting our health, well-being and quality of life.

Physical literacy  
is our relationship  
with movement  
and physical activity  
throughout life.

### A personal relationship

Having a positive and meaningful association with movement and physical activity.



### Movement and physical activity

How we move (physical), connect (social), think (cognitive) and feel (affective) during movement and physical activity plays a crucial role.



### Throughout life

Influenced across the lifecourse by individual, social and environmental factors.



**CAPABILITY**  
Can this behavior  
be accomplished  
in principle?



Physical
Psychological

**OPPORTUNITY**  
Is there sufficient  
opportunity for  
behavior to occur?



Social
Physical

**MOTIVATION**  
Is there sufficient  
motivation for the  
behavior to  
occur?



Automatic
Reflective



**TARGET  
BEHAVIOR**



# What is Meaningful PE?

PE during childhood is regarded as important in providing meaningful experiences in physical activity to children ([Beni et al., 2017](#); [Kretchmar, 2006](#)). According to MPE, PE experiences should have personal significance for children. PE teachers should emphasize the purpose and goals of movement for an individual, give attention to the personal significance of the emotional value of the experience, and provide a sense of coherence by connecting PE to experiences outside of school ([Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2022](#)).

Enjoyment is seen as a key element for meaningful PE experiences in addition to social interaction, challenge, motor competence, personally relevant learning, and delight. Pedagogical strategies that facilitate these elements positively contribute to children's PE enjoyment ([Beni et al., 2017, 2019](#); [Ní Chróinín et al., 2018](#)).

- Adank et al, 2023

# **Defining meaningful and how does it relate to PE?**



Meaningful is defined as:

- Significant – of personal value
- Purposeful – motivating e.g. Goals
- Coherence – makes sense and engages the mind and body

Meaningful PE prioritises experiences that hold meaning for children and this is the process for shaping practice and pedagogical decisions. We can do this by considering experiences that encourage participation and enhances quality of life.

**Meaningful PE requires intentional planning. It is too important to be left to chance.**

# What Is and Isn't Meaningful PE?

## THE MEANINGFUL PE APPROACH IS NOT:

A checklist or list of prescribed steps teachers should use to teach toward meaningful experiences



A set of six features

A stand-alone model or approach for delivery of a PE program



## THE MEANINGFUL PE APPROACH IS:

A framework to help guide teachers' pedagogical decision-making when prioritizing meaningful experiences



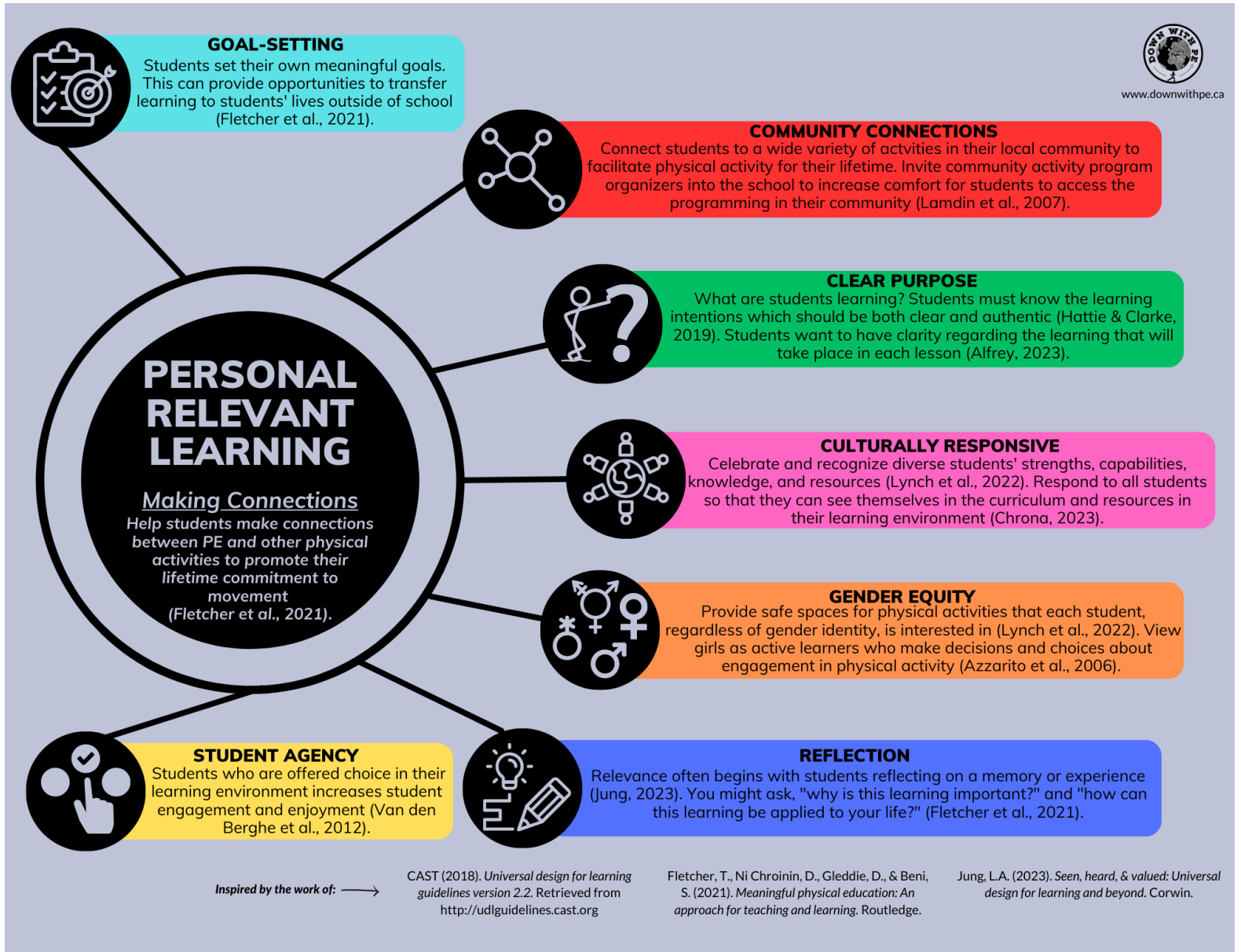
Ideas about the types of features that influence ways students experience meaningfulness and about how teachers might promote those



Designed to be integrated with local curricular and policy objectives and used in concert with other pedagogical models/approaches where appropriate



# Personal Relevance



# *The How of Meaningful PE*



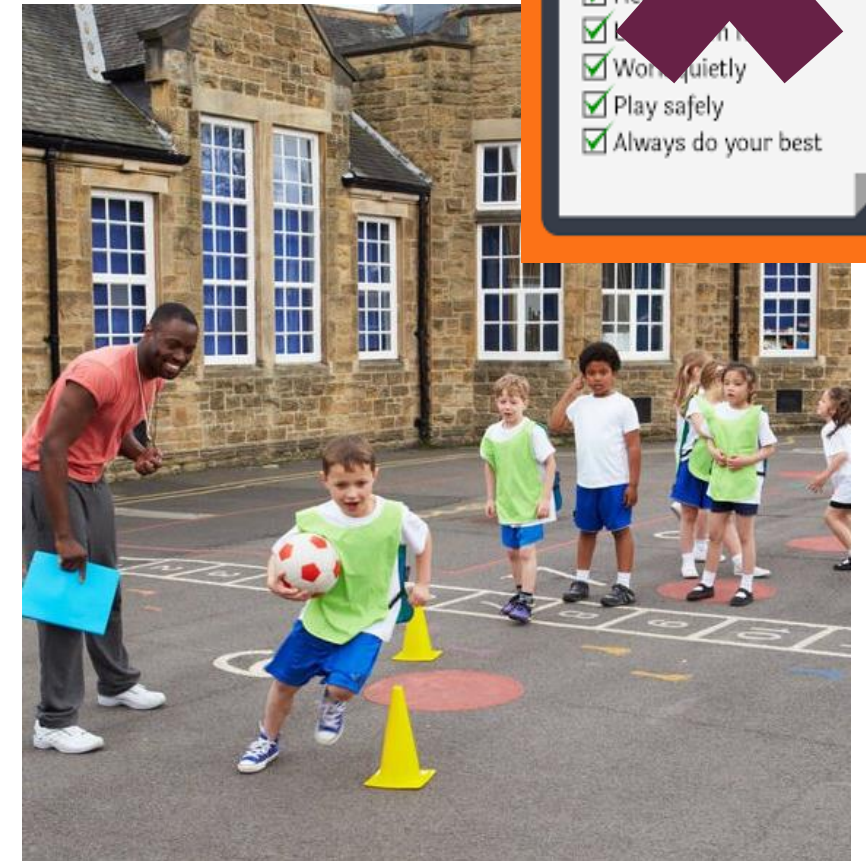
1. Social interaction – How do you group children and why (behaviour?), How can you promote discussion and collaboration and how you engage with individual children within the lesson.
2. Fun – consider how you structure your lessons. Prioritise engagement and joy right from the start of your lesson. Clear boundaries are obviously essential in order to maintain an inclusive and safe environment.
3. Challenge – How can you promote choice and challenge? Carefully consider role and place of competition.
4. Motor competence – Consider pedagogical models that promote reflection, and build confidence. Student perception of ability (growth mindset) significantly impacts on future activity and choices.
5. Personally relevant – When do you jump? If you could jump higher, what could you do? Linking PE to real life.
6. Delight – Consider your role in promoting delight and the role of play and child led activity within lessons. Delight fosters further participation and satisfaction.

# But first...

What are your priorities for teaching PE?

Do children have meaningful experiences in your PE lessons? How do you know?

What do you think your children think are your priorities when teaching PE?




Meaningful PE demands a democratic approach where children have a say in what happens in PE

**STRATEGY 1:**  
Using **CHOICE** to Find Voice



**Choice**

**STRATEGY 2**  
Learning to Direct Play

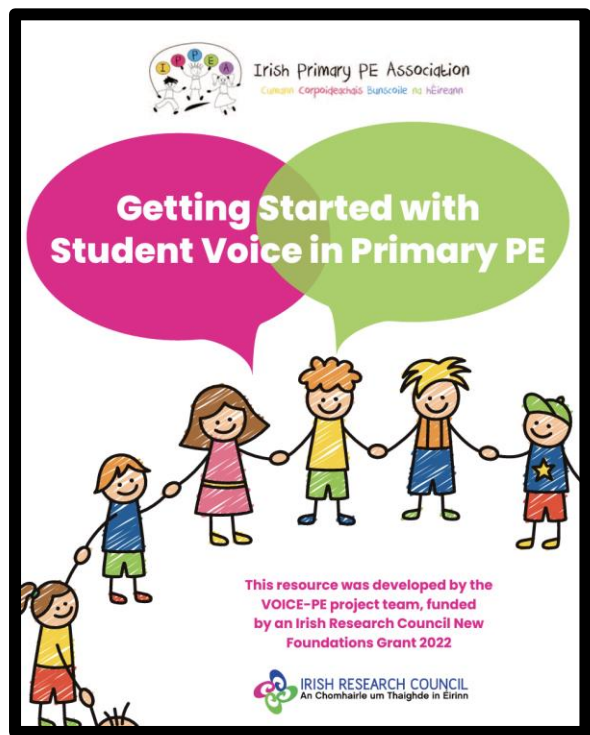


**Social & Partner Choice**

**STRATEGY 4**  
Change One Thing



**Provide autonomy & options**



**STRATEGY 5**  
Special Interest Badges




**Recognising achievement, effort, creativity**

**STRATEGY 7**  
Certificate of Achievements\*




**Personal challenge, persistence, determination, effort, kindness**

**STRATEGY 6**  
Connecting to Children's Wider Physical Activity Lives



**What inspires you and what does your community offer/value?**

**STRATEGY 3**  
Identifying and Responding to Children's Preferences



**What features do children like – free play, adapted?**

# What Now?

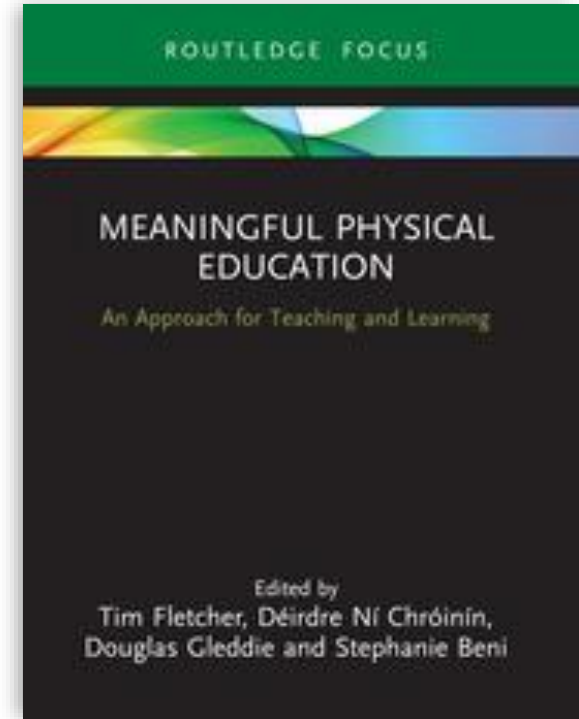
- Start small and consider how you will approach co-construction/ student voice? Quick poll? Philosophy for Children discussion?
- What is within your gift? Can you redesign what you do or how you do it? If you have a scheme of work, consider how you can personalise.
- How can you promote greater student ownership? Roles and responsibilities.
- How can you promote collaboration, talk, social interaction?
- How can you start to integrate choice and challenge?
- **Consider barriers to teaching along with barriers to learning**





# Further information:

- Read: <https://meaningfulpe.Wordpress.Com/>
- Follow:  
<https://twitter.com/meaningfulpe?lang=en>
- Watch:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uaJM-URxLY>



*Any Questions???*

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