

PROPOSAL FOR EXPANDING CYNEFIN

Isabella Head-Bates

Curriculum Adventure (BMOE6002)

Maria Trevino Gonzalez

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Carmarthen, Wales

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Since Covid-19 the rate of physical activity among children has decreased. Childhood obesity has been growing at an alarming rate for many years now. During the height of Covid-19 schools, parks, and playgrounds were closed leaving children with few options to get outside and be active. Now we are seeing a growing number of physically inactive children. Children are not encouraged enough to participate in outdoor activities anymore, rather they are given iPads in order to entertain themselves. However, physical activity is a very important skill to teach children. In order to promote a healthy lifestyle children need to be taught the importance of physical activity. This starts in school. Schools are required to provide physical education courses in order to promote physical activity. However, with the decrease in movement among adolescents new programs are needed to encourage physical literacy. For my proposal, I am focusing on students from grades 11 and 12 because these are the years right before students go to university so learning different ways to be physically active can prove to be beneficial. By expanding Cynefin we can create a facility with many different affordances that will encourage students in grades 11 and 12 to choose an activity that will help promote physical literacy in their lives.

The goal of physical literacy is to encourage students to pick up physical activity as a long-term lifestyle practice. Teachers should encourage students to gain faith and inspiration in their skills. When students become physically literate not only are they confident and inspired in their skills, but they have a certain level of comprehension that helps them understand the importance of physical activity in their life. Physical literacy should be used as an aim that physical education should strive to reach. The difference between physical education and physical literacy is that physical education is finite and has an endpoint, whereas physical

literacy is constantly changing and allows the individual room to grow. There are cases where the school is the only place where students have access to physical activity. That being said, teachers should work to promote physical literacy during their time with the students. Physical literacy is something that every person has, but each individual has a different level depending on their current skill level (Whitehead, 2010).

Affordances include things in the environment that can be provided to not only animals but also humans (Gibson, 1986). Gaver (1996) explains that affordances of the environment can also help to promote social interactions. Affordances can be used in regard to physical literacy because as students use the different affordances offered by the environment around them they can become more physically literate. By using the environment students can become more comfortable outside, which encourages physical literacy. The more students interact with the environment the more confident they become. When students experience new social interactions through affordances they can become more confident and knowledgeable in their skills. It is also said that having someone to engage in physical activity with increases the likelihood that the individual will continue to engage in physical activity in the future.

In the United States, each state makes its own laws on the required amount of physical education students must participate in. In California, the required amount of physical activity for middle and high schoolers is four hundred minutes every ten days (California Department of Education, n.d.). This ends up being an hour-long class each day. California now requires students to partake in a physical performance test at the end of grade 9 (California Department of Education, n.d.). If the students pass this test they can be excused from taking a physical education course in grades 11 and 12. High school students are required to learn information about “the effect of physical activity upon dynamic health, mechanics of body movement,

aquatics, individual/dual sports, gymnastics/tumbling, team sports, rhythms/dance, and combatives” (California Department of Education, n.d.).

The problem with the California physical education system is that there is little funding, a majority of the schools’ funding goes to core classes like math, science, and English (Pothamsetty, 2019). Also, schools focus more on creating athletes out of students, instead of letting students choose which activities they want to participate in (Pothamsetty, 2019). Not all students are particularly fond of sports, so making a physical education system that is mostly revolved around sports will lead to students feeling left out and not enjoying themselves.

Another problem with the California physical education system is that no holistic approach is being taken. By adding a holistic approach to the physical education system learning becomes more student-centered instead of curriculum centered (Etkin, 2024). A major problem with the physical education system is that students in grades 11 and 12 are not required to take any sort of physical education course. These are crucial years for students because these are their last two years before they enter the adult world. For this reason, it is important that they learn how to participate in physical activity in the long run. McGill (2001) proposes for grades 11 and 12 that a “new curriculum should focus on the development of lifelong personal wellness programs and move away from the emphasis on team games”. This will allow students to learn ways on how to engage in physical activity outside of sports once they leave school.

The physical education curriculum in California is vastly different from the new curriculum for Wales. The new curriculum for Wales encourages teachers to incorporate the outdoors into their teachings. The new goal is to create individuals who are knowledgeable in their physical and emotional health, promoting a healthy future lifestyle (Welsh Government, 2019). While California aims to get students physically active through their physical education

system there is not much that promotes a healthy future lifestyle. California could benefit from adopting the idea from the Welsh curriculum that classes other than physical education should have some element of outdoor learning. Singh and McMahan (2006) explain how there is a positive relationship between increased test scores and physical education. This means the more students engage in physical activity the more their academic test scores will improve. In addition, the physical education system in California should adopt a more holistic approach to physical education, where a healthy lifestyle is the main focus instead of teaching students how to be athletes.

For my proposal, I am choosing to focus on students from grades 11 and 12. I feel this is important because these students are not required to take a physical education course. So I want to create a facility that will encourage their engagement in various physical activities as well as promote the importance of mental well-being. University is hard and high school does not always well prepare students for the new challenges they will face. However, having an outlet that students enjoy can help them better cope with the stressors of adult life. Physical activity has been shown to lead to a decrease in depression symptoms and increase the behavioral and emotional well-being of students (Booth et al., 2022).

My first task at adding onto Cynefin would be to build a locker storage inside the main storage room. Inside these lockers, I would require the students to lock up their phones before coming outside to start their physical activities. This is because phones are proven to be distracting when it comes to learning. Students are less likely to pay attention or engage in activities if they have access to their phones. Students who spend increasing amounts of time on their phones are less likely to engage in physical activity (Han et al., 2023). By taking away their

phones students will have the opportunity to disconnect from social media and interact with the outside world in a more hands-on way.

My goal for Cynefin is to create a space where students can choose the activities they participate in. Most often in traditional physical education classes, in California, students do not get to pick the kinds of activities they do, instead, the teacher makes a lesson plan where all students are doing the same activity together. I find this to be very limiting as not every student is going to enjoy the same thing. So I want to create a space where students have the opportunity to choose. My program will include a rock climbing wall, a bike track, a swimming pool, and an area for meditation.

I plan to convert the white building, seen in Figure 1, into a rock climbing gym. This gym will include a section where students can learn how to boulder, abseil, and high rope climb. The section that is designated for bouldering will have a range of paths that vary in difficulty. If students choose to, there will be a section where they are taught what abseiling is. In this section, students will be given the opportunity to try abseiling and then be taught how to set up their own abseil. The last section will include a high ropes climbing wall where students can be strapped into a harness while they rock climb. This section will also have varying paths of difficulty. The high ropes section will also have a lesson on how to use a belay device since these are required when climbing using high ropes. This building will also have a storage room equipped with harnesses, helmets, and rock climbing shoes that students can sign out. That way students will not be excluded from participating in rock climbing just because they do not have the right equipment. For this part of the program, the lessons will start with an introduction to safety. Students will learn how to properly wear a harness and helmet. Also, they will learn techniques on how to properly fall just in case, especially with bouldering. If students choose to at the end of

the program there will be an option to go up to the mountains and practice the skills that they have learned. This way they understand that rock climbing does not have to only be done inside, but can also be enjoyed outdoors.

As for the bike track, shown in Figure 2, I plan to keep it as is. However, I will have built different types of obstacles that can be laid out throughout the track. These obstacles will mimic what it would be like to bike in the mountains because, at the end of this program, students will be given the opportunity to go mountain biking. I also plan to keep the storage room where the mountain bikes and helmets are stored. For this program students will be taught how to properly choose a bike that will fit them. The students will then be taught how to check if the bike is safe to ride. Students will then work through different obstacles that get harder each week in order to progress their way up to being able to bike in the mountains. There will also be the option for students to just engage in bicycle motocross (BMX) activities on the track if they do not desire to learn how to mountain bike.

The next part of my plan is to build an Olympic-sized swimming pool. This would be done in the areas shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Part of this area would also include a changing room where students can change in and out of their bathing suits. Throughout this program, students will be introduced to a wide variety of paddle devices, like kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards. Every six weeks the students will be taught how to use a different paddle device. They will then get to practice using these devices in the pool. By first practicing in the pool students will be able to gain confidence and competence in their selected device. Towards the end of this program, students will be able to pick which device they like the best. We will then take the students out on a small expedition where they will use their chosen device in a non-controlled environment, like the river or ocean.

The only part of my program where the students will not get a choice is the meditation sessions. I plan to convert the yurt, as seen in Figure 5, into a space for meditation. Here the students will be taught the benefits of meditation and also how to meditate. I also plan to incorporate imagery lessons as well. In today's society more and more teenagers and young adults have anxiety and high levels of stress. This is most commonly caused by the amount of time adolescents spend on social media. Social media has helped lead to an increase in anxiety among teenagers (Tomoniko, 2019). While physical activity has been shown to improve mental health and decrease anxiety there is not always an opportunity to be physically active. This is why I want to introduce the students to meditation. It has been shown that meditation can improve anxiety, lower stress, and help individuals have an overall more positive outlook (Chu, 2010). My hope by introducing students to meditation is that I am helping to provide them with a skill that can be used anywhere when they are feeling high levels of anxiety or stress.

By expanding Cynefin I am hoping to create a facility that allows students to have a choice in their physical education. There is a need for more physical activity among students. My plan will hopefully introduce students to an activity that they will participate in throughout their lives. By going through this program students will develop new skills and learn why these skills are important. They will then put these skills into practice and in the process become more physically literate. This is because they will gain more confidence and potential motivation in themselves and their skill level. The California physical education system is very limited in what it offers to students. Students rarely learn skills that they will take with them. My plan will allow students the opportunity to become more self-assured. I feel that giving students the option to choose their activities will help to increase engagement and desire to continue to pursue these

activities in the future. It is the hope that through my program students will become more physically active and have a sense of joy in what they are doing.

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Appendix

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

