

Sustainable Development Goals in PE

Different international institutions have emphasized the relevance of education to developing citizens who contribute to achieving the SDGs for 2030. However, a review focused on physical education (PE) has yet to be performed. I believe there are several SD Goals that can be addressed in Physical Education. What I have written here is an attempt to highlight the SDGs I can incorporate into my classes, and where they might sit.

Education should be considered a key factor in consolidating sustainable habits in future generations. In fact, education, in all its amplitude, is one of the main axes on which to structure sustainability. It is aimed at empowering students to make responsible decisions in pursuit of a just society, economic and environmental integrity in the present and future generations. It has been pointed out that teachers play a decisive role in in SDG 4, "Quality Education," and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the concept of Education for Sustainable Development for those responsible for educating future generations.

Looking at the SDGs, I outline a few that resonate with me and PE.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being. Ensure healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.

Introducing a health unit covering Goal 3 would include the following objectives. Teach a unit designed to highlight what communicable diseases are, and how to protect ourselves from them. Obviously COVID springs to mind as a global threat to the health of our entire population, and as this is an area all of us have experienced, (particularly those of us who lived through the epidemic in China), and so the students' prior knowledge will be strong. I expect high energy and interest in this subject. I also see this as a unit taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and with some differentiation even PS and PK would benefit from it (sneezing into your elbow, using and disposing of tissues, using hand sanitiser, washing hands, wearing a mask etc.) To cover the entirety of Goal 3 other subjects would run throughout the unit. Mental Health is a huge issue and looking at the numbers of youth suicides world-wide is eye watering. We can never underestimate the impact that every life lost to suicide has on family, friends, workplaces and the broader community. In Australia in 2020, over 10 million Australian adults are estimated to know someone who has died by suicide, and 1 in 2 young people are impacted by suicide by the time they turn 25. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that around 8-9 lives are lost per day to suicide. In 2020, suicide was the most common cause of death for young people aged 15-24 years. 402 young people aged 15-24 died by suicide, representing 13.0 deaths by suicide per 100,000 people. Knowing this, a unit on Mental Health cannot be reduced to one grade

level, an oasis if you like sitting in the middle of schooling. It must be entwined throughout an entire program, from Grade K – 12.

Substance Abuse is another subject I would cover in this unit. To keep healthy, safe and physically active requires one to eat well, drink well, and avoid substance abuse.

For instance, a Kindergarten unit on Health and Well-Being might include:

- Identify personal strengths
- Name parts of the body and describe how their body is growing and changing
- Identify people and demonstrate protective behaviours and other actions that help keep themselves safe and healthy
- Practise personal and social skills to interact positively with others
- Identify and describe emotional responses people may experience in different situations
- Identify actions that promote health, safety and wellbeing
- Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings and the natural environment
- Identify people and demonstrate protective behaviours and other actions that help keep themselves safe and healthy

Goal 4: Quality Education

I think SDG 4 one of the most relevant to PE. Firstly, target 4.1 is considered to have a direct relationship with PE as the UN has established PE as a “fundamental right of all” and, therefore, it is a crucial component of equitable and quality education. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence at the neuroscientific level that establishes a positive relationship between physical

activity and academic and/or cognitive performance. For example, improved concentration, better performance in general executive function, or an increased sense of well-being. Target 4.4 is oriented in the same direction by sport in general, as it involves developing personal skills related to employment. Target 4.5 points out the importance of reducing inequalities, highlighting gender and vulnerable people. In this case, the relationship with PE would also be direct as it allows the integration of values such as teamwork, companionship, cooperation, and an ideal opportunity to develop co-education.

A Goal 4 Grade 4 unit might include the following:

- Health benefits of physical activity
- Safety
- Active play and minor games
- Challenge and adventure activities
- Fundamental movement skills
- Games and sports
- Lifelong physical activities

- Rhythmic and expressive movement activities

Some strategies in these units might include:

- Describe strategies to make the classroom and playground healthy, safe and active spaces.
- Participate in outdoor games and activities to examine how participation promotes a connection between the community, natural and built environments, and health and wellbeing.
- Research own heritage and cultural identities and explore strategies to respect and value diversity.
- Practise and refine fundamental movement skills in a variety of movement sequences and situations.
- Practise and apply movement concepts and strategies with and without equipment.
- Participate in physical activities from their own and other cultures.
- Adopt inclusive practices when participating in physical activities.
- Apply innovative and creative thinking in solving movement challenges.
- Apply basic rules and scoring systems and demonstrate fair play when participating in physical activities.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

SDG 10 aims to reduce inequalities to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals. Sport is undoubtedly an opportunity for social inclusion and diversity, as equal opportunities can be promoted through sport. Targets 10.2 and 10.3 include the importance of this equality, which PE can work on directly, as it has been shown that PE sessions promote cooperative attitudes and inclusion.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Sports culture usually promotes environmental care in any media since it is a useful tool for educating and raising awareness among young people.

Some research has shown PE students' opinions about practicing sports such as plogging, where they jog through different environments while collecting polluting waste, resonate highly with youth today (it is youth who have been identified as holding the issue of climate change as one of their first global priorities).

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Conflict, insecurity, or injustice are a severe threat to sustainable development. Sport and physical activity can help reduce violence, improve unity, as well as promote dialogue and social cohesion. The practice of PE within the framework of activities that require cooperation and collaboration, such as sports, would help improve interpersonal relations among students.

In addition, this goal could also be related to applying the Personal and Social Responsibility Model, which has been considered a valid pedagogical model in PE for improving citizenship. Finally, the practice of sports governed by rules can explain the importance of respecting operational standards in a community.

These SDGs really resonate with me, and by using cooperative learning and critical thinking methodology I believe they can be successfully built into a PE curriculum.