The Fidelity of Integrating TPSR and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy through Physical Activity in Educational Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Physical activity has been shown to be beneficial to youth in comprehensive ways including increased time on task, academic performance, social interactions, and emotional awareness. One physical activity model commonly used in physical education and sport is the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR) which integrates life skills and values into these contexts. This research evaluates fidelity of the TPSR model when extended and administered in a program that focuses on culturally relevant pedagogy and academic content literacies through physical activity. By utilizing the TPSR checklist, participant journal entries, and a participant interview, we found the TPSR model can still be implemented effectively with an academic emphasis. Certain aspects of TPSR were challenged like participant behavior of encouraging others, particularly during low enrollment. While having a larger number of participants can present different challenges, physical activity and academic growth remain key considerations for health of youth. Likewise, physical literacy and content literacy are vital academic aspects of holistic youth development and the findings confirm these areas need not be viewed as exclusive and distinct in educational practice. Those leading in physical literacy contexts and content literacy can use TPSR as a valid framework to successfully engage youth in integrated aspects of each discipline.

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education and activity are essential elements to the health and development of youth. Being physically active is not only beneficial to a child's health, but it can also impact their emotional awareness, social interactions, and academic performance. Positive youth development (PYD) focuses on enhancing the development of youth through a strength-based approach that educates and encourages healthy life skills among youth (Jacobs et al., 2022). Moreover these concepts have been applied to sport, physical education (PE) and physical activity programs. The teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR) model format includes the principles of PYD (Baker et al., 2016) and is commonly used in physical activity contexts. Additionally, the core values of TPSR work to incorporate aspects of culturally relevant pedagogies (CRP), aiding in the empowerment and academic achievements of youth. However, academic success, a core tenet of CRP, is not directly incorporated into TPSR. This leads to a noteworthy consideration for physical educators in school contexts looking to effectively elevate physical activity and youth development in traditional educational settings (Pinkerton & Martinek, 2022).

The TPSR model was originally developed as a PE model and has been commonly implemented in sports-based youth development programs. This article addresses implementation of the TPSR model in an afterschool program that alternatively focuses on academic content through physical activity. Our program, known as Get Fit! With Math and Lit, is offered for free in an underserved community at an urban university literacy center to youth in 2nd through 8th grades. The program sessions include physical activity and exercise along with traditional literacy and mathematics-based practices through creative game-like activities. At the time of this report, as researchers and co-facilitators, we had implemented this program over three semesters, continually improving and investigating the model through research and data analysis. In particular, this article aims to evaluate the fidelity of the TPSR model with academically focused physical activity by assessing the program's sessions and the youths' understanding and participation in these activities. This, in turn, could lead to valuable implications for PE and sports and physical activity programs in effectively intertwining PYD and CRP with academic goals in similar school contexts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TPSR was initially developed by Hellison (2010) as an attempt to serve marginalized youth in low-income communities. Martinek and Hellison (2016) claim the TPSR model "guides practitioners in using physical activity to help kids take more responsibility for their well-being and be more sensitive to the well-being of others" (p. 9). The model accomplishes this through its five levels: respect, self-motivation, self-direction, caring, and transfer. In addition to incorporating these five goals, programs that implement TPSR follow a general lesson format, engage in various teaching strategies, and encourage specific behaviors among its participants. As stated by Escarti et al. (2018), "the structure and strategies of the model are

applied to help participants learn and practice behaviors and attitudes that will help them become more responsible individuals" (p.13).

Hellison (2010) developed the five levels of TPSR with the purpose of providing loose and modifiable steps for participants and program leaders. The five levels are separated into three categories that aim to gradually empower participants: beginning, advanced, and most advanced. In the beginning category is respect and self-motivation. Respect is meant to teach youth to be considerate towards others' emotions while learning to take personal responsibility for their actions. Self-motivation focuses on the effort and perseverance of the youth during activities. The advanced category is made up of self-direction and caring. Self-direction encourages youth to set goals and make their own choices. Caring helps the youth become compassionate while developing leadership skills. Lastly, the most advanced category involves transfer. Transfer will require the ideas learned in the program to be applied to other aspects of life (Ellison et al., 2019). TPSR and its levels are capable of enhancing development, and teaching personal, social, and emotional skills (Jacobs et al., 2022).

Consistency is a critical element of PYD. Youth need consistency to effectively learn and understand the components of the model. To maintain this consistency, a five-part format was created: relational time, awareness talk, physical activity plan, group meeting, and self-reflection time (Hellison, 2010). Relational time provides the opportunity for a relationship to be formed between the instructors and youth. Developing this connection cultivates agency in youth and the building of cultural relevance (Pinkerton & Martinek, 2022). Furthermore, relational time allows the individuals a chance to work towards building trust and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses (Ellison, et al., 2019). Awareness talk consists of an opening to the group meetings. During this stage, a brief introduction of the specific life skill emphasized can be discussed (Hellison, 2010). The bulk of the meeting is the physical activity plan. Aspects of the TPSR model are embedded in the planned activities, providing a chance for the youth to use the skills they learned (Ellison et al., 2019). This time allows for the TPSR ideas to be embedded and practiced by the youth, allowing engagement in challenges that may increase important aspects of the model such as individual and group empowerment (Hellison, 2010). A group meeting is held near the end of the session to allow time for instructors and participants to meet and discuss the events of the meeting. This session evaluation then shifts to an individual evaluation for reflection time, where students may complete self-evaluations, ratings, and journal responses (Ellison et al., 2019).

Relatedly, in primarily academic settings, Ladson-Billings (1994) worked to create CRP as a framework for teachers to empower all students in owernship of their learning. CRP is similar to TPSR in that they are both holistic, developmental models that take a strength-based approach to supporting youth. The three pillars of CRP are cultural competence, sociopolitical consciousness, and academic success. Cultural competence refers to helping students connect with their own culture and becoming more educated about others. Sociopolitical

consciousness describes the use of information learned in real-world situations that may involve critical thinking and problem solving to overcome inequities and social injustices. Lastly, academic success relates to intellectual growth that arises from lessons and instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The core values of TPSR can facilitate CRP by promoting the development of relationships between practitioners and students and transference of life skills (Pinkerton & Martinek, 2022). TPSR's focus of empowering youth may naturally relate to sociopolitical consciousness and cultural competence, but its framework often fails to promote academic development (Pinkerton & Martinek, 2022).

In our program, we integrated frameworks of TPSR and CRP through the use of multimodal academic literacies. Multimodality describes how communication and meaning is conveyed using multiple modes like speech, text, gesture, color, signs, symbols, numbers, sound, and images, etc. (Kress, 2010). Inherently, PE, mathematics, and traditional literacy skills (reading, spelling, phonics, and writing) require multimodal pedagogy and representations across grade levels and contexts (Chandler-Olcott, 2017; Craddock, 2022). Thus, with creative exercises, innovative activities, and unique materials (such as hula hoops, jump ropes, soccer balls, dry-erase dice, bungee cords, or lettered and numbered colorful bean bags and poly spots), we promoted the use of multimodal literacies. Multimodality was a common thread for connecting these content areas and maintaining a focus on physical activity alongside academic goals with both a TPSR and CRP framework (Pinkerton & Craddock, 2024a).

METHOD

For the portion of data directly related to this study, we triangulated sources to evaluate the fidelity of the TPSR model in our physical activity program. As co-authors and co-researchers we identify separately as undergraduate student researcher, a professor of kinesiology, and a professor of teacher education. Over time we developed and faciltiated physical activity sessions together. These sessions were refined over multiple semesters and adapted based on participant input, remaining true to TPSR's focus toward voices and choices, and CRP's prioritization of cultural competence. We have analyzed and reported on different semesters, participants, and data from both academic literacy and youth development lenses (Pinkerton & Craddock, 2024b).

During one particular semester, a TPSR implementation checklist was completed during 10 of the Get Fit! With Math & Lit's meetings by the trained undergraduate research assistant who was not involved in the planning or implementation of sessions. Since sessions were offered twice a week, a checklist was completed one day each week. To evaluate use of the TPSR model in a program, TPSR and its elements must be demonstrated in the sessions (Hellison, 2010). Thus, descriptive statistics were used to report the frequencies of the TPSR checklist components (TPSR levels, lesson format, teaching strategies, and student behaviors). The frequency of each of these components were used to help determine if the TPSR elements were being implemented with fidelity.

Additionally, following the meetings, youth completed four different multimodal journal entries generated from the TPSR checklist and created by the same undergraduate research assistant (with some professor feedback prior to use). These journal entry questions were completed towards the beginning and end of the semester in a pre- and post-reflection format. The topics involved the individuals' multimodal responses representing their understanding of specific life-skills and engagement with academic literacies through self-reflection and self-assessment (see appendix). Through the multimodal journals, we were able to explore each participants' perceptions of the program's material through qualitative coding and analysis. Lastly, one participant engaged in an individual interview during the final program's session. From this, we were able to discuss the youth's feelings and opinions about the program.

Program Description

Get Fit! With Math & Lit consisted of elementary school-aged youth who have below-average literacy levels for their age group or grade level. The participating youth are referred to a university-affiliated literacy center located between two low-income communities in the southeast United States and then recruited to the program. This stage of Get Fit! With Math & Lit met twice a week in 45 minute sessions focused on mathematical and literacy engagement through physical activity. In the sessions youth typically engage in physical activities that include spelling, reading, writing, and mathematics.
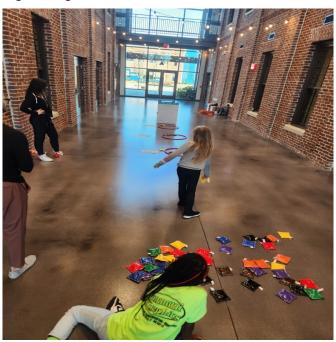

Figure 1. Example of Program Equipment and Materials in Action

By using multimodal literacies through physical activity, the program intends to build academic success by promoting holistic youth development through CRP and the TPSR framework. The first few minutes of the program sessions consist of relational time and awareness talk. While the youth are being led in a warm-up, the group discusses a specific life skill. For the following 20 minutes, the participants engage in games that integrate reading, writing, and mathematics into physical activity. At the end of the meeting, the participants are given a few minutes for reflection and journaling time.

Wednesday 3/6

Participants: J, R, N

Word of the day: Effort/Never Giving Up

- Dice – Write letters on the dice and activities on two others. Roll the dice and spell a word with the letter and perform the activity for the number of repetitions the other die lands on.

- Soccer balls – Count how many times we can juggle the ball in 1 minute, add up our score.

- Soccer balls – Set up poly spots against wall and use the soccer ball to spell a word or perform a mathematic equation. Then we do an exercise that many repetitions. Other participants can dribble the ball through a Z shaped path outlined by jump-ropes.

- R's Lily pad "Red Light/Green Light" game on poly spots – but review rules first!

Journal Prompt: What new skill do you want to learn or try?

Figure 2. Example Outline of Session Activities

RESULTS

Twelve youth (N=12) were recruited to participate in the program and join the study. The attrition rate is eight, leaving four participants. As researchers, we of course find this to be notable, as will be included in our discussion and directions for future research. Out of the total 26 sessions held, 23 of them had youth in attendance. See **Table 1.** for demographic information of participants. To assess the fidelity of TPSR within the program, characteristics of the model were evaluated in the sessions. The 10 completed TPSR implementation checklists were used to identify descriptive statistics of frequencies of the desired qualities categorized in TPSR levels, lesson format, teaching strategies, and student behavior (**Table 2-5**).

We also collected multimodal journal responses related to these categories from the participants after the end of multiple sessions. Some differences were seen in pre- and post-journal responses and will be described more thoroughly in the discussion. Through observations and the journal responses, participants seemed to be confident in their abilities and behaviors

during the program, while one reported having a different confidence level for the various literacies (like mathematics versus reading versus writing).
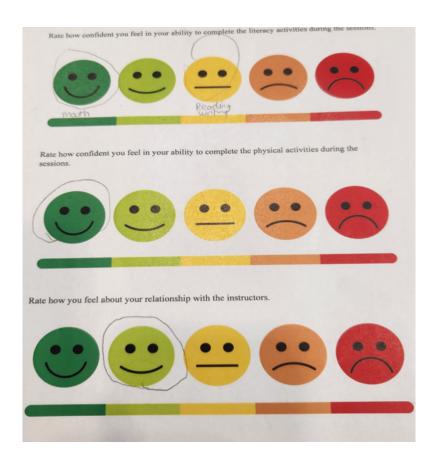

Figure 3. Participant's Multimodal Journal Example

It was also observed that youth saw differences between their activity program behavior and their at-school behavior. Additionally, during a concluding session, the one participant who engaged in an individual interview with program leaders will be highlighted in more detail druing the discussion.

Table 1. Participant Demographic table

Code Name	Sex	Age	Grade	Race/Ethnicity	# of Sessions
R	Female	7	2nd	White	15
SA	Female	10	4th	Black	12
J	Male	8	3rd	Black	9
N	Male	10	4th	Black	10

Table 2. TPSR Levels

Levels (Goals)	Frequency
Level One (Respect)	80%
Level Two (Self-motivation)	50%
Level Three (Self-direction)	50%
Level Four (Caring)	60%
Level Five (Transfer)	100%

Table 3. Lesson Format

Lesson Format	Frequency
Relational time	100%
Awareness talk	100%
Physical activity with responsibility	100%
Group meeting	70%
Reflection time	80%

Table 4. Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategy	Frequency
Modeling respect	100%
Setting expectations	100%
Providing opportunities for success	100%
Fostering social interaction	100%
Assigning management tasks	70%
Prompting leadership	90%
Giving choices and voices	100%
Involving students in assessment	100%
Addressing transfer of life skills	100%

Table 5. Student Behaviors

Student Behavior	Frequency
Participating	100%
Engaging	100%
Showing respect	100%
Cooperating	100%
Encouraging others	20%
Helping others	90%
Leading	80%
Expressing voice	100%
Asking for help	100%

DISCUSSION

When implemented effectively, our results indicate TPSR can naturally incorporate CRP and promote PYD as a holistic developmental model and a youth-centered framework. This data illustrates TPSR was consistently used as the framework of a physical activity program that also incorporated and prioritized academics. This has noteworthy implications for physical educators who can use intentional pedagogy to engage underserved youth by promoting the core values of TPSR through physical activity and CRP in academic contexts.

To evaluate the levels of responsibility shown throughout the program, it was determined if each level was directly addressed in individual sessions. The explicit discussion of life skills is a key feature as character trait development is not necessarily inherent to sport and physical activity participation (Coakley, 2011). Discussions about the levels, their meanings, examples of their use, or participants' engagement in the responsibility were expected. Respect was noted in 80% of the program's sessions. Youth regularly showed respect and kindness to the program leaders and other participants. At most times, they could be seen actively listening to the instructors and following directions. Self-direction was noticed in half of the evaluated sessions. Goal setting was especially prevalent in these meetings. For example, one activity in which the youth engaged was jumping rope. They were asked to set a goal for how many jumps they could do in one minute and then would work to reach that goal. Participants then added their jumps together in a mathematical exercise to make new group goals for a second round. Consequently, the instructor-directed goal setting in this example transitioned into the youth's motivation for the group to achieve a certain goal when the activity was repeated, which also indicated conceptual understanding of their double digit addition.

In half of the sessions evaluated, self-motivation was present. The word of the day was related to this level of responsibility in multiple sessions. Self-motivation or effort was visible in the participants regularly engaging and participating in physical activities. Effort could be seen increasingly in the youth's work in literacy activities. One participant specifically could be observed finger counting and putting in their best effort to complete provided math problems incorporated into activities. The fourth level of responsibility—caring—was the focus of a session and could be observed in more than half of the evaluated meetings. The youth-related the term caring to being "good" or "nice". They could be seen engaging in this when assisting each other with spelling words, math computations, and physical exercises like dribbling and juggling a soccer ball. Lastly, conversations about the transference of core values and activities in the program were noted in every session. Many of the examples the youth provided during relational time regarding the words of the day were related to things outside of the program's session. For instance, the topic of goal setting often led to conversations about goals the participants were motivated to reach in the classroom, goals in video games, or what they hoped to be in the future.

The format of the program sessions was consistent with the TPSR recommendations. All sessions began with relational time and awareness talk which transitioned into various types of physical activity that incorporated the discussed core value. Group meetings, which are defined by Hellison (2010) as a time for opinions on the session and how to make program improvements, occurred in 70% of the evaluated sessions. Reflection time, or journaling, occurred in 80% of these sessions. The absence of these two elements in the daily format can be ascribed to the choices and involvement of the participant. There were a couple of sessions where participants were busy with the physical/literacy activities, so they decided to continue with them rather than leaving time for conversations or journals. Additionally, one session was cut short due to a fire alarm, leaving no time for a group meeting or reflection time.

Assigning management tasks and prompting leadership were the only teaching strategies that were not observed in every session. 30% of the evaluated sessions did not appear to include assigning management tasks. All of these sessions also only had one participant. It is possible that the ratio of participants to instructors led to management tasks that facilitate the organization of the program to have been completed without requests for participant assistance. Additionally, promoting leadership was not accounted for in one session. This could be because of the introduction of a new activity and the addition of a new participant to the program.

Similar to the teaching strategies, most of the student behaviors could be seen in the program. There is also a call for physical educators and sport and physical acitvity pogram leaders to model positive behaviors for youth (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2012). It was recorded during the sessions if any of the youth demonstrated the relevant behaviors, such as participating in the session, helping one another complete activities, leading or creating activities, or cheering for each other. Encouraging others, helping others, and leading were three behaviors that were not noted in every session. The reason for this may be the number of participants in the sessions. For many sessions where encouragement was not noticed, for example, there was only one participating youth. When there were more youth present, encouragement could be seen more often. It was also noted that during the sessions where leadership was not observed, new activities were being implemented or the youth were more disengaged and quieter than normal. Therefore, it is possible the frequency of the behaviors decreased because of uncertainty, disengagement, and the small amount of youth in attendance.

The goal of the journal prompts was to get an idea of the participants' understanding and opinions of the program; however, they created obstacles and limitations. The first and third (see appendix) seemed beneficial in gauging the youths' understanding of the terms addressed and their confidence levels in the activities. For example, when asked what respect

and caring meant, an individual responded by writing the words "good" and "help". They also added multimodal representations of their own through drawings, one depicting someone returning a lost item to its owner. Having the option of drawing answers to the prompts seemed to be preferred by the youth and allowed for greater expression of their thoughts. Similarly, the multimodal smiley face Likert scale which included text, image, and color made understanding the prompt easier. Most participants claimed to be confident in all aspects of the program, but one participant's interpretation provided different confidence levels in types of literacy (see Figure 3). The final two journal prompts appeared to be too complex and abstract for the youth to grasp a full understanding of the questions. The inclusion of double negatives in the fourth prompt was challenging for the youth. Overall, the attendance rate proved to be a major limitation in journal entry analysis. The prompts were done in a pre- and post-program format. However, few participants completed paired pre- and post-responses because of varied attendance, leaving little room to explore progression, change, or growth over time.

The attendance rate was also noted as significant by the participant through an interview. When asked about the program, they mentioned that they liked the program, but having more children there would have made it more enjoyable. The individual also said that movement helps them to think better. Additionally, when asked what they would say if explaining the program to a friend, they stated, "I would tell them it was fun, um, helped me more to read and write." Because of this qualitative feedback, it is reasonable to believe the youth participants viewed the program as helpful to their academics.

The program Get Fit! With Math & Lit implemented nearly all elements of the TPSR model in the majority of sessions. The number of participants added some limitations, such as a small sample size and inconsistencies in pre- and post-journal entry data. However, the small number of attendees enriched the program in other ways; it allowed for flexibility and the relationship building necessary for cultural competence, making it possible to tailor sessions to the youth's physical activity preferences and academic levels. With sessions being individualized to the student, the multimodal activities implemented could be geared towards their academic struggles, allowing more time to improve in their more difficult topics.

Due to the primary use of TPSR in PE and sports-related programs, future research should continue to examine the TPSR model in programs that incorporate academics and the promotion of physical literacy. Further exploration should also investigate the fidelity of programs implementing TPSR with larger participant numbers. Interestingly, though large classroom sizes can certainly be a challenge for educators in instructional settings, our participants consistently wanted to have more peer involvement and interactions. While we recognize possible barriers with larger groups, youth continually acknowledged physical activity and movement with each other as the key component to their engagement in our

format. We hope this illuminates the potential impact to physical educators and sport and physical activity leaders in harnessing the power of this model. Consequently, analyzing the model in both after-school programs and traditional school-based gymnasiums and contexts would be beneficial, as TPSR is valuable in these settings (Baptista et al., 2020). Accordingly, we are in the process of facilitating our program in its current context but also extending to school-based research by partnering with elementary level educators. Finally, we continue to interrogate the relationship between sociopolitical consciousness and its relevance and applications with TPSR's life skills. In other words, we identify room for improvement on incorporating student voice and culture into values and issues they see as relevant for reflection and incorporating those into their development and self-efficacy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). This is important work in PE and sport pedagogy that merits the attention of multiple stakeholders (Scanlon et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Despite widely recognized benefits of physical activity and holistic youth development, PE programs continue to be minimized and limited in funding and resources. At the same time, PE spaces are also facing increased pressure to incorporate academic literacies like reading, writing, and mathematics into instruction and applications (Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment, 2013). We posit our combined model of TPSR and CRP offers a foundation for this type of pedagogy that still elevates and honors the role of physical activity and health to its rightful station. A lens that situates multimodal literacies as being relevant, authentic, and applicable across multiple content areas and contexts positions PE and academic engagement as an integrated endeavor rather than mutually exclusive approaches. Our results offer practical evidence to this end by providing a framework for physical educators in structuring activities, exercises, and lessons through TPSR in multiple spaces. Similar models can be adapted and utilized by experienced practitioners who know their students, cultures, and communities best. This type of pedagogy can empower youth with the agency and ownership vital to successful engagement with PE, academic development, and holistic health.

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