

Developing Local Partnerships in HPE (Win, Win, Win)

Abstract The community collaborative partnership was extended in semester one 2012 as part of unit EDF3619 ‘Sport and physical activity education’. The purpose of this chapter is to share insights of this programme. A key goal for the ‘Friday Sports’ programme was to be a worthwhile and valued experience for the children, and especially, for the four new partnering schools. The partnership enabled accessing new assets for each of the stakeholders and subsequently, enhancing the quality of the learning experience, which they otherwise would not have had. Feedback from the various stakeholders evidenced that the ‘Friday Sports’ programme was successful and very popular.

The community collaborative partnership was extended in semester one, 2012. This was the second of the six units in the Primary Education Physical Education stream to involve local primary schools. In semester one, 2011 as discussed in detail in Chap. 3, a pathway was created through the implementation of swimming and water safety education in Primary schools. Teacher education students studying the unit EDF2611 ‘Experiencing Aquatic Environments’ as an elective gained swimming and water safety discipline knowledge and subsequently qualifications (a Victorian Institute of Teachers registration requirement) in the Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA)—Swim Australia

Teacher (SAT), Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA) Bronze Medallion and RLSSA Resuscitation courses.

Discussion of the sports partnership implemented as part of unit EDF3619 ‘Sport and physical activity education’ has been presented with reference to the International Civil Society Centre (ICSC) ‘Nine building blocks for successful partnerships’ (2014, p. 14).

ACTORS

Leadership

Primary education Initial Teacher Education (ITE) university students (pre-service teachers), choosing the physical education (PE) major stream at Monash University (Gippsland campus), studied the unit EDF3619 ‘Sport and physical activity education’. Amendments were made to this unit by the leader so that the ‘Friday Sports’ programme would potentially benefit all stakeholders; namely pre-service teachers, local school communities, and the local health industry. This programme ran over five weeks and was the first university–school partnership programme of this nature to be implemented within the Gippsland area.

Leadership involved initiating programme discussions, which was essential for this learning opportunity to be created. Communication initially comprised personal face-to-face relations between the leader and the primary school principals. In January of 2012, during pupil free days for the primary schools, the programme leader visited the three closest Churchill primary schools to meet with the Principals. In some schools, the Principal was available and a meeting/discussion occurred where the leader could share his vision of the pre-service teachers conducting various sports sessions at no cost for the primary children on a Friday. This also gave the Principal the opportunity to share their interest and thoughts in this proposed sports programme. If the school Principal was not available, an appointment was made for a convenient time to meet and contact details were exchanged. Furthermore, a brief explanation of the project was given to the next person in charge. After the three Churchill schools had confirmed their willingness to participate, the number of children was calculated. There were enough teacher education students (40) to involve more than the three Churchill schools, all of which were within walking distance to the facilities.

The leader extended the invitation to other surrounding schools to participate following the same process, namely, visiting schools to meet principals. Having been employed as a Head Teacher in a large school,

the author valued and prioritised approaching the principals when making initial contact with the primary schools. In total, ten schools were approached during the pupil free days, what was the beginning of the academic year within Australia.

Partners

Community collaborative partnerships were further developed between Monash University (Gippsland campus) Faculty of Education, the local health industry (local leisure and sports centre) and six local rural primary schools; Churchill Primary school, Hazelwood North Primary school, Thorpdale Primary school, Churchill North Primary school, Lumen Christi Catholic Primary school, and Yinnar South Primary school.

The Friday Sports programme was designed to enable Year 5 and 6 children from the six participating schools to choose a sport that they would like to participate in during the one-hour sessions over the five weeks. Each sport group consisted of 20–25 students, were mixed sexes and mixed schools. Monash University provided the equipment, and the human resource of five teacher education students per group.

The pre-service teachers planned the five-week units, and Monash University, collaboratively with the local health industry (local leisure and sports centre), provided the stadium and field facilities, all at no cost to schools. Subsequently, the implementation of this sport unit built relationships between Monash University (Gippsland campus) Faculty of Education and rural primary schools.

Rural communities are defined by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) as “being not metropolitan; not major regional centres; not remote; and having a population within town boundaries of less than 10,000” (Clayton et al. 2004, p. 6). The towns of Churchill, Yinnar, Thorpdale, and Hazelwood North where the primary schools were located all meet the definition of rural communities (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Rural community size and distance to travel to venue

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Persons (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996)</i>	<i>Distance from Churchill (km)</i>
Churchill (3 schools)	4882	0
Yinnar (1 school)	477	13
Thorpdale (1 school)	447	27
Hazelwood North (1 school)	1220	6.7

PROCESS

Goal-Setting

The long-term plan for the ‘Best Start’ programme was to involve more schools, children, and a wider range of health and physical education. Although relations had been previously initiated with the sports centre and two of the local primary schools through swimming, these did require strengthening, which was an overarching goal for the programme. For four of the schools involved, it was the first time they were collaborating with Monash for physical activities, and in some instances, the first time within any curriculum area. Naturally, it was a goal for this to be a worthwhile and valued experience for these new schools. The partnership enabled accessing certain assets for each of the stakeholders that enabled improvements to the quality of the learning experience that they otherwise would not have.

The axiomatic benefit of the sports programme from a university perspective was that the teacher education students were provided with an opportunity to teach and reflect on real life experiences, placing the theory into practice. The programme provided children in local Primary schools with quality physical education lessons. It also provided professional development for teachers within schools. Within the realm of the university, another goal of the programme was to progressively work towards achieving the objectives of the broad framework for unit EDF3619, the Sports Education curriculum model; “to develop as competent, literate and enthusiastic sportspeople” (Siedentop 1994, p. 4).

Funding

The local leisure and sports centre expressed their support for the sport activities involving the local primary schools by subsidizing the cost. The goal for the leisure centre was to promote physical activities within the community and also the facilities that they offered. Monash were charged for two netball courts only and used three courts and the hockey field. This enabled the leader’s vision of involving local primary schools during the unit at no or minimal cost. This collaboration reinforced a larger partnership established between Monash University, the local City Council and the Australian Government, coinciding with the completion of the local leisure and sports centre redevelopment project in 2011.

Initial discussions with local principals in January (2012) revealed that implementation of the HPE learning area was carried out by generalist classroom teachers in all but one of the six schools. This particular school had a delegated PE teacher but the teacher had no specialist training. Furthermore, some schools outsourced the HPE learning area for the approximate annual cost of \$10,000 through the ‘Bluearth’ programme. Hence, collaboration is seen to be advantageous for all stakeholders and for future provision of quality HPE lessons at no or minimal cost.

While assets were pooled and shared, there was no funding or grants for this sports programme despite numerous applications for internal and external funding. Costs for transport for some schools and equipment for the number of participants did become problematic and is discussed in more detail in Chap. 10.

Management

Not having previous knowledge of the children, the leader decided that upper primary (Year 5 and 6) were developmentally appropriate and best suited to the Sports Education curriculum model, often associated with secondary schools. This model was a non-negotiable for unit EDF3619 ‘Sport and physical activity education’ as it was adopted as a core framework for secondary pre-service teachers at another Monash campus.

Each sport group consisted of five teacher education students and 20–25 children, were mixed sexes and mixed schools (this included mixed school systems). The sports were conducted in two sessions on a Friday. The first session was between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. and the children had the choice of four sports; netball, basketball, tee ball, and cricket. The second session was between 1:15 and 2:15 p.m. and the sports offered included netball, basketball, football (Australian Rules), and soccer. There were therefore approximately 20 Monash University students in each session which was designed to coincide with their unit tutorial/workshop times, and approximately 100 children. Schools were aligned with the session time that the author had established with the principals during the initial meetings as most suitable. Figure 7.1 outlines the details provided to school communities and the university pre-service teachers.

It was clarified that schools were responsible for the implementation of their own school excursion policies (drink bottles, permission forms, first aid, and teacher supervision). Also, it was reinforced that while the univer-

Monash University/Latrobe Valley Term Two Friday School Sports – Year 5 & 6			
<u>What</u> Friday Sports is an opportunity for the Monash University Education students (who have chosen units of interest in Physical Education) to conduct modified sport lessons for Year 5 & 6 children in the local area.			
<u>Where</u> These lessons will be held at the Latrobe Leisure Centre Churchill, both inside the stadium and on the Hockey Field. There is no cost for the use of the facilities and in the case of rain all sports will be conducted within the stadium.			
<u>When</u> The first five weeks of term two: Friday April 20, 27 and May 4, 11 & 18. Some schools will attend between 10:30 and 11:30 am, others will attend between 1:15 and 2:15 pm.			
<u>Why</u> The children benefit and the university students (future teachers) benefit.			
<u>How</u> There will be 4 sports for the children to choose from during their school's session. This will be prepared before the first week so that schools are evenly mixed together. The children will remain in their particular sport for the five weeks. Monash University will provide the equipment, facilities and the university students who have planned a five week modified sport unit. The schools will be responsible for the implementation of their own school excursion policies (drink bottles, permission forms, first aid and teacher supervision). While the university students are very capable and have a great deal of potential, they are not qualified teachers and their experience is limited. Each school is responsible for arranging their own transport to and from the Latrobe Leisure Centre – Churchill.			
<u>Proposed Schedule – Latrobe Leisure Centre Churchill</u>			
<u>Time of session</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Number of children</u>	<u>Modified Sports</u>
10:30 -11:30	Lumen Christi (Yr 5 & 6)	40	Netball, Basketball
	Churchill North (Yr 5 & 6)	39	Tee Ball & Cricket
	Yinnar South (Yr 5 & 6)	1	
		—	
		80	
1:15 –2:15	Churchill (Yr 5 & 6)	55	Netball, Basketball
	Hazelwood North (Yr 5 & 6)	35	Football & Soccer
	Thorpdale (Yr 5 & 6)	<u>16</u>	
		106	

Fig. 7.1 Programme details for Schools and University students

sity students (pre-service teachers) were very capable and had a great deal of potential, they were not qualified teachers and support was encouraged and necessary. Furthermore, each school was responsible for arranging their own transport to and from the Latrobe Leisure Centre—Churchill. The leader accentuated from the outset with all stakeholders that by working collaboratively we could enable the programme to be supervised efficiently. This was reiterated when addressing the children and teachers on the first week of the programme. It was clarified that this meant respecting all adults regardless of whether they were from a school, university, or leisure centre. Throughout the programme, the teachers worked collaboratively with the pre-service teachers.

The pre-service teachers were given clear guidelines for preparation. They were to choose their own groups (of five students) and as a group decide on a sport that they felt comfortable to implement considering the facilities, equipment, the various ages and abilities of the children, group interests, and expertise. Also, a sport they believed would be beneficial for the children. The groups were to cooperatively implement the sessions and were required to prepare a unit ‘sequence of lessons’ outline. Lessons were to focus on a particular skill (or strategy), to be progressively developed through fun games (aim of a prerequisite unit) and/or modified version of the sports. The games and lessons were to be:

1. Safe for all players.
2. Inclusive—all players could participate. This involved having the skill level to participate safely and at an enjoyable level.
3. Engaging—the players’ participation was optimised. Waiting time was eliminated or minimal.
4. Enjoyment was prioritised. (Lynch 2013b, p. 27).

Lessons were required to be flexible and inclusive, this entailed having realistic expectations, being developmentally appropriate, and, as lead teachers, having the confidence to adjust rules and plans as required. The identified skill and/or strategy was to be the focus for each of the five week’s lessons and each pre-service teacher was required to take leadership for a particular week and plan the lesson’s activities in detail.

The Friday Sports began in Week Seven of the university semester. The university pre-service teachers were in the second and third year of their Bachelor of Education course and had therefore successfully completed a number of teaching professional placements. Furthermore, most pre-

service teachers had been observed teaching swimming lessons. In classes leading up to Week Seven pre-service teachers discussed scenarios, perspectives, and shared teaching reflections. Progressive planning and some of the teaching episodes planned were taught to peers and feedback was offered. This involved time during classes for each group to explain to their peers what they had planned as the five-week sequence and teaching some of the activities.

During the five-week programme time was allocated before and after the primary school sessions so that reflection could take place, queries could be voiced and answered, equipment could be prepared, and space could be maximised. Pre-service teachers used online technology systems (Moodle 2 and Blackboard) for communicating and planning when not on campus.

Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation, and Learning

Through implementing ‘hands on’ practical teaching and learning, subsequently the workshop sessions enabled the provision of quality transparent lessons demonstrating pre-service teachers’ (ITE university students’) course content understanding and pedagogy knowledge to peers, teachers, teacher assistants, and parents from the local schools. They were also conducted in a public Leisure Centre facility open for any interested parties to witness.

Methodologies for monitoring and evaluating the learning during the ‘Friday Sports’ programme included a reflective journal maintained by the leader, ongoing observations, and regular informal interviews held with all stakeholders; namely the pre-service teachers, teachers, school principals, leisure centre staff, children, and parents.

Feedback from the various stakeholders evidenced that the ‘Friday Sports’ programme was a success. School staff and children articulated their wish to continue working collaboratively in the future. This was evidenced by schools who originally notified Monash that they were not available in certain weeks, changing their initial plans to attend the Friday Sports sessions, or in one case attending half of the one-hour session to appease the children.

Similar to swimming lessons, the children from the local Primary schools were excited to be taught by the pre-service teachers during the five-week sport sessions. Parents came to support their children and comments from teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and the children expressed gratitude

for the lessons provided. The leader and pre-service teachers were regularly thanked personally and formal appreciation was corresponded to the leader.

Similar to the pre-service teacher feedback for swimming, ITE students valued the opportunity to provide learning and teaching experiences for the primary children through the 'Friday Sport Programme'. Student Evaluation of the Teaching Unit (SETU) EDF3619 in Gippsland evidenced once again students' perspectives of programme improvement. The students' overall satisfaction with the quality of the unit received a median of 4.56 out of 5 (5 being strongly agree that they were satisfied with the quality and 1 being strongly disagree). The last time this unit was offered at the Gippsland campus was in semester one in 2010 and the overall satisfaction with the quality of the unit median was 2.5 out of 5.

Comments articulated by the pre-service teachers evidenced purpose and value of the learning experience created. Best aspects of the unit included "Being able to take what we have learnt in the unit and actually teach primary students" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11). Also, "The practical interaction with the students was great. I felt this experience was very valuable and I had the opportunity to learn much more than listening to theory in a tutorial. This was my favourite unit this semester" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11). The best aspects of the unit included "having the children from local primary schools coming in so we could work with them and put our lesson plans into action to see what worked and what didn't" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11). Also, "The chance to take our own class was a great opportunity" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11).

The "practical component" (SAT evaluation 2011, p. 1) was unanimously expressed as a strength and the Friday Sports programme (last five weeks) was regarded as the best aspect of unit EDF3619 'Sport and Physical Activity Education'. Further practical support statements included; "Being hands on and teaching students" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11); "Doing Sports Ed with the Grade 5 & 6 students" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11); and "Seeing the kids enjoying themselves and having fun" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11). The success of the programme was best summarised by the ITE student comment that the best aspect in EDF3619 'Sport and Physical Activity Education' was "Spending time teaching kids and seeing them grow along with ourselves" (SETU EDF3619 2012, Q11).

Once again, the leader deliberately did not discuss data gathering with stakeholders, as many of the teachers were being introduced to the 'Best

Start' programme. Moreso, the leader did not want to burden school communities with thoughts requiring extra time and effort. However, suggestions were made by the leader that there would be good opportunities in the future for grant applications to assist with the programme which may possibly involve some research. Such possibilities were well received by the teachers during discussions. Hence, trust was building and relations were being strengthened between the leader and teachers.

Again, it was the purpose of the leader to "be transparent in communicating successes and drawbacks, strategies, reports and evaluations" (ICSC 2014, p. 25). This was achieved in a paper presented and discussed at the '28th National Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia (SPERA) conference' in September, 2012. The paper was later published in the Australian and International Journal of Rural education and was titled 'Community collaboration through sport: bringing schools together' (Lynch 2013a). Communication of programme successes and drawbacks was also written and later published in the Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education in 2013, titled 'School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE): understanding new directions for schools and universities in health and physical education'. Publications and presentations were warmly received by various educationalists. (Lynch 2013c).

This Friday Sports programme was designed using international 'best practice' within PETE. Data was gathered by the leader in early January of the same year. The data gathering UK PETE case study inspired the leader to commit to the programme.

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