29th ACHPER International Conference, Adelaide 2015

We are professionals and leaders in health and movement or motion in our country. This is what I saw and experienced from the range of keynote speakers and workshops in the 3 day conference. When you are hearing statistics such as that the average child is spending less time outside than someone in a high security prison and that we are living in a time of sickness despite progressions in technology, medical science and in theory understanding of the human body and mind, it accentuates the integral role we have in influencing the future.

It was my first ACHPER conference and I hope that now it will definitely not be my last. The Teachers Registration Board gave me an opportunity that I have no regrets in taking. Although I teach predominantly in the academic classroom, coaching 4 Pedal Prix teams and in the fitness and wellness industry, I saw that this conference would be beneficial to all teachers, educational professionals and in some cases parents and others in the health industry.

Day 1 started with an amazing welcome to country that set the scene of embracing diversity and respect with an Indigenous song and didgeridoo performance. The keynote speakers that followed were inspirational and at the time, I didn’t know how much I was going to enjoy each of the speakers who presented across the conference. Some of the big messages communicated included the value of a games-based approach to teach awareness and decision making, how values can be taught and communicated in lessons and the importance of and strategies to empower students to lead this through questions of inquiry.

The keynote speakers on the following days continued to be of a high calibre touching on all facets of health and movement from neuroscience, the concept of play vs entertainment, working with high performance athletes, what makes a true high achiever and the implementation of the National Curriculum. Something that stood out for me that is sometimes a challenge to communicate with both the community and the leadership in schools, is the message that the health of the body and mind cannot be separated and by increasing physical activity and play, will not limit learning but enhance learning outcomes through increased activity in the brain.

Each of the workshops I attended provided useful and practical ideas and information that I could take not just back to my PE classes or sports groups but could transfer into any aspect of the classroom. It focused on the learners, best practice and high standards. The range of both active and passive options throughout the conference really allowed people to drive their own learning pathways…. And in some cases keep us on our toes, literally!
Something that cannot go unmentioned here is the value of the social and networking aspects of the event. It was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends (or in my case, even my old teachers), have professional conversations with experts in the industry, meet new people who are challenged by similar things to me and start that new friendship.

On returning to school in term 2, there are a number ways in which I will be able to immediately be able to apply by learning from the conference including:

1. Start communicating some of the statistics and advice to my Pedal Prix community and the school community through Facebook and the newsletter how to facilitate play further at home.
2. As a part of my lesson preparation, develop at least 1 values based question to use at either the start or end of my lessons or sports training sessions.
3. With my PLC at school on Effective Feedback, provide examples to be implemented in HPE and share ideas from Jan Stirling as some alternative models.
4. Within my academic classroom based lessons I would like to try including at least 1 active or standing activity. This may be through a game or language warm up in the first part of the lesson, the use of the windows and liquid chalk to apply visible thinking strategies or maybe just a different group task that requires people to move to a different location.
5. As a professional move beyond what is required by me within the school, to set challenging personal and professional goals and take a little bit of advice from Jan Stirling about the importance of forgiving yourself and moving on.

Overall I would like to reinforce how valuable and professional the conference was to me as both a HPE teacher, academic teacher and community fitness professional. I would like to thank the Teachers Registration Board for their generosity in supporting me to attend such a prestigious event. It really was an honour and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Adrienne Niven, The Heights School