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Angela Kishaun Beale  
*Adelphi University*, [bealetawfee@rowan.edu](mailto:bealetawfee@rowan.edu)

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## EDUCATION

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# Fulfilling the Promise of Making a Difference: Creating Guards of Life With TPSR

Angela Kishaun Beale

Consistently, the literature on minorities in aquatics identifies the challenges surrounding aquatic involvement among minority populations. This same literature discusses the challenges of minority communities to provide affordable programs to combat these challenges. This reflective narrative describes a unique collaboration designed to provide high quality health and physical activity programs for youth in underserved communities. Health and physical activity professionals (HPE) strive to build collaborative relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and underserved school districts through educational experiences necessary for effective teaching and professional commitment. Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. (End Needless Drowning) was one such program. Anchored in a humanistic curricular model, Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. combines conventional goals related to teaching swimming and lifesaving skills with TPSR goals in an effort to prevent drowning. Lessons learned from this 3-year initiative are described so that others may understand how this initiative works and how these insights might inform similar efforts elsewhere.

In the opening verse of the song from the TV series, *Fresh Prince of Bel Aire*, famous Philadelphian and entertainer, Will Smith, a.k.a., the Fresh Prince, sang, "In West Philadelphia born and raised, in the playground was where I spent most of my days." In another song, *Summer Time*, Will Smith created an urban anthem that became a vehicle for urban youth to express their joys for living in the urban environment. These lyrics truly captured the experiences of my youth. Growing up in North Philadelphia, I swam competitively under Jim Ellis, an iconic African American figure in the history of swimming in America. His personal story is portrayed in the movie, *PRIDE*. My experience with Coach Jim Ellis prepared me to swim as an intercollegiate scholarship athlete at Howard University, an historically Black university, to serve as an intercollegiate swimming coach before earning a doctorate and becoming a university professor and to pursue aquatics as a vocation as well as a means of gaining opportunity and enrichment. As a physical education teacher educator (PETE), I feel personally responsible for eliminating the stereotypes perpetuated in society with regard to minorities in underserved

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Angela Beale is with the Health Studies, Physical Education, and Human Performance Science Department at Adelphi University in Garden City, NY.

schools. I believe it is important to equip high school students with relevant and inspiring educational experiences that enable them to take control of their lives, to shape their career goals, to imagine future endeavors, and to become active participants in their scholastic journey. It is also my personal charge to encourage and actively engage PETE students, particularly those who sometimes fail to see the overwhelming, powerful impact of social constructs on their views of physical education and physical activity overall.

Scholars in the field of health and physical education (HPE) recognize and have called for the need to change teacher preparation in an effort to create a stronger role for HPE in the 21st century, especially in underserved communities (e.g., Beighle, Erwin, Castelli, & Ernst, 2009; Hellison, 2006; Lawson, 2005; Martinek, McLaughlin, & Schilling, 1999; Melville, 2009; Rink, 2006; Walsh, 2008). Therefore, it is the purpose of this article to describe how and why I undertook a journey with my colleagues to investigate changes in the way HPE preservice teachers are educated and to explore the possibilities of bridging physical education with community-based physical activity programming. The initial steps by our group are described in an article entitled “collaboration for health and physical education in high-needs schools and communities” (Doolittle, Beale, & DeMarzo, 2009). As members of the Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) Alliance, we began this project by asking ourselves “How should university-based teacher preparation faculty get involved in underserved schools?” and “How do we work with schools and community-based organizations to provide more physical activity programming for children and youth, especially when the money well has run dry?” Even though a variety of responses were shared in our discussions, it was clear that any initiative or program undertaken to create an “effective university-community collaboration” should (a) be driven by a realistic desire to make a difference, (b) serve as a catalyst for creating a better and sustainable program, (c) be able to be initiated or continued despite current policies, and (d) be flexible (Walsh, 2002)

In this current article, I describe the development of one alternative aquatic physical education program created for a high-needs high school. In line with our questions and goals to make a difference, we created Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. (End Needless Drowning). I center attention on the use of an aquatic medium because African American and Hispanic youth are at the greatest risk of death from drowning.

Nationally there is a continuing critical need to reduce the number of drowning deaths that occur in the United States. More than 50% of drowning deaths occurred in residential pools, with many fewer deaths occurring in public pools and other natural bodies of water. Research reveals the highest rates of drowning deaths occur among school-aged children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003; Centers for Disease Control, CDC, 2009). Further, the overall-drowning rate of African Americans is 1.2 times higher than that of European Americans, with African American children, ages 5–14, drowning at 3.1 times the rate of European American children (CDC, 2009).

The inclusion of swimming lessons and other aquatic activities in physical education is a paramount need for safety reasons, because swimming is a frequent leisure activity as well as an ideal one to include in schools’ physical education programs (American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness, AAALF, 2004; Avramidis, Butterly, & Llewellyn 2007a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d; Beale, 2005; Beale

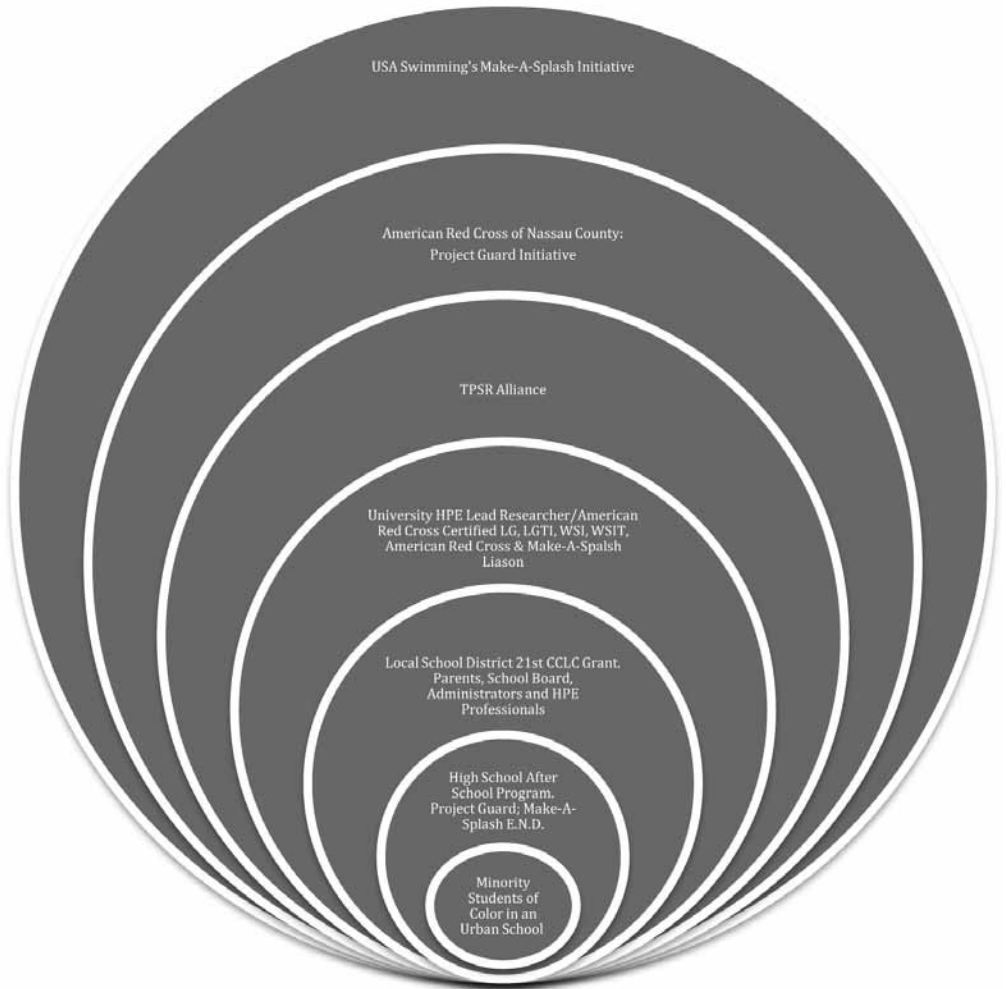
& Lynn, 2011; Cardon, Verstraete, Dirk, & Bourdeaudhuij, 2004; Moran, 2009). Aquatic research on minority populations highlights a number of obstacles to providing effective swimming programs within minority communities (Avramidis, Butterly, & Llewellyn, 2007a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d; Beale, 2005; Jackson, 1991). These obstacles include a lack of access to pools, too few low-cost instruction programs, poor adult supervision, lack of minority aquatic personnel, and a fear of learning to swim. The proposed program not only provides students with water safety skills that can save their lives, but it also provides students with the opportunity for acquiring an occupational skill set, social and emotional growth, and exposure to a physical activity which can be used for a lifetime.

## How We Began

### School/University/Community Collaboration

In Fall of the 2006–2007 academic year, at the invitation of the physical education administration in a high-needs public school district (serving grades kindergarten through 12), a collaborative relationship was begun between university faculty members in the Department of Health Studies, Physical Education, and Human Performance Studies at Adelphi University and teachers of physical education in the district. The focus of this collaboration was to engage in long-term programmatic development for quality health and physical education programs and to teach in high need multicultural communities. With this charge, a productive relationship was initiated involving a number of activities that provided university faculty and preservice undergraduate students with meaningful experiences in high need schools with students, teachers, and administrators. In addition, this partnership included community-based organizations (CBOs) that were also interested in developing services that would connect with the schools and address the needs within the school communities (Figure 1).

In October of 2005, one of the CBOs in this community, the American Red Cross (ARC) of Nassau County (the county immediately adjacent to the east of New York City) launched a Community Needs Initiative aimed at fostering youth leadership, creating socioeconomic opportunities for youth, and building safer communities. Of the several programs under this initiative, the American Red Cross of Nassau County felt the Youth Safety Preparedness Programs (including Project Guard, Guard Start, and Learn to Swim, which were aquatic programs designed to give participants the knowledge and skills needed to prevent and respond to aquatic emergencies already running in other communities) could make a positive impact on young adults in this and other high-needs communities. In addition, in 2007, the USA Swimming Foundation launched their own Make A Splash, a national child-focused water safety initiative. USA Swimming's Make A Splash initiative was designed to increase affordable learn-to-swim programs, enhance knowledge regarding water safety, and decrease drowning deaths in minority communities. With similar goals in mind, meetings were held between university faculty members, the American Red Cross of Nassau County, and USA Swimming's Make A Splash initiative. Both the USA Swimming Foundation: Make A Splash Organization and the ARC of Nassau County agreed to join the Adelphi University HPE Collaborative



**Figure 1** — Building relationships: Project Guard: Make-A-Splash E.N.D.

to begin a swimming and lifeguard training certification program in a particular Nassau County high need school district in September of 2007.

Each member of the collaborative shared the belief that the development of educational experiences relevant to the current needs and future well-being of young adults in this high need school district was a priority. As a result of discussions with the school district's administrators and physical education professionals, CBOs, and university faculty, the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. program was proposed, designed, and implemented at the high school level (grades 9–12) to achieve the following goals: (a) to expand the physical education and physical activity options beyond the traditional physical education and athletics programming, (b) to address the needs of the students in this high-needs community by taking advantage of an

existing but underutilized aquatic facility to promote physical activity and youth development through an aquatic medium, (c) to increase minority participation in aquatics through the American Red Cross Certified Lifeguard Training/Learn to Swim and Make A Splash Programs, (d) to develop lifetime and occupational skills of participating students in a physical activity setting, and (e) to qualify participants for employment as lifeguards in publicly regulated and operated New York State pools. In addition, we surmised that the programming available through the collaborative project could be extended to include middle school students and other community members. In an effort to fund this initiative, the American Red Cross, Adelphi University faculty, the administration from the school district, and USA Swimming sought federally-funded and private grants, corporate sponsorship, and matching funds. After diligent efforts, the program received funding as a part of a 21st Century Community Learning Center collaborative (CCLC) grant (multiple service-providing entities and CBOs) submitted by the school district. The collaborative partners believed that with the school district and community support, Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. would be able to provide lifesaving skills and certification, physical activity, employment opportunities, and many other tangible and intangible benefits for both students and the local community. The university's project director spearheaded the community collaborative relationships and responsibilities among all entities involved (i.e., Adelphi University, ARC of Nassau County, USA Swimming, and the school district) to ensure the success of the program and its long term sustainability (Figure 1).

### **Fulfilling a Promise: Making a Difference**

Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. was born out of a desire to make a difference in a physical education program serving a high need school district (i.e., Federal Title I status school in which 38% of the students were eligible for free lunch, 17% had limited English proficiency, only 86% annual attendance rate, and a 64% graduation rate accompanied by a 9% teacher turnover rate; 55% of the students African American heritage and 44% were Hispanic or Latino). With high need underserved youth being at increased risk for numerous threats to their physical and psychological well-being (USDHHS, 2000), it is imperative that school and community programs be designed to arm youth with adequate life survival skills (i.e., responsibility, respect, and caring, interview skills, demonstrable occupational skills) that will help them to successfully play the hand which they have been dealt (Lickona, 1992; McLaughlin & Irby, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Walberg, Reyes, & Weissberg, 1997; Wright & Burton, 2008). There is an international belief that physical activity programs can engage youth and promote positive character development and moral reasoning (Miller, Bredemeier, & Shields, 1997; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones 2005; Sandford, Armour, & Warmington, 2006; Wright & Burton, 2008; Ennis, 2006). The goal of Project Guard/Make A Splash E.N.D. was to create and sustain a physical activity program with such a socially conscious purpose.

Initially, we planned the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. Program as an expansion of the existing traditional physical education options in the high school. Even though this high-needs minority school existed within a suburban landscape, many youth living in suburban-urban low income communities were struggling

with more traditional “urban” challenges and problems (i.e., low graduation rates, teen pregnancy, failure in high stakes testing, living in substandard housing, possessing access to uneven health care, existence of high rates of underemployment and unemployment, expensive and limited transportation, presence of gang and domestic violence, underfunded social services) common throughout the New York City metropolitan area as well as elsewhere in urban areas of the U.S. (Doolittle et.al, 2009). Consistent with literature on youth development and physical activity (Hellison and Walsh, 2002; Hellison and Wright, 2003; Walsh, 2008; Wright and Burton, 2008), the physical education course where this program was implemented consisted of traditional activities with few students participating in after-school sports or other physical activity programs. Few safe playing fields, gymnasiums, parks, or pools existed in the area. Thus, the programmatic justification was to help this school district take advantage of its existing but underutilized swimming pool and to create and establish increased opportunities for aquatic physical activity that might lead to aquatic occupational opportunities. Simultaneously, we had the desire to provide a self-sustaining program through community collaboration, supplying home-grown lifeguards and swim instructors. Participants would be provided with opportunities to develop their personal, social, and occupational skills through their ongoing involvement in an aquatic physical activity.

### **What Makes This Program Different?**

The skill-based teaching methods are similar to those used in conventional American Red Cross-approved First Aid, CPR, and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) courses. This program was anchored in a humanistic and social curricular model called *teaching for personal and social responsibility* (TPSR) as advocated by Hellison (2003). TPSR is an instructional model, which has been designed and used in the field for over 30 years (Hellison, 2003). Considered as an effective instructional approach for implementing youth development concepts through physical activity (Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Hellison & Wright, 2003; Walsh, 2008; Wright & Burton, 2008), TPSR was specifically developed to address the needs of underserved youth, predominantly those living in urban environments (Hellison, 2003; Wright & Burton, 2008).

I personally designed and developed the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. program with the goal to train youth to gain a greater sense of respect and responsibility for themselves and others while teaching critical lifesaving skills. The success of the program relied on community support, adequate funding, sufficient engagement time, and student dedication. I used the TPSR instructional approach, which had been developed in a variety of physical education and physical activity contexts (Hellison, 2003, 2006), as a means to integrate personal, social, and occupational skills development with traditional learning to swim activities. TPSR is supported philosophically by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Standard 5, which states that a physically educated person “exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings” (NASPE, 2004). The integration of personal, social, and occupational skills development with traditional swimming, aquatic fitness, and lifeguard training allows instructors to help students apply concepts about responsible choices in swimming and lifeguarding to other parts of their lives. For

example, admission to the program required that students agree to consistently exercise self-control and effort whenever they were in the pool or locker room area and that they began to show greater self-control and effort throughout the school day. Establishing a culture where students agree to show up daily and on time, to refrain from making negative comments about people, and to participate in the required activities without complaining were all aligned with TPSR goals at levels 1 (i.e., respect and self-control) and 2 (i.e., willing participation and effort). Students also got daily practice setting personal goals for swimming and were recognized by their peers when those goals were achieved (level 3). As their skills increased, students were asked to assume responsibility for assisting and teaching their peers (level 4). Each day, students considered how these TPSR goals could be accomplished in their lives beyond the pool, at school, at home, and in their communities (level 5).

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) Educational Learning Standards for both Physical Education and Career and Technical Education, were also incorporated into Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. activities (see below). I have come to find that by creating program goals focused on a humanistic and social curricular model, and supported with NYSED NYS “work-based learning” (NYSED, 2011), we were providing students with a program “focused on assisting students with developing broad, transferable skills for postsecondary education and the workplace.”

## **NYSED Career and Technical Skills Standards**

Standard 1: Career Development. Students will be knowledgeable about the world of work, explore career options, and relate personal skills, and relate personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities to future career decisions.

Standard 2: Integrated Learning. Students will demonstrate how academic knowledge and skills are applied in the workplace and other settings.

Standard 3a: Universal Foundation Skills. Students will demonstrate mastery of the foundation skills and competencies essential for success in the workplace.

Standard 3b: Career Majors. Students who choose career major will acquire the career-specific technical knowledge/skills necessary to progress toward gainful employment, career advancement, and success in postsecondary programs.

Daily discussions about being a positive member of the Project guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. family linked swimming and lifeguard training experiences to skills and behaviors expected in the world of work. Students discussed the consequences of absenteeism, tardiness, not getting along with others, and lack of effort when working in a variety of jobs. They also practiced self-assessment, interview skills, and other behaviors necessary to survive in the real world of work. A quality work-based learning program (WBL) program like Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. has, in my opinion, been able to create not only a fun but relevant school-based learning experience because we were able to provide students with the opportunities to acquire not only skills learned in a classroom by solidifying real world occupational opportunities, but students who developed and gained skills that could save their own and others' lives. As a result, I have had students



who epitomized characteristics like self-respect, effort, and responsibility and who were able to create and establish valuable friendships and working relationships that they will be able to carry for a lifetime.

## How Was It Done?

I knew that using TPSR to assist our participants in applying concepts about responsible choices in swimming and lifeguarding to other parts of their lives would be a perfect fit. It was easier to talk the talk about TPSR than it was to walk the walk. TPSR is very challenging for instructors and participants alike. In the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D program we found that as with any teaching experience one must enter with a concrete plan. I stuck as closely to the implementation of a standard TPSR lesson as I possibly could.

Our daily plan was drawn from Hellison's work, but other variables were even more essential to the program's success. The safety issues needed to conduct an aquatic program were at the top of the list but we also had to make modifications to encourage both programmatic and student success. In addition, program structure, instructor qualities, program support, and day-to-day interactions with students were all powerful elements necessary for our success. Lessons learned about these three variables are listed below. I acknowledge that every program is unique and that not all that we have learned may be relevant to everyone; however, I share the following lessons learned:

**Program structure.** Upon initial entry into the program, all students were provided with the opportunity to participate in recruiting events, receive informational brochures and course syllabi detailing the structure expectations and goals of the program, and introduced to the programmatic staff who would be working alongside them daily (i.e., 4 days per week, 2 hr per day minimum). Upon entry, students understood that they must be prepared to set goals, because all students were preparing to participate in official certification training and testing in the areas of Lifeguarding, First Aid, and CPR (e.g., all students must achieve a minimum of 80% on written tests in each area). All students, regardless of their personal swimming skill, took part in lifeguard training and certification activities with the overall goal of promoting the importance of water safety. All participants were given the opportunity to set short and long term professional goals that enabled them to become proficient in a variety of lifesaving skills (e.g., deep and shallow water rescues; reach and assist water rescues; and saving conscious choking victims as a result airway obstructions, first aid, and CPR), regardless of their personal swimming skills.

In an effort to promote maximum student involvement in Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. all participants were provided with the materials (e.g., lifeguarding text, CPR rescue masks, first aid materials, journal assignments) and supplies (e.g., swimming suits, caps, goggles, flip flops, towels, shampoo and conditioner, lotion, feminine products) needed to take an active and successful role in the program. In an effort to maintain active involvement and motivation, participants were provided with a snack and transportation home following the program's daily completion. All students who achieved full American Red Cross lifeguarding certification (i.e., who passed standard American Red Cross prerequisite swimming requirements, passed three written certification exams in the areas of CPR/AED, first aid, and

lifeguarding with 80% or higher success) were provided with immediate opportunities for employment (see below).

## **Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D.: TPSR Daily Session Outline**

- Relational Time
  - Professional check in
  - Personal Greetings (meet and greet; i.e., How was your day? How do you feel?)
  - Get to know your activities (group stretch and calisthenics).
- Awareness Talk
  - Daily lesson objectives –Hellison’s Levels are presented.
  - Lifeguarding roles and responsibilities are discussed in relation to professional responsibilities.
  - Application of levels and lifeguarding are discussed with students and applied to the responsibilities they have to themselves and their everyday lives (i.e., lesson session, goals set by students).
  - Swimming group assignments are given (Sharks = beginners; Guppies= intermediate; Minnos = Lifeguard Candidates)
- Lesson focus (In assigned groups differentiated instruction occurs simultaneously.)
  - Lifeguard training activities
  - Learn to swim activities/peer teachings
  - Simultaneous differentiated aquatic group instruction
- Group Meeting
  - Instructors create discussions in relation to the levels and individual group performance.
  - Students discuss perceptions of daily session and team interactions (likes and dislikes).
  - Students discuss goals set during awareness talk based on Levels 1–4.
- Reflection Time
  - Q & A time
  - How hard did you try today (Level 2)?
  - How well did you work as a team (Level 2)? Tell something that a teammate did well today (this can be either in or out of the pool).
  - How well did you control your mouth today? (self-control, respect)
  - What were your goals if you’d like to share? Did you achieve your goals? How? What did you do? (Level 3)
  - Did you provide any leadership? (Level 4)
  - How are you applying the responsibilities to your everyday life? (Level 5)
- Dismissal (team cheer that is always student selected)

Within our program, we had a unique programmatic staff structure. For example, in the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. program, our staff consisted of the program director who was a University faculty American Red Cross certified as a lifeguard (LG), a lifeguard trainer (LGT), Water Safety Instructor (WSI), and Water Safety Instructor Trainer (WSIT); the Program Coordinator who was the American Red Cross Aquatic Director and liaison; two–three lifeguards hired directly from our high school students trained in or graduated from the program; two–three WSIs (depending on class size) with preference given to high school students trained in or graduated from the program; one–two graduate students whose duties ranged from academic tutorial services to aquatic instruction depending on the needs. We preferred that graduate students hold WSI/Lifeguarding certification or were a student enrolled in an aquatics course or who had an academic specialty in English, math, or science at the university.

We required that all participants in the program attend daily. If a student was going to be absent, they must notify instructors or other colleagues via e-mail, telephone call, or send a message in advance. All students received individualized programmatic progress reports during their tenure in the program, and all students were encouraged to participate in their evaluations and receive the feedback (i.e., progressing successfully, on probation, or termination of programmatic experience). If a student received probationary status they had to complete an expectation contract. With an expectation contract, students were told to complete a list of goals and expectations that instructors' could expect from them throughout their duration in the program. In addition, participants were informed that they could not resume their participation until they returned with the contract and it was agreed upon and signed by both parties. Students were informed that if they breeched any part of the expectation contract during the remainder of their tenure in the program they would be terminated from the program. All students participated in peer teaching experiences and oral presentations.

***Instructor qualities.*** Our daily plan was drawn closely from Don Hellison's work. We discovered that some other variables were even more essential for program success. Factors such as personal instructor qualities, program structure and support, and day-to-day interactions with students were as important as the TPSR philosophy. I came to know that a plan not backed by belief in what you are teaching would be a plan unrealized. I entered this endeavor with the attitude that the program would succeed, not because I had something to prove, but because I possessed a true desire to make an impact. Up front I acknowledged that every program is unique and that not all that is planned or suggested may be relevant for everyone. Based upon my experiences, I can share the following suggestions.

It is my belief that successful instructors must value the program philosophy and believe that the content and instructional approach have relevance for participants. As a collaborative group, we began our relationships with the belief that all parties involved had something to offer our participants. Before the start of the program, this belief was supported by countless hours of volunteer service from faculty and students from our HPE teacher preparatory program and mentoring hours with veteran teachers from the district. Through in-service curricular development

workshops between HPE University faculty and district PE teachers, goals for student learning were established. From these meetings, we decided that a focus on a humanistic and social curricular model would be the best fit for the teaching and learning process for the students. The TPSR approach was perfect for addressing our programmatic goals for student learning.

It is my belief that successful instructors must have resiliency and flexibility with the process by understanding that TPSR is dynamic, dramatic, and true to its name. In the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D program, the days were filled with realistic character building lessons, arms for hugs, and an environment where tears were considered a strength, not a weakness. At the front door we placed a trash can where upon entry students were told to toss all typically negative attitudes and experiences that they had encountered and accumulated during the school day. In many underserved high schools education has become primarily a system of punitive measures. The typical high school system has become a place where intellectual autonomy is not as important as the rules of law and order and where the development of personal growth and intellectual character is stymied by a bureaucratic structure that seeks to limit the capacity for self-realization (Tawfeeq, 2011, personal communication). It is essential that our participants were assured that they were most important to their own success. We expected that they would take an active role in every day's learning experiences. They must set goals daily and make plans to achieve them.

It is my belief that instructors must have or be willing gain a true knowledge of the participants and their world and then present content that can evoke an intrinsic response. For example, in the Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. program participants were asked to self-report on predesigned questions or simply to write about how they felt. Participants were asked to discuss how the specific Hellison TPSR levels, which were displayed in the pool area, applied to them personally, both in their lives and in the program. Our group meetings were times for participants to share, out loud or in writing, any goals they wanted to achieve.

Instructors must understand that consistency in using the TPSR principles was key. It is my belief that an instructor must consistently use the TPSR instructional approach every day. Daily consistency makes it challenging. I have found that because of the consistency of our program (e.g., meeting time 4 days per week Monday-Thursdays maintaining a committed staff), students were able to achieve both fitness and personal growth while allowing for the development of personal relationships that have built a family-like culture within our program. Students came to our program and felt safe. A lot of the negative social issues that existed within the school were eliminated. Students who normally would not interact with each other learned how to respect each other and through that demonstration of respect, became friends. I have found that if I deviate from our typical day's structure, students would remind me because they grew to enjoy and rely upon the structure and freedom that use of the TPSR approach provided. Most importantly, I have come to understand that as an instructor, I lead by example and I understand that students hold me accountable for the expectations that I have set. I know the program is working when students hold me accountable.

## Lessons Learned

Our staff found that having an awareness of the hidden curriculum that exists within the school district as well as an understanding of our participants' attitudes toward physical activity and or fitness definitely could have an impact on student participation and instructor planning. We have found that through the use of Hellison's TPSR approach, we have established an environment of trust and assurance. Relational time has played one of the most important parts within our daily lessons. Calling students by name, knowing and caring about their interests, and asking them sincere questions as simple as "How was your day?" opens up more than the door through which our participants enter. I have found that being a part of the community is important. We have become more than a collaborative presence in name only in the community. We attend school board meetings, student performances when invited, community events, and as administrators of the program, we are always on-site providing hands-on support and supervision for our program. I have learned that it is important to establish and work side by side with both national and community-based organizations, district representatives, grant representatives, school administrators, the athletic director, the pool operator and custodian, administrative assistants, facility and transportation personnel including the bus drivers, the students, and their parents. All of these efforts and more were taken to ensure the success of our program.

Planners/instructors must understand the importance of communicating with parents and involving parents. Within our program, this was an area of great difficulty and challenge. We never stopped trying to provide a variety of programs and opportunities (e.g., written syllabus, written expectations, gaining written parental permission, parental telephone calls of thanks, water Safety Day events, First Aid/CPR course offerings, Bring a Friend/ family to swim weekly opportunities). Through the use of Hellison's TPSR philosophy and program, I have learned that one must acknowledge the participants' roles in the teaching/learning process and present opportunities, within the content and context, in such a way that allows participants to be the teachers and leaders within their own learning process. I have learned to plan for differentiated instruction and to find ways to make participants feel that I view them all equally. Above all, they must realize that I want them to improve. Most importantly, any instructor must be respectful of the real, meaningful differences among individuals and reflect that in their involvement and interaction with those persons. To aid in the successful recruitment of participants into the program, participants must be allowed to join irrespective of their current swimming skill or academic or disciplinary status at school. In other words, we have to accept them as they are with the expectation that they will grow and bloom with the full potential that all our participants have the right to attain.

I have come to believe that instructors and planners for our program must be motivators and respectful of participants' talents and strengths. Every session and lesson should incorporate objectives that can have an impact on participants' lives both within and outside of the classroom (e.g., providing debriefing opportunities for participants and staff following every lesson, holding weekly staff meetings, and creating authentic professional preparation meetings for participants where participants are able to practice professional encounters and behaviors). I always strive to present and emphasize for participants that our program classroom is a

room without walls and emphasize that they are expected and challenged to make a real effort to achieve their best, both in and out of our program and their classes.

## Challenges

Trying to establish a meaningful pedagogical relationship is a cornerstone in youth development programs (Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010). Attempting to do this within a complex collaborative relationship, while also to develop an environment which fosters mature, reflective, respectful individuals who are prepared for occupational opportunities and growth, is altogether a truly novel and incredibly challenging adventure. I have learned that in a program like Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D., we must enjoy leading by example. I know that our students must believe that the goals requested are attainable. Our staff must possess the professional certifications (e.g., Lifeguard Instructor, Water Safety Instructor Trainer, Water Safety Instructor) from an accredited aquatic certification agency (e.g., American Red Cross, YMCA of USA) to successfully enable professional certification outcomes for students. Instructors and planners must have knowledge of actual occupational requirements and opportunities for employment in the local community (e.g., age required for employment, additional certification requirements) to ensure the overall success of programmatic goals such as employment as a lifeguard.

***Have we made an impact?*** Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. was developed to provide students with opportunities to learn lifeguard training and water safety skills. More broadly we expected the students to engage in a variety of activities developed to provide choices for practicing personal and social skills needed for success in school and the workplace. They needed to be engaged in tasks requiring critical thinking and problem solving through professional development assignments, specifically created for them such as goal setting assignments, interviews, progress report meetings, and presentations. The program was specifically designed knowing that the skills and certifications gained during this process would qualify students for employment as lifeguards in publicly regulated and operated New York State pools.

Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. has been able to create not only a fun but relevant school-based learning experience. I have been able to provide students with the opportunity to acquire skills learned in a classroom that integrate real world occupational opportunities at the same time as they develop and gain skills that can save their own and others' lives. The program has enlisted University PETE students and school participants who embody and present the TSPR philosophy of the program and who are able to create and establish valuable friendships and working relationships that they will be able to have for a lifetime. To assess the effectiveness and impact of the program, we have used primarily qualitative methods that draw on multiple data sources to evaluate this program over its three years of existence (e.g., program-related documents, field notes from observations, focus group interviews, and formal and informal interviews of individual key stakeholders). I have also gathered data to assess the degree to which participants transferred the four primary TPSR goals from Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. to other areas of their lives. To document transfer, I used ongoing qualitative data collection methods employing video and other documentary records. The purposes of using

videography was to capture the true benefits of those who participated in this program by identifying examples of their social and professional development along with the tangible impact of *Teaching for Social and Professional Responsibilities*, show the importance of the collaborative relationships to stakeholders, and provide evidence for facilitating future funding.

## Evidence for Program Success

There are many alternative physical activity education and physical activity programs described in the physical education and youth development literature. Evaluation of the results of such programs is still urgently needed (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones 2005; Sandford, Armour, & Warmington, 2006; Wright & Burton, 2008). The impact data being collected as part of our current project include observations and interviews, swimming skill measures, and personal and social responsibility achievements.

**Certification evidence.** During the program's three years of operation, we have served approximately 300 participants. Over the tenure of the program, all students have become more water safe as individuals and earned one or more American Red Cross instructional swimming certificates ( $N = 300$ ; 100%). Due to the structure of our program that services both high school and middle school students, only students ages 16 years and older who attend the high school can fully qualify as lifeguard training candidates ( $N = 100$ ; 33.3%). To date, of those 100, 16 years or older students and 40 lifeguard training candidates (40%) have successfully received American Red Cross First Aid and CPR certification, with 12 of the 100 candidates (12%) successfully achieving American Red Cross Lifeguarding certification. Four of the 100 lifeguard candidates (4%) have continued on to achieve certification as an American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor as a result of the program.

**Evidence in their own words.** So what other accomplishments can we claim? When asked to write on a reflective journal assignment regarding "personal goals and expectations" one student shared the following:

. . . Well before this program my expectations outside of swimming was to pass my classes by the skin of my teeth meaning if I got that 65 I'd be happy. . . I'm going to be completely honest I'm okay with the swimming portion of lifeguard training it's the rescuing portion that scares me because I feel like I'm not cut out for it like I'd fail. Today when I successfully completed a shallow end rescue, it gave me, I don't know, a type of motivation. I felt like maybe I can do this maybe I am lifeguard potential. I told myself it's time to stop playing around and get serious. My goals and expectations for this lifeguard program is to gain a sense and knowledge of responsibility. . . . In order for me to become a lifeguard, that means showing up on time to practice, reading and studying my packet notes, paying attention to rescue techniques, asking questions if I don't understand how something is supposed to be done. . . . If you see me not showing a sense of responsibility I'd prefer you tell me right away. . . . My goals outside of the program is to show up to school and my classes on time, do my work, and aim for higher grades than 65 and by higher

I mean 75 and above because it sucks not being able to do something you love because your grades are horrible. (Clifford)

When asked to write on another reflective journal assignment regarding “Personal Goals and Expectations, other students stated the following:

With my time with project guard I’ve learned many things that I have come to apply to the real world. Participating in Project Guard has helped me build confidence within myself, where I am now beginning to see myself less hesitant to do things I’d normally hesitate to do. From Project Guard I see myself more cooperative with other people and willing to assist them with their problem. My mind has been changed of the way I see things now and I can solve problems with a different view. (Omar)

This program helps me to develop my skill in the outside world by talking good English, helping others, or caring. This program helps me be more understanding with what is going on in the classroom. (Hector)

. . . My goal is to become a lifeguard despite the fact that at the moment I am lacking swimming skills. My goal each day is to improve myself with each practice, and be determined to accomplish my goal. . . . For self-direction I push myself to improve without having anyone to tell me so. (Jessica)

And on a final assignment on which students were asked to reflect “personal goals and expectations,” students shared the following reflections:

It’s been 3 months since I joined . . . and it helped me out a lot inside and outside the pool. I developed new strategies of how to improve my mechanics with my leg and hand coordination. . . . It helps me outside the pool by never giving up and also I have been motivated to work out more and eat healthy. (Jason)

Because of skills that I’ve learned in Project Guard I have learned that I can work with other people and not become upset. . . . Rather than always try to get everything done by myself, I’m letting people help me and I’m trusting that they can do their jobs the right way. . . . Project Guard is a fantastic program that really helps students. It should be a mandatory class in all schools because the lessons that it teaches are important ones. (Gabrielle)

One of the things that I like about this program is that its teachings and qualities are not limited to the pool. This program has provided me with the skill of setting small goals until I achieve the ultimate goal. (Peterson)

## Conclusion

Project Guard: Make A Splash E.N.D. is still a work in progress but in keeping with the TPSR philosophy, I believe you just have to be willing to try. As a teacher education faculty member, I have come to believe that we teach because we know



that we are supposed to inspire our future professionals to be prepared to make a difference (Walsh, 2006). I believe that whether we are teaching in the local public schools or in an institution of higher education that we are supposed to provide students with relevant curriculum that will be meaningful and not dehumanizing to them. I believe we teach and design programs and opportunities because we believe that if we do not lead by example, we cannot expect our students to follow and model what they have learned and been taught. I believe we teach because we believe that students are supposed to be researchers, problem solvers, critical thinkers, learners, and much more. I believe we teach because we believe that students should be able to believe that goals in life are always achievable as long as they do not give in. I believe we teach because we believe that providing relevant physical education and physical activity may require collaborations beyond school. We do it because we know that students must be “global citizens” and culturally aware and be prepared to use strategies that will sustain them whether in the classroom and in life, for “a new world order is in the making, and it is up to us to prepare ourselves that we may take our rightful place in it” (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, Malcom X, 1963). I have learned we do it most importantly because we believe that as educators we teach because we are supposed to arm not only our students but ourselves with the confidence that though things in life may seem unfair, difficult, and at times insurmountable, no matter what, there is a light at the end of the tunnel as long as we persist.

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