MOVING PLEASURE
IN SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

by

Peter Train

BA Hons. Newcastle Polytechnic, 1989
MSc. City University, 1995
M. Ed. University of British Columbia, 2011

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
(Curriculum Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)
October 2018

© Peter Train, 2018
The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Moving Pleasure in Secondary School Physical Education

Submitted by Peter Alexander Train in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

**Examin E Committee**

Anthony Clarke, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

________________________________________
Supervisor

Carl Leggo, Language, Literacy and Education

________________________________________
Supervisory Committee Member

Jeanne Adele Kentel, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

________________________________________
Supervisory Committee Member

George Belliveau, Language, Literacy and Education

________________________________________
Examiner

Karen Meyer, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

________________________________________
Examiner
ABSTRACT

There is a dearth of research investigating the emotional experiences of students (Pope, 2005) in secondary school physical education and a “deafening silence” (Booth, 2009) regarding the essential role pleasure may play in physical education. Pringle (2010) underscores the potential educational value of “movement pleasure” and this hermeneutic inquiry responds to his call for educators to better understand the way pleasure is socially constructed and managed in their practices. To further understanding of pleasure I draw upon Epicurean philosophy (a practical way of living Life) and apply it to my practice as a secondary school physical education teacher. I create an alternative open framework through which to view events and the experience of curriculum posing the question, “In what ways might a pursuit of pleasure influence curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education?”

Epicurean hermeneutic inquiry is the means used to understand student experiences of secondary school physical education. On a weekly basis students share journal entries of their experiences of physical education subsequently unfolding conversations which inform and lead my practice. I concomitantly write my own field notes during and after each physical education class that I later rewrite after reading the students journals and talking with them about their feelings. While studying and drawing from Epicurean philosophy a way of living curriculum in relation to pleasure and happiness (Eudaimonia) I attempt to deepen my understanding of the emotional experiences students encounter in physical education. For example, in one Grade 9 class, I keep close track of and respond to
a conversation with one student who is interested in easing the suffering of students who have negative experiences in physical education.

The inquiry highlights the influence an embodied and scholarly pursuit of pleasure has on the way curriculum is lived and the tension that exists between natural desires that young people have to move for pleasure (freedom, joy, exultation, and delight) and the developmental lens through which I, as a physical educator, tend to view movement. It provides an alternative and emergent curricular pathway for educators who are interested in investigating the value of “pleasure based physical education.”
LAY SUMMARY

The feelings of students in secondary schools often get overlooked by educational research. This inquiry asks in what ways prioritizing pleasure might influence curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education.

For one school year I attempt to understand the experience of students I teach, with the aim of making physical education as pleasurable as possible for them all. Students and I write and talk about our experiences of activities in physical education, while I study Epicurean philosophy, an ancient practice of living in accord with feelings of pleasure and happiness (Eudaimonia).

The inquiry provides insight into a journey exploring the educative value of pleasure. It provides examples of the way pleasure influenced curriculum design and pedagogy and an alternative theoretical framework for curriculum theorists and educators who are interested in further exploring and developing the idea of pleasure based physical education.
PREFACE

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, P. A. Train. The fieldwork reported in the dissertation was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H14-01726.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................... iii  
LAY SUMMARY ........................................................................................................ v  
PREFACE ................................................................................................................... vi  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................ vii  
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................... xi  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................. xii  
Dedication ................................................................................................................. xiii  
PART ONE ................................................................................................................. 0  
Reframing Physical Health Education Around Pleasure ......................................... 1  
MOVING PLEASURE .............................................................................................. 1  
   Our Limited Understanding of Pleasure ............................................................... 3  
   Moving and Being Moved (Kretchmar, 2000) ...................................................... 6  
   Epicurean Philosophy: As a Way of Living Curriculum ...................................... 7  
   Transforming my Practice .................................................................................. 10  
   The Philosophical Concept of Emptiness as a Guiding Thread ......................... 12  
   Pleasure as an Alternative Lens ......................................................................... 13  
BACKGROUND TO THIS INQUIRY ...................................................................... 15  
   The Problem ....................................................................................................... 15  
      Historicizing the problem: A loss of practical philosophy (Pierre Hadot, 1995) .. 24  
      Returning to practical philosophy .................................................................. 25  
      Embracing the wholeness of being: Emptiness as a guiding thread that may help us understand the value of pleasure in physical education (Watson, 2014) .................................................................................................................... 27  
A Philosophical Framework for this Inquiry ......................................................... 32  
   ‘The pleasure of movement’ as a guiding aesthetic for physical education ......... 34  
Methodology .......................................................................................................... 35  
   Epicurean Hermeneutic Pedagogy: A compassionate form of inquiry (Smith, 1999) ................................................................................................................. 36  
Methods ............................................................................................................... 41  
Data Collection (gathering) and Analysis (interpretation): September, 2014 – July, 2015 ................................................................. 42
Appendix A: An example of a modern physical education curriculum that was designed around the feelings contained in movement: The Moving and Growing Curriculum, 1952 ................................................................. 223

Performance Discourse (Displeasure) ............................................................. 225

Appendix B A modern pursuit of self in a culture of unhappiness ............ 232

(Pfaller, 2014) ............................................................................................... 232

Pursuit of an illusory Self ............................................................................... 232

A Modern Practice of Self and Unhappiness (Robert Pfaller, 2014) ........ 236
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Not everyone’s happy................................................................. 17
Figure 2: My children “racing each other” at Alice Lake, Squamish, BC........ 35
Figure 3: Three Pillars of knowledge that allow learning to happen: Ataraxia, Autarkia, and Eudaimonia (peace of mind, inner freedom and good indwelling spirit)................................................................................................................................. 74
Figure 4: My children (six years later) “racing out together” at Long Beach, Tofino, BC ................................................................................................................. 89
Figure 5: Twenty Minutes of USSR (Uninterrupted sustained silent reading): getting comfortable around each other, relaxing, sharing silence................... 106
Figure 6: Project a kind of happiness (smile, laughter, insight, opinion) ....... 122
Figure 7 “All the childish things are fading…” ........................................... 142
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisory committee at UBC: Professor Tony Clarke, Professor Carl Leggo and Dr. Jeanne Kentel for their dedicated support over the last six years. I would also like to thank the teachers of the courses I took at UBC, (Bill Pinar, Samson Nashon, Karen Meyer, Carl Leggo, Jeanne Kentel, Bill Doll and Donna Trueitt): my student cohort at UBC: all of the students who I have taught over the years, and my teaching colleagues who I continue to work with. You are all part of this inquiry and none of it could have happened without you. Thanks.
Dedication

To Ami, thanks for your patience and unwavering love.
PART ONE:
Reframing Physical Health Education Around Pleasure

MOVING PLEASURE

Can you remember running as a child? – playing outside with your friends: hopping, skipping and jumping, flying a kite, riding a bike downhill, walking nowhere in particular, climbing trees and bouncing and swinging on their branches, leaping across streams and falling in, splashing and laughing. Where does all of that go as we get older? Do we lose our ability to hear and respond to the call of movement? Does physical education in secondary schools concentrate on allowing young people to experience and forge a relationship with the pleasure of movement? In what ways might experiencing the pleasure of movement regularly in secondary school physical education be enough to meet curriculum aims?

For, ten years I worked with adults who had lost touch with their bodies. Many came to the gym because they felt they had to: for their health. Some would tug at their waists and ask, “How can I get rid of that?” They wanted to stop smoking, lower their blood pressure, deal with their asthma, diabetes, anxiety, back ache, repetitive strain disorders and injuries…to tone up, get stronger, get bigger, increase their energy levels or train for an event (like getting married). After being sedentary for so long, attending the gym was not easy. Most had lost the pleasure of moving. It was my job to help them enjoy exercising and to
persevere. I had a target: in a building of over, 1000 employees the goal was to convert 33% into ‘gym users’: with each member attending, 1.2 times per week.

Knowing names went a long way. Conversation generated trust and a feeling of care: it humanized the environment. I would greet everyone by name, checking to see how they were feeling and sharing stories since I had last seen them, making sure to say goodbye at the end of each session. I did this in a polite, light-hearted way, smiling and joking around. Pantomimes, talent shows, dance classes, life drawing, poetry, juggling workshops, and an adventure club (as well as the exercise program) all emerged from conversations in the gym. I promoted pleasure and the gym as a social hub.

There were three heart attacks. Bill from the mail room collapsed on me after a few minutes of cycling and then came back to the gym the next day. Another man who commuted by Concord (New York to London) continued making calls and dictating letters after we reached the hospital in his limo. I told him to turn the phone off and he looked at me disapprovingly. Then Richard, a senior partner who I did not let use the gym because his blood pressure was too high, died the same evening at his desk.

A few years later, during my teacher training I worked on a Cardiac Rehabilitation ward at Derbyshire Royal Infirmary Hospital teaching exercise classes. A heart attack tends to take all confidence away. Outpatients came in to exercise in the ward where it felt safer for them to start moving again. The camaraderie and social support seemed as important in the rehabilitation process as the physical effects of exercise. Moving together with others who had suffered
heart attacks and experiencing trust and confidence in their body again was vital to getting back out into the world. Why wait until too late to prioritise the pleasure of movement? Physical education might strive to cultivate an ethos and deeper understanding of living according to the pleasure of being alive. In ten years (and over a thousand exercise programs) what made a difference to people’s lives boiled down to common sense: research in the field of exercise psychology over the last 30 years (Dishman, 1985; 1994; 2005) continues to confirm that choice, ownership, social support, enjoyment and readiness all play a significant role in promoting movement. Neuroscience (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007) finds that positive affective experience is essential to transferring what we learn into our everyday behavior, thus ‘confirming’ what some philosophers like Epicurus have long proclaimed; that we come to know how to live through sensations and feelings and that “Joy is the driver of the wheels of the eternal time machine” (Schiller, 1786). If we were to understand Epicurean philosophy in its original sense of being an orientation and practice of being and living happy, in what ways might it serve to guide curriculum and pedagogy in physical education? In what ways may physical education be an embodied practice of learning how to live according to pleasure and in particular the pleasure contained in movement? In what ways might pleasure be a name for physical education?

Our Limited Understanding of Pleasure

Many sport pedagogues recognize the value of movement pleasure in PE but few overtly accept that the promotion of such pleasure is of legitimate educative value. In contrast, the dominant justifications for PE rest on
instrumental and developmental goals. I … emphasize the potential educational value of movement pleasure… Attempting to understand how pleasures (and displeasures) are socially constructed and effectively managed in PE is a complex but important educational challenge.

(Pringle, 2010, p. 119)

In this philosophical and hermeneutic inquiry, I take up Pringle’s challenge to expand my understanding of how pleasure is ‘constructed’ and ‘managed’ in my practice. I take up a pursuit of pleasure assuming that physical education has the potential to be more pleasurable for all. In particular, I attempt to understand what I call the pleasure of movement (see page 33) as it emerges and is experienced in secondary school physical education. There is a dearth of research given to understanding pleasure in physical education and I explore the ways attempting to understand pleasure as a way of living might influence curriculum and pedagogy. Research shows that in Canada physical education frequently results in negative experiences for students (Singleton & Varpalotai, 2006). There is often disconnect between what curriculum is and what many students want it to be (Gibbons, 2009; Humbert, 2006). While students value ‘fun’ and ‘friendship’ the PE curriculum continues to be defined by long term aims of sport and health. In challenging this position, Humbert (2006) suggests that physical education teachers listen for a change to the feelings of students in order to be led.

Ross (1987) suggests that the physical education profession in British Columbia overvalues the technical purpose of curriculum at the expense of the person who is living the curriculum. He stresses the need for an existential lens to
“rebalance” and “humanize curriculum” (p. 59) and, for me, the imperative is to think not only of “what” I teach in physical education but to be led by “who” I teach. In this inquiry I invite students who are living the curriculum to say how it might be made more pleasurable. This resonates with Canadian curriculum scholar Aoki (2005), who asks “can curriculum truly invite?” (p. 362). Such a journey demands an openness and vulnerability to change that may feel uncomfortable for the teacher.

Although educators realize that positive affective experience is an important part of physical education (Kirk, 2012; Humbert, 2006; BC PE Curriculum, 2006), Pringle (2010) points out that prioritizing movement pleasure is not common practice. The dominant mode of physical education for the last half century in schools has been oriented around achieving extrinsic aims rather than attempting to understand and enable the pleasure of movement itself. Booth (2009) outlines a gradual codification and ‘de-pleasuring’ of human movement in society since the industrial revolution. In physical education the immediate benefits of movement (pleasurable affects) have become peripheral to long-term health aims such as countering obesity and sedentary living (Rintala, 2009, p. 280) and physical education is widely used as a vehicle to perform various technical and political ends (Brown & Payne, 2009). Kentel and Dobson (2007), ask that movement be valued “… not only as an educational end but as an end in itself” (p. 146). Morgan (2006) asks that physical education stop justifying itself and start celebrating movement. This inquiry responds to the plea to restore the
centrality of human movement, and the pleasure it may afford students in physical education.

Moving and Being Moved (Kretchmar, 2000)

In *Moving and Being Moved*, Kretchmar (2000, pp. 268-271) outlines three main strategies used by educators to increase meaning in physical education: the Prudential (a utilitarian approach that appeals to self-interest and sees movement as useful - this approach for example tends to give health and fitness messages); the Intellectual (involving critical thinking and cognitive elements in lessons: an approach that sees movement as something to be understood – we learn through, not in, movement); and the Affective (which focuses on fun, enjoyment, joy, friendship, trying hard, succeeding, learning, improving and winning: an approach that sees activity as something to be enjoyed). Interestingly, Kretchmar, suggests all three approaches tend to fail to provide deeply meaningful experiences of movement for young people. What is missing in physical education, Kretchmar suggests, is the devotion of time and patience to “collecting subsidiaries” (habits, skills, and a history) that can then be lived from. Kretchmar (2000) calls for “movement to be honoured and not just used” in physical education, suggesting that meaning comes afterwards as a “benefit of dwelling in a movement subculture” (p. 271): he asks for the patient cultivation of “playgrounds begging to be explored … *playgrounds* asking students to surrender to them” (Kretchmar, 2000, p. 169). This inquiry is a practical pursuit of pleasure in secondary school physical education that attempts to cultivate an environment and atmosphere that invites students to move and forge a relationship with the
feeling of being in their bodies and the world. In my practice I attempt to apply and understand the Epicurean aphorisms, “Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure”, (the inscription on Epicurus’ Garden gate recorded by Seneca the Younger in Epistle XXI) and “Human nature is not to be coerced but persuaded” (Epicurus: VS 21, as cited in DeWitt, 1954, p. 93).

**Epicurean Philosophy: As a Way of Living Curriculum**

Ancient Greece saw that humans tend to live in states of ‘un-wisdom’, unable to grasp all that nature has given them. Cast into the open, we sail restless seas full of desire and anxiety, searching for an answer, a fix, an elixir of some kind, when all around is happiness. Life’s sweetness ebbs in our longing for more. This may still be the human odyssey. Passions (desire and fear) cloud the pleasure of being alive.

Epicurean philosophy arose as a kind of therapy, as a way of easing the suffering of the soul so that life could be lived more fully. It is in this sense that I apply Epicurean philosophy in physical education.

Empty is the philosopher’s argument by which no human suffering is treated. For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sickness of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul. (Epicurus, as cited in Watson, 2012, p. 61)

Epicurus wants us to be sad no longer; to stop wasting life yearning for something else so that we might dwell in and become receptive to the pleasure of existence. The objective is Eudaimonia: a state of good indwelling spirit and blissful contentment. Pierre Hadot (1995) describes Epicurean philosophy as being a
continuous physical and spiritual journey of becoming aware of reality and letting go of unnecessary desires and fears, and in their absence savoring the pleasure of existence. It is through sustained contemplative study of nature and the exercise of friendship we may learn to be happy. The pleasure of existence is revealed through an absence of suffering/anxiety: peace of mind yields an inner freedom within which people may move ‘more freely’ and experience the pleasure of movement (joy, delight, exultation). In what ways might the application of this philosophy influence the experience of secondary school physical education?

Pleasure based physical education understands that suffering (anxiety, depression, isolation) is always there, part of life and living curriculum and attempts to assuage suffering.

Elsa
She moves silently into the school gymnasium with her grey coat zipped up to her chin and her arms hanging at her side. Coat sleeves covering her hands, she squints at me from under her toque: like a snowman. She has no bag. For three years she has had no bag: just the same jacket and toque. She does not want to take part. She sits on a bench and looks across the gymnasium. I ask her if she can help me with something and we walk down the hallway to the school secretary’s office:

“Hi Kris – do you have a knife please?”
“a knife?! … what kind of knife?!”
“– a big sharp one …
……………………is there one in the kitchen we could borrow…”

We walk back down the corridor to the gymnasium carrying a knife. “These basketballs are old and I need to get rid of them – I want you to use this to flatten them out so we can put them in that bin over there…” I say to her smiling, handing over the knife.

Later - I see her looking out of the gym office. She has one of the deflated basketballs on her head: cut in half, like a hat, and is staring at me with a weird grin, and then she starts laughing. I go and see her and we laugh together. I ask her to write all of the things she likes about PE on one side of her ‘hat’ and all of the things she does not like about it on the other! “So I can see what’s going on in your head.” At the end of the lesson she shows her basketball hat to her classmates and some ask what it is all about…. can they make their own?

I tried all sorts to get her moving that year:
Direct instruction and appealing to her did not work. I offered sports clothes. I paired her up with different buddies. I would occasionally bring in my three year old daughter for her to ‘look after her’ (play with) while I was teaching. They would sit and draw together. I allowed her to go to the recreation centre with a teaching assistant … and then with a friend. During a wrestling activity that included a couple of students playing music, I asked her to get a musical instrument from the music room and she played the bongos in the gymnasium for a few lessons.

I wanted to see her participating with the others: I wanted to see her ‘come out of her shell’ and move freely. Don’t all bodies want to move? Maybe I was wrong. Maybe it was unnecessary for her to participate with the others.

One day a couple of students took her hands and pulled her with them and she ran alongside…and then as a game of tag developed she burst away. Ignited, she sped across the gymnasium floor. I couldn’t believe the lightness of her feet and her speed – what power! Look!!

This story predates my formal inquiry and happened in my fifth year of teaching.

The methods used to understand and engage Elsa were not planned logically but followed gut feelings, impulses and intuition. They were responses (often spontaneous) to an evolving context, framed by a conscious reaching out to include and allow her to move. The ‘basketball task’ was not something that I could have planned; it just made intuitive sense in the moment. Offering the knife lent trust and provoked Elsa to express herself and her response led to a deeper understanding. It was only in the second semester that year that I came to know that Elsa’s mother had died a couple of years previously. The subtext of Elsa’s story and the whole story of teaching physical education might be philosophical:

that is, about the suffering of the spirit, soul or psyche and how to ease it. The premise is that we all go to school suffering and in need of some kind of help. We suffer divorces, abuse, and insecurity about not having enough: work, status, money, food or clothing, friends, or familial support: as well as insecurity over our identity, and our physicality (our sicknesses, and diseases and mortality).
Writing this made me realize that over the last ten years I have known thirteen youngsters who have lost a parent while in school.

In such a milieu how might a focus upon the pleasure of movement ease anxiety and suffering? In what ways might prioritizing pleasure allow young people to forget their worries enough to experience happiness in physical education?

Hadot (1995) writes that for the Epicureans, friendship was the spiritual exercise ‘par excellence’ and the greatest way of easing suffering. It required a conscious nurturing of a ”joyous relaxed atmosphere” (p. 89), and involved specific exercises, such as publicly confessing one’s faults, asking for and receiving the perspectives of others, giving advice and examining one’s conscience through meditation and writing. In an Epicurean school,

Each person was to tend towards creating an atmosphere in which hearts could flourish. The main goal was to be happy, and mutual affection and the confidence with which they relied upon each other contributed more than anything else to this happiness.

(Festugière, as cited in Hadot, 1995, p. 89)

Pleasure places an emphasis on a sensitively caring form of pedagogy.

Transforming my Practice

My tendency as a teacher of physical education is to control movement. This reflects the way I was taught physical education. I tend to map movement out and direct it. Amid the patterned movement I make modifications: change equipment, teams or combinations, speed things up and slow things down, and ask questions
to probe understanding. I am passionate about having a certain quality and flow to movement in lessons.

Epicurean philosophy (see Chapter 3) might say that my passion (ego) is what I have to guard against, be more attentive to and keep in abeyance. The Hellenists saw passion as the root of all suffering. Passion means suffering a ‘reactance’ (pathe) toward something. ‘Being passionate about having a certain quality and flow to movement in lessons’ may give rise to ‘reactance’ (and over-reactance) to types of movement that do not conform to my idea of ‘quality and flow’! I need to be aware of and hold in abeyance my tendency to react and over react when teaching. The cultivation of a relaxing environment that invites movement requires relaxing myself (my ego) and cultivating patience and restraint.

Always controlling and directing movement can deaden it and make teaching physical education feel like a task and not a joy. Young people can sense when adults try to get them to move for extrinsic ‘health’ reasons; their ‘resistance’ and ‘reactance’ to health education initiatives has been well documented (Whitehead, 2005). A pedagogical orientation around pleasure has led me to stand back more and allow movement to evolve. It has challenged me to create a space in which young people feel they are being allowed to move freely. Slowly I have deepened my inquiry to be a quest for understanding the pleasure of movement with no ulterior motive and am beginning to understand the idea that “… in philosophy the pleasure accompanies the knowledge. For the enjoyment does not come after the learning but the learning and the enjoyment are
simultaneous” (Epicurus’s Vatican Saying, 27, as cited in Inwood & Gerson, 1994, p. 37).

Thus I am not in a process of coming up with a recipe or formula for pleasure, nor am I trying to identify its essence. I am in my practice continually processing the phenomenon of pleasure in its entire contingency, (savouring it), trying to see, hear and feel more deeply the experience and event of physical education. This has been transformational. I feel that I interfere less and that more happens: students are actively involved and lead more. I have more energy at the end of the day. Through my inquiry I hope to share how the process of paying attention to the experience of students and attuning to pleasure may act as a guide for curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education.

The Philosophical Concept of Emptiness as a Guiding Thread

Gay Watson (2014) points to a historical interaction between Hellenist and Buddhist philosophies and describes both as philosophies of emptiness that offer possibilities to live fuller lives. Philosophies of emptiness are based upon embodied experience, a therapeutic goal, and awareness of the construction of experience, the not-self, interdependence and indefinability: emptiness offers fresh possibilities for theorizing and living physical education curriculum. ‘Curriculum as an empty path’ (that unfolds in the second half of this dissertation) responds to the question of how we might operationalize pleasure as a concept.

What is a practice of emptiness and in what ways might it provide a basis for understanding and promoting pleasure and the pleasure of movement in secondary school physical education? What might a contemporary application of emptiness
look like in secondary school physical education? I explore the idea of physical education being a place where students may encounter a sense of emptiness, in the form of open space, and openings that are opportunities to grow. Thich Nhat Hanh (2008) describes practitioners of mindfulness developing courage to ‘open up’ and smile knowing that they do not know, “… to be able to look at everyone else with the open mind and eyes of love” (p. 65). This conveys a sense of the journey I am on as a teacher-scholar-researcher venturing to understand and allow the experience of pleasure to lead and guide my practice.

Pleasure as an Alternative Lens

This inquiry draws attention to the ‘transparent and unnoticed lenses’ through which we see physical education and the limiting effect they may have. It provides an alternative view that allows both teacher and students to temporarily ‘step out of their capes’ (‘escape’ subjectification) to question what they are doing and ask what is happening.

In a field of research dominated by “control and/or emancipation oriented ideas” attempting to understand the experience of students in physical education - the “hermeneutic quest” (MacDonald, 1995), “… appears to have been relegated to third, neutral, non-action category” of research. Macdonald points out, however, that hermeneutics; the ongoing practice of understanding (underpinned by the theory that everything requires interpretation), is the basis of all research, “… the basis in which scientific-technical and critical theory efforts are grounded” (p. 173). While the seemingly ‘neutral’ task of understanding experience and pleasure in physical education is not one many educator/scholars
feel inclined to take up: it may seem too leisurely a pursuit, and one that may not get them anywhere, I am in the unique and very fortunate position of being in a school district that is supportive and allows me to explore how understanding and pleasure might guide curriculum and pedagogy.

This inquiry responds to Gadamer (1977), Hadot (1995), Pfaller (2014), and Watson (2014) who suggest philosophy may still act as a guide for living. It responds to the natural desire people have to move freely and experience the pleasure of moving and invites students to participate in the simple ongoing quest of understanding how to live according to pleasure. It is based on the tenet that what is most worth knowing is how to live happily.

At a time when discourse around physical education is becoming almost medical (Tröhler, 2015), a return to Epicurus offers a way to cultivate peace of mind, inner freedom, a good indwelling spirit, and blissful contentment. Attuning to the pleasure of existence and of movement returns us to the original task of being happy and may act to assuage anxieties inherent in modern life. In sum, I wonder in what ways a pursuit of pleasure (Epicurus) may be useful: In what ways might a pursuit of pleasure influence curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education?
BACKGROUND TO THIS INQUIRY

The Problem

In a field populated by theories and models that align pedagogy with prescribed (quantifiable) learning outcomes (Kirk, 2012), attempting to understand the experience of physical education and the intrinsic benefits movement may afford young people goes largely ignored. Exploration of ways in which pleasure may act as a guide for curriculum and pedagogy is rare. For over half a century research has sought to validate and legitimise physical education in terms of technical and political goals:

The promotion of enjoyment or pleasure per se is not normally regarded as of educational value. Any subject that bases its case for inclusion in the school curriculum principally on this ground is liable to be excluded from education altogether. (Whitehead, 1990, p. 6)

Pringle (2010) points to a resistance to valuing ‘movement pleasure’ in academic discourse. A dominant ‘instrumental and developmental’ lens in research tends to overlook the task of understanding the feelings of students and the quality of their experience in physical education (in the sense that Gadamer (1996) points to qual meaning anguish). The problem from an Epicurean perspective is that by not ‘overtly accepting’ the importance of understanding and cultivating pleasure (both the static pleasure of existence afforded by an absence of anxiety and the kinetic pleasure of movement (see next chapter), we may inadvertently be contributing to the incidence of suffering, (anxiety, alienation, isolation and depression) in our field. From an Epicurean perspective not to prioritize a cultivation of pleasure
(read the diminution of unnecessary suffering) is a neglect of a duty to care. Do we care? In what ways do we care about the experience and feelings of students in physical education? In what ways might a dominant instrumental and developmental lens (Pringle, 2010) limit what we care about or focus on in our educational practices?

This inquiry is a practical prioritisation of pleasure in secondary school physical education that assumes suffering (in the form of multiple anxieties) is always ‘there’ when living curriculum and it prioritizes the task of listening to the feelings of students as they move. Students are encouraged to express their feelings. They are, asked to keep reflective journals that they can share with their teacher throughout their grade 8, 9, and 10 physical education. This is a way of inviting conversation (Gadamer, 1960) with and among students that may inform and lead curriculum and pedagogy: a way of cultivating a sense of ‘living curriculum together.’ It is an effort not to ignore or skim over feelings as if they are not important.

The very first time I came in the gym I can feel butterflies in my stomach. I’m very anxious because PE is never a thing for me. All I think that time is PE = paperworks, exams, practical tests and sports. The moment I’ve find out that boys are combined with the girls my anxiousness increased and I don’t kow what to do because I’m really not good when it comes to sports and things about PE.

Lynne, Grade 10
Well I’m gonna try to explain this and what I meant about this drawing is that life is not really like fairy tales we all have up’s and down’s and that not everyone’s always smiling some of those smiles might be a fake one and that not everyones really happy. Sometimes people envy you because of the way you look and dress but they don’t really know how their words hurt so much. When you laugh with your friends and have fun with them just to forget all the stress and problems so that’s why I drew this pretty much that’s everything I can explain.

Jane, Grade 8

(See Figure 1)
While pleasure, to many educators, may not appear to be of significant ‘educative’ or ‘educational’ value (Pringle, 2010; Whitehead, 1990), it provides an alternative lens (Watson, 2014) through which to view the experience of students in secondary school physical education. In this inquiry for example, prioritising pleasure, (listening to the feelings of students and attempting to understand their experience of physical education), focusses me on the task of cultivating a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere that invites, persuades and allows students to move. In this inquiry curriculum is orientated around aesthesis (sensory experience) and the overall task of learning to be receptive to pleasure: learning to be happy. There is a conscious effort to be less obsessed with skills: there is less repetitive practice of technique, less time spent assessing performance and more time devoted to play and exploring the pleasure of movement and understanding the experience of students in physical education.
A month ago we were told we are doing the, 12 minute run. I wasn’t scared but I was nervous. What if I didn’t go as far as the other kids what if they laugh at me. The whole class got to their spots with their partners. Shara (my partener) offered to go first but I told I would go so I could get it over with. I started to jog first but saw all the kids running and I felt really out of place so I started to run. I felt really insecure because I was getting tired and everyone seemed totally fine. My friends courage me on so that gave me a confidence boost. My whole body was getting really sore and I felt really dehydrated. I only got, 19 laps and I felt kind of bad when people were telling me their scores (laps). It wasn’t like they were trying to be mean, it wasn’t thir fault I got less laps. But when the second groups finished some of my friends got the same number and told me we all did good. It seems like people think bad of me when really they don’t cause who cares who got what number of laps or who has the best gym strip, really all that matters is we are getting fit and healthy. Even though it was my worst P. E experience I know I can learn and improve from it.

Alison, Grade 8

Gym class was really difficult today because it was a mini version of fitness testing. I am not fit, but having a disease does not help either… (March, 17):

Angela, Grade 10

I have been diagnosed with the severest classification of Crohn’s and got my first shots (4) today. Painful!!!!!!!!!!!! (May 7)

Angela, Grade 10

Through devoting more time to understanding the experience of physical education in this inquiry, I have come to wonder if promoting friendship and offering unconditional support might be more meaningful (read moving) than focusing on achieving prescribed learning outcomes. Why are we, as physical educators so hesitant to voice a belief in promoting friendship, pleasure and happiness in secondary school physical education? In ancient times a pursuit of pleasure held broad value and was synonymous with the practice of living a good life. A pursuit of pleasure involved practicing humility, gratitude and contentment; it was a quest to specifically cultivate the ability to be happy. If he were alive today Epicurus might suggest that, while discourse revolves around
instrumental and developmental goals (seeking to legitimate and justify curriculum, research and pedagogy), the greatest gift for students in secondary school physical education may be a certain granting of freedom to participate for pleasure: “… relax … arrive with a smile, be free from worries … take time to get ready… take time to enjoy playing with your friends …” Such an approach may provide relief (emotional support) for a student. Lessons not prefaced, enacted and summated around prescribed learning outcomes may allow for more space and time for ‘relational physical education’ (trust and happiness) to grow. Imagine in physical education regularly allowing students to play without direct instruction and not worrying about it, just joining in and playing, connecting on an unspoken level with students and the experience of being and moving in physical education. Is it okay (educative) for me to do this as a teacher in secondary school physical education? In what ways might a playful participatory approach provide a way of caring more deeply? Conversely, imagine students feeling pressured, getting changed as quickly as possible, worrying about not meeting expectations, not being good enough, not being fit enough, being injured, or sick and needing a note to excuse themselves,…worrying about not fitting in …or fearing being ridiculed by others and how this might undermine their ability to move, or their pleasure in movement. Imagine the suffering we might unknowingly inflict by unquestioningly allowing for this in our classrooms.

I didn’t like PE because people called me stupid. I wasn’t good at it. I was terrible at any of the games the class played. Ms P was my PE teacher. I am scared of the students making fun of me in the changing room. I am slow and I don’t like people watching me change. In PE Ryan, Leroy and others were always fighting with me.

Last year I did not participate in PE with the class. I didn’t feel good about not being like the other kids. I helped doing work around school – sweeping hallway and stuff.
Huebner (2008) says that not being preoccupied with achievement of evidence of learning might allow us to be more aware and able to focus upon our ways of being together. This resonates with Kretchmar (2007) that what is needed in secondary school physical education is a “devotion of time and patience” to cultivate “playgrounds that ask students to surrender themselves to them”.

Epicurus might point out, however, that “dwelling in a movement subculture” (Kretchmar, 2007) is not done for any other reason than dwelling. The value of dwelling lay in its pause. This is a large part of what Hellenist philosophy and physical education may be all about: ‘learning to live in the moment’: relaxing and being comfortable with others amid an emptiness of external expectations. Epicurus suggests that it is in “tarrying” (temporarily forgetting socially constructed goals and ambitions) that we may encounter the ‘healthiness of the moment’, or ‘the pleasure of existence that is always there’. Students may learn to recognise and be receptive to the pleasure contained in the moment through a practice of tarrying (moving for no other reason than pleasure). Discourse in physical education is particularly resistant to this idea of dwelling or tarrying, as if such an exercise is a waste of instructional time: but it may be a necessary form of ‘wait time’ (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008) that allows students to become comfortable enough to start moving freely in physical education. A patient devotion of time for students to move playfully, without instruction at the
beginning of each lesson may for example help cultivate a relaxed and buoyant ambiance, which in turn may raise a student’s receptivity to instruction. The simple pleasure of being in a relaxed and playful environment in secondary school physical education may have value that is underestimated by those who look in from the outside through the dominant outcomes-based lens. Cultivating pleasure and students’ receptivity to the pleasure contained in movement engages a type of learning that is less quantifiable. Pleasure based physical education involves a deep ‘aesthetic’ kind of learning (based upon sensory experience) that unfolds slowly and may be very empowering for students. It requires a teacher to be attentive and responsive to feelings which in turn may help raise collective levels of awareness around feelings that may guide a form of learning to live happily (free from unnecessary worry).

Taking the time to understand the feelings of students and the quality of their experience through actively participating in physical education is a necessary step in providing responsive curriculum. Through Epicurean hermeneutic pedagogy (that is explained below) we may be able to create an environment that affords the conditions for students to experience the intrinsic benefits of movement (freedom, joy, exultation and delight). As a practitioner I have found that granting more time for students to move ‘unconditionally’ (within the parameters of safety and care) has not reduced the quantity or quality of movement in lessons and the learning that takes place. If anything it has encouraged those who find moving in physical education difficult to participate more fully. In relation to promoting a love of movement and activity, pleasure
plays an obvious and central role in that, without pleasure, activity in physical education may quickly lose its appeal, its benefit and purpose (peace of mind, inner freedom, joy, exultation and delight).

In my personal opinion, enjoying the activity is way more important. Learning the activity is good, but without enjoyment no one’s going to want to participate and it feels more like you’re being forced to do it. Typically when people enjoy things they do better in it, and even if they don’t do better, they try harder and there’s more participation and effort put into it.

Jane, Grade 10

From a student’s perspective, forms of pedagogy based on substantive curricular constructs (for example, self development, sport skills or health related fitness) tend to focus on measurable outcomes and to overlook the overall experience of students. Theoretical models of learning that tend to align pedagogy with prescribed outcomes (Kirk, 2012) may feel and act like a form of coercion, resulting in negative or unhealthy experiences for students:

My worst expirence in gym class was when my class did the, 12 minute run. And I did 34 laps but I felt really sick and I had cramps the whole time. And my mouth was really dry from running non stop. And I also smelt really bad cus I was sweating a lot. I was also very exhausted. After that I could not move at all because of my limbs were so sore. And I had to skip school the next day because I could not move. And I stayed in bed the whole time the next day. This was first time ever happened. It was my worst gym class ever.

Bertram, Grade 9

In what ways might a clear focus upon quality of experience in physical education provide difference or relief for students caught in a landscape of prescribed learning outcomes? The premise of this Epicurean hermeneutic inquiry is that an emptier lens (free from technical and political aims) may allow students and their teacher to dwell and work towards making physical education more pleasurable.
for all and that this may result in a fuller, more meaningful experience. An application of emptiness (see the second half of this dissertation) deconstructs my egotistical conditioning and habitual tendency to control and direct the movement of students and asks me to live curriculum with and for them. Prioritizing pleasure is a compassionate act: a way of caring that seeks to allow the experience of moving joyfully in physical education to lead the way. This inquiry devotes time and patience (the whole of my practice as a secondary school teacher) to the task of cultivating conditions in which students may experience pleasure and the pleasure of movement. In it, curriculum and pedagogy are oriented by a hermeneutic process of attempting to understand the experience of physical education in an open, genuine, caring and generative way (Gadamer, 1960; Smith, 1999; Jardine, 2013).

Historicizing the problem: A loss of practical philosophy

(Pierre Hadot, 1995)

In Philosophy as a Way of Life (1995) Pierre Hadot traces a loss of practical philosophies of existence (ancient schools of happiness) back to the rise of Christianity. As Christianity adopted many of the methods of practical philosophical inquiry that were effective (read therapeutic) in ‘learning to live’, such as prayer, meditations, daily examinations of conscience, admitting and sharing weaknesses, and writing (the keeping of ‘spiritual notebooks’), it rose in strength and other philosophies of existence were reduced to playing ‘supporting theoretical roles’. Hadot (1995) outlines a process of ‘scholasticism’ whereby philosophy became a ‘specialist subject’ taught in universities founded by the
medieval church. ‘University philosophy’ became far removed from being of any practical value: “Philosophy was no longer the supreme science but servant of theology” (p. 270).

Philosophy was originally a practical endeavor, distinctly different from modern philosophical discourse: Hadot describes the ‘exercise’ and ‘art of living’ towards happiness that required a sustained practice of ‘spiritual exercises’. For Epicureans, philosophizing “…was a continuous act, permanent and identical with life itself…” a way of “…achieving independence and inner freedom…”, and of cultivating a “…feeling of belonging to a whole which goes beyond the limits of individuality” (Hadot, 1995, p. 268).

Hadot (1995) suggests that “… ancient philosophical traditions can provide guidance in our relationship to ourselves, to the cosmos and to other human beings…” (p. 274) and it is in this sense I take up Epicurean philosophy (‘an adventure of the human spirit’) and try to apply it in my practice. I pursue pleasure as an orientation in physical education in the hope that it may help students (and me) to experience and gain a sense of freedom and place in the world. Practical philosophy (attempting to understand experience and to become more aware of what makes us happy as human beings) provides a way to explore the intrinsic value of pleasure and happiness.

Returning to practical philosophy

It is extremely difficult to theorise pleasure. Pleasure is more a practical thing: an experience that is largely ineffable. Eagleton (2003) suggests that to theorise pleasure is like trying to theorise champagne instead of tasting it. What
we need in the field of research in physical education is a way of conveying pleasure’s intrinsic value: a way of conveying how attempting to understand the experience of physical education in terms of pleasure may be of practical value for those who are living curriculum. Hadot makes me wonder if returning to practical philosophy (the straightforward task of paying close attention to experience and documenting practice) might allow the voice of those who are living curriculum to be heard. In what ways might a ‘genuine conversation’ with students who are living secondary school physical education curriculum, serve to broaden (break open) the value pleasure holds for them?

Practical philosophies centred around the task of perceiving the difference between the socially constructed world and the natural (real) world and attempting to live more in accord with what is real (natural). Gadamer (1996) talks of ‘geheuer’ and the original educational task of cultivating a sense of belonging, or a feeling of being in and of the world: of being at one with existence. Greek philosophy and culture emanated from the task of making oneself at home in the world. The approach was practical and hermeneutic as people strove to live according to the whole of which they were part. Although the aims differed across the various schools of philosophy, they shared methods for raising awareness of reality. Hadot (1995, pp. 81-126) refers to inquiry being comprised of ‘spiritual exercises’ that served to raise the level of consciousness above that of self to the universal and outlines a framework for inquiry that existed across all schools. ‘Learning to live’ (Hadot, 1995, pp. 82-89) entailed research (skepsis), reading (anagnosis), listening (akroasis) attention to the
present moment (prosoche) and mastery of ego (enkratia) as a type of adult education geared around peace of mind and happiness. Seen in this light, practical philosophy provides a basis for educators to begin thinking of curriculum and pedagogy outside of the technical, political and scientific lens. Practical philosophy presents an ‘alternative’ and potentially ‘therapeutic’ (liberating) approach for educators, which contrasts with dominant modes of instrumental and developmental modes of research and teaching in physical education that focus on achieving extrinsic outcomes. It affords an opportunity for educators and their students who want to explore and find their own sense of wellbeing. In this way practical philosophy allows those who are living curriculum to ask, ‘What about the wellbeing of students and teachers?’

Embracing the wholeness of being: Emptiness as a guiding thread that may help us understand the value of pleasure in physical education (Watson, 2014)

Gay Watson (2014) points out that Epicurean philosophy was a philosophy of emptiness (a way of living in accord with the ‘not self’, the contingent, interdependent and ineffable nature of reality) that faded with the rise of a philosophy based upon a “… metaphysics of presence and transcendence, separating ideal forms from living matter …” (Watson, 2014, p. 74). With the rise of Christianity, voices valuing the emptiness of existence, such as the Epicureans, Stoics, Cynics and Skeptics were ‘muted’ and ‘forgotten’ and have become what might be thought of as dormant or ‘recessive’ philosophies in the modern world. Amid a dominant culture of Christianity, Watson (2014) hears “echoes of emptiness” persisting through the Middle-Ages: strands of thought concerned
with “… the relationship of everything and nothing, the understanding of emptiness as potential and the difficulties of speaking of what is ineffable” (p. 75). She points to ‘mystics’ and ‘singers of negative theology’ inspired by kenosis “… the Greek word for emptiness that [emphasis added] refers to the practice of emptying all traces of self will from the mind of the practitioner so that it may be filled with God” (Watson, 2014, p. 75). Kenosis saw self-will as enclosing and preventing participation (understanding) and was taken up in the concept of gelassenheit (‘releasement/letting go of self will’) by Meister Eckhardt (‘to be full of god one needs to stand empty’) and again centuries later by Husserl and Heidegger: “Thinking is releasement to the open-region …” (Watson, 2014, p. 88). Emptiness is found in ‘apophasis’ (description by negation) and ‘agnosia’ (unknowing) and Watson (2014, p. 79) draws our attention to the Lutheran theologian Jakob Bohme (1575-, 1624) who proposed the ‘ungrund’, an ‘indefinable matrix out of which everything arises’. After the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, the alternative “voices of emptiness” become “more a reaction to reason and the scientific rationalization of nature’ than the Church” (Watson, 2014, p. 79).

Over the last century, Watson (2014) points to “a movement towards notions of loss of essential authority, indeterminacy, contingency and immanence” (p. 81) - a theme that has been taken up in every field of human endeavour that she calls “the response to emptiness.” This can be seen in education today where an “inability of traditional (western) forms of discourse to deal single-handedly with the lived problems of the present day … makes
interpretation or reinterpretation of contemporary paradigms and their institutional embodiments necessary” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). Smith points to a “general state of exhaustion of … the dogmatic-normative traditions of epistemology and metaphysics” (p. 27) that have provided the foundations for educational discourse and practice. Set as I am in what Smith calls “a grand Western epistemic tradition” (p. 37) of modern education where the “… modus of discourse is argumentation and dispute … so that winners can be declared … so that interpretation be put to rest” (Smith, p. 36) it is strangely difficult to begin to express the potential value of an application of pleasure in a way that I feel may be heard by my colleagues or in my field. Of what practical value is pleasure? How do we ‘construct’, ‘manage’ or ‘operationalise’ pleasure? In a field that is borne by a tradition of positive behaviourism (where people are striving to produce measurable results), I propose a contemporary ‘therapeutic’ application of pleasure based on a philosophy of emptiness. I attempt to provide an open framework that enables educators in secondary school physical education to take up the task of understanding physical education in relation to pleasure and happiness.

In modern western society, there is a tendency to view any application (practice) based on ‘emptiness’ as mystical, esoteric or of little practical use: we have negative preconceptions of what emptiness is and an aversion, resistance, or inability to embrace ‘it’ (the ‘not self’, the ‘Whole’, the ‘All’, what is ‘Other’, the ‘World’… are all attempts to capture the contingent, interdependent, irreducible and ultimately ineffable nature of reality). We like to reduce things to manageable
parts. It may be difficult to begin to understand physical education as a practice of emptiness (read wholeness or fullness), but Watson encourages us to explore philosophies (practices) of emptiness that are part of our ancient roots because if taken up they may provide new ways for us to think, talk about and enact physical education. In this dissertation I take up Watson’s challenge to develop a contemporary therapeutic application of ‘emptiness’ (read wholeness or fullness) in secondary school physical education. I playfully take up the somewhat heretical not to mention difficult task of ‘emptying’ (relaxing) curriculum and living it for pleasure. What might a contemporary therapeutic application of pleasure in secondary school physical education look like? In what ways might it help express the value that pleasure (peace, freedom, good-spirit, joy, exultation and delight) holds for students and teachers?

A philosophy of emptiness, (Watson, 2014), draws us back, “to the pre-Socratic and Hellenist philosophy of Greece … before the hegemony of substance and being, in an attempt to find an openness that is not nothing” (p. 94). It brings us to Epicurus and the idea of pleasure being “a potential pillar of coherence” (Booth, 2009, p. 135) around which to design and live curriculum in secondary school physical education. Watson (2014) opens up an alternative way of thinking and allows me to start asking questions like: In what ways might I empty curriculum in physical education without losing the richness of its content? In what ways might I relax curriculum constructs so there is more space for students to encounter a sensation of freedom? What kind of benefits might a more relaxed curriculum afford students and teachers? How might pleasure help re-theorize
(relax) curriculum and pedagogy and afford more natural ways of being and moving in physical education? In what ways might physical education return to the ancient practice of learning to live according to the emptiness (read irreducible whole-ness) that Life presents? With the loss of philosophies of existence such as Epicurean philosophy we have stopped asking such questions. We have stopped asking how we might plan lessons so that they offer a sense of emptiness, space or openness for students to encounter and move into: how we might ‘plan for nothing so that more can happen’. Pleasure presents and requires taking a risk. Immersed in a philosophy of substance and a tradition of suffering we ask other questions. Instead of believing in the value of pleasure and the pleasure of movement and staking a commitment to it (exploring it in our practice), we tend to place our faith in theories and models of learning. Philosophies based on the idea that reality is quantifiable and can be ‘constructed’ and ‘managed’ (Watson calls philosophies of substance) tend to dominate our thought and action. In this inquiry I explore the value of what cannot be defined, measured and prescribed: I explore a less quantifiable kind of learning based upon sensory experience that may be of equal or even greater value to students interested in learning how to live happily.

Pleasure is more an experience than a quantifiable entity we can reproduce but this does not mean it is trivial or that it should not be taken seriously by educators, (read valued and used to theorise, design and enact curriculum in secondary school physical education). Eagleton (2003) points out, “… pleasure and seriousness are related in this sense: that finding out how life can become
more pleasant for more people is a serious business” (p. 4). Epicurean philosophy provides a way of not only exploring the ‘complex but important educational challenge’ of understanding the ‘construction and management’ of pleasure in physical education (Pringle, 2010), but also a way of caring more deeply. Returning to Epicurean philosophy is an attempt to understand through application a wisdom that flourished globally for seven centuries because of its therapeutic value (DeWitt, 1954, pp. 3-35), but has since become recessive (replaced by dominant philosophies of substance, presence and self).

A Philosophical Framework for this Inquiry

This hermeneutic inquiry actively explores Epicurean philosophy to expand understanding of the value of pleasure as an orientation in physical education. In it I listen to the feelings of students and am led by unfolding events that emerge when attempting to live curriculum around pleasure.

Epicurean philosophy offers an alternative epistemology based on aesthesis (sense experience), intuitive reasoning (‘thoughtful practice’) and friendship. It provides an aesthetic and ethical lens that assumes the feelings provoked through participation in physical education are of utmost educational import. When brought to bear on physical education, the question ‘What is pleasurable and what is unnecessarily painful about participation in physical education?’ emerges to guide curriculum and pedagogy placing an onus upon cultivating a supportive atmosphere where feelings of pleasure, (peace, inner freedom, goodwill, joy, delight and exultation) may flourish. This brings to the foreground of my inquiry the ancient practice of theoria (being present to what is
happening through embodied participation) as a way of knowing. Gadamer (1960) contrasts the ancient participatory act of theoria (giving oneself over to things and others in order to understand them more), to modern theoretical frameworks that take a more ‘objective’ perspective. Theoria is described as a “possibility of being wholly with something else … where [emphasis added] self-forgetfulness is a result of giving one’s full attention to the matter at hand…the opposite of holding oneself back” (Gadamer, 1960, p. 125). This type of participatory approach to understanding reflects a time in our culture when scholars knew the “limits of objectification” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 270): kenosis (emptying the self) was seen as an exercise and a way of experiencing and knowing ourselves and the world more fully.

It is through this open hermeneutic lens underscored by an alternative Epicurean epistemology that I aim to understand the experience of others within the context of what Schön (1983) calls the ‘swampy lowlands’ and ‘indeterminate zones’ of practice. In what ways might such a lens guide my inquiry/practice? Gadamer (1986) suggests that the aesthetic might allow me to say what it is I value and aim to cultivate in my practice as a teacher when I do not prioritize above all else prescribed outcomes in a provincially mandated curriculum: it allows me to describe pleasure as the focus and guide for curriculum and pedagogy in physical education.

Kretchmar (2007) suggests that physical education might aim to afford students an expanding sense of freedom, happiness and delight: Wright (2010) asks for Happiness to be preserved as a value, Smith and Lloyd (2009) and Smith
(2007) ask for ‘joy’ and ‘vitality’ to be prioritized in lesson planning and Pringle (2010) emphasises the potential ‘educative value’ of ‘movement pleasure.’ Recent work in New Zealand (Stevens, 2017) focusses on the joy of movement in physical education. I am inspired to explore the Epicurean idea that the true meaning (value) of secondary school physical education for students may be found in the pleasure of movement: ‘Stranger, here will do well to tarry, here our highest good is pleasure’ (Epicurus as cited in Seneca the Younger in Epistle XXI).

‘The pleasure of movement’ as a guiding aesthetic for physical education

Lucretius observed that human movement is the result of free will and its meaning is personal. One cannot make someone move. It is their decision to move that gives a sense of freedom, a sense of being in the movement and the exhilarating sense of being the movement. Such enthusiasm (entheo-ism “to be full of God”) can be seen in the facial expressions of children when they decide to “race each other” (See Figure 2). This is the beauty (pleasure) of movement that as an underpinning aesthetic may provide a broader lens through which to conceptualize and enact curriculum in secondary school physical education.
Methodology

Gadamer’s hermeneutics (pursuing understanding through ongoing interpretation and application) provides structure for my inquiry as I explore and attempt to understand the experience of physical education. A process of ongoing interpretation and application of Epicurean philosophy in my practice allows me to cultivate an understanding of how pleasure might reframe curriculum and pedagogy in physical education, and this continues to serve as a lens through which I view the experience of students in physical education. Inquiry evolves through a process of hermeneutic listening (Davis, 1997), interpreting and reinterpreting the everyday text (spoken, written and embodied) that surrounds me in my practice. It is led by a conversation that asks: In what ways might Epicurean philosophy (a practice) influence curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school
physical education? This is a form of practical philosophy that may be thought of as ‘Epicurean Hermeneutic Pedagogy.’

Epicurean Hermeneutic Pedagogy: A compassionate form of inquiry

(Smith, 1999)

“Whenever we are engaged in the activity of interpreting our lives and the world around us, we are engaging in what Greeks called “practical philosophy” (Smith, 1999, p. 27). Practical philosophy and hermeneutic pedagogy (Smith) provides an alternative approach that helps me address the problem I encounter as an educator; the problem of suffering (forms of anxiety, isolation, depression) and how to respond. It provides a way of raising ‘pedagogical consciousness,’ not just of students’ situations and feelings, but of the ‘unnoticed transparent lenses’ (Watson, 2014) through which I habitually view the world, (lenses that at times may limit my view and create unnecessary suffering). “The aim of interpretation, it could be said, is not just another interpretation but human freedom, which finds it light, identity and dignity in those few brief moments when one’s lived burdens can be shown to have their source in too limited a view of things” (Smith, 1999, p. 29).

Hermeneutic pedagogy (Smith, 1999, p. 122) is underpinned by the ancient knowledge that “the meaning of anything is never knowable purely in and of itself, but only in so far as it bears a relationship to something, or to others.” In imagining a pedagogy for the future, Smith describes pedagogy that is deeply relational, based upon the “interconnectedness between adult and child … the ontological bond that gives our lives meaning”: and suggests an approach that
‘enters into the play of the world’, “enabling a kind of conversational dance with the young which ensures that they will not be abandoned, neither will teachers become sclerotic in their thought and action.” (pp. 123-124). This is an apt way of describing the nature of my inquiry and practice that explores the experience of students in relation to pleasure. Learning to live curriculum according to pleasure “involves learning how to live with [emphasis added] the world instead of trying to force it into an identity we can recognize as conforming with our concepts of it” (Smith, 1999, p. 123). Smith describes a form of pedagogical inquiry that holds potential to enlighten, (change my way of being in the world), if I remain open and attentive: if I stay committed to ‘following the conversation’ with and for students. Children and young people may have a lot to teach about notions such as play, pleasure and happiness: not least of all how not to take my self and things too seriously. An encounter with my son Alfie, underscores the importance of this:

Daddy! You’re not a ‘real’ teacher are you!
Uh? …Yes I am! What do you mean? Of course I’m a ‘real’ teacher! I say, struggling to defend myself to my five year old son…do you know what all those lines on the gyms floor mean – and the rules for all the games and how to play them…
Yeah I know but you’re a gym teacher, you don’t have a classroom with desks in it and chairs and stuff – and you don’t wear a suit – you wear shorts and…and you play sports and stuff…

(Parenting diary Sep, 27, 2013)

In my reaction to defend myself to my son as a ‘real teacher’, the terms I began to use reveal a somewhat ‘limited view’ (technical lens) through which I view school, and an inability to describe or a resistance to express pleasure as a
rationale for who I am and what I do. I realize now Alfie may have been pointing to the different environment I am in as a secondary school physical education teacher and wondering…. what’s it like in secondary school?…. what do you do Daddy? He may have been wondering about the less defined space of secondary school physical education. He may even have been asking: What kind of a teacher are you Daddy? Smith (1999) refers to the child bringing a message, “…the child . . . who reminds us of our own deep adult vulnerability and our need for a gentler way of being together on this earth” (p. 125). How much does the technical frame through which I habitually view physical education estrange me from students and the relational side of teaching? In what ways might teaching and my life as a teacher be more pleasurable? An Epicurean hermeneutic lens provides a way of listening to ‘the message’… or question the child brings to me. It provides a way for me to start describing who I am and what I do in terms which may transform my perspective and way of being. ‘Creating an environment in which students can relax and experience the freedom of playing, laughing and moving without worrying about quantifiable outcomes’ is what I do as an educator and this is my way of bringing what Smith (1999) calls the “hardened world” (p. 125) that is becoming increasingly less playful to its fuller senses.

In this inquiry, ‘life writing’ (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo & Sinner, 2012) and ‘life writing and literary metissage’ (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009), provide a way of generating, capturing and presenting the conversation of lived curriculum and a way of illustrating my pursuit of pleasure in curriculum (a pursuit of understanding) with the perspectives of students and fellow teachers.
Through a process of writing and rewriting, I work to provide “richly detailed and unusually insightful analyses of teaching and learning from the inside” (Cochrane-Smith et al., 2009, p. 5). I try to provide a sense of an educational journey that Epicurean philosophy and pleasure takes me on: a process of learning from and about pleasure. I attempt to present the perspectives of students and teachers who are living curriculum by including their words, in a way that both compliments the voice of Epicurus and provokes and invites readers to journey with me in a process of making meaning (understanding the experience of physical education) with transformational possibilities. This inquiry provides a way of questioning our understanding of the experience of physical education in relation to pleasure which holds potential for what Gadamer (1960) calls a ‘fusion of horizons’ (a broadening of understanding), and is a way of inviting us to question further the value of pleasure in physical education.

The same week that Alfie questioned me about being a real teacher an interesting thing happened in a lesson where a student was leading his classmates:

“Look!: James shouted…holding the basketball up in the air with one hand “…basketball is not always fast – you have to slow the ball down – you have to slow down – you have to stop the ball and then move … that’s what works…” The rest of the class tried to copy as he dribbled the ball down the room. After the lesson they wrote feedback on pieces of paper for me to read before we would discuss - a way of sharing and taking from the experience. One comment said, “… well organized but too serious…and too strict…” and another, “… too much like a real teacher!”

“… too much like a real teacher! What do you think that means James?” I said to the student who had been leading: “… probably I was making them work too hard – not letting them play and have fun …” As we talked James expressed a frustration with those students who don’t try, “It’s not like basketball practice … they don’t listen!”

I nodded: “… maybe we can’t expect the same as in basketball practice … PE’s not like a sport is it? It’s not like they choose to be here…some of them probably feel awkward. What do you think is the most important thing in PE for students?”
James talked about enjoying it and it being not so much about technique and winning but having fun and helping students play and feel good. The next lesson James begins with some free play while he sets up a game for the class to play:

“OK – this is Kingball: a game we play in my country when we are kids …” James smiles and walks over to a bench that he has placed close to a basketball hoop at one end of the court, “… one player stands on the bench during the game and only they are allowed to score … their team has to try and get the ball to them so they can shoot – no other players are allowed in the end zone only the player standing on the bench … after they score someone else takes their place and that’s how it goes until all players on your team have scored …” The class play two concurrent games and in between games there are water breaks, “…take your time: no rush …” James jokes around with students leaving long periods of rest between each game … the class relax and engage playfully with the environment swinging on ropes, dancing and bouncing the balls to each other, a couple lay down and talk, … the atmosphere has a kind of relaxed playfulness to it.

“Wow!! What a difference … how did you do that?!” I asked James. “I just thought about what you said and about PE being different – and I just tried to make it more relaxing’. In the space of one lesson James seemed to have achieved what has taken me such a long time in my own practice.

A hermeneutic pedagogical inquiry asks, in what ways might focusing upon understanding the experience of students through an Epicurean lens be transformational? In this dissertation I attempt, through a practical hermeneutic approach (what I think of as ‘thoughtful practice’) to reframe curriculum and pedagogy in physical education around Epicurean philosophy: I strive to in some way convey a journey of understanding. Interestingly, the success of all ancient philosophies of happiness lay in them being taken up and practiced with others and so in this dissertation there is an attempt to invite the reader to accompany me and explore pleasure as an alternative construct for practice. Writing taken from my teaching field notes and the journals of students is interwoven to communicate an ongoing embodied pursuit of understanding how to live curriculum according to pleasure and the pleasure of movement.
Jardine (1992) points to the potential ‘fecundity of the individual case’ in opening up meaning: the value of particular moments that take us by surprise and shake assumptions that underpin everyday practice. In this dissertation I refer to events and particular moments that spoke to me during my quest to understand the experience of physical education in relation to pleasure. Writing attempts to capture moments that were transformational: ‘moving moments’ that have led me to begin to understand and view physical education differently. The dissertation may read a little ‘slow’ and feel like an unwinding road that is by no means complete. This reflects my own slow learning (a journey of unfolding understanding), and my limitations as an individual attempting to understand through application, pleasure as a contemporary therapeutic practice of emptiness (Watson, 2014). What you hold in your hands is a snapshot of who I am and what I do as a teacher of secondary school physical education and I beg your patience and some leniency as I try to communicate a practice of pleasure and happiness.

Methods

In order to expand my understanding of pleasure in practice, text (‘data’) was gathered (‘collected’) and interpreted (‘analyzed’) from three activities: study (of Epicurean philosophy [related literature]), teaching (daily enactment of curriculum in physical education) and parenting (daily life as a parent of young children who seem to be experts at moving for pleasure!). In reality and in this dissertation study, teaching and parenting are interwoven but for analytic purposes I separated them. The collection and interpretation of text (data) in each aimed to capture and present a range of perspectives that may exist in a physical
education curriculum oriented around pleasure, including those of the teacher, student, subject and milieu (Schwabb, 1969). Through this process, my inquiry does not aim to develop a model for achieving pleasure, but attempts to live curriculum according to it and to convey ways that an Epicurean lens may influence curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education.

Data Collection (gathering) and Analysis (interpretation):


Whilst in practical philosophy “philosophizing is [emphasis added] a continuous act permanent and identical with living itself …” (Hadot, 1995, p. 268), for the purposes of collection and analysis, study, teaching and parenting represent three different activities in which I gather and interpret text. Each represent a different activity. For example, when I am studying (reading, writing, contemplating, and sense making through conversation), I am not teaching Grade 8, 9 or, 10 physical education or being a father and in this sense the three activities were differentiated. Data collection and analysis (gathering and interpretation) aims to draw out the interplay between each activity that informs me as a teacher of physical education. The above accounts of ‘conversations’ with Alfie, and James for example, illustrate how parenting, teaching and study interact and inform a broader understanding and ongoing application of pleasure in my inquiry/practice.

Writing and rewriting in this inquiry allows me to relate more to what is other: it allows me to begin to understand the experience of physical education from different perspectives and it deepens my “hermeneutic imagination” (Smith,
1999, p. 39), my awareness of ‘the interpretability’ of lived curriculum, and it hones my ability to attune to and act in accord with the complexity of living curriculum. Writing and rewriting the experience of physical education allows me to understand and attempt to express the educational value of orienting physical education curriculum around pleasure.

For one academic year I collected and analyzed data (text) through a recursive process of writing and leaving gaps between teaching field notes that I revisited daily in the evenings and again on weekends, filling in gaps between my notes or leaving them blank. Revisiting my notes allowed me to question and reinterpret them in the light of experience. It enabled me to contemplate and attempt to capture in writing the interplay between study, teaching and parenting. Writing up events, stories and problems in detail and sharing and discussing with others, helped question my understanding. As I revisited my teaching field notes and ‘filled in the gaps’ I tried to identify themes, links, and questions that appeared to be emerging in my thinking and practice.

Hadot (1995, pp. 81-125) describes ancient methods of philosophical inquiry as being ‘spiritual exercises’ that involve a person’s entire ‘psychism’ aimed at procuring a therapeutic transformation of perspective and way of being in the world. Methods (exercises) involve the imaginative and affective aspect of a person (meditations, visualisations, morning and evening contemplations, re-living memories), are nourished by intellectual exercises (reading, listening, research and investigation) and are combined with practical methods for creating habits (self-mastery and accomplishment of daily duties). In this way the methods
of practical philosophy used in this inquiry combine to attempt to provide a deep, holistic approach that informs my analysis and way of being as a teacher. Study (research, thorough investigation, reading, writing, thinking, scholarly conversation, and the exercise of friendship). In what follows I briefly refer to key authors and texts that have informed this project.

A close reading of *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1960) during an independent studies course at UBC introduced to me the idea of understanding being an embodied practice of giving one’s self over to events and the world in order to know them more (theoria); a practice of cultivating and following genuine conversations; of opening up and remaining open to new possibilities; of listening in order to be led; and broadening my horizons and recognizing that I am part of something greater than my individual self, part of a long tradition (language) that allows and limits my understanding of Life.

For Lucretius, in *De Rerum Natura* Book, 1 (Slavitt, 2008) “There has to be empty space, emptiness that allows for the possible movement of things” (p. 15) Epicurean material theory of atomic movement proposes that all movement of Life (all growth) depends on space. This idea of ‘space’ being what allows movement to emerge and flourish provides a powerful metaphor that continues to expand the analysis of my practice. Space and openness (a practice of emptiness) in relation to human movement is a main theme of investigation in this inquiry, which I am beginning to understand as a practice that affords sensations of fullness or wholeness. *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Hadot, 1995) helped me begin to relate to Hellenist philosophy and ‘Epicureanism’ as ancient spiritual
practices aimed at overcoming egotistical passions that tend to isolate rather than connect. *The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault, 1990) and *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture* (Pfaller, 2014) gave me an understanding of ancient philosophies of happiness in relation to modern ways of living, introducing me to the difference between the original idea of striving to keep the imagination of ego in check (Pfaller, 2014; Hadot, 1995) and the modern narcissistic tendency to feed the ego through an accumulation of self-esteem in a practice of Self (Foucault, 1990).

After the teaching year in which data was collected (September, 2014 – July, 2015), I returned to a closer reading of *Epicurus The Man and his Philosophy*, (DeWitt, 1954) and *De Rerum Natura* (Lucretius, Munro, trans., 1864) in an attempt to interpret and apply Epicurean schemata to secondary school physical education curriculum. This took one semester of study leave, (September, 2015-February, 2016), working six days a week, reading, annotating and discerning themes from Epicurean Philosophy, all in relation to the data I had collected from one year of teaching physical education focusing on pleasure. Reading DeWitt included investigating ways that Hadot (1995), Pfaller (2014), Foucault (1990) and Watson (2014) might inform a contemporary application of Epicurean philosophy in my ‘classroom’. After this semester of study, I returned to teaching full time and after two months found that when I came back to my writing (during the spring break of April, 2016) I could appreciate an Epicurean framework for physical education (see next chapter) a little better.

Space or openness persisted as a metaphor for promoting movement in my practice and I felt compelled to respond to Watson (2014) who challenged me
with questions such as what might a contemporary therapeutic application of emptiness (pleasure) look like in secondary school physical education and in what ways might physical education be a practice of emptiness?! This was an unanticipated question that emerged to lead and further shape the writing of my dissertation over the next three years. Researching and investigating pleasure as a practice of emptiness involved re-reading Watson (2014) and exploring the works cited in her book, for example R. P. Droit (‘Astonish Yourself’, 2002). I incorporated Droit’s ‘perspective altering’ exercises into my daily life during the data collection period of the inquiry (September, 2014-July, 2015) − exercises aimed at heightening sensory perceptions and altering perspective to assuage existential anxiety, such as showering in the dark, walking in the dark of night, running (taking exercise) in a cemetery, visualising one’s situation from high above, counting to, 1000 out loud in a room by myself and visualising my own death in order to appreciate the infinite value of the present. During the data collection period I had also read Thich Nhat Hanh’s (2008) *The Miracle of Mindfulness* and practiced the breathing exercises at home by myself and with my children and with classes I was teaching in physical education. These continue to provide useful ways of understanding how Epicurean philosophy (a philosophy of ‘emptiness’) might be applied in physical education. Applying the concept of emptiness theoretically to curriculum (‘PART TWO’ of this dissertation), in the light of ongoing practice has taken three years to evolve while teaching full time (2015 to present). Other literature I read to inform this inquiry includes: O’Keefe (2010), Inwood and Gerson (1994), Farrington (1967), Rist (1972) and Klein

I have found writing about (describing curriculum and my practice) in terms of emptiness immensely challenging and feel that this may reveal my limitations…for example my tradition and way of life which has mostly been about performance, presence and self. The idea of emptiness being a practice and a way of living happily: and of not focusing upon Self to promote human movement has been transformational and continues to feel rewarding as a basis for practice.

A big part of ‘study’ in this inquiry was being part of an annual winter cohort of graduate students at UBC with Professors Bill Doll and Donna Trueitt (2013-2016), and the strength this gave me to persevere with the task of attempting to express in writing what I felt at the beginning could only be experienced. For the years before, during and after my year of data collection, we would meet every other weekend over a course of three months during the winter. The courses focused upon writing dissertations, papers, and scripts for presentations. Over the weekends we would read our writing to the group and share our thoughts and difficulties, receiving alternative points of view and suggestions (possible avenues for investigation and research that may inform our
work). We studied a book in each course Tröhler (2012) *Languages of Education*, Ng-A-Fook & Rottmann (2012) *Reconsidering Canadian Curriculum Studies* and Morin (2008) *On Complexity*) chosen by our Professors to expand thinking and stimulate conversation. Professors Bill and Donna took the time during and between weekends to read our work and provide detailed supportive feedback, in a spirit of sharing, friendship and community:

WHAT A JOY!!! … you need to read Lucretius: Slavitt provides a translation that’s easy to read that keeps it all in hexameter verse … a lovely poem. Oh and have you read ‘The Swerve’ by Stephen Goldblatt? It’s a fascinating story … Whoosh! – who would think of using Epicurus to reframe secondary school physical education!


Looking back, these courses contained many of the ancient practical methods of philosophical inquiry outlined by Hadot (1995), (listening, reading, writing, researching and thoroughly investigating practice from different angles, learning to dialogue and learning to read), but most significantly for me they provided friendship. The experience of meeting up with others to share work in an atmosphere of mutual scholarly support kept me going on a long journey, particularly during times when I felt lost. From an Epicurean perspective, friendship (confessing one’s faults, asking for and receiving the perspectives of others, and examining one’s conscience through meditation and writing (Hadot, 1995, p. 89), provided central pillars around which study could endure. While study may be a form of self-education (Gadamer, 2001; Pinar, 2015), being and becoming scholars we often need to feel the support of others which points to the value of schools being places of congregation, and teaching not just being instruction but the cultivation of relaxed and supportive atmospheres: a task of
creating conditions in which ‘hearts can flourish’ (Hadot, 1995, p. 89). Friendship, from an Epicurean perspective, is what allows students to persevere and education to happen. With the ongoing support of this circle of scholars, brought together by Professors Bill, Donna, my PhD committee, my family and teaching colleagues, I managed to produce and present work at various conferences, (Train, 2013; 2015; 2015), to staff in my school, and to my school board. It is through a process of admitting difficulties, sharing work and asking for advice (an exercise of friendship) that I was able to persevere with the daunting task of completing this dissertation. Ongoing movement between a conceptual reading of pleasure and the practice of living secondary school physical education according to pleasure continues to inform my understanding and practice and it is this movement (that I call study) that allows me to continue to ‘frame’ and ‘reframe’ (Schön, 1983) curriculum and pedagogy in relation to pleasure and wellbeing.

Teaching Field notes recorded the naturally unfolding everyday text (written, spoken and embodied) that emerged in and around physical education lessons. I recorded expressions of pleasure and suffering and particular events in detail via the use of a daily notebook, lesson notes and weekend notes. Students kept diaries and journals and I also kept a written note of dialogue with my teaching colleagues.

(a) Daily Notebook

I carried a small notebook with me every day to record events as they happened (trying to capture details, words, expressions and feelings of myself and
others), as they spoke to me in my quest to understand the relevance of pleasure. Hadot (1995) and Foucault (1990) point to philosophers of happiness using ‘hypomnemata’ (spiritual notebooks) as a way of broadening their understanding of how to live. My noting of everyday events in relation to Epicurean philosophy was a way of recognising what Epicurus might say to the present: it was a way of identifying “an ever-present” (Hadot, 1995, p. 210) value in the philosophy, not as a way of solidifying my position or perspective, but as a way of broadening my understanding. “What did Epicurus say and in what ways might that apply to this situation?” and “What did other people say in the field of human movement that might relate?” were questions that fed the orientation of my daily notebook. Informed by study, various aphorisms or sayings would come to me during the day and I would write them into my notebook, eventually making them my own.

For example, on not over-reacting and being able to respond in difficult teaching situations, I heard Grindler (1995): “Relaxation is that condition in which we have the greatest capacity of reacting. It is a stillness within us, a readiness to respond appropriately to any stimulus” (p. 13). I wrote at the top of the page in my daily notebook “breathe, smile, respond – relaxation is what allows movement to happen”. On making the experience of physical education more pleasurable for students I was having difficulty connecting with, I heard Barlow on FM Alexander (Johnson, 1995), “Approach your pupils … as if you had never seen them before … you do not bring to this encounter all you know about them – how they have been in the past…. Give them a chance … to be what
they are today” (p. 90) and I wrote as a heading in my daily notebook “… see everyone as if for the first time …” as a reminder to be open and receptive to all.

(b) Lesson Notes

Quick notes were written after lessons in my ‘day planner.’ Particular events or things that students said that stood out to me were recorded in detail. “What happened?’ and ‘what were my feelings?’ were the two guiding questions that I sought to answer when reading these lesson notes (thus exploring the experience of lessons in physical education).

(c) Weekend Notes

Lesson notes were read and then re-written in a separate book every weekend. In these ‘weekend notes’ I would add reflections and make suggestions (plans) for the next week’s lessons. Overall the process of writing my teaching field notes allowed me to cultivate an ongoing conversation with students: recording threads of conversation in my lesson notes would allow me to pick up and continue the conversation in following lessons, for example, “… talk to Matthew about what he said about having more choice!! … What did he mean? What can we change?” By picking up this thread and talking with Matthew about it in the free-play at the beginning of the next lesson I was not only finding out more about his view on things but I was letting him know that his feelings were important and that I was engaging in a genuine conversation. My notes allow me to start each lesson by circulating and talking with students about details from previous lessons, (what happened and what was said), exploring their perspective and desires, which is a way of broadening understanding, nurturing a sense of
living curriculum together and gaining trust. Taking notes allows me to follow up on things that I might overlook or forget: (“… Julia, I read your journal entry on running and wanted to talk with you about it – it being a kind of public embarrassment (P. E)! - I wanted to know I was glad you could express that…I guess everyone in PE must feel like that about something – like some dreading gymnastics or dance … I don’t like running long distances either! … does that mean we should not do it? Should we avoid things we find difficult or do not like?”).

Following up on field notes and journal entries provides a practical way of ‘… staying with the conversation (Smith, 1999) “… a conversation that is never finished …” where success has the requirement that “…members be committed to staying ‘with’ each other, constantly listening to subtle nuances of tempo and melody …with one person never stealing the show” ( p. 39).

writing notes on particular events at the end of each lesson and reading them at night – discussing my thoughts with students during the week and then re-writing my lesson notes each weekend …and reading the journal entries of students sometimes shocks me and questions my perspective – I think about the experience of physical education from various distances and angles (in the moment, at the end of the day and on weekends) which is a practice of thinking more broadly or caring deeply about what is happening. It allows me to see the ways I sometimes overreact in situations to students’ behaviour, and to think about situations from their perspective…what is most important? This helps expand my understanding and the way I live curriculum. It allows me not to take myself or things too seriously and to be more relaxed. Overall it transforms my way of being: the way I respond to students…my demeanour… my posture, facial expressions and tone of voice – the ways I project and am receptive to happiness – writing and re-writing (after exploration) guides thoughtful practice and enables me to cultivate a more relaxed atmosphere - in which students can be happy and move more freely!”

(Weekend notes April, 25, 2015)
d) Students’ Diaries & Journals

Students in two Grade 8 classes and two Grade 10 classes were invited to write about their experiences in physical education on a regular basis. Grade 8 students were invited to make handwritten journal entries during one, 20-minute period of silent study each week. They were each given an exercise book to write in that only I would read: it would not be read or shared with other students or teachers. Students did not have to show me their journals: it was not a course requirement and many chose not to write. In the two Grade 8 class there most students completed weekly entries for the first month and then their writing became less and I focused more on conversation towards the end of the semester. Two Grade 10 classes of 28 students were asked to keep electronic journals on their experiences of physical education (for example, relaxation: student led lessons: free play: choice day: recreation centre day: not having fitness testing). ‘Describe the activity, what happened and what were your feelings’ were the core guiding instructions as I sought to understand the experience of physical education from the perspective of students. The electronic journal entries seemed easier for students to continue to engage with and monthly entries were completed by 55% percent of the Grade 10 students throughout their semester of physical education. This dissertation only includes text from student journals and emails from those who granted consent. Field texts produced in the inquiry were only used after allowing the student author(s) the opportunity to read, verify, edit and agree to the inclusion of their texts in a story.
(e) Teacher Colleague Dialogue (critical friends)

Two teaching colleagues and I regularly discuss what is happening in our classes, the challenges we are facing and the approaches we are taking. We teach alongside each other sharing the space set aside for physical education. We discuss different approaches to enacting curriculum, contrasting ways of constructing and managing curriculum, talking about such things as ‘scope and sequence’ and the assessment of learning. This inquiry that asks in what ways socially constructed curriculum may be more natural has stimulated a philosophical discussion among us that has continued to inform our practices. Paying close attention to this conversation with my colleagues during this inquiry has been transformational in that I am more able to communicate what I do in terms of pleasure. Through keeping the conversation open I have been able to embrace the differences in our practices, which has led to a different way of describing what we do as a department. My colleagues were particularly attracted to the idea of space being the medium for all movement (Lucretius) and to the question of how we might cultivate space for movement to flourish. Over the last couple of years we have begun to describe what we do as a team in relation to space, movement, and the environment (space being a metaphor for a practice of promoting movement). Moving and connecting in space (MIS and CIS) has become an acceptable way for us to envision and formally describe physical health education¹ (PHE) in our school.

¹ The phrases physical education and physical health education are used as interchangeable from hereon in.
Parenting A parenting diary (covering the period September, 2013-February, 2015) gathers and interprets the text (spoken, drawn and embodied) of Sacchi, Alfie, and Charlie inside and outside of school, collecting and exploring moments that speak to me in relation to the inquiry in moments that I recognize as relating to the pleasure of movement. This allows me to think about movement from a different angle; in terms of who I am and what I do in relation to movement. In what ways, for example do I respond to the natural inclination children have to move for pleasure? In what ways do I stifle or enable the pleasure of movement? In what ways might understanding the experience of movement from a child’s perspective inform and influence curriculum and pedagogy in physical education? The natural desire my children have to move for pleasure provides a healthy contrast to my adult tendency to move for extrinsic reasons. Through being with my children I bear witness to their natural inclination to move for pleasure which serves as an interesting viewpoint from which to contemplate the movement of students and myself in secondary school physical education. Bearing witness to play and the pleasure of movement through the lens of being a supportive parent expands the way I view the landscape of physical education. In what ways might secondary school physical education reawaken the child within us and thereby rekindle our affinity with the joy of movement?

The overall process of writing and rewriting teaching field notes combined with reading students’ journals, attending to dialogue with teaching colleagues, and a keeping a parenting diary, provided a holistic inquiry into the experience of being a secondary school physical education teacher in relation to pleasure. The
application of methods used in this inquiry provides a thoughtful way of living curriculum and what I think of now as ‘more thoughtful practice’. From the perspective of one teaching colleague during this inquiry, I was from her perspective “always thinking – always changing or tweaking things.”

The following story illustrates how study, parenting and teaching continually interact in this hermeneutic inquiry, informing a pursuit of pleasure (a relaxation of curriculum) in my practice as a secondary school physical education teacher.

Study: during a seminar held by Jeanne Kentel at UBC we practiced a form of embodied knowing; breathing, breathing and moving, breathing with our eyes closed listening – then in pairs we breathe and move together …following each other’s movements. We practice touching to feel the action of breathing and the tension in the body – we breathe while holding hands, which is a powerful (intimate) way of connecting: not speaking seems to magnify the senses in this exercise: it feels ‘very real.’ Epicurus refers to the senses as our touch or contact with reality.

Parenting: just as we were leaving the house this morning I spontaneously held my hands up to my sides for my children to hold and closed my eyes – and we held hands, eyes closed listening to the sound of each other breathing for a minute: they seemed to be naturally responsive to this way of connecting and it became something we would do every now and again, always just remembered as we were going out of the door…. we would stand together in the boot room holding hands with eyes closed (smiling) in the middle of the morning rush. I found it a very comforting exercise. One morning dropping the kids off at school - just as they got out of the car I got out with them and held out my hands closing my eyes …but they just laughed, “NOOO! Not here daddy!!! Not at school!”

Teaching: In what ways does the public context of school and physical education change the way we live curriculum in physical education? In what ways does it limit the way we promote movement and wellbeing? During this inquiry I put aside twenty minutes each week for each class in physical education to practice relaxation: breathing exercises, progressive relaxation and mental clearing. The breathing activity I had been introduced to in the UBC seminar and the circle activity that had emerged from it in my parenting got me wondering: how might I cultivate a similar, ‘comforting’ or ‘connecting’ effect in physical education? I didn’t have the courage to simply stand in a circle and hold out my hands (‘not at school…not as a teacher’): I didn’t think the students would go for it and the possibility of a few non participators might create a divisive effect…. so in an effort to work towards creating a similar effect, I set out the mats for the Grade 9
students quite close to each other in the pattern of a large circle in the middle of the gym and I turned out the lights. Before changing into their PE gear students each lay on a mat in the circle and we went through our breathing and progressive relaxation movements before laying still in the quiet for, 10 minutes. Over the course of one semester these relaxation exercises progressed to practices of stillness, sitting and standing (‘as statues in the dark’) and then of moving (walking and balancing) in the dark, with a focus upon sensory awareness.

The Context of this Inquiry

The inquiry is set in a secondary school (Grade 8 -12), located in a small town in the coastal mountains of western Canada. The student population has grown from 370 to 500 over the last, 10 years and is forecast to continue to grow. Originally a logging town, over the last half century the town has become increasingly centred on tourism. It has a ski hill and a vast network of outdoor recreational opportunities and is a two hour drive from the nearest large city. Many of the ‘old timers’ came here to ‘get away from city life,’ ‘to live in the mountains’ or to ski: to live according to the pleasure contained in movement: (the freedom, joy, exultation, and delight): ‘I never grew out of it … like a lot of people here I am still a big kid – I enjoy playing too much – that’s why I never left …” (J. Smith, personal communication, May 8, 2014).

In each of my classes there are students who ski (downhill, cross-country, park and freestyle), snowboard (big mountain, park and slopestyle), mountain bike (cross country, downhill, BMX and slopestyle), skateboard, climb, play golf, and play tennis competitively. There are also many who profess not to like or be good at sport.

Data was collected and analysed from the classes I taught in one year: two Grade 8 classes and one Grade 9 class who had physical education every other
day for a whole year and two Grade 10 classes and one elective, multi-grade ‘Human Performance’ class who had a lesson every day for half a year. Lessons are 73 minutes long and all classes are mixed gender with an average of 28 students per class. Facilities for physical education include a large gymnasium, an outdoor basketball court, a large playing field (for example allowing for one full size soccer pitch), and a surrounding forested area in which the teachers have designed trails for students to explore. The school is a five minute walk to the community recreation centre (where we have access to a skating rink, a pool, squash and exercise facilities). There are public trails that connect the school with the whole valley, leading out to nearby parks and lakes and it is possible to take classes on an extended hike that leads up to a lookout from where you can see the town and school below. This trail has been built by two of the school’s teachers over the last, 20 years.
Extra-curricular sports at Mountain-View Secondary are strong: an elite athlete program with a twenty-year history continues to produce world-class performances in the field of winter sports and mountain biking. School teams compete towards the provincial level in basketball, volleyball, cross-country running, track and field, hockey and soccer, and many students compete at the provincial level. In the last two years, there has been an introduction of a Hockey and Soccer Academy within the school. At a time when sport plays such a big role in many students’ lives, what chance might they have of playing and moving less seriously? What opportunity is there for them to practice playing and moving for the sake of playing and moving only?

The province has recently mandated a new Physical Health Education curriculum. Over the past years, we have been changing the content, assessment, and delivery of PHE. Part of this change includes a shift towards helping all students relate to their immediate social and physical environment through playful movement. There is change towards promoting the pleasure of movement, informed by doctoral research in the department, which aims to understand the experience of physical education. The idea is to ‘relax the student body’, (help reduce unnecessary anxieties) and allow students to feel comfortable in school and to this end there is a focus upon affording the experience of moving freely through a playful exploratory approach. While continuing the traditional range of sports, games, fitness training, gymnastics, dance, wrestling, and track and field, students may be asked to improvise around activities and to ‘make them their own’. For example, modifying gymnastics into parkour, inventing and teaching their own games, leading and teaching sports and games for their peers, and working together to design their class schedule of weekly activities.

Teachers have been expanding the range of outdoor, adventurous activities for students with the idea of developing the natural connection many of them have with the environment. The department has purchased a fleet of bikes, complete with helmets and paniers, some rain gear and snow shoes so that classes can ‘take curriculum further afield’. As part of volleyball this past September, for example, one class cycled to … Park to play on the beach courts. Both Grade 9 classes cycled to The Point for afternoon sessions of sailing and the Grade 10’s took part in a canoe course with a ‘group expedition’ down the River …. As winter approaches, we are preparing orienteering maps of the surrounding fields and forest to practice orienteering. Over the last five years, teachers have worked with students to develop a system of trails around the school that classes now explore walking, running, orienteering, snowshoeing and playing forest games. To help students connect and make meaning from their experience in physical education they are asked to reflect and describe their experience and feelings in a written journal.
Throughout the whole physical education experience, there is a shift occurring with a focus upon experiencing the healthiness of play and the ancient practice of friendship providing a balance to the competitive side of sport.

After data collection period (September, 2014 to July, 2015) I took study leave for the first semester of the following year to re-read DeWitt (1954), Hadot (1995), Watson (2014) and Pfaller (2014), and in the light of the previous year’s teaching experience, attempt to draw out an Epicurean framework or lens through which to view secondary school physical education. After this I returned to teaching full-time. Writing this dissertation has been a slow process of ‘revisiting’ data in relation to ongoing experience. Hopefully this lends a certain realism: spending time writing the dissertation while teaching has been a humbling process. Gradually, (over the last six years) I feel an Epicurean framework and sensibility has emerged that seems to be edifying for students and myself. Much of my pursuit of pleasure in physical education when put into writing may sound like simple common sense but in practice it is difficult. The school system I work in seems to be intent on using up or filling up any free or open space there may be for physical education and its students to move in. In the last four years there has been the introduction of single Sport ‘academies’ (fee paying ‘programs of choice’) that are led by external coaches (who work for businesses) and are now operating inside many schools in my district. There has been talk at the administration level of making our school into a BC Sport School. The physical education staff are not quite sure what this means. We are just aware that the academies are taking up curriculum time and physical space. This encroachment is also happening in existing subject areas, for example two years ago Health
(previously a separate subject) was placed into the physical education (PE) curriculum, making it Physical Health Education (PHE). Time and space for experiencing the pleasure of movement appears to be under threat. Where there used to be, 28 students in a gymnasium there are now 60: often two classes are divided by a curtain and the noise level is such that it is often hard to ask a question and be heard. The administration tells us that the school is at 90% capacity. Ironically, or perhaps pertinently (?), amid all of this my inquiry and practice attempts to find and create space for students to relax, move, and play in order to experience the pleasure of movement in physical education! I take up Lucretius who points out that for all movement to happen (change, growth, and learning) there needs to be space! At one point in this inquiry I was asked by the administration to explain where I fit in: in what ways does a practice of emptiness make sense? In what ways might it contribute to ‘school growth’? This dissertation is an attempt to respond in some ways to that question, to develop and communicate a contemporary application of pleasure (which is a practice of emptiness) that may be increasingly relevant to the needs of students in secondary schools.

Two weeks ago the University advisor who visits to observe and support student teachers I mentor told me, “I see now the value of letting secondary school students play for, 10 or, 15 minutes at the beginning of lessons in PE. They don’t seem to play anymore outside of school – it’s all ‘after school activities’ led by adults – and there are no playgrounds in secondary schools, so to see them all playing together is quite moving …”
RELAXING (BROADENING) THE VIEW OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The educational task from an Epicurean perspective was to recognise the socially constructed world we live in and to begin to live more in accord with nature and natural necessity.

It’s a Monday night and Sacchi (ten years old) sits at the dining table doing her homework: practicing a ’public speaking’ assignment:
“…ten things I like about nature are: - the wind blowing through my hair, the quiet in the forest, dancing in the rain, making snow angels, laying in the snow and watching snowflakes fall, racing my brothers outside, riding my bike down hills, laying on the dock in the sun and listening to the water below, looking up at the sky at night: What do you like most about nature?”
I tell her about the volcanoes Agua and Fuego in Guatemala: climbing one (Agua) and looking over at the other (Fuego) to see it erupt. Going to sleep in a tent pitched between the volcanoes and climbing Fuego the next morning. Shaken awake by a storm the wind blew me up the mountain. “As you get higher on a volcano you can see more and more around it and more and more of the land below . . .” I got drawn into going to the top: into Sulphur fumes and the swirling wind, towards the mouth. Then after bracing my body … to look down inside the volcano, I turned and ran, laughing and screaming – totally afraid. Strong gusts pulled at me and swept me sideways. I was running full pace, into hailstones soaking wet and cold just wanting to get down out of the wind. It took five minutes to reach the trees and there it was silent … like nothing had happened. The sun warmed my face and dried my clothes as I descended slowly into the valley. At the bottom I met a man whose land rover was stuck in a ditch. After helping him get free he offered me a lift and it turned out he was the coffee plantation owner. He drove through a gate with an armed guard into a Spanish style courtyard and I was invited into the house, a grand conquistador palace. We were served a hot dinner followed by ice cream. On the table there was a silver jug containing something special. He called it resin or was it ‘the oil’ of the coffee bean, “… for the ice cream: a luxury … please it’s a special type of coffee …”

The planter drove me back into town to my hostel, stopping off at a church to show me a festival celebration. He felt bad for the people (his workers): they were poor and lived in poverty. Dazed and tired from the last two days I stared out at the families on the side of the road. I let my head rest against the passenger window and closed my eyes.

Whether planters or pickers, guides or tourists we are all part of a wider context. Thrown or ‘placed’ we are somehow ‘broadcast’ into the universe, falling onto land that has been cultivated by generations of humans. Our bodies grow and we
learn how to be in them: we learn how to live and be happy. The land we are thrown onto may be hard and quite overused. It may not feel easy to be happy. Cultivating natural happiness as we mature is akin to cultivating a childlike sensitivity and sense of wonder, and an openness (inclination to attend to what is other) in a culture that is all about self. It is akin to learning again to live in harmony with nature.

In answer to Sacchi, ‘what I like most about nature’ is being part of it, moving in it and feeling alive! I like the feeling of freedom that my body affords: being physically moved by the world and others: going for a walk and being moved by the landscape or a conversation with a friend. I like getting out of my head – escaping into the feeling of movement. In my youth I remember running alongside rivers: the faster the river moved the faster I would run, up and down the bank full of excitement, singing and shouting with the rush of water. I would lay in rapids holding on to rocks to let the water run over me: to feel it pulling at my body like I was going to wash away. Walking home afterwards I remember feeling a deep inner calm.

I remember the difference that cycling to work made to my quality of life during the first year I lived in London: a difference between feeling isolated commuting by tube and feeling full of wonder cycling through the arteries of one of the oldest and busiest cities in the world. For years exercising in the gym was a way of connecting with nature and strengthening my body: blood pumping, muscles working, sweating and breathing hard, stretching and relaxing: the feeling of being fully alive. This is what makes going to the gym a necessity and a pleasure for many people who work in the city: a desire to move and feel the feeling of being in their bodies that their regular daily tasks do not allow.

The notion of movement as catharsis, a temporary escape from the imagination of the mind (a tempering of passions) returns us to the idea of physical education being a form of original philosophy. In Hellenist philosophy physical and spiritual gymnastics sought to assuage (soften) unnecessary desires and anxieties and allow people to experience and bear (embrace) the pleasure of existence and infinite value of the present moment. Moving for pleasure in physical education seeks to counter the ego and allow students to encounter and accept what nourishes them naturally.

Walking to school each day through a forest: something he describes as a ‘natural luxury’, Kevin (my teaching colleague) experiences a sense of revelation
as the seasons slowly unfold. Epicurean physical education (this inquiry) thinks that at the deepest level the embodied experience of movement is what inspires. A sensation of well-being is contained in physical movement. Atoms swerve, compounds vibrate and organisms move: when we as humans follow an impulse to move we feel an inner energetic charge that not only overcomes our inherited sense of ‘duality’ but connects us with Nature. It is when we move in response to the impulse to move for pleasure that we realize ourselves as part of Life. This is the empty Hellenistic path toward wider consciousness that may lead students to a simultaneous sense of inner freedom and meaningful connection with the world. Stephen Smith (2007) talks of movement connecting us to landscape: movement carrying ‘an intention not confined to individual purpose’ and of the first rush of movement being a ‘mimetic impulse towards otherness.’ He points towards the potentiality of practices focussed around pleasure and the pleasure of movement offering ways for students to maintain a natural and intimate relation with their bodies, other people and the world.

In a culture not geared around the pursuit of natural happiness (Eudaimonia) there may be a need to cultivate educational environments in which young people experience moving for no other reason than for pleasure (peace of mind, inner freedom feelings of wellbeing). Working in a discipline that has a tradition of embracing pain (no pain no gain, what does not kill you makes you stronger, pain is character building), and that has framed movement instrumentally for decades, I listen closely to impulses (my own and students’) to swerve away from unnecessary pain and move for pleasure. I am tired of pushing
students to move and improve and instead focus my energy on understanding experience in order to offer a curriculum that is more relational. In *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault (1990) points to how regimes of pleasure were developed and used to experience wellbeing and vitality. It is in this vein that I try to understand how pleasure might be ‘embraced’ (Booth, 2009) in secondary school physical education. It is towards this end that I offer an interpretation of Epicurean philosophy that reframes secondary school physical education in a way that pleasure can be used as a guide for educators. In what ways might Epicurean philosophy re- or de-theorise physical education curriculum and what possibilities might this open? What kinds of movement might emerge in a curriculum that urges us to understand and prioritise pleasure and the pleasure of movement? In what ways might the promotion of pleasure and the pleasure of movement in schools be educative? In what ways might pleasure be physical education’s highest good?

In this dissertation I communicate a process of making meaning from events or experiences. I try to portray an ongoing quest for understanding the experience of movement and ways that it influences curriculum and pedagogy. The exploration unfolds slowly and there may be moments when a reader feels they want to know more quickly or more precisely what I mean: for example, when I mention the idea that pleasure is our highest good in secondary school physical education: or that Epicurean philosophy is a ‘practice of emptiness’. Understanding such ideas lies in sustained practice and my dissertation may reflect this: feeling somewhat incomplete or unfinished to a reader. I ask for
leniency and patience as I attempt to communicate an Epicurean framework for curriculum and pedagogy (Part, 1: ‘reframing physical education around pleasure’) and some stories from practice (Part, 2: a contemporary application of pleasure in secondary school physical education) that have emerged over the last six years. Hopefully this will provoke thought and expand ways of thinking and talking about physical education. Quotes from students are inserted in text boxes and narratives taken from teaching field notes are off-set from the main text in an attempt to convey an unfolding and integrated understanding of the experience of secondary school physical education in relation to pleasure. Boxing the quotes and off-setting narratives from field notes is an attempt to highlight the voices of students and the influence they had on me and my practice. In practice, opening the journal of a student is a little like opening a box containing a gift: each box pointing towards the more mysterious side of living physical education with students that, if pondered, may expand the way we think about the design and enactment of curriculum.

This inquiry and the process of writing up moving moments that emerged has moved me into a different ‘space’ that is often harder to inhabit as a teacher and may be less recognized as ‘educative’ by those who view things through more quantifiable lenses. It is notable to me, however, that students seem to intuitively recognise and respond more to a ‘practice of emptiness’ than a practice of prescription. Through an inquiry into pleasure, I feel I have become better at creating an environment and atmosphere that invites, persuades and accepts movement as an end in and of itself. I adopt a pedagogy that is more
participatory’: a pedagogy that is oriented by the shared task of attuning to and understanding the embodied experience of physical education. In an application of emptiness (see next chapter) I constantly try to see, hear and feel what is happening in an effort to develop pedagogical awareness, a sensitivity to feelings and an ability to live curriculum happily.

Epicurus Expanding our Understanding of Pleasure: Epicurean Philosophy as a Basis for Curriculum

Watson (2014) describes Epicurean philosophy as a philosophy of emptiness but this does not mean it has no weight, that it is not meaningful, or that it has no potential as a basis for education. In this chapter I outline Epicurus’ scheme of knowledge: what he thought most important to know, his way of knowing, his theory of reality (physis) and the way that a well thought out schema for living according to pleasure may inform the way we think about the design and enactment of secondary school physical education today. I provide a fairly detailed outline of Epicurean philosophy to counter the idea that an application of pleasure is in some way trivial, superficial or of no ‘educative value’ in secondary school physical education.

Learning to be receptive to natural happiness

In Epicureanism, there is an extraordinary reversal of perspective. Precisely because existence seems to the Epicurean to be pure chance, inexorably unique, he greets life like a kind of miracle, a gratuitous, unexpected gift of nature, and existence for him is a wonderful celebration. (Hadot, 1999, p. 209)

The leading premise in Epicurean philosophy is that life is our highest good and what is most important to know (experience) is how to live happily. Happiness
(our sense of being blessed with Life) is our highest virtue. The humble pursuit of pleasure — *ataraxia* (‘peace of mind’), *autarkia* (‘inner freedom’) and *eudaimonia* (‘a good indwelling spirit and contentment’) — is a spiritual practice of attuning to the healthiness of the present moment.

Imagine looking down on things from high above: go for a walk at night, look up at the stars, imagine the scale of the cosmos and its multiple universes and feel the ‘voluptuous horror’ (Lucretius) of being alive. Imagine with vivid detail your own death occurring later today. Look at the ground. Stoop, pick up the soil and rub it into your skin … contemplate your common material existence and the gift of each waking dawn … the infinite value of the present instant.

Epicureanism is about overcoming existential anxiety and being free from attachment to unnecessary desires and fears. The task is to live comfortably with what is other: to accept the limitation of embodied existence and embrace the empty openness of Life with a relaxed and happy attitude. A pursuit of pleasure lends gratitude and resilience.

**A different kind of hedonism**

Epicurean philosophy is a philosophy of emptiness and philosophies of emptiness are philosophies of existence. What this means is that when Epicurus talks of life and pleasure — he does not mean for me to think only of my life: he means for me to think of *Life* (humanity and the whole of existence). We are the legacy of billions of years of evolution, interdependent beings with a fleeting opportunity to experience the pleasure of existence:
The sum of things is ever renewed and mortals live by a reciprocal dependency. Some nations wax, others wane, and in a brief space the races of living things are changed and like runners hand over the lamp of life. 

(Lucretius: Munro, Trans., 1864, p. 54)

Life is our highest good and happiness (Eudaimonia: a good indwelling spirit and blissful contentment) is what is most important to know. Epicurus recognizes that perfect happiness is unattainable but sees its pursuit as being what might make us more human. The task of being happy transcends a preoccupation with self that tends to narrow our perspective and way of being. In asking us to take up the pursuit of pleasure Epicurus asks us to pay attention to the nature of existence and realise the infinite value of being present: this breath, this person next to me, this world we are in. To ‘live like a God amongst mortals’ (an Epicurean aphorism) is to be conscious of the Whole of which we are but an infinitesimal part.

Eudaimonia (a good indwelling spirit and contentment), ataraxia, (peaceful tranquility) and autarkia (inner freedom) may sound quite obscure as educational goals and at first may be difficult to envision as ‘pillars of coherence’ (Booth, 2009) around which to construct learning . . . but what if young people were to leave each physical education lesson with such feelings? What a daily gift physical education might be!
Epicurean theory suggests that a relaxing environment may be what allows students to experience a deeper connection in physical education. It is when the mind is relaxed that the body is better able to react, respond, and move fluidly: ‘ataraxia’ (peace of mind that comes from an absence of anxiety and inner turmoil) is what allows a higher form of being present and what allows students to move ‘more freely’ thereby interiorizing the fullness of what exists around them. Thus the Epicurean ‘pursuit’ of pleasure is not about seeking pleasure but freeing one’s self from unnecessary suffering and anxiety to realise the wholeness of existence ‘the pleasure that is always there.’ It is not about self-gratification and self-indulgence but realizing what lies outside of the self. Freeing, ‘transcending’ or ‘raising the level of the self’ (Hadot, 1995, pp. 81-109) to encounter and interact with the rest of existence takes sustained daily practice and in this sense Epicurean philosophy was the exercise of living well.
This inquiry is an attempt to understand and promote the experience of pleasure (the experience of being in the body that opens a student to the world) and it strives to move away from the idea of using pleasure to teach anything else. For students to experience and learn to be receptive to pleasure and the pleasure of movement is the aim of my practice.

Epicurus was the first to suggest pleasure as a desired state of being that we can become more attuned to. Previously pleasure was thought of as a transient sensation, affecting and being limited to body parts or organs, existing in mixed and impure forms and in a hierarchy of sensations ascending to the intellectual (DeWitt, 1954, p. 216 on Plato and Aristotle). Where Plato described the absence of suffering and pain as a neutral state, Epicurus saw it as a kind of positive stasis or state of wellbeing.

Pleasure is described as ‘cognate’ (connected) and ‘connate’ (since birth and in the body), and “... of one nature with normal life ... not an appendage that may be attached or detached; it is a normal accompaniment of life in the same sense that pain and disease are abnormal” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 223). Pleasure is synonymous with the feeling of healthiness and being well: the experience of being in our bodies: the natural experience of the body that Gadamer (2007) calls a “mysterious process of unnoticed health and well-being” (p. 270). In a similar vein, Serres (2010) describes health as form of “nullity” a “silent unconsciousness” (pp. 41-42) of the body that lends capability: that allows us to think, dream and do other things. Our feeling of healthiness and of being in our
bodies (the silent pleasure of existence) is our natural constitution and property that should be protected and celebrated (upheld) by educators when living curriculum. Not to live physical education around the experience of pleasure (the feeling of freedom contained in physical movement) may prevent students from appreciating the pleasure of being healthy. To view pleasure as something we can add on or take away in activities rather than see it as a central guiding element for experience in physical education reveals a modern lack of understanding.

As children we do not question why we move, rather we trust the body, sensations, anticipations, and feelings and allow them to lead. Epicurean philosophy returns us to the educational task of trusting the body and allowing feelings to lead. This is a way of allowing students to become receptive to the pleasure of existence that is always there. Through a focus upon understanding and experiencing the pleasure of movement (freedom, joy, exultation, and delight) and exploring “what is the feeling of being and moving in physical education?” we may promote awareness of the healthy feelings contained in movement: we may promote a healthier environment. It is in this sense that attempting to understand and cultivate pleasure in secondary school physical education provides an alternative (and perhaps more moving) kind of ‘health promotion.’ Epicurus asks, in what ways we might design curriculum so that students experience the pleasure of being in their bodies and encounter the feeling of the healthiness of the moment. ‘Euphrosune’, a serene joy that comes from knowing (experiencing) health of body and peace of mind (‘mens sana en corpora sano’; Juvenal, as cited in DeWitt, 1954, p. 106), is the knowledge that a curriculum of pleasure aims to
reveal. Pleasure being a state of well-being that lends us inner freedom (autarkia) was the “major innovation in the new hedonism” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 216) of Epicurus and it formed the basis for Epicureanism becoming a way of life.

In Epicurean theory pleasure can be experienced in stillness (calm tranquility) and in movement (joy, exaltation and delight): it is both the stable (ketastematic) pleasure of existence and the transient (kinetic) pleasure of movement. Application of this philosophy prioritizes cultivating a receptiveness to the stable pleasure of existence: creating an environment that puts students at ease (one of safety, peace and goodwill) is the continuous task and skill of the educator that may be thought of as creating conditions in which students may encounter a feeling of freedom: ground in which the pleasure of movement (joy, exultation and delight) may flourish. Publishing a structure for the week that has plenty of space for movement and growth: allowing time at the start of each lesson for play, practicing relaxation skills: breathing, relaxation techniques and mental clearing, devoting one lesson a week for students to lead, and offering a wide range of activities within lessons so not everybody needs to do the same thing, may all reduce resistance to being in physical education. In this way we may begin to see how pleasure can act as a guide for curriculum and pedagogy in physical education. Epicurus helps us respond to Booth (2009) who suggests pleasure as a ‘potential pillar of coherence’ for curriculum in secondary school physical education. We may begin to think of pleasure as providing three pillars of knowledge around which to design and live curriculum: three pillars that allow learning to happen (See Figure 3).
The canon (an embodied way of knowing)

The type of learning a curriculum of pleasure elicits is based upon an embodied way of knowing. In Epicurean theory, knowing comes through embodied experience. The body is described as an ‘envelope’ and a ‘vessel’ for the soul in which sensations, anticipations and feelings move with mind that is a ‘super sensory organ’ akin to consciousness. This canon of separate interdependent criteria for knowing (body, sensations, anticipations, feelings and mind) was the invention of Epicurus, (DeWitt, 1954, pp. 121-154). In the section below I outline the way Epicurus proposed the criteria allow us to live happy lives.

In Epicurean philosophy body and soul are described as “enmeshed” and “co-sensitive” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 152) having a natural affinity with pleasure (pleasure being what sustains and moves us as human beings). Being able to intuitively reason through sensations, anticipations, feelings, and mind was seen
as a gift “fallen from heaven . . . holy palladium” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 127) providing a way of knowing peace, inner freedom and happiness. It is in this sense that Epicurus proposed a ‘rational’ pursuit of pleasure, suggesting that through the use of sensations, anticipations, feeling and thought we may manage desires and ‘choose’ to pursue that which edifies and sustains. DeWitt calls Epicurus a pragmatist and intuitionist.

*Sensations, anticipations, and feelings* (see below) are our ‘triple contact’ with reality (our criteria for knowing what is ‘true’) and are referred to in Epicurean theory, along with *mind* as the canon. The canon is what allows us to move physically, socially and spiritually towards happiness (Eudaimonia). When Epicurus talks of ‘knowing what is ‘true’’ he means not an absolute truth but what is *real* to us and moves us as human beings. Sense experience (aesthesis) is what allows us to determine what is real. This resonates with Gadamer (1984) and ‘the relevance of the beautiful’: aesthesis being what gives meaning, what strikes us as true and moves us. For Epicurus there is no other way of knowing: (“all else is vain and senseless”). How else do we make sense of any situation than through our senses?

*Sensations* are referred to as our touch and connection with the world. In Epicurean philosophy ‘sensations do not lie’ they merely register qualities (phantasia) that are recognized by a secondary, “. . . fantastic perception of the intelligence” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 140). It is the habitual mind (the lens we inherit) that may obscure and limit our understanding of events and our ability to respond: the ‘automatic mind’ that errs, not sensations. The Epicurean way to guard against
errors of the ‘automatic mind’ was by paying attention to all sensations equally, checking perceptions of events with others, “. . . attention must be paid to the immediate feelings and to the sensations in common with others in matters of common concern” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 140).

This is a de-centering of the self . . . recording events and feelings and talking over with students before going back to notes to reread and rewrite is a kind of ‘conversation’ that guides the construction and management of pleasure in curriculum. Epicurus asks that we study nature to know how to live . . . for him the ‘fantastic’ (immediate and close) encounter with combined senses (phantasia) is the ‘highest grade of evidence’, (DeWitt, 1954) - the most rich sense experience: the perception of particulars is what is most important. In particular I pay close attention (and revisit) the moments that moved me: that caught my attention. I find the relaxation, breathing and sensory awareness exercises help me attune and be receptive to what I hear, see and feel when in class.

(Weekend notes Nov., 2015)

**Anticipations:** (also called *preconceptions*) are described as ‘innate senses’ that we carry with us as a result of the accumulation of human experience: they are a legacy of being human and include notions such as justice, honesty, prudence, equity, and religion. For Epicurus anticipations represent a kind of preconditioning by Nature for survival in society. There is resonance here with Gadamer’s (1960) notion of ‘preconceptions’ and ‘prejudice’: the tradition of which we are part and cannot bracket out from the process of making meaning out of the world.

As children mature feelings of pleasure and suffering guide and naturally lead them to the forming of dispositions and it is in this sense that attempting to understand and cultivate feelings of pleasure in physical education is important. The natural inclination to avoid (and lessen) pain may have a positive effect if we
listen and respond to it in our practice as educators. By basing practice on pleasure of movement and avoiding unnecessary suffering, we may gradually reveal to students the pleasure of being present. We may reduce the perceived need to look elsewhere for pleasure! Attempting to understand the experience of students may serve as a way to help cultivate an atmosphere of acceptance and a sense of belonging that is essential for them to connect with the pleasure of movement. ‘Epicureanism,’ a term Hadot (1995) uses when referring to Epicurean philosophy, is a missionary philosophy based upon philanthropia (love of mankind) and friendship (DeWitt, 1954).

**Feelings:** That feelings guide behaviour, (‘we reach out for what is good and shy away from pain’) is not an invention of Epicurus: his invention is the ‘canon’ – that feelings work alongside sensations and anticipations and the mind/soul interdependently to guide us. Feelings become more important criteria for knowing as students mature socially. As well as attuning to sensations to know reality better, students need to trust their feelings and allow them to lead since feelings are what move them toward the habit of living happily. Embracing pleasure requires embracing (trusting) feelings and letting them be a natural guide, which takes practice.

*Mr. Train – can I sit out today? . . . I don’t feel good. “Okay,-what do you feel like doing? Do you want to help me organize some equipment, or you can watch and join in if you feel like it? You can sit out and stretch or go to the mats and lay down for a bit...*  

*(Teaching Lesson Notes)*
By listening and responding to the feelings of a student (taking their feelings seriously and allowing them to play out) I offer an emptiness for the student to encounter “… Okay - what do you feel like doing?” instead of presenting rules and standard procedures, (for example the need for a letter from the parent, a work sheet they can do for not participating), offers the student a chance to work out their feelings and to choose what they feel like doing. By not demanding a student participate in an activity I may remove the feeling of non-participation and allow her or him to remain open to the possibility of his or her feelings changing. The fundamental existential attitude in Epicurean philosophy of relaxation (Hadot, 1995) offers an experience of curriculum that invites a student to move while accepting the right to choose not to. It is a pedagogy that does not react if a student turns down the invitation to move or feels conflicted, a patient pedagogy leaving the invitation open and seeking to allow a friendly atmosphere persuade: “… never try and force . . . be happy and open . . . what’s the rush? When they see their friends playing they may change their minds and begin to move … they may smile and laugh and begin to change their feelings about being here …” (Teacher colleague dialogue). Adopting and cultivating a fundamental existential attitude of relaxation, (serenity and gratitude) (Hadot, 1995), Epicurean pedagogy may help students who do not feel part of things or who are experiencing difficulties and inner turmoil to feel accepted. This may open the door to happiness.

Happiness cannot be so much constructed as offered or invited as a potential way of being that feels good. It may be modelled or occasioned through
gesture, posture, tone of voice and body language and invited by creating conditions in which students can relax and move free from judgement. A focus upon understanding and experiencing the pleasure of movement cultivates an atmosphere that encourages young people to adopt a disposition (diathesis) towards movement and the happiness it contains. In this way an Epicurean sensibility in physical education allows students to practice ‘choosing to move’ in physical education.

**Mind:** pursuing (choosing) true (natural) pleasure requires using the canon wisely. Epicurus was the first to propose a ‘rational pursuit of pleasure’ (DeWitt, 1954) a process of becoming conscious of sensations, anticipations and feelings in order to manage desires. DeWitt (1954) highlights that the word pursuit in ancient Greek is associated with what we might call ‘choice’: the ‘rational pursuit of pleasure’ and diminution of pain involves choice. First there is a choice of adopting an overall ‘diathesis’ towards life (an enduring attitude and disposition) that influences the forming of long term aspirations and ambitions. The diathesis (existential attitude) compatible with Epicurus’ school of happiness was to be content with a simple life and free from the suffering that excessive desire causes. Second, DeWitt points to the ongoing task of choosing between immediate desires. Epicurus established three categories of interplay between desire and suffering that may inform a rational pursuit (choice) of pleasure: the interplay of natural desire and necessary pain, natural desire and unnecessary pain, and unnatural desire and unnecessary pain. “Of our desires some are natural and necessary, others are natural but not necessary; and others are neither natural nor
necessary, but are due to groundless opinion” (Inwood & Gerson, 1994 p. 34).

Attending to what is natural and necessary and being happy (blissfully content) takes practice. The basic limit to pleasure that we know as infants becomes blurred as we mature: it may become increasingly difficult to distinguish and know what is ‘natural and necessary.’ Modern culture tends to promote a pursuit of egotistical desire and the accumulation of self-esteem (‘the illusion of self-determination’) (Pfalter, 2014, pp. 214-215) not to mention material wealth instead of natural pleasure and happiness. In contrast Epicurean practice involves coming to know and live in accord with what is real, (read what sustains us as human beings) and is a humble form of hedonism. It sees a direct relationship between true (real) happiness and desires that can be satisfied. The pleasure that comes from satisfying natural desires has a limit that cannot be exceeded, which guards against the pursuit of excess.

If someone asked what my goals in life were I most likely would say the stereotypical thing like being rich and famous. But what is that possibility? What is our goals in life? What are we looking or searching for? Some people build there life around a goal in life and never succeed. Does that mean it was impossible or they just needed more guidance. All these questions I’m asking probably won’t be answered but If I make this a goals will I find them? I might never know. The more my brain goes and thinks of goals I think dumb things like eating sushi for the rest of my life or to stop time. But If I lets say were writing an essay about my own goals I would probably say. To find enlightenment. Have no care in the world. I want to have no stress and just live happily. It’s quite impossible but whats the point of a goal if you don’t try to reach them.

Anna, Grade 8

For Epicurus, pleasure (peace of mind) leads the way naturally in life: it is ‘the root of all good’ (that we all reach out for), ‘the beginning and end of a happy life’ (that we have a constant affinity with) and ‘nutriment to the soul’ (edifies our whole being). Through practice we may learn to distinguish between desires that
edify and desires that create unnecessary suffering, and we can come to know the
difference between necessary and unnecessary pain. Living curriculum through
this lens we may move closer to knowing what is natural and necessary in
physical education. Epicurean physical education questions a tradition of
pain-based physical education and an assumption that suffering is necessary (‘no
pain no gain;’ ‘what does not kill me makes me stronger’). Pleasure-based
physical education assumes that the level of pain necessary to maintain health is
low (‘what is good, read healthy, is easy to get’). Pleasure-based physical
education focuses on moving and playing for no other reason than pleasure. It
temper modern ego-driven lifestyles and ‘heroic attitudes’ of pushing through
pain. A focus upon inter-being and friendship curbs the imagination of the ego
and acts to de-structure phenomena such as over-training or over-exercising,
exercise as punishment, unrealistically high teacher expectations, comparative
testing and overly aggressive forms of play.

In today’s era of screen and self it is easy to lose touch with our bodies
and the simple pleasure of existence. Experiencing the pleasure of movement in
physical education may be necessary. In this way a sustained daily practice of
‘moving for pleasure’ (attending to sensations, anticipations and feelings and
reflecting on the experience thoughtfully) is an effortful promotion of resilience
on the behalf of an educator.
Physics: The epistemological basis for living Life according to pleasure and happiness

Epicurus’ theory of reality (physis) was known as a periodeia: a journey for exploration or tour for pleasure (DeWitt, 1954, p. 110), and was based on Democritus’ theory of atoms, with the added invention of ‘the swerve’ (declination) of the atom, underscoring the emergent and contingent nature of Life. As a material theory of existence it ‘dethrones’ Plato’s pure reason (DeWitt, 1954, p. 22), and replaces it with human intuitive reasoning: Plato’s divine laws are replaced with laws of nature and his incorporeal, eternal forms and ideas apprehensible only by a divine mind are taken away as supports for living. A scheme of knowledge based on the natural world (what Epicurus calls a ‘genuine physiology’ (DeWitt, 1954, p. 155), provides a supporting framework around which to prioritise a pursuit of happiness (Eudaimonia), peace of mind (ataraxia) and inner freedom (autarkia) in life. For Epicurus studying and knowing the interdependent and contingent nature of reality could free a person from unnecessary suffering, excessive personal desire and exaggerated fears.

It is for this that we do everything, to be free from pain and fear, and when we succeed in this, all the tempest of the soul is stilled,. . . feeling no need to go farther as to something lacking and to seek something else by which the good of soul and body shall be made perfect.

(DeWitt, 1954, p. 229; Epicurus’ Letter to Menoeicus)
We are but infinitesimal specks in an infinite universe, the message is to live free from existential anxiety and to embrace the pleasure of existence: life is brief, live with others free from worry, accept the embodied limit of pleasure and experience the infinite value of being present.

Do not fear the Gods,
Don’t worry about death,
What is good (sustenance) is easy to get
What is terrible (mortal frailty) is easy to endure

‘Twelve elementary principles’ (DeWitt, 1954, p. 112) presented a simplification of the nature of existence. Nature was described as the ‘sole creatrix’ (Munro, 1864, p. 101) and the motion of atoms (‘the first beginnings of things’) was presented as the vital force in Life. Atoms move eternally: inside all matter there is *space* that allows a vibratory movement of atoms, a creative force. *Space* is the source for all movement in Life; *space* is the source of all vitality! For this Lucretius celebrated Epicurus as an architect of happiness; Festugière (1956, p. 40) called him a ‘doctor of the spirit’, and the Platonists, Christians and Jews thought of him an abomination: *All that exists is matter and void* (!).

Epicurus’ Twelve Elementary Principles (From DeWitt, 1954 and Munro, 1854)

1. Matter is un-creatable
2. Matter is indestructible
3. Universe consists of solid bodies and void (body and soul are coterminous and co sensitive).
4. Solid bodies are either compounds or simple
5. Multitude of atoms is infinite
6. The void is infinite
Numbers 7-10 relate specifically to laws of movement
7. Atoms are always in motion (and for movement to happen there needs to be space).
8. The speed of atomic motion is uniform
9. Motion is vibratory in compounds (vibratory motion is the vital force in the organic world: the human body is an ‘envelope’ or ‘vessel
Including an outline of Epicurean schema in this dissertation emphasizes the fact that a pursuit of pleasure has a scientifically thought out basis. It also highlights that being happy has never been easy and takes effortful, sustained practice, which points to the educational value of developing a contemporary application of pleasure in today’s secondary school education.

The Swerve: Towards pleasure and the pleasure of movement

Epicurus saw the consequences of determinism (either divine law or laws of physical causation) as being a denial of a central characteristic of natural movement (contingency, unpredictability and spontaneity) and his solution was to propose a “… sufficient degree of freedom in the motion of the atoms to permit of freedom in the individual …” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 175): a declination in the movement of an atom popularly known today as ‘the swerve’. In his doctoral thesis on the difference between Democritean and Epicurean physics of motion Karl Marx saw Epicurus’s invention of the swerve as a conscious protection of human free will. According to Marx, the swerve of the atom does not appear accidentally in Epicurean physics such that it underpins a principle running through all of Epicurean philosophy: “while the atom frees itself from its relative existence, the straight line, by swerving away from it; so the entire Epicurean philosophy swerves away from the restrictive mode of being . . .” (Marx, 1841,
Part II: Chapter 1. In Epicurean philosophy the swerve away from what constrains forms the basis for all movement: “Nature is not to be coerced” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 128). “The purpose of action,” writes Marx (citing Diogenes Laertius: ‘For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear’): “… is to be found … in the swerving away from pain and confusion, in ataraxy (peace of mind).”

the mind and its freedom fend off the necessity of actions, and keep us from being determined and dominated, enduring and suffering.

(Marx, 1841, Part II: Ch. 1).

Marx describes Lucretius as the only ancient who truly understood Epicurean physics as providing a guide to human dynamics: Lucretius proposed that the swerve of atoms breaks the ‘bonds of fate’ (fati foedera) (Munro, 1854, p. 62), freeing people from social necessity. For Lucretius, when applied to human consciousness, the declination of atoms becomes “… that something in its breast that can fight back and resist …” the soul of the atom. (Marx, 1841, Part II: Ch. 1).

The beginning of motion is born from the heart, and action first commences in the will of the mind and next is transmitted to the whole body and frame. Quite different is the case when we move propelled by the strong might and strong compulsion of another…against our inclination … Do you see then, … that though an outward force often pushes us on … against our [emphasis added] will,… there is yet
something in our breast sufficient to struggle against and resist it?

(Lucretius, II: 265-285, as cited in Munro, 1864, p. 63)

Lucretius (as cited in Munro, 1864, p. 64) talks of the ‘power of free action’ and the mind being free from ‘internal necessity’ and provides an alternative lens through which to view curriculum and pedagogy in relation to the promotion of human movement. It is interesting to note that in the Epicurean school the word schoolteacher was banned due to its perceived negative association with ‘a false principle in instruction’ (coercion), (DeWitt, 1954, p. 93). For Epicurus (Vatican Saying, 21 as cited in Inwood and Gerson, 1994), “Human nature is not to be coerced but persuaded.” Epicurus believed that students could not be driven to the goal of happiness, and the title of ‘leader’ or ‘guide’ was used instead of teacher. Epicurus questions a performative mode of pedagogy that tends to prescribe and coerce movement in modern physical education (Evans & Penny, 2008) and suggests that providing an openness that invites students to move, may be more natural (read efficacious) in promoting an affinity with movement. Whitehouse (1995) in “The Tao of the Body”, writes, “something more is needed than simply body mechanics … the feelings hidden in the body, the source of all its movement, must be involved” (p. 247). For Whitehouse (1995), we gain our sense of being in the world through movement: “the core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved” (p. 243). To feel one’s body move ‘easily, freely and totally’ is what gives us our sense of being and
well-being. In Whitehouse’s opening paragraph of The Tao of the Body we hear echoes of Lucretius’s opening paragraph in ‘De Rerum Natura’:

Movement is the great law of life. Everything moves. The heavens move, the earth turns, the great tides mount the beaches of the world. The clouds march slowly across the sky, driven by a wind that stirs the trees into a dance of branches … all living creatures … have their being in movement, exist by virtue of it, show forth their nature through it…. “Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly”- And man? Whoever he is, wherever he is, he too lives in movement. His body is a world of movement in itself.

(Whitehead, 1995, p. 241)

increase giving Venus … before thee, goddess, flee the winds, the clouds of heaven,… wild herds bound over the glad pastures and swim the rapid river … Yes throughout seas and mountains and sweeping rivers and leafy homes of birds and grassy plains . . . thou art the sole mistress of the nature of things, and without thee nothing rises up into the divine borders of light, nothing grows to be glad or lovely.

(Lucretius, Munro, Trans., 1864, p. 1)

Interestingly, in relation to curriculum, research and pedagogy in physical education, Whitehouse (1995) suggests that “the sensation of moving and being moved … moments of total awareness … cannot be anticipated, explained, specifically worked upon or repeated exactly” (p. 243). As educators we can only work towards inviting the experience of moving and being moved by affording an environment in which students feel they can move easily, freely and totally. Such
an approach requires a willingness to let go of instrumental and developmental
tendencies in order to allow movement to unfold and flourish.

The pleasure of movement (joy, exultation and delight)

On page 34 of this dissertation I offered a statement describing the
pleasure of movement illustrated with a picture of my children taken in, 2012.
‘Lucretius observed that human movement is the result of free will and its
meaning is personal…’

Before a race for example there is a split second after the sound of the
starting gun when a person decides whether to race or not. One cannot make a
human race. It is the decision to move that gives a sense of freedom, a sense of
being in the movement and the exhilarating sense of being the movement.
Connection of self and world is what we feel in such moments: Epicurus talks of
inner freedom and the ‘fullness contained in pleasure.’ For children, movement is
exploration of the unknown (Smith, 2007) and it allows a journey to unfold
throughout their lives. In the following picture (six years after I began my own
educational journey exploring pleasure in this inquiry), my children have become
young people and it’s lovely to see them, running (away from me this time – the
youngest leading), out towards the massive horizon of the world: still together,
still full of enthusiasm (See Figure 4).
The pleasure of movement (described on p. 34 and iterated again here) provides an underpinning aesthetic and an alternative (more open) lens through which to conceptualize and enact curriculum in physical education. By experiencing the pleasure of movement in physical education students might experience a profound appreciation of what it means to be alive. They may feel part of the world and connected to it and each other and this may sustain and inspire them. Through this lens movement needs no other justification: experiencing and coming to relate to the pleasure of movement is more than enough: in movement students experience the interplay of existence, the wholeness of world, mind, body and soul. The pleasure of movement holds the potential to provide students with the experience of embodied fullness. Designing curriculum through this lens we might start to think of it as a structure ‘shot through with space’ (Lucretius) that invites and allows movement to evolve – space that allows for emergence. Epicurus proposes curriculum as a ‘journey for exploration’ or ‘tour for pleasure’ and I think of
expanding horizons of movement. Thinking of curriculum in this way we may start to realize it in its fuller sense of being ‘what moves us.’

A therapeutic application of pleasure: Living beyond the limits of individuality

Epicureanism arose alongside Buddhism as a way of living oriented around easing feelings of anxiety, loneliness and isolation. Both philosophies entail a process of journeying from distracted states of self-concern to more open states of awareness, arrived at through focusing upon interdependency and the ‘not self’. Where Foucault (1990) interprets Hellenist philosophy as a practice and a cultivation of self, talking of asceticism, (an ‘economy of pleasure’, ‘regimen’, ‘dietetica’ and ‘techniques of the self’), Hadot (1995) emphasises askesis as the central component of Hellenist philosophy: specific ‘spiritual exercises’ that sought to ‘raise the level of self’ to a higher plane of universal reason and cosmic consciousness. For Hadot (1995), Epicureanism cannot be defined simply as a culture of the self, a relationship of the self to self, or pleasure that can be found in one’s own self. The Epicurean was not afraid to admit that he needed other things besides himself in order to satisfy his desires and to experience pleasure. (p. 208)

Along with the need for physical nourishment and “a physical theory of the universe to eliminate the fear of the gods and of death,” Epicurus saw the human need for spiritual connection (with others and the world).

Connecting with the world through movement

Recently in a department meeting a teaching colleague of mine mentioned the value of ‘just going for a walk’ with students because “it allows them to ‘let
their guards down . . . and to begin to connect - they forget I am their teacher for a moment and we get to know each other a bit more. It’s just so great when we see each other as real people” (L. Clements, personal communication, April, 13, 2016). In this sense, prioritising pleasure and the pleasure of movement in physical education may be thought of as an attempt to temporarily dissolve the socially constructed concept of school (the student-teacher divide) and to provide an atmosphere in which students and their teacher may be more receptive to each other and the environment they are in. A curriculum constructed around pleasure presents a more open landscape (emptier of assessment criteria for example) through which students may travel, move, and play more freely. This resonates with “Greek philosophy” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 272) that recognised self-consciousness as preventing “… the giving in to the world and being open to the world that we call consciousness, knowledge or openness to experience.” In Epicurean times philosophers realised that “wonderful self-forgetfulness” allowed fuller experience and deeper kind of knowledge.

Friday was choice day and we started off with playing volleyball during the warm up. After a couple of minutes we decided to play the same passing game in a circle with one of the big balls. I absolutely loved playing this game and I don’t ever remember laughing so hard and being so carefree around others. We lost track of the time and ended passing the ball to each other for the whole gym class! It was surprisingly tiring and different from playing with a volleyball. After this, normal volleyballs seem so small and awkward.

Julienne, Grade 10

Connecting with others through friendship

In Epicureanism ‘friendship’ (providing mutual affection and support) was thought of as the ‘greatest tool’ and ‘spiritual exercise par excellence’ (Hadot,
1995) for cultivating a sense of happiness and belonging in the world: “Of all the
good things wisdom provides for life-long blessedness, the chief is the acquisition
of friendship” (Inwood & Gerson, 1994, p. 34). Friendship was an exercise to be
practiced with everyone, across all relations, a task involving a process of
admitting and sharing feelings, asking for and receiving advice, a way of
broadening one’s horizon and way of being in the world.

This makes me wonder in what ways teaching might be more pleasurable
for secondary school physical education teachers if we were to take up and
embrace the ancient concept of friendship as an educational exercise. In
Epicurean times friendship was a “phenomenon with broad space” that described
what it meant to be human (Gadamer, 2007, p. 271); it was not something to be
avoided but something already ‘there’: an unspoken part of our humanity we
inherit, that when embraced gives us a sense of solidarity (allows us to ‘go
beyond the limits of our individuality’) and enables us to be happy. For Epicurus
(following Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics) friendship provides a natural form of
justice obviating the need for rules and policies. Friendship is virtue in practice
(Farrington, 1967, p. 29), requiring honesty, consideration, suavity, and gratitude
(DeWitt, 1954, pp. 289-327). All of this makes it easy to begin envisioning how a
focus upon cultivating friendship might enrich the experience of physical
education. We might begin to think of various ways of practicing friendship,
setting up buddy systems for example to help students persevere with exercise, or
to reduce anxieties around being and moving in physical education. Rather than
using friendship to achieve extrinsic goals however, we might think of friendship
as an exercise and end in itself. Friendship might be valued as an exercise that yields inner harmony.

| I really enjoy playing these casual games of badminton because it allows you to learn and develop on a sport, while comfortably hanging out with your friends. By being with my friends and not feeling uncomfortable, I believe that I actually learn more and have fun which has a larger impact. |
| Emily, Grade 10 |

| An activity that was memorable to me was on Friday when we were able to play whatever we wanted and a bunch of my friends and I got out the big red ball and played volleyball! I thought it was really fun and I definitely got a work out playing it. I was with all my best friends and I think my most memorable part of it was that I was energetic while playing it and that led me to feel good about my work out and happy. |
| Penny, Grade 10 |

Epicurus saw that true philosophy (the practice of living happily) spreads contagiously via small groups and that outside of friendship, philosophy (educational practice) may quickly become propaganda. Modern research affirms that happiness spreads through social relations: contagious ‘outbreaks’ of happiness occurring to the extent that whole villages have been witnessed laughing together. Christakis and Fowler (2009) describe happiness flourishing as a ‘spread of goodness’, which resonates with the Epicurean notion of pleasure and happiness (eudaimonia) being humanity’s telos and highest good. Although it may sound strange, the idea of friendship being an exercise may be what students relate to and embrace naturally when living curriculum in secondary school physical education. Friendship provides a focus that may be ‘most healing’: an exercise or ‘way’ for all (students and teachers) to relate and find belonging in the world.

In a curriculum responsive to feelings, there is an emphasis on the importance of creating conditions that allow friendship to flourish. Teachers may
focus on the task of being happy, relaxing, (not being preoccupied with quantitative ends), and cultivating a playful supportive atmosphere that relates to the feelings of students. In an effortful cultivation of pleasure, friendship is “…too precious …to be left to the hazards of chance … a certain agreeableness of speech and manners’ is essential …” on the behalf of the educator. “‘Wear a smile’ Epicurus recommended” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 311). This may be easier for teachers who are not overwhelmed by a pressure to provide evidence of learning to their superiors and others who look in from outside the classroom. In a more relaxed curriculum and open schooling system an educator might focus more clearly on the difficult and time consuming task of understanding experience and fostering friendship and happiness, which may in turn create a more engaging and meaningful curriculum for students.

Knowing how to live towards happiness is knowledge that is ever in flux: knowledge that may not so much be gained or used as engaged with in practice and it is in this sense that it may be a central and edifying part of teaching. In hermeneutic inquiry, ongoing interpretation and application of “the complex fabric of life together”, (Jardine, McCaffrey & Gilham, 2014, p. 9), (hermeneutic practice) allows me to continue attempting to live curriculum according to pleasure: to dwell in and attune to the deeply convivial nature of living curriculum. I am absorbed by the task of actively investigating what the pleasure of secondary school physical education is. “Philosophy as a way of life and a mode of being in the world practiced at each instant that may transform” (Hadot,
1995, pp. 264-275) captures the nature of my inquiry: a philosophical (Epicurean) hermeneutic inquiry into the experience of secondary school physical education.

An Emerging Epicurean Sensibility (Ethos) for Living Curriculum

From Epicurus I take an emerging ethos into my practice as a teacher: to take responsibility for happiness, to prioritize friendship and to adopt and promote a fundamental existential attitude of playful relaxation that swerves away from suffering (upholding the ethic not to suffer or cause suffering): I assume that any necessary level of pain in physical education is low, (‘what is good (healthy) is easy to attain’): I prioritise the embodied experience of movement and cultivate a hermeneutic practice of understanding that leads the way we live curriculum. Living in the present moment of curriculum takes precedence as experiencing the healthiness of each moment is important. Space as a medium in which all movement happens and ‘creation of space for movement’ is a metaphor that guides and expands my thinking about what I do as a teacher of physical education.
In this section I begin to explore what a philosophy of emptiness is and ways that the ancient concept of ‘emptiness’ may help educators today start to envision the value of pleasure in secondary school physical education. I reframe curriculum around the concept of pleasure. A philosophy of emptiness (like Epicurean philosophy) differs from philosophies of substance in that it accepts the interdependent, contingent and transient nature of life: it seeks to teach students to live with uncertainty - part of the whole, rather than spending a lifetime trying to reduce and in some way conquer it. Epicurus suggests that Life and happiness cannot be conquered but only experienced.

Since I began exploring pleasure as an orientation for my practice in secondary school physical education (Train, 2012), I have regularly caught myself trying to define, construct, and or use ‘it’ in a desire to promote movement. Watson’s understanding of Epicurean philosophy being a practice of emptiness challenges me to ‘let go’ of this inclination and focus instead on the task of understanding the experience of physical education. Pleasure is less a thing we might grasp, utilise or explain (or ‘construct and manage’ (Pringle, 2010)), and more something already ‘there’ in the play of existence that through practice we may experience and become aware of and receptive to.
The ‘emptiness’ of pleasure as a phenomenon is what makes it different, difficult and potentially transformational as a concept around which to theorise and enact curriculum in physical education: pleasure being an absence (of anxiety and suffering), space being the medium for all movement and source of vitality, and the pleasure of movement being contingent, ephemeral and indefinable. A practice (cultivation) of pleasure is based on attempting to understand and respond to experience which is always unfolding. Exploring Epicurean philosophy as ‘a philosophy of emptiness’ (Watson, 2014) whilst helping lay theoretical grounds for creating conditions in which students may experience pleasure and happiness in physical education, may also help guard against ‘dogmatic’ forms of practice. Hadot (1995) asserts that all Hellenist schools of philosophy were based around doctrine and dogma. DeWitt (1954) describes the original Epicurean school as containing a hierarchy of ranks and titles with ‘Epicurus the Sage’ at the top of a pyramid, the Hegemon (leader and guide) of his disciples. Life within the school was ‘a progress towards wisdom by stages’ organised around a ‘pyramid of reverence . . . with each grade of disciples looking up with due respect to the smaller numbers in the grades above.” The ultimate goal was a kind of perfection and learning, a process of acquisition requiring patience and obedience: DeWitt (1954, p. 100) cites Horace, “Are you willing to learn, to listen and to trust a better man?” In contrast, Watson (2014, p. 168) proposes Epicurean philosophy as a philosophy of emptiness and affirms any application of emptiness as being “anti-dogmatic, a central path, always taking the middle way between presence and absence, always upsetting dualities.” In this
way the concept of emptiness may help expand our understanding of Epicurean philosophy and its educational value.

For practitioners of ‘emptiness’ the task is to overcome a ‘most pervasive’ myth that reality is made up of substance: “people normally cut reality into compartments, and so are unable to see the interdependence of all phenomena” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 48). It is for this reason that I attempt to relax the theoretical underpinnings of curriculum in this dissertation, relaxing (broadening) the constructs self, health, and sport that tend to constrain thinking and practice in physical education. The risk of learning in secondary school physical education to adhere in life, for example to the myth of ‘self’ existing as an independent entity in and for itself, is that students may become ‘self-enclosed’, isolated from the world they are in: cut off from the simple pleasure of existence. A narrow view of self in education may lead to a pursuit of self-esteem and unwittingly create or contribute to suffering. It is through the embodied experience of moving for pleasure in physical education that a student may begin to realise an, “intimate connection with world” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 47). An orientation around the concept of emptiness may allow connections and ‘relational physical education’ to take root. Watson (2014, p. 175) describes practices of emptiness such as Epicurean philosophy as ‘therapeutic’ in that they free students from the myth of substance and reveal the wholeness of existence, citing Einstein to capture from a ‘western perspective of scientific indeterminism’ the concept of universal or cosmic consciousness that was central to practices of emptiness such as Epicureanism:
A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

(Einstein, as cited in Watson, 2014, p. 175)

As intimated above, Watson’s description of ‘emptiness’ serves to expand my thinking and application of Epicurean philosophy in this inquiry: it lends a sensibility that may guide the design and enactment of curriculum. Watson (2014) suggests that ‘developing a contemporary therapeutic application of emptiness’ (such as Epicurean physical education) may be a way of making a contribution to my field. In modern (western) culture knowledge of how to apply ‘emptiness’ (read pleasure) is limited: Watson (2014) describes a knowledge that is theoretical and descriptive rather than practical and prescriptive. “While descriptions of emptiness are common in contemporary science, the implication of this new knowledge for ethics, education, child rearing and the normal business of daily life are as yet seldom explored in depth” (p. 106).

What is ‘Emptiness’?

Emptiness is not a lack or deficiency but a defining characteristic of reality that is empty of any substance that exists separately by itself. Reality is always interdependent, contingent, somewhat ineffable, and always in flux. This idea of
emptiness (or rather wholeness) resonates with the Epicurean idea of a contingent and interdependent universe. It harmonises with the idea of space being what allows movement to happen: “everything is riddled with emptiness”: “if there were no emptiness nothing could move” (Lucretius, as cited in Watson, 2014, p. 97). For Epicurus space (openness) is what allows all movement, experience and knowing to occur and it is what may allow positive emergence to happen when living curriculum, which may serve as a cautionary note for those designing, filling and covering curriculum. In a curriculum emptier of goals based upon ideal forms of movement, there is more opportunity for students to experience the feeling of moving ‘freely.’ A curriculum emptier of criteria for ‘correct’ movement may diffuse performance anxiety and allow a student to relax and experience the pleasure of movement in physical education.

‘Emptiness’ holds the interconnectedness of everything and prevents us from attempting to measure anything as if it were an independent entity existing in and for itself. From this perspective, Epicurean philosophy holds the potential to dispel dominant philosophies of substance, presence and self that have gained momentum in the West since Descartes: (“a substance is that which requires nothing except itself in order to exist” [Jardine, 2012, p. 48 citing Descartes, 1640/1955 p. 255]). Watson (2014) uses the word ‘openness’ to help us begin imagining a ‘contemporary application of emptiness’ in secondary school physical education. She describes philosophies of emptiness (Epicurean, Stoic, Skeptic, Buddhist, and Taoist) as orientations that provide potential “. . . doorways . . . to different deeper understanding of a way to live with contingency
. . . free from strictures and structures of certainty and orthodoxy.” Philosophies of emptiness offer the basis for developing meaningful ways of living with and describing the ways we live with interdependency, contingency, ineffability (or indefinability) and the ‘not-self’ and they are based upon experience and awareness.

Experience

A shift away from a philosophy of substance and the idea of reality being made up of fixed entities, eternal and perfect forms that can be theorised, modelled and learned, may allow an educator to focus more clearly upon experience. In practice the task of attending to the flow of experience in physical education presents the “ultimate impossibility of certainty and totality” and reveals curriculum as a living “web of immanent relationship” (Watson, 2014, pp. 179-180). From this perspective curriculum only exists when it is happening: it has the quality of an event that students and their teacher experience and may begin to understand. Attempting to understand is a continual and shared hermeneutic task that may provide:

… a way, a path to well-being and to living in accordance with the best understanding of reality we can achieve. It is a knowledge … realized in an embodied and emotional fashion, as well as intellectual one, … a philosophy of emptiness unfolds through feelings of emptiness that may be experienced either with confusion or ultimately with clarity. The task is to face up to the inevitable contingency of life without being paralysed by fear or uncertainty … open to both lack of certainty and
the freedom that an understanding of emptiness provides. (Watson, 2014, p. 168)

Through this embodied hermeneutic process I have come to experience being part of the milieu. My role has become more participatory. I experience the feelings of being in a lesson . . . being in a pair, or in a group: while a student leads the warm up I feel various aches and pains in my body and experience being and moving in physical education with others: this helps me relate more closely to the perspective of a student and the context in which physical education plays out ... – it is part of understanding what is happening and being understanding ...

(Weekend notes May 3, 2015)

In an Epicurean hermeneutic inquiry the process of making meaning (experiencing and interpreting events and thoughtfully responding) is what may be educational. It is the process of attempting to understand experience (that is shared, ongoing and never complete), that may be transformational. While the experience of students in physical education can never be fully understood, I have come to think of attempting to understand the experience of physical education as providing a relational keel for living curriculum. In a curriculum led by a process of understanding and affording the experience of pleasure, relationships begin to lead the way. An application of emptiness conducive to the emergence of pleasure raises questions over ways we promote physical movement in schools. It asks, for example, what the consequences may be for students who move in a system that rewards (quantifies) certain ways of moving. Watson (2014) intimates that when students start to think of themselves in a certain way based upon “labels given to them by others, they are trapped in a straightjacket that may prove constricting” (p. 115). This makes me wonder about the ways standardised secondary school physical education curriculum may constrain the movements of students: what
might be the consequence of always being instructed how to move (not being allowed to move without instruction)? How many students leave thinking that they are not able, athletic or skilled at moving, and how might this influence their movement in Life?

| Personally, I feel like most of the “pain” of PE is mental. The way that people feel about themselves can affect their enthusiasm and level of participation… some kids … go through their high school life or even their adulthood with a poor body image. Being self-conscious can make activities and exercises uncomfortable for them. I think my gym class was very good at accepting people and cheering everyone on.  

Debbie, Grade 9 |

Watson makes me wonder if a more open curriculum focused upon understanding experience may be more enabling for students than a curriculum underpinned by a philosophy of substance that focusses on achieving prescribed outcomes. In what ways might an emptier curriculum provide some form of ‘relief’ for everyone? Are we able to think of an emptier curriculum as being potentially transformational in physical education or is it necessary to continue explaining ourselves and what we do using Western society’s dominant language of substance, presence, purpose and learning? While a focus upon space, openness and freedom in the design and enactment of curriculum may sound too open, most educators will acknowledge that an overemphasis upon assessment can inhibit movement in physical education. An emptier lens may open up different ways of envisioning and enacting physical education. Watson (2014) asks me to give up an epistemological justification of movement for physical educators to instead explore a ‘mindful’ approach to understanding the experience of it. “Attempting to understand how pleasures (and displeasures) are socially constructed and
effectively managed in PE” (Pringle, 2010, p. 119), returns me to the philosophical task of learning how to live according to embodied experience that inspired Epicurus. Such practice requires a willingness to live curriculum responsively. Attending to experience emphasises the intrinsically rewarding practice of being aware, open and receptive to the feelings: it emphasises physical education as a practice of ‘embodied mindfulness’.

Awareness

If we are really engaged in mindfulness while walking along the path . . . then we will consider the act of each step we take as an infinite wonder, and a joy will open our hearts like a flower, enabling us to enter the world of reality . . . existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality . . . the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black curious eyes of a child – our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 12)

Slowing down and paying attention to the experience of being and moving in physical education may be thought of as awakening awareness. As a focus it counters the dominant educational reflex (Tröhler, 2012) to enact curriculum instrumentally. Attuning to pleasure that is contained in movement (sensations and feelings) is a deeper kind of learning that requires more time and patience. A practice of cultivating awareness of the embodied experience of movement checks the modern practice of reducing curriculum into units of work to be learned, (a
phenomenon referred to by Jardine (2012) as ‘fragmentation’ of curriculum), and returns us to Epicurus’ idea of curriculum being a more leisurely “journey for exploration” or “tour for pleasure” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 110). Cultivating awareness of sensations, anticipations and feelings in physical education may be thought of as an embodied practice of mindfulness: “keeping consciousness alive to the present reality” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 11).

In a school where Wi-Fi has no boundaries, posters on the gym and changing room walls say, ‘Phone Free Zone – no buds bud! I give an extra three minutes at the end of each lesson for students to sit and do nothing, to ‘catch their breath’ before going to their next lesson and notice that in this ‘emptiness’ students are tempted to turn to their phones instead of their neighbours. I encourage them to leave their phones in their lockers but they don’t want to be apart from them. Amid this apparent sea of distraction, Epicurean physical education attempts to offer an encounter with emptiness:

Twenty six Grade 10 secondary school students relax for, 20 minutes. They practice a silent reading of their own bodies, paying attention to their sensory perceptions, attuning to the feeling of being in their body and the simple pleasure of existence. Whilst laying on the floor of the school gymnasium with the lights out they attend to what they can hear, see and feel: the sounds of the building they are in, the air conditioning, footsteps, a clock ticking, their breathing, their body moving against the floor, the lights hanging from the ceiling, errant balls stuck high up in the rafters, a door opens, muffled voices…laughter – silence, stillness, the sound of someone snoring softly. We do this once a week. Last Tuesday laying down in the centre of the gymnasium I could hear birds singing outside. The, 20 minute relaxation is ended by a reading of daily announcements over the PA “Good Morning Mountain-view Secondary…” After the announcements the students stretch and slowly get up off the floor, keeping their eyes closed they are asked to see if they can make their way to the changing rooms. (See Figure 5)
I never really lie on my back unless I am going to sleep. Even then, when I sleep, I am generally tired and only thinking about having a good sleep. This opportunity to lie down comfortably and loosely think about what you have been doing is a very good practice. It is a very good time to sort out your mind whilst not trying to pay attention to anybody. Me personally, I just like to do some plain deep in and out breathing, while covering my eyes to make my eyes dark and relax from then on.

David, Grade 10

Embodied mindfulness: A ‘precious resource for education’

Watson suggests such practice may provide ‘a precious resource for education in that good habits of attention (attuning to sensations of wellbeing) may counter toxic levels of attention deficit, stress and anxiety that our modern ‘entertainment culture’ encourages” (Watson, 2014, p. 172). Metzinger (as cited in Watson, 2014) outlines a modern ‘problem in the management of attention’: where students’ ability to control and sustain their focus of attention that provides
“one of the deepest layers of phenomenal selfhood” (p. 118) is increasingly endangered. Metzinger (Watson, 2014) sees a “media environment of contemporary culture as not only an organized attack on the space of consciousness . . . but a mild form of depersonalization.” He suggests a need to provide young people with opportunities in physical education “to learn techniques to enhance mindfulness and the sustaining of attention” (p. 118). Devoting time for such practice requires a willingness on the teacher’s behalf to ‘slowdown’ and ‘relax’ in order practice paying attention to embodied sensations, anticipations and feelings. The simple act of breathing is something we tend to take for granted and overlook in physical education but practicing breathing may have quite an effect not only for students suffering from asthma or respiratory problems, it is an exercise that may improve mind and body, an exercise that may raise our collective capacity to en-joy (experience the pleasure of being and moving together in physical education). Practicing breathing may help students in physical education who feel that they do not fit in, those who get laughed at by their peers when they fall over or make a mistake, those who overhear others calling them ‘fat’ and ‘ugly,’ or those who suffer from anxiety about getting changed with their peers. In what ways might we allow students in physical education classes to begin to breathe easily (be less anxious) so that they can feel the simple pleasure of being?

Breathe provides a fragile piece of thread . . . the bridge from our body to our mind, the element that reconciles our body and mind and which makes possible oneness of body and mind . . . it alone . . . can bring them both together,
illuminating both and bringing both peace and calm. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 222)

A weekly breathing exercise while at first feeling slightly strange (different) to many students and feeling difficult to incorporate in a lesson may help cultivate a more relaxed and caring atmosphere. A variety of simple breathing exercises (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 22) seems, over time, to help some students cultivate a relaxed awareness of being in their bodies and the world. Just this week when I was feeling like not teaching ‘relaxation’ because some students were being resistant to it, one student affirmed my belief in the value of a weekly practice: are we doing the relaxation Mr. Train? - I just wanted to say the relaxation exercises are good. I find they help. I have started doing them in the morning before I come to school – and it helps me concentrate.

(Lesson Notes April, 10, 2018)

I very much enjoy when we have relaxation on Thursdays. It gives me a chance to wind down and not have to think about anything. It also helps me to loosen up my muscles and relax my body. It is something different then what we are used to too. We don't get to experience this in any other class.

Today, instead of doing our normal meditation we went on a trail run. It seemed to work just as well as most people stayed quiet and you just focused on the nature around you. You didn't have to think about what you have to do later, about school, or anything that may have been causing you stress.

Kate, Grade 10

We all come to school needing some kind of help, some kind of relaxation or escape from the strain of everyday life. Regular practice of breathing, relaxation and mental clearing exercises may help nurture awareness of emotions contained within the body that ‘push and pull’ thereby helping students attain a sense of inner freedom. In what ways might we help students become aware of and free from emotions they experience in physical education that may be unnecessarily constraining their movement? In an attempt to help students become more aware of feelings related to movement in physical education in this inquiry I asked
students to describe their experience of physical education: I asked them to briefly describe events and activities and their feelings.

Journaling on the experience of physical education was something new for students in this inquiry and finding a way for them to journal that could inform and guide curriculum and pedagogy was (and still is) an emergent process. Not all students participated in the journaling and some expressed a preference for being physically active.

I like doing the breathing exercises and writing things because it helps me relax, focus, become a better person/friend, and think about what I’m doing and how my actions might affect others and their well being. Although this is making PE class more fun, I think there should be a class or something to do this because it is taking time away from our P.E classes.

Sarah, Grade 8

It’s kind of boring and easy to forget . . . I always put my other homework before this . . .

Randy, Grade 10

Journaling is hard! I have a memory of a goldfish so I always forget to do them . . .

Vanessa, Grade 10

It appeared that from many students’ perspectives the value of physical education lay in the feeling contained in movement and the feeling of being free to move without any explanation or justification or any written words! The value of physical education for many students is embodied and somewhat ineffable. This brings about an interesting tension during inquiry, between trying to understand the experience and feelings of students while at the same time allowing them to feel that they can move freely, without having to explain themselves. In what ways might I encourage reflection through journaling without making it a chore or
requirement? I encouraged students to write in this inquiry in the belief that the process might stimulate conversation with their peers and provide a sense of support, community and solidarity: I encouraged journaling as a way of cultivating what Epicurus might think of as ‘universality’ and ‘friendship’. With the Grade 8s I put the journals on the floor during silent reading for any who wanted to write about any events in physical education: “Can we draw…?” asked one, “…yes – you can draw about what happened; pick an event that stands out for you, describe your experience and your feelings. This is for you to begin to understand your feelings: you do not need to share your journal with me but if you want to it might help me understand and plan lessons.” With the Grade 9s conversation between students and myself emerged to expand my understanding and inform my practice and in an attempt to make journaling easy for the Grade 10s I used electronic software so that they could post reflections from their phones. Posts were confidential (readable only by me) and helped open up conversation around the students’ experience of physical education. The aim of inviting a conversation around the experience of physical education was not only to expand my understanding but to raise students’ level of awareness. Raising awareness of feelings that circulate around being and moving in physical education may have a powerful effect in that, “If in one class, one student lives in mindfulness, the entire class is influenced” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008, p. 64).

I don’t really enjoy the whole journaling thing. although I can see where I could help you understand what everyone is thinking as some people might not speak up in class if they are not enjoying something. and through this website you can make class more inclusive and enjoyable for those people.

Brad, Grade 10
Journalling is a little weird for me. I’m not used to writing my feelings down like this. I find it difficult to put some of it into words, so I try to make the entries short so I can get the main points across and not ramble on for too long. I think that it has become easier for me to write this kind of stuff since you have had us start journaling.

Penny, Grade 10
Two Steps in Developing a Contemporary Application of Pleasure in Secondary School Physical Education

Watson (2014) suggests there are two steps in developing a contemporary therapeutic practice of emptiness such as Epicurean philosophy in secondary school physical education: first, a step of deconstructing or ‘emptying’ which I think of in this inquiry as ‘relaxing curriculum’ (broadening the way we view constructs that define curriculum) and, second, a step of living with and maintaining the emptiness a more relaxed curriculum provides, which I think of in this inquiry as courageous pedagogy.

Step One: Relaxing Curriculum

As a basis for allowing pleasure to emerge and lead the way I relax (broaden) the theoretical constructs of Self, Health and Sport that dominate the design, implementation and experience of secondary school physical and health education (PHE). Watson warns that creating a more relaxed (open) framework may provoke a feeling of loss, followed by an emotional reaction to want to ‘fill the emptiness’ or in this case to fill the curriculum. This is something I experience as a practitioner attempting to move away from a practice based on quantifiable and/or prescribed outcomes. In modern society there is a pervasive ‘educational reflex’ to cling to a system that promises results (Tröhler, 2012) and in schools there is an unspoken ‘pedagogical contract’ (Too, 2000) that anticipates curriculum to be a well laid out path: teachers leading the way, designing and implementing curriculum around short term measurable outcomes, providing units of work, assessment criteria, and rubrics for achievement. This is part of the
tradition of schooling where curriculum is a thing of substance (a pathway) and learning is a form of progress that can be measured. Although agreeable to many as a general orientation, pleasure may not be fully understood as a construct around which to design and enact curriculum in secondary schools. It may appear too open and in this sense any casual or superficial application of pleasure has the potential to create anxiety. It is for this reason that in this dissertation I take the step of re-theorising (or de-theorising’) physical education around pleasure (pleasure being a phenomenon of emptiness). I attempt to create a relaxed framework to enable and guide the task of living curriculum in secondary school physical education around pleasure. I use the idea of a ‘relaxed framework’ inspired by curriculum theorist MacDonald (1995) who proposed an ‘open framework’ for curriculum theorising as an alternative to closed systems that are based on input/output algorithms. The primacy of ‘aesthetic rationality’ (our ability as educators to cope intuitively when living curriculum), proposed by MacDonald, and Herbert Marcuse before him, complements a pursuit of pleasure and happiness in physical education. It resonates with Epicurus’ ‘rational’ pursuit of pleasure which was practical and intuitive (DeWitt, 1954). Initiating the idea of a more relaxed, Epicurean framework for theorising and enacting curriculum in physical education is not an attempt to create a system or model around which to engineer pleasure and happiness but to provide a basis for educators interested in exploring ways that pleasure may guide research, curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education.
Step Two: Courageous Pedagogy

‘Relaxing curriculum’ (broadening the concepts of Self, Health and Sport) is meant to diffuse the instrumental and developmental lens and allow a practitioner to work towards creating and maintaining a more open landscape for students to move in. This places emphasis on responsive pedagogy that resonates with David Smith’s notion of pedagogy being a hermeneutic practice of understanding and responding to the uncertain context of living curriculum. “Hermeneutics is sometimes called ‘the philosophy of the middle way’ . . . it takes up its work right in the middle of things . . . does not seek pure ground, or . . . some place of objectivity from which to view and analyse people or situations…the hermeneutic voice attempts to speak always from the centre of action” (Smith, 1999, p. 45). Epicurean Hermeneutic Pedagogy attempts to understand experience and respond in ways that afford pleasure: it sees curriculum as a living thing always in flow; a river that continually needs to be read and navigated. Pedagogy responds to the emotional current of curriculum and steers a path responsively. This is different than following a well laid out path: it requires finding a way. The hermeneutic orientation of keeping open the question of what the experience of physical education is, through actively participating, making notes on events and feelings, sharing perspectives with students, reading and re writing notes and planning accordingly to maintain a sense of openness, is a practice of cultivating and being led by a genuine conversation around pleasure (peace of mind, inner freedom, contentment, joy and delight). This resonates with Schön (2016) who talks of artful inquiry into
situations that contain “uncertainty, instability and uniqueness…a pattern of reflection-in-action …” which he calls a “reflective conversation with the setting” (p. 268). Keeping curriculum open, (presenting curriculum as an ‘empty path’ to students) requires a delicate skill akin to balancing on “. . . a knife’s edge between is and is not, between positive and negative, realism and nihilism” (Watson, 2014, p. 176). Practitioners of emptiness are described by Watson (2014) as “agents of uncertainty” who “must look to their footwork as dancers in space and language.” (p. 176). In an application of emptiness I must adopt a “middle way”: journeying in my thought and practice between presence and absence, embracing contingency, indeterminacy, and lack of essence. Maintaining openness is a courageous way of living curriculum. It requires me to be aware of my preconceptions and expectations: to become aware of my ego-centric habits that may unnecessarily reduce the experience of movement.

**Developing courageous compassion**

Buddhism expands an Epicurean ethic of living with others in mind to living for others, proposing living for the other as the criterion for achieving Enlightenment or Eudaimonia. Courageous compassion, (Rinchen, 2001) is central to the success of any application of emptiness. In an application of pleasure it is “. . . the motivation with which we practice that [emphasis added] determines the outcome . . .” (Rinchen, 2001, p. 9). Any attempt to cultivate happiness in physical education requires overcoming self-concern on the part of the practitioner and “to overcome self-concern we need to develop heartfelt concern for others . . . to rid ourselves of misconceptions, which distort our
perception of how things exist, we need the correct understanding of reality supported by this spirit of enlightenment” (Rinchen, 2001, p. 7). In the field of secondary school physical education, we need to overcome any fear of not being taken seriously when we talk of the educational value of pleasure and happiness. An expansive application of pleasure asks the educator to attempt to understand the experience of physical education from the perspective of students: it requires the physical educator to be aware of and resist any self-centred motives, values and beliefs and to be aware of the habitual egocentric lens. As a physical education teacher in pursuit of pleasure I need to commit to the task of understanding and being led by sensations, feelings and thoughts of students when living curriculum. Such an open pursuit may be sustained by ‘courageous compassion’ and the motive to make the experience of physical education and life in school pleasurable for all.

An application of pleasure prioritises cultivating the kind of space students need for movement, experience and awareness to flourish. It is different in that it requires me as an educator to cultivate an environment in which students may encounter and respond to an invitation to move led by their sensations, anticipations and feelings, and thoughts. One might think of curriculum appearing to students as the surface of a lake inviting them to ‘dive in’ and pedagogy as ‘creating the conditions’ (the clear invite of the lake) through a sensitivity and presence of mind to wait, stand back and allow students to choose to move.

An Epicurean sensibility moves away from the Platonic idea of pedagogy leading generations of young people toward an adult form of life (paideia) and
towards the idea of pedagogy being a playful participatory act: a ‘taking part’ in the intergenerational experience of moving happily together: a celebration of Life. DeWitt (1954, p. 106) asserts that Epicurus was concerned with creating happy and content (not only moral) citizens. Epicurean physical education asks how secondary school students may learn to stay childlike in their way of being and moving. In what ways might they be inspired by moving for pleasure? Epicurean physical education does not embrace models that align teaching with prescribed learning outcomes as it is not overly concerned with training students to move in certain adult ways. Relaxing the technical, political and scientific rationale for Physical Health Education is a compassionate act based upon a “. . . gentle wisdom – that accepts the insubstantial nature of the world without denigrating it, . . . an application of emptiness [emphasis added] affirms primacy of space in which the creative act occurs” (Watson, 2014, p. 181). In a practice concerned with the feelings of students in physical education, Watson affirms that emptiness may provide:

A guiding thread to living curriculum [emphasis added] that – rather than meeting contingency with theoretical necessity . . . brings us back to life as it is lived; to experience freed form essence and definition – clear sighted openness to experience . . . lived with attention. (Watson, 2014, p. 178)

In this second half of my dissertation the two steps of emptying (relaxing curriculum) and living with emptiness (courageous pedagogy) are interwoven to provide an idea of what a contemporary application of pleasure in secondary school physical education may look and feel like. An Epicurean sensibility expands the technical, political and scientific rationale to include the ethical and aesthetic value contained in Physical Health Education. The concepts of Self, Heath and Sport that dominate curriculum design and enactment are relaxed (broadened to lend a deeper more human meaning); Epicurean physical education moves away from mastering (read constructing) an individuated sense of Self to focus instead on allowing students to experience and practice ‘inter–being’ and friendship. It moves away from pursuing scientifically defined Health outcomes towards allowing students to ‘move for pleasure’ (peace of mind, inner freedom, good spirit, joy, exultation, and delight) and, through a relaxation of the concept of Sport it returns students and their teacher to the broader idea of play and a playful enactment of curriculum. Is it possible for such a relaxation of curriculum to allow a deeper form of learning to happen? In what ways might this more open framework provide a basis for understanding the educative agenda of moving for pleasure? In what ways might it help us move away from talking about
‘constructing and managing’ pleasure (Pringle, 2010) to understanding experience and cultivating awareness and receptivity to pleasure (Watson, 2014)?

STRANGER, YOU WILL DO WELL TO TARRY HERE
WHERE PLEASURE IS OUR HIGHEST GOOD:

Stories of Practice

Can teaching be this kind of simple architecture? Allowing space for young people to move and experience the pleasure of movement is not as easy as it sounds. I can never fully know the experiences of students I am teaching. What they say to each other is different from what they say to me: what they say under their breath to each other may be helpful or hurtful. Every day is different. Sometimes I get things wrong and ‘am not the person I want to be’. In what ways might physical education provide the kind of space that truly invites and supports movement?

Here I report on an emergent moment in my inquiry where I began asking students about our ways of being together in physical education. I did not know I was doing it at the time – I was more ‘wondering out loud.’ Huebner (2008) suggests that when we stop being preoccupied with learning we can start becoming more aware of our ways of being with students and start adopting ways that may be more educational.

Wordplay

In the middle of Grade 8 physical education yesterday I invited the class into the gym office to look at my little white board. This was unplanned. We had been
working with feelings of movement: exercises for breathing, relaxing, mental clearing, exaggerating posture, and gesture - generally playing with movement and exploring how different ways of moving changed the way we felt. After exploring feelings of movement, I wanted to ask in what ways the feeling and experience of movement in physical education might be more pleasurable.

-“…follow me everyone - come on in – can everyone fit in here?!!”

This was the first time a whole class had ever been into the office for there is not enough space. I could sense my teaching colleague in the gymnasium with his class peering over at us crammed into the office…

Being in the small room emphasised the task of sharing space together in curriculum and the need we each have for enough space to move and grow.

-“…Wow Mr. Train…! you have your own bathroom … and a shower … cool!” –
- “Yeah … welcome to my world,… Look!! – I said … sometimes I write down ideas on this little board – Can you see? – can anyone read my handwriting?! Can someone read what it says?

Joanne tentatively read my notes from the board:

“… imagine that the point of school is to be a better person. What would we do in PE? How do I do this? How do I measure it? Can we do this?? … maybe give a list of words …. ask them to choose a word? – An action word for being a better person in PE – a word that you want to be in this and the next lesson? What might be a good word to be in PE. . . ?”

We filtered out of the office and students began to think of their words. During the lesson whilst playing a game they came to me individually, each telling me their word and talking a bit about it before going back to play. The words they chose for themselves were ‘cheerful, enthusiastic, kind, understanding, cooperative, happy, funny, positive, team/togetherness, energised, energetic, cheerful, and encouraging.’

About five minutes after the lesson a student came back to the gym and asked if she could change her word; from cooperative to understanding because understanding was more challenging, and we started an interesting discussion. Then later during recess, Luca, a senior student who acts as a peer tutor in grade 8 PE, stopped me in the hallway – “… Hey Mr. Train I have thought of my word… it’s encouraging – what is yours? Have you thought of your word?”

In the next lesson I tell the class I cannot make my mind up which word to be and ask for their help, ‘…could you give me some ideas? …I can’t decide. Do you know what word I might be to be a better person in PE? What word might I be to make your experience of physical education more pleasurable? If you all write one word each I’ll get lots of ideas …” They wrote their words privately and handed them in on folded pieces of paper.

Later that day …when I came to unfold the pieces of paper I felt a mix of apprehension and intrigue: What did they write? What do they want me to be? What might this reveal about my current way of being with them? As a class they wanted me to be confident, participation, helpful, cheerful, educational, patient, joyful, open minded, cheerful, empowering, easy, fun, motivational, enthusiastic (like when you talk to us), happy, energized, team,
accepting (not saying no to anything), creative, control, relaxed, nice, and team/together.

… Look! – I say reading out the words they have given me… to be a better person in PE. If I try and be these words will it be helpful to you?

“YES!”, they shout in unison - full of glee – “…because you can show us how to do it…how to be those words…”

Are you going to give me a grade for it? What do you think?

You like this idea of giving me a grade – and shout YES!!

I ask if I can focus on one word for today and you talk amongst yourselves in a circle and decide on Cheerful! I feel a wave of relief and laugh “…that makes me feel good that I am going to be cheerful.” Towards the end of the lesson – I playfully write up on the board CHEERFULNESS /10 … and I leave the marker pen for you to write my mark. After all my efforts to join in with your game and be full of cheer – I get eight out of ten – and when I say half joking “…that’s only a B! . . . ”, you say that I should have joined in more, revealing the delicacy of balancing space between student and teacher – I thought I was allowing freedom by not always being in the action. You let me know I can do this by playing and not interrupting.

On another day in a lesson where I have forgotten to wear a watch, I am trying to teach you how to play cricket. Due to my anxiety about time - I am rushing things and I see the disconnect and displeasure in your face – and so I take out the typed up list of words from my pocket and ask you what word you want me to be – and you say immediately “RELAXING!” –and someone else says ,…no what about enthusiastic – but you say NO … RELAXING,… and I get it – “… I need to let go of time here and stop rushing things! Sorry - why am I rushing you?”

Expanding my practice

I did not know where this ‘word play’ would go: this reveal and diminution of unnecessary ways of being in curriculum, along with the exploration of the pleasure of movement. It felt like part of a process of ‘letting go’ of judging movement so that a wider range of movement could emerge and flourish’. A couple of days later when cleaning the office I found a piece of paper tucked under the phone in the corner of my desk. Turning it over I was surprised to see words on it presumably written by a student . . . faint of pencil lines that stopped me in my tracks (See Figure 6):
What was this? The words seemed to present a challenge. To walk this line… to live curriculum around pleasure is not easy: in what ways am I going to lead? In what ways might the exercise of unfolding possible ways of being be continued and expanded? In what ways might pleasure provide a guide for living curriculum?

The ‘wordplay’ had emerged from a practice that sought to provoke and explore the sensations of movement, allowing students to move freely without interruption and afterwards to reflect on it privately through writing and conversation. Students were encouraged to journal: to describe their experience of moving in physical education and their feelings. These reflections helped broaden my understanding of the experience of physical education and my ability to provide a more responsive curriculum: they prevented me from brushing over the feelings of students as if they were not important.
Opening up: Admitting feelings

Significantly, when the activity emerged, I had thought about but then consciously steered away from asking the students if they would like to assess me on a word during a lesson. I have always been a little fearful when being observed or assessed by others (self-conscious) and was in this case suddenly aware of not wanting students to assess me. I remember afterwards relaying what had happened to a colleague, confiding in him my fear of being assessed. “Come on!” she said, “that’s not fair! You have to let them assess you… after all you assess them!” The next day I smiled and asked the class if they would like to assess me and they had excitedly accepted the offer – as if it were some kind of gift! Allowing them to assess me felt in some way like moving closer together, a way of getting more comfortable around each other.

After the students assessed my cheerfulness we continued to explore the idea of assessing each other’s ability to be the words we wanted to be. Students came up with an idea of picking numbers out of a hat (instead of names) so that they each would not know who was assessing them. After going through this discussion and picking numbers out of a hat, it felt however that to carry on with the idea of assessment was unnecessary and may even have had a ‘reverse effect’: it would be like spying on each other! Do we need someone else to tell us how we are acting or to remind us of the word we chose to be? I dropped the idea of assessment but admit that I found myself occasionally asking or reminding students of their word in relation to their behaviour, realising again my tendency to attempt to control conformity and consent.
Understanding instead of ‘assessing’

The value behind the wordplay exercise may have been in elevating a collective awareness of ways of being and the responsibility each person has to play a part in cultivating a pleasurable environment and atmosphere. In one of the ‘free writes’ immediately after the lesson when students had chosen their words, they were asked to write why they had chosen their word in an effort to provoke further thinking and conversation around ways of being in physical education.

I chose funny, not only because funny people are a great positive vibe to be around. I feel that not enough people laugh and smile enough. Someone who is funny can really change someone’s mood and even on occasion someone’s look on life and social problems. Being funny isn’t all about saying jokes with the perfect pick up line? (is that the word???) By being funny can be raw and quick “witted” or can even be well planned and thought about . . . Laughter can lighten up any mood, let it be sadness or just a stressful day. Everyone can have an even better time in gym, no matter if they enjoy gym or not.

Wendy, Grade 8

Wendy’s reflection on why she chose her word informs me further about how I can be a better person in physical education and how I can help students connect with being in physical education: in particular the importance of relaxing and not taking things too seriously.

I chose the word outgoing. The reason why I chose this is because in PE I usually feel tired and become quiet. My goal is to more cheerful and encouraging towards the class. I want to be friendly towards everyone, not just my close friends. A word I thought about choosing before was encouraging. Encouraging ties in with outgoing in some ways, but outgoing also means other things. I’m trying to think of being more outgoing in PE by trying new things, getting out of my comfort zone, and helping others.

Jane, Grade 8

Jane’s reflection on her word gives me insight to her being tired and reminds me of the task physical education presents to students that is not only physical: the
task of broadening one’s ‘comfort zone’ across a wide range of activities in different environments. It helps me think of creating situations where she may interact and help others. Her reflection expands my thinking so that I begin to think of curriculum as an exercise of trying new things, (an exercise of living), getting out of comfort zones and helping others. The next week I ask Jane if she would like to lead some warm ups and activities in basketball. For the two weeks leading up to Christmas I offered a ‘Christmas present’ to the class: I asked them to work in small groups to choose and design the activities for the two weeks leading up to the holidays. They are asked to create an ‘atmosphere of celebration’: we brainstorm what Christmas means to each of us: family, friendship, giving, caring, being happy, and they are asked to sign up to lead activities on the different days. I volunteer to help when needed and to take part in the fun and games: to experience the events and understand what happens. The focus is on working together to make lessons as pleasurable as possible for everyone.

Together. Together means to me that no matter what a group/team/class does they always find a way of sorting things out. Like in gym when we play a game but we want to improve on it we come together as a group/team/class and sort it out/discusse it.

Kim, Grade 8

Group discussion and conversation about activities with students who did not journal provided another way for them to express their feelings. Physical movement of students provided an additional form of embodied expression that I recorded in my teaching notes. It turned out that my effort to attend to and be responsive to feelings of students in order to make curriculum as pleasurable as
possible for all was experienced by at least one student as quite different. A parent told me her son had said to her in a tone of frustration, “Gee! . . . Mr. Train sure tries to be everyone’s friend . . .” He was used to being pushed more in physical education in terms of his physical ability: he was an athlete and used to being top of the class. The parent asked me to explain my philosophy and I remember defending myself against what felt like an ‘accusation’ of trying ‘to be everyone’s friend,’ which is ironic now when I think of Epicurean philosophy being a practice of friendship. At the time I outlined a philosophy of orienting curriculum in a way that all students could enjoy participating in a wide range of activities: I talked about the importance of allowing students to feel free to move without being judged especially when they were trying something new: and the value of taking a more relaxed playful approach to sports.

I was resistant to describing my practice as a promotion of friendship and caring and not used to talking of physical education in such simple terms. It has taken a long time for me to embrace such a simple philosophy but if asked now I might say that friendship and caring provide the basis for my practice in physical education.

After meeting the parent I returned to her son’s word (‘energised’) and felt an immediate pang of guilt for not catering to his more athletic needs. The inquiry does skew my vision towards students who are more clearly suffering or feeling out of place in physical education: in what ways might I be overlooking the needs of students who are ‘more athletic’? In what ways might a practice of pleasure benefit more athletic students? The student and I discussed why he had chosen the
word and how we might change things: “… I was looking at your word (‘energised’) and wondering what you want to do?” I said. He told me that he loved downhill mountain-biking and skiing and so I asked him how we might approach lessons differently and we talked about options that might challenge him. We set up an assessment system to help him monitor and improve his overall contribution, his technical ability and fitness levels. We decided on a method of self and teacher assessment that would focus on leadership of warm ups and activities, physical engagement during games and the progression of his fitness levels. I also asked him to think of the benefits of taking a more relaxed approach in physical education that might compliment his busy athletic schedule outside of school.

Being open and receptive to differing perspectives of students is part of staying with them, not abandoning and staying committed to a conversation that may lead us all as participants in physical education (Smith, 1999). In this way a pursuit of pleasure may be educational in that it holds the constant potential to be transformative: to broaden perspectives of both student and teacher, from the narrow habituated view of self to a wider perspective and a different way of being-in-the-world. The process of making meaning together (understanding each other) may be what broadens our awareness and possible ways of being in physical education: it is what may influence curriculum and pedagogy. This is the educative value of pursuing pleasure (read ‘attempting to understand the experience of students, in order to make their experience of physical education more pleasurable’).
The idea of ‘constructing’ happiness

I had an idea of constructing a wall of happiness in the school gymnasium. “During the year,” I said at one conference presentation, I wanted each student to have thought about and to be able to answer the question “what makes me happiest in physical education is …” Each student would get a brick on the wall on which to inscribe their sentiments. This idea came from Diogenes of Oneanda, who in the second century AD paid homage to Epicurus by creating an 80 meter wall inscribed with Epicurean tenets on how to live a happy life. The wall was situated in the Greek equivalent of a ‘shopping mall’ advertising happiness as something that cannot be bought. I suggested that the gymnasium wall of happiness might be a reminder of what may be most important in curriculum. This idea of recreating Oneanda’s wall reveals my habitual tendency as an educator to want to label things: to define who I am and what I do in terms of outcomes, when in fact who I am and what I do is always dependent upon the context and is always changing.

What happens when you are teaching a class that is quite wild? In the face of unruly behaviour how might a more relaxed (open) approach work?

At the same time as teaching the two Grade 8 classes I was teaching a Grade 9 class that was quite ‘wild’. I remember writing that teaching this class felt like ‘teaching in the middle of a tornado’ and ‘trying to make myself heard in the middle of a whirlwind.’

A pursuit of pleasure in physical education is underscored by a class understanding and relating to the importance of cultivating a relaxed environment
and atmosphere in which movement can happen. Many students’ in the Grade 9 class seemed to be unaware of others in the gym: empathy seemed to be lacking: they would come tearing out of the changing rooms running and screaming, throwing balls from one end of the basketball court to the other. For many of the students the importance of a relaxed atmosphere during the free play at the beginning of lessons had not been explored or practiced during their Grade 8 PE course. On top of this they were sharing the gym space with another Grade 9 class and the busyness of the gym (two classes of 30 students) meant that the free play at the beginning felt quite intimidating and unsafe.

The opening, 10-15 minutes of each lesson in which students are allowed to play without instruction play an important role in cultivating an atmosphere of pleasure (caring for and playing with others) that may then support and allow movement to flourish in physical education. Part of the purpose of ‘free-play’ is to allow students to practice cultivating an atmosphere conducive to pleasure (peace of mind, inner freedom and good spirit). If misunderstood as a ‘free for all’ where ‘anything goes’ free-play at the beginning of a lesson can have a reverse effect: it can inhibit movement and create an atmosphere that is difficult to relax in. My colleague and I were finding teaching both of the Grade 9 classes very difficult and quite draining: it was ‘like teaching amid a storm of noise’. In what ways might communicating the purpose of free-play help students create a more relaxing atmosphere in which to teach?

My colleague and I limited the equipment and restricted areas of play to make things safe and played calm but cheerful music. We called both classes
together to explore their awareness of what was going on and the importance of safety for all. Progress was slow and some students seemed to keep on dominating lessons. It felt draining to teach when both classes were in the gymnasium. A turning point in my class came when a fire alarm sounded for a fire drill towards the end of one lesson. We were out on the back field and in this quiet interlude I told them that teaching them for the first month had felt quite difficult and I asked if anyone else felt this way? Was this lesson pleasurable? What about other lessons? Eventually the quieter students spoke up saying why it was not fun for them but that they would like it to be. We needed to find a way for it to be more pleasurable for everyone. It had taken a fire bell for me to stop and talk about the feeling of being in this class. The quietness of being in the field may have helped. It took the humility of opening up and admitting my own feelings – and then having the courage to ask if anyone else felt the same way to begin changing things.

In the next lesson the students co-created a rubric to guide ways of being together. What might we each do to make the atmosphere better? I asked them to each write down a plus and a minus: a type of behaviour that would make lessons more pleasant and another that made being together unenjoyable.
Simple words came from giving all of the students a chance to voice their feelings. We read them out and for a week every student assessed their own way of being (giving themselves a mark out of five) at the end of each lesson: to do this they would come to me and tell me their mark. By the end of the week behaviour and atmosphere seemed to have changed for the better and I asked them if this was necessary … this reporting in at the end of each lesson? I stopped collecting their marks as I did not want students to feel that I was attempting to control or coerce their behaviour. Raising awareness had seemed to change
things: a calmer atmosphere had ensued. In lessons I focussed on simple t

...mbuilding exercises that allowed them to work as a class and I asked them to design and lead a fortnight of lessons during which time my colleague remarked how much the group had changed. Expressing my own feelings (opening up) and then listening to the feelings of students and sharing them with the group, helped promote an awareness of the mutual need for a pleasant atmosphere. The self-assessment emphasised that each student was responsible for cultivating such a pleasant atmosphere. The whole process seemed to make a palpable difference but other simple things like a change in the seasons, being able to go outside into more space, a couple of students moving away from the town (decreasing the size of the class) and the process of accruing more time together, are examples of possible factors that could have influenced group dynamics.

Summary

Watson proposes emptiness as a ‘guiding thread’ for an educator interested in cultivating pleasure: she points to Epicurean philosophy being a practice and warns against the tendency to create a system or model to rely on in order to construct and manage happiness. There is no model that can engineer happiness: what is necessary is the courage to accept this and explore feelings that emerge in a more open curriculum. Pleasure is less a thing that can be ‘constructed’ (Pringle, 2010) than it is something that is always already ‘there’ (the pleasure of existence) if we are open to it. As educators we might focus on cultivating an atmosphere that is receptive and an atmosphere needs to be cultivated, worked upon, and grown over time.
At the end of the year of data collection in this inquiry the wall in the gymnasium was left blank. Not putting words on it, leaving it empty at the end of the year became a symbolic part of this inquiry (an application/practice of emptiness is ongoing). Leaving the wall empty keeps the question: *(What is the experience of physical education and what is most important?)*, open. The wall’s blankness represents ‘never fully knowing’ and the task of being receptive to the differing perspectives of students and open to fresh possibilities of the moment. It focusses me on creating a sense of emptiness in which students may move and find their way. My aim as a practitioner is not to construct and manage pleasure but to purposely resist any temptation to impose a rule or system upon pleasure: to listen and attempt to understand the feelings of students and to strive to ‘project a kind of happiness smile, insight laughter, opinion.’
RELAXING SELF

This section on self aims to highlight a way of diffusing the instrumental and developmental lens we tend to look through as educators so that we may be more receptive to pleasure and the task of creating conditions in secondary school physical education which invite students to relax and move for pleasure.

Relaxing my Perspective

Hadot (1995) emphasises *askesis* (‘raising the level of self’): spiritual exercises aimed at transcending self-consciousness and replacing it with a perspective of the Whole that was a central part of Epicurean philosophy. This might be thought of simply as keeping the bigger picture in mind. Hadot talks of Hellenist practice involving personal exercises to raise the level of self:

- To take flight each day! At least for a moment, however brief, as long as it is intense. A ‘spiritual exercise’ everyday – either alone or in the company of someone … Step out of duration…try to get rid of your own passions, vanities, and the itch for talk about your own name, which sometimes burns you like a chronic disease. Avoid backbiting. Get rid of pity and hatred. Love all free human beings. Become eternal by surpassing yourself.

This work on yourself is necessary. This ambition justified.

(Friedman, as cited in Hadot, 1995, p. 81).

Epicureans saw the need to work on our own perspectives and ways of being and living before educating others: “We must concern ourselves with the healing of our own lives” (Epicurus’ Letter to Menoeclus, as cited in Inwood & Gerson,
1994). As an educator in this inquiry I have found that study and writing have helped raise my awareness, lending me keener sense of gratitude and an ability to live each moment more fully: to dwell in each moment of the school day as much as I might when not at school. I have become more attuned to the pleasure of existence which is constant.

**Studying, writing and living the World**

Wind blows, whipping my jacket around me and as I lean forward along the tracks stones clatter under my feet. I pick up one of them to throw it but it feels warm and this make me stop and put it down. I sit and look out across the lake. Walking returns me to the elemental the steel tracks, the rocks under my boots and feet sipping all atoms vibrating and sliding around, lending the experience of being alive: Life!

Dried leaves scuttle through the trees making me wheel around in fright and a bird flies out of the trees right at me and as I sit up and begin to recover my composure a dragonfly slowly follows the bird… A duck moves across the lake preening its feathers and a cyclist glides down the trail on the far side of the lake clad in sporting attire I take off my shirt and raise my arms to the sky I look up at the high peaks and imagine sitting up there. Looking down I see the trail wind through the valley - I see the school and students sitting in a science class …a skeleton hanging in the corner with labels on various bones. One label says Mr. Train on it – and I realise I am looking at myself an educational donation, eighty years on: bleached white yellowing bones with nothing to say. What an exercise this is - looking down on Life unable to touch or take part: invisible, unheard: wishing I could live again.

For ‘Epicureans’, writing was not just a method for constituting self but an exercise that could help transform perspective and way of being. Writing held the potential to change the level of the self, to broaden and universalize it, in that: “A
person writing feels he is being watched: he is no longer alone but a part of “the
tently present human community” (Hadot, 1995, p. 211). Along with being a
technique for cultivating self, mastering self and attaining a sense of inner
independence, writing was way of accessing “… a higher ‘psychic level’ and
another relationship with ‘the exterior’”. For Epicureans it was a way to cultivate
a receptivity to the pleasure of existence, which in turn could lead to:

   a new way of being in the world … which consists in becoming aware of
   oneself as part of nature … one no longer lives in the usual, conventional
   human world, but in the world of nature … one identifies oneself with an
   Other: nature, or universal reason as it is present within each individual.
   This implies a radical transformation in perspective … interiorisation is a
   going beyond oneself: it is a universalisation.

   (Hadot, 1995, p. 211).

Seen in this light writing might be thought of as a necessary form of continued
professional development for teachers.

**Relax: you are Home**

be happy

don’t watch television

sit alone for 30 minutes and look at the sky

be happy with the complexity of the universe

and your wonderful body that affords every-moment

Coming home from work last night I was met, first by the flashing lights of a
police car and ambulance and then a neighbour outside my house.
“Jonny died in his sleep: … he was only 52.”

That night I remembered something Jonny had said to me while I was putting out
the garbage last spring: he was getting his bike ready for the summer- testing it -
pedaling it around in circles and he said something about ‘making the most of it’:
“…it’ll probably be the last year I ride.”
Had he known he was going to die so soon?
It was a surprise to the rest of us.
Two months later, again coming home from work I was met by the shape of a police car and an ambulance parked outside of my house.
Eric who lived 4 doors down the other way had passed away, two neighbours dying in two months makes you stop and think, …who might be next?!
Eric had lived on his own for years: his wife had left him and took their son (who had autism and who had attended our school and who Eric loved), away with her to Switzerland.
The last time I had seen Eric was New Year’s Eve when we talked about ‘a funny thing’ that had happened a few years earlier. He used to go Kite-skiing on the lake and towards the end of one winter he had gone through the ice with his skis on: “…just where the creek comes into the lake you know…it wasn’t thick enough.” A man driving on lakeside road saw him and managed to get up to a nearby helipad, jump into a helicopter save him in the nick of time: Eric holding on to the ice for long enough before finally clinging to the feet of the helicopter to get dragged out. It had made the papers. We laughed about it and toasted our good health. He had got to live for another two years because of that rescue.

Dawn

the Mountains loom dark against the morning sky as we cycle down through the forest towards the lake.
When we get there we put off our swim: it is cold and we don’t want to go in, we wait for the sun.
I wedge a flat stone between my thumb and forefinger and bend low before sending it out across the water.
“Six!” I shout sending another “. . . TEN! Did you see that?!”
They (my sons) scurry along the water’s edge: scanning the ground, fingers brushing through the rocks for flat stones to throw.
I watch their silhouettes move against the lake, gathering stones Stuffing their pockets and pulling out the bottom of their shirts to carry more, before dropping them in a pile to throw, “…look at this one!” “…Watch this!!” They throw and holler.
The stones wing off to the side, lob up high and disappear abruptly into the shallows as the boys (4 and 6 years) practice skimming: stones start skipping across the surface before catching edges and sinking below. Each throw ‘a little moment of time’: a brief fling.
I walk closer and watch the rocks disappear into the lake, ripples circling out across the surface.
We lay down on our towels.
In the sun,
Laying here next to this lake I might as well say that I am in heaven. Why think of it as some far off place? Why not live as if this were it? To exercise philosophy is to nurture this perspective, and to live above emotional turmoil, peaceful,
unworried, free from anxiety and content with what is: aware of the profound pleasure of existence. Epicurus saw the purpose of philosophy as enabling people to be happy: to realise the happiness of being alive. It is in this sense that studying the world and writing about it is a form of spiritual exercise. I am like those stones: made up of the same atoms (part of the same Life cycle), But with the miraculous gift of being able to move and live Life! My miraculous body! I am Peter (petros), a small stone, a brief fling in the vastness of eternity.

This inquiry is an attempt to transcend my own limited view of things: an attempt to expand my pedagogical consciousness and way of being-in-the-world in a way that may benefit the students I teach. Moving towards the idea of an empty, ‘selfless self’ in my practice, writing serves to relax my perspective and bring a bigger picture to mind. It allows me not to take anything too personally or seriously and to adopt a broader more relaxed perspective. It allows me to take everything into account and live according to the simple pleasure of existence. Through an emptier (broader and more relaxed) lens teaching becomes a reciprocal and shared experience. Studying, writing and then living curriculum according to this “shared experience” helps diffuse my singular perspective: it allows me to “inter-be” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 95).

Inter-being and Friendship

To help me understand further the idea of nurturing a ‘selfless-self’, Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) suggests a new verb to focus the cultivation of compassion when living curriculum, the verb ‘to inter-be’: “Everything coexists…That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. ‘To be’ is to inter-be. We cannot just be by ourselves alone. We have to inter-be with every other thing” (p. 96).
The simple act of smiling and being receptive each time I see a student – seeing them ‘as if for the first time’ is a compassionate act of inter-being that opens me up and helps dissolve negative feelings and thoughts that may act as barriers: Epicurus talks of friendship “allowing hearts to flourish” (Festugière, as cited in Hadot, 1995, p. 89). If a student, for example, is regularly playing up or causing a disturbance it is easy for me as a teacher to start harbouring negative feelings towards her or him and maybe even to start fearing his or her presence (or even to start having bad dreams about the student!), which may in turn inhibit a student’s ability to relax, move responsively and gain a sense of belonging. If a colleague and I have a misunderstanding it is also helpful to smile and see them as if for the first time: these are examples of the way inter-being may help me flourish as a teacher.

This idea of ‘inter-being’ complements friendship as a way of knowing and overcomes the problematic term ‘inter-subjectivity’ that relies on ‘subjectivity’ to exist (Gadamer, 2000). Gadamer (1999) proposes friendship instead of inter-subjectivity as the way we come to knowing how to live. Whatever word we use, ‘inter-being’ and ‘friendship’ (relationality) may be what teenagers relate to most in their experience of being at school.

Wednesday Dec, 17th

As the Grade 8’s file out into the car park, Julian (Grade 12) puts some music on and we sit and talk, beginning to cut out cardboard bases for the annual gingerbread house building event that is happening on Friday (part of the school ‘Winterfest’ celebration). I notice J. has several Manga books (graphic novels) that I have seen him reading since he came into the school in Grade 9.

“Do you read any serious books Julian?!” I say playfully.

“What do you mean sir?”

“You know,…books about the world and Life: about love, pain and death…?!”
Most students don’t seem to read about such serious things but imagine if they did! . . . it might be helpful eh? Reading more serious books might help you learn how to live!”

“But manga books do that sir!” J. looks at me quite offended “… they’ve taught me some of the most important things … like friendship … you get emotionally involved with the characters and you don’t want them to die I know people who have cried reading manga…” The school announcements come on over the PA system and J. stands up and moves into the office to listen. “You interested in the school announcements?” I say

“Yeah …well it’s the Grad quote of the day - my idea – just wondering if anyone is doing it yet…. so far it has only been me and one other person who has submitted quotes.”

“Why quotes?” I say

“Oh I dunno I just really like quotes – thought it would be fun …”

where do you get your quotes from … all over the place – … some from Manga! Like that one just now, he says pointedly: “Success is not to beat a strong person but to protect someone you care for …”

Something about what he says makes me stop, “… say that again,” I say, putting my scissors down and reaching for a pen.

Living curriculum and promoting movement in physical education may is a compassionate exercise of inter-being and friendship in that human movement is relational (contingently dependent). The movement of a student relates to the context in which it plays out. It is through this broader and more inclusive lens that the onus in pedagogy shifts towards understanding and supporting movement. This difficult task of understanding what is happening complements (and may begin to replace) the task of assessing intentional skills as, in an orientation around inter-being and friendship that accepts movement is always contingent and related, it is precisely because we want to allow each student to be and move in relation to their own body and circumstances that we may choose not to attempt any summative assessment of their movement. We may instead prioritise the fluid process of inter-being: the skill of moving in relation to what is and cultivating a
sense of relatedness. This is not something we should underplay as it may be a higher form of learning that underpins the progress of both teacher and student inside and outside of school.

“For the self that understands its implication in the web of life, emptiness of self equates with resilience and with interdependence.”

Relaxing (Freeing) the Student Body

While I have been writing this ‘piece’, struggling to understand and communicate a ‘contemporary therapeutic application of emptiness’ (Watson, 2014) in secondary school physical education, Ami handed me a piece of Sacchi’s artwork from school that might help express what I would like to say about the value of ‘relaxing self’ (See Figure 7).

Figure 7 “All the childish things are fading...”
As a child Sacchi was led by a strong desire to explore the world, her movement arising “not specifically from the body but in the nexus and intertwining of bodily engagement with the world” (Smith, 2006, p. 1). Gradually as consciousness dawns and she bears the weight of it, as she ‘matures’, she begins to lose the freedom of moving without thought. Her movement becomes inhibited by a sense of self-consciousness (‘emotions in confusion’). As a student transitioning from elementary into secondary school, Sacchi who is now in my Grade 8 PHE class could be at risk of losing her innate ability to move for pleasure. In a system and society that prioritises Health outcomes where young people are asked by their teachers to learn to move for extrinsic reasons, it may be necessary for Sacchi to practice moving for pleasure and natural happiness. In a culture of unhappiness that prioritises the pursuit of self (see Appendix B) I don’t want my daughter to lose the natural inclination and ability to move purely for pleasure.

Recognising the body as a vehicle for being and knowing in what ways might I strive as an educator to provide conditions that encourage expansive exploratory movement (movement that is less prescribed)? In what ways might physical education provide a counter space or refuge for students living in a society obsessed with static, fixed and confined learning spaces? Serres (2010) writes about self ‘forgetfulness’ allowing movement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My emotion in confusion because I am confused of what I should be, everyone keeps asking me what I want to be when I grow up but I don’t want to think about those kind of things yet, I still want to be a kid and play, have fun, goof around and not be serious. All the childish things are fading and everyone is trying to be older than they are. I think that everyone should be themselves before time runs out.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacchi, 12 years old (Oct., 2016).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The body performs certain gestures all the more easily when they unfold from the least amount of attention possible...Ask a skier how he links his turns or a pianist how he performs his virtuoso passages; because they can’t explain it, you think they’re stupid, while your question, idiotic, shows itself to be completely ignorant of the body: performing its feats faster than lightning, it does without the mind and its supervision; it doesn’t like consciousness and the feeling is mutual. What consciousness stiffens, forgetfulness makes flexible. ...Instruct the clumsy in loss of consciousness. (p. 41)

Contrasting the free movement of the body with self-consciousness that tends to constrain movement, Serres (2010) points towards a possible contradiction of designing and enacting secondary school physical education around a construction of self. Why not base the design and enactment of curriculum directly around the experience of being and moving? “Supple virtuality and passage into act demand a kind of unconsciousness” (Serres, 2010, p. 42): there needs to be something that frees a student up to move in such a public arena. Movement in secondary school physical education happens in relation to a landscape that is too large for us to see or fully comprehend: movement is ‘nested’ within and emanates from a social background and it reflects an inner geography of feelings. From an Epicurean perspective human movement is a reflex of the body and soul: it holds the potential to involve or express the whole of our being. In what ways might we allow students to move outside the technical lens of learning?
Offering an Experience of ‘Moreness’ (Huebner)

In ‘education and the spiritual’, Dwayne Huebner, (2008) describes the concept and word ‘learning’ (associated with a psychology of self-development), as “so much a coin of the realm that it blocks the imagination” (p. 401). ‘Learning,’ Huebner points out, has become a word (rather than a concept) that we use unthinkingly in our profession, a dead metaphor that no longer expands the way we think about who we are and what we do as educators. For Huebner (2008, p. 404) human life is ‘movement, change and journey’ and education involves an expanding relationship between a person and the universe in which there is a realisation of the ‘moreness’ of the world, a realisation that ‘we can always be more than we are.” Limiting thinking and practice in physical education around the psychological and behavioral construct of ‘learning’ may unnecessarily limit the experience of movement.

In my personal opinion, enjoying the activity is way more important. Learning the activity is good, but without enjoyment no one's going to want to participate and it feels more like you're being forced to do it. Typically when people enjoy things they do better in it, and even if they don't do better, they try harder and there's more participation and effort put into it.

Jill, Grade 10

“Learning is a trivial way of speaking of the journey” (Huebner, 2008, p. 405). The language of ‘growth’ and ‘development’ is a mundane way of speaking about the mystery of participating in Life and the potentially liberating experience of moving in secondary school physical education. If we want to promote physical education in the minds of students and their educators as an exercise of participating in and celebrating Life we may need to use a more expansive
language. We do not need always to use ‘learning theory’ or ‘developmental theory’ to ex–plane: make flat or flatten out the mystery of physical education. Huebner (2008) suggests that as educators we might start asking not only how young people ‘learn’ or ‘develop’ but also ‘what gets in the way of the great journey’! In physical education we might question what prevents movement from flourishing: what prevents students from moving purely for pleasure (peace of mind, inner freedom, good spirit, joy, exultation and delight)? Such an inquiry leads me to question what curriculum constructs constrain and limit human movement in physical education. What constructs might prevent physical education from being deeply moving or inspirational? Is learning a condition of schooling? What is the purpose of schooling? Is schooling an institutionalised form of control?

Huebner suggests that if we stop using the word learning we might become more adept at describing the deep value of physical education. Not using the word learning might bring its original metaphoric value back: we might start imagining all of the things physical education may be to students. We may begin to accept that anything ‘learned’ by students is largely unknowable, a gift, a secret, a memory that if kept by them remains special (Biesta, 2012) and we might stop asking them to account for what they have ‘learned’ in a realisation that receiving such explanation may merely take away the specialness of moving ‘forgetful and free’ (Serres, 2010). We might begin to trust the inherent value of moving outside of the technical lens and experiencing the freedom of moving for pleasure. What do we do when we turn students inward and ask them to analyse
their own movement in relation to certain ideal forms? Might it be healthier to allow them as young people to move free from comparison in secondary school physical education? Pleasure based physical education might provide an opportunity for some ‘direct living’ and a refreshing break from self-analysis. It might help rekindle or keep alive the natural childish desire that we are all born with to move, laugh and scream with the delight of moving free from thought.

Lingis (2004) observes how we are born open to the world and become closed to it when we try to interiorise meaning:

As little children we were allowed to … play for hours … run again and again through piles of autumn leaves, without having to worry what it all meant. But then they started. Our parents, our teachers faced us and demanded that we give an account of what we did…. It is not by ourselves . . . that we start to question why we move: why we go for a walk, why we bathe, or eat or what we eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner: it may not be necessary to ask why we move and analyse what it says about us. In what ways might we again allow the body to lead and move with natural fluidity? (p. 40)

Understanding that a student’s sense of self may be dependent upon their sense of freedom (afforded by self-forgetfulness) might encourage us as educators to begin imagining and creating more open environments that invite movement and elicit feelings of connectedness (feelings of being at home in body and world).
The Garden: Summer, 2016

Charlie, (7) smiles:
“Daddy . . . ? D’you know what I like about Nana and Pops’ house? . . . THE GLASS ROOM! . . . at the back of the house where you can look up at the sky . . . and - they have a back yard.”

He had played in the garden with his brother Alfie (9) for five weeks.

When we arrived Nana had put up a swing-ball set in the garden: a tennis ball tethered to a pole that was fixed to the ground: two red plastic bats hanging from it. At first they made their way out to the swing ball at the crack of dawn, ‘waking the neighbourhood’ with their shouts as the ball flew back and forth . . . Nana rushing out and calling them in.

The swing ball stayed up and we all played with it – while hanging the washing on the line, mowing the lawn, sitting having a coffee or reading the newspaper as well as of course at the social get-togethers: Mum versus Sacchi (12), Nana vs. Pops, the kids, . . . my siblings and their spouses and their children all played, rallying, gasping and shrieking as the ball flew around the pole. It was part of the garden, part of our holiday, and part of what held us together. When the holiday was over the swing set was taken down and put into a suitcase to bring back to Canada, where it was immediately placed outside our house in one of the car parking spaces: a forlorn reminder of playing in Nana and Pops’ garden.

The car park was more of a public arena. Standing in front of the houses it presented more of a challenge than an invite, the boys pairing up against each other comparing their strength with each hit, with the ball eventually coming off the rope and having to be fixed. I noticed the young kids watching from the playground . . . waiting until the coast was clear before wandering over to investigate:

Sacchi: “. . . it’s weird, I feel I am really good at it when I play by myself but when I play against other people I don’t feel I can play as well . . . especially when there are others watching . . . ”

Sacchi’s friend: “. . . yeah that’s like when I play my brothers . . . they take it so seriously . . . ”

As I listen to the youngsters play I imagine the swing set in a secondary school physical education lesson – in a sheltered corner where a student or students can play ‘with no one watching’: I imagine a slack line on the outside field, slung tight between two trees, a student balancing on it: a soccer game in the background and some students passing Frisbees to each other in the opposite corner. A wide range of activities in one lesson, not all in plain view: friends playing freely, the games they play, trying them out naturally.

Later as I am walking home from school, I meet Sacchi cycling with a friend – “… Dad! . . . we’re just going to play tennis at the park – we’ll be back by 5 . . . ” she shouts and I turn and watch her go – “Okay!” I say pleased she is taking the swing-ball activity further afield.
Is this what Epicurus means when he says friendship is the greatest tool for experiencing happiness? The greatest aid for stepping out into the world and getting comfortable in it? Is this what it means to educate: to set the stage, to create or allow conditions in which young people may experience and move into openness together, making it their own? To trust that if given the opportunity young people will move for the pleasure of it? Epicurus says pleasure leads the way naturally throughout life: that all I am doing is gradually removing the barriers (artificial constructs and fears) that tend to constrain movement of young people unnecessarily. Epicurean physical education attempts to practice what students might naturally continue themselves outside of school.

**Epicurean Curriculum: An Emergent Structure Shot Through with Space (Lucretius)**

Through an emptier lens I see pedagogy as creating and maintaining a sense of openness for students to encounter and move into and then being receptive to the different ways students move to make it their own. I see curriculum being a structure ‘shot through with space’ (Lucretius) for movement and growth to happen.

Over the course of a year a weekly structure with time for relaxation, exercising choice and practicing friendship emerged in Grade 10 physical education. Once a week we would walk to the local recreation centre to play squash, swim, ice skate or use the fitness centre: students would sign up the day before to take part in each activity in small groups, rotating each week to allow everyone the opportunity to try out each activity. During this lesson I would move
around the activities to oversee and ‘be there to help if needed’ but I purposely tried not to intervene in order to allow them to play each activity with their friends.

On Wednesday we went to Meadow Park and I played squash with Emma, Kyle and Daikichi. I had never played squash before so I was horrible at it. However, it was good to play a challenging and fun game with my friends (we can laugh at/with each other when we mess up). Friday was choice day and we started off with playing volleyball during the warm up. After a couple of minutes we decided to play the same passing game in a circle with one of the big balls. I absolutely loved playing this game and I don’t ever remember laughing so hard and being so carefree around others. We lost track of the time and ended passing the ball to each other for the whole gym class! It was surprisingly tiring and different from playing with a volleyball.

Francesca, Grade 10

Once a week we would practice, 20 minutes of relaxation, (I taught various breathing, progressive relaxation and mental clearing exercises and in the second half of the course students and I would practice relaxation without instruction). There was also one ‘student led lesson’ each week that allowed students to plan and lead a lesson either individually or with a friend, afterwards receiving supportive feedback. Fridays developed along themes of choice, play and then freedom: I started with a condition that students needed to decide through consensus what they were going to do as a class but moved away from this to allowing students to move and play freely with friends as they wished. In these lessons I would join in, oversee and act as a supportive catalyst for play.
Each week I would teach two lessons covering a ‘topic’ that could be then taken up and explored by students in student led lessons if they wished: for example the topic of gymnastics led to student led lessons in parkour, wrestling led to ‘wrestling with music and dance,’ health related fitness lessons led to student led yoga and kick-boxing, target, net/wall, striking and fielding and territorial games led to students inventing games, and teambuilding and orienteering lessons led to student led games outside). I purposely moved away from the idea of units of work to explore the value of moving more for pleasure. This provides a picture of what a curriculum based around attempting to understand the experience of students in order to afford pleasure may begin to look like.

**Balancing structure with space**

Space as a medium and source for movement continues to act as a metaphor that expands my thought and practice: balancing structure with space is a continual task that sometimes appears to ‘work’ and then at times does not. There is resonance here with Merleau-Ponty (2010) who points to ‘spatiality’ affording ‘relationality’: allowing communication between people and what is other.

We perform our movements in a space which is not ‘empty’ or unrelated to them, but which on the contrary, bears a highly determinate relation to
them: movement and background are, in fact, only artificially separated
stages of a unique totality.

(Merleau-Ponty, 2010, p. 159)

Thinking of the environment, atmosphere, and movement of students being one
emphasises the potentially positive influence of cultivating a pleasant (read
relaxed and playful) atmosphere.

Epicurean Pedagogy

Epicurean pedagogy requires cultivating one’s own receptivity to the
pleasure of existence in order to be able to ‘teach it’ to young people. Every day I
need to be able to embrace the pleasure of living curriculum together with
students. Two stories below illustrate an on-going effort to cultivate my
receptivity to the pleasure and happiness of the moment and the way it has in turn
influenced my practice.

Charlie (my son) is in Grade 1 and while I am on study leave, for a whole
semester, I take him to school each morning. Walking into the classroom before
the day starts has a special feel: Charlie gets a burst of energy and slides across
the floor. “There is no one here …” we say peering around. It feels like walking
into an empty church. I sit on one of the small chairs and hear the children lining
up outside and then, when Miss M. opens the door they bubble in hanging up their
coats, getting their agendas out and switching into their indoor shoes. They find
spots to sit, under the teacher’s desk, on bean bags and cushions, on the carpet, on
chairs, and behind the bookshelves … and they sign up on a board: green, orange
and blue for the mood they are in, and again to say which bus they are on at the
end of the day.

For the first week I read to Charlie which he seems to enjoy but as the days go on
he is happier to pick a book, slide under a table and ‘hide out’ with a friend. One
day when we get there I see a box of pears and I can’t resist. “Wow,”— I say,
picking up a pear and then a pencil and piece of paper. As I sit drawing and
shading the pear…just as my Dad had done when I was a kid, a few of Charlie’s
friends move closer to watch and a couple reach for paper and start their own
drawings. “Look! Look at that!” I say to Charlie sitting next to me “…it’s called a
still life.”
The next morning I see my drawing up on the board, and some fresh paper, pencils and crayons on the table and by the time the class pour in to the room I am sitting drawing, “Hi Pete…” says Jeannie leaning over the table to see what I am drawing: “Hey . . . what ya drawing …?!!” says Alta sitting down: “ . . . Hey! - that’s our classroom!”’” says Marlow - “Wait,” I say, to Seb as I quickly sketch him wearing his enormous bobble hat. “Look at that! - that’s awesome …” For a week I sit and draw … and the kids join me drawing and talking about their pictures. Some bring their own pencil cases: “what are you going to draw today Pete?” I found it a relaxing way to start the day.

The ‘soft start’ provided a warm welcome for students. I found myself wondering how I might continue if I were teaching. I thought of a larger table to sit around and of going from drawing together into painting, making shapes, patterns, letters and numbers: maybe having themes to explore each day.

The next week Charlie’s permanent teacher (she had been away on leave) returned and we arrived one morning to find the layout of the room was changed. The desks had been put into pods of four with name tags and various writing instruments on them. Equipment was stationed around the classroom with four children allowed in each area (to avoid congestion). I looked for a place to sit but all the desks had name tags so I knelt at the end of one of the tables chatting to the kids … missing sitting at the table and the conversation that had buzzed around me as we drew together.

My feelings of being in Charlie’s classroom may reflect and inform an Epicurean sensibility in secondary school physical education. They point to the value of creating an environment that invites students to move and allows them to make themselves feel at home. Free play at the beginning of each lesson may provide a way for students to move and play and ‘get comfortable’. A variety of equipment placed out in open space freely available: without instructions students encounter a sensation of freedom. I set up and adapt the environment in the gymnasium to provide a welcome and an unspoken invitation for students to move. Just as Charlie’s teacher had left out pears, put my picture on the whiteboard and then put out more pencils, crayons and paper to allow more students to continue drawing, I put out equipment each day in response to the unfolding desires of students. As students arrive I am already playing – I shout out their names joyfully waving to
them from the other side of the gym. A few run out from the changing rooms and start playing while another puts some music on. During the ‘free play’ I circulate in the background overseeing things, checking in with each student, joining in their games or inviting them to play. I talk with them and try to gauge the overall mood, pointing to a ‘sign-up board’ where they can sign up to lead the warm-up, or teach a mini activity or manage the equipment for the lesson. I breathe, stretch, and play.

I use a Gong to signal the start of the lesson and as the semester progresses we become used to using the gong together. Anyone may use it to ‘intervene’ – to call the group together if they see a need. I use it if I want to introduce or review a task. They say they prefer it to the whistle. It has a ‘mellow sound’ that calls them in slowly, relaxing the atmosphere in transitions between activities. Letting structure lead and being there (participating in the background of tasks supportively) allows movement to flourish.

Towards the end of my study leave Charlie asked me why I couldn’t keep coming into his classroom in the mornings. Prior to this he had never had any issues with me not being there – he was always happy to go to school. He had plenty of friends who he played with outside of school in his class. I asked him why he wanted me to keep going, and he said “So you can meet the people … and so they can meet you – so you can get to know their names and they can get to know yours”. Gradually, it dawned on me that, “… you want me to be part of your class don’t you Charlie!” – ‘Yes,” he said quietly continuing to play with his Lego. His smile descending, I feel a silence that is a deep bond. Sitting there
together I realize that nothing else matters: we are completely focused on the present instant (absorbed by it). Being together has an infinite value to it. Why look for any other reason to be, move and play in physical education? Why does it take me so long to understand this?! In a time when most of us as adults are not present to our own children or not very good at being fully present when we are with them, practicing being present (in the moment) in secondary school physical education through focusing on moving for pleasure may be necessary and have great educational value! Our adult minds always seem to be in a rush, unable to see the infinite value of the present.

Inquiry into the cultivation of pleasure in my practice has led to a more receptive structure that allows movement to unfold naturally. The structure for curriculum that emerged as a result of my study in and around pleasure and emptiness allowed more time for students to move without formal instruction (often students would lead warm-ups, games and activities within lessons). Offering an emptiness (openness) to invite movement was something that became a conscious strategy: I created a blank sign up board where students could sign up to lead warm ups, and manage equipment in every lesson. I found myself at various times feeling challenged by the emptiness. Instruction, practice of technique and skills and well laid out activities eased the strain and provided a way to balance a more open weekly structure: sometimes it felt good to be instructed and to follow instructions: direct instruction allows students to concentrate on movement. After vacations and long weekends direct instruction provided a way of getting back into the flow of things: something for all to
follow. During direct instruction I was more aware of trying to avoid taking certain forms of exercise and techniques too seriously and of avoiding coercing ‘correct movement’. The concept of emptiness (openness) had raised my receptivity to the vast range of different ways (styles) of moving that exist in cohorts of students.

Watson (2014) talks of an application of emptiness involving a “rotation from the egocentric to the allocentric processes of consciousness” (p. 176). I found that viewing the experience of school and physical education in relation to the overall context of Life allowed me to be more patient, resisting any temptation to react or instill order amid what sometimes were quite chaotic lessons. Offering more space for students to move and find their way together required the difficult task of letting go of control and trusting students: a balancing act that I became better at with practice. Sometimes the classes needed more structure, for example after long weekends or holidays. Co-creating a weekly structure at the beginning of each week helped me become more aware of the needs of students, the process of negotiating the weekly structure (with the spaces in it for free-play, relaxation, and student led lessons) leading to higher levels of enthusiasm and engagement.

**Embracing the emptiness (read fullness) of pleasure**

Not to embrace pleasure in physical education is to deny what accompanies our normal state of being healthy (our ‘relaxed vitality’) and what we may end up with is a repressed and somewhat superficial experience of curriculum: a feeling of being put through the motions: the rush and hurry of getting changed, warming up, listening to instructions and learning objectives, doing exercises while a teacher watches with whistle and clipboard, being dismissed, getting changed, moving on to the next lesson – ‘…don’t be late!’

For Epicurus to see the artificiality of this kind of experience and to choose not to act to relax the socially constructed barriers that may be preventing students from
moving more naturally is a practice of denial. The journey towards wisdom (Euphrosyne: serene joy) lies in adopting a more open attitude of vulnerability and grace. I have replaced my whistle with a large gong that we share as a class and I wear a white t-shirt: I join in full of cheer: attempting to cultivate a relaxed atmosphere. Two students lead the warm up today and another two the main activity and a pair have signed up to manage the equipment: there is a student led lesson once a week.

To embrace pleasure is to embrace the joy of being present, the empty openness of the moment and the joy of being together and alive! Free play at the beginning of lessons allows us to learn how to do this. Thinking of physical education and teaching it as celebrating Life makes me feel more human. I find it easier when I stand emptier of expectations and demands to smile. My white shirt becomes a screen for the play of students to project onto: a blank page ready to receive, I project and am receptive to the happiness of the moment.

By being happy I allow students to be happy. Amid the play one student tells me as he runs by laughing that he likes the way I just stand there smiling at everything.

During the lesson I talk to students about how they are feeling. I join in their activities before moving on and ‘blending in to the milieu’, purposely ‘disappearing’ into the store room or my office for a while to give room for them to play and move experimentally: I attempt to offer a feeling of freedom that comes from not being watched. I keep walking and talking to students, playing and moving on, before calling them in to discuss and celebrate together the wide variety of movement and play and to frame the main activity of the day.

Last lesson on Friday, Jeannette (who is in her first year of teaching physical education) and I had decided to let two students lead some games. After I had led a playful warm up and gradually handed over the reins to the two students, we sat at the table in the gym, ‘happily overseeing things’. I helped Jeannette plan her upcoming gymnastics unit. The students stood over by the gong sorting teams and deciding what games to play.

A game of fireball has been going for over five minutes and a small group are singing and some others dance . . . to the music they have put on . . . “. . . can we turn off the lights?!” one asks. This is a legacy I inherited from another teacher: playing in the dark. An awareness heightening exercise! In the dark students struggle to hone their awareness of what is out there and where it is . . . I dim the lights and screams and shouts and laughter erupt . . . play commences, and the noise settles down into a steady bubbling type of pattern . . . you can almost hear the students concentrating their vision . . . where is the other team?

Then while playing in the dark it seems the whole two classes (56 Grade 8 students) start singing along to the music they have put on: “. . . just a small town boy – In a small town world . . .” their voices bounce off the rafters. Jeannette and I can hardly hear ourselves speak: we start laughing: “. . . You see . . . ?!” I shout, “. . . this might not be happening if we were instructing! It’s so special to hear them all singing and . . . look!” We watch students dancing: one boy who would never dance in a physical education rolls along the floor doing the worm
and another crawls on all fours surreptitiously carrying on the game … all kinds of movement seem to be erupting in the shadows of the game:
Towards the end I bang the gong to call them in and they wander over . . . their arms swinging and feet feeling the way. I raise the lights and discuss what just happened.
Constructing and managing (living in accord with) pleasure in curriculum is like constructing and managing space – creating openings, pauses or breaks and experiencing them with students: allowing natural movement to continue in a supportive way. All adventures involve a journey into some kind of ‘unknown’ and are to some extent an encounter with risk.
In what ways might curriculum in physical education contain an openness for students to encounter and journey in?
RELAXING HEALTH

Moving for pleasure (not Health) provides a way of engaging students in physical education that concentrates on an embodied way of knowing. For Epicurus, ‘health’ was not a phenomenon that could be objectified or clearly defined and manufactured: it was a feeling (an embodied experience). Feelings of pleasure (peace inner freedom contentment with what is) and feelings associated with the pleasure of movement (joy, exultation and delight) are personal indicators of what today we call health. Today, in our ‘technically and politically legitimated world’ we tend to attempt to measure or ‘assess’ health by convention, “… but there is also a natural form of ‘measure’ which things bear within themselves” (Gadamer, 1996, p. 108). In reality health is still a mysterious condition of inner accord, a phenomenon that “… sustains its own proper balance and proportion …” (Gadamer, 1996, p. 107) and an Epicurean sensibility asks in what ways physical education might offer students an experience of the healthiness that is contained in their own bodies. In what ways might physical health education be more of a celebration of who we are and an experience of bonhomie (cheerfulness, friendliness and geniality)?! In a very human sense Health is not just a theoretical concept that young people need to learn, it is much more than that. It is a miracle, a mystery; a gift (the contingently interdependent, ineffable wholeness of being alive) that students may come to know (and

I love gym because of the feeling of being fit and healthy. When it comes to sitting and writing about health and fitness I don’t like gym
Janice, Grade 8
appreciate) through movement. In what ways might the modern idea of promoting ‘Health’ be corrupting physical education (read taking away the time we need to explore and promote the experience of moving for pleasure)?

In *The Enigma of Health*, Gadamer (1996) talks of *geheuer*, ‘making ourselves at home in the world’ being the original philosophical (read human) task and suggests to me that helping young people, in particular to fulfil a natural desire to feel at home in their bodies, secure, familiar and free from anxieties, may be very relevant in modern physical education. In an increasingly device-based culture where the incidence of anxiety (depression, isolation and anxiety) is well documented in schools, *geheuer* resonates with the Epicurean ‘pillars of knowledge’: *ataraxia* (peace of mind), *autarkia* (inner freedom) and *eudaimonia* (good indwelling spirit and contentment) raising the question, In what ways might secondary schools help students connect with and feel at home in their bodies and the world? Moving for pleasure provides clear emphasis on the embodied experience of movement and the importance of students’ feelings.

Along with the prevailingly dominant medicalised approach that tends to define Physical Health Education scientifically in terms of cause and effect and the attempt to manufacture Health in schools, Gadamer (1996) suggests there may be less care and less humanity. Attempting to assess and progressively improve health and fitness scores in physical education may not only be misguided, it may unnecessarily provoke anxiety (discord) and inhibit movement, especially when done in such a public arena as secondary school physical education.
Interestingly, when talking about the task of promoting health, Gadamer (1996) makes a distinction between the ‘science of medicine’ and ‘the art of healing’; the “‘knowledge of things in general and application of them in the complex context of living (p. 103). ‘Knowledge of things in general’ (the concept of Health) can be learnt, but the knowledge of how to apply them in the complex context of life is the philosophical work of hermeneutics, the kind of skill that Gadamer (1996) points out “must gradually ripen” (p. 104) through experience and development of reflective reasoning on how to live. When it comes to living and learning around the concept of Health people, (in this case) educators and students “must learn to find our own way” (Gadamer, 1996, p. 104). In this chapter I try to convey a way that is unfolding in my practice – a hermeneutic way

---

I really disliked the fitness testing. I never was able to do that well in them (except for the, 12 minute run) and it just didn’t make me feel good about myself. It wouldn’t even help me get healthier it would just tell me if I’m fit or not. If I got a low score it wouldn’t want me to exercise. The fun things in pe class makes me want to be active.

Vanessa, Grade 10

. . . the fitness test made me really uncomfortable and it felt kind of like a competition. I understand the good points to it, it tests flexibility, stamina, strength, power, and reaction time but like in the name, it’s a test. I think that just doing the activities in class is enough of a test. There’s nothing fun or creative in it, it’s kinda like taking exams . . . but rather than using your brain, you use your muscles.

Jade, Grade 10

Whenever the day in the week comes for us to go outside with our running shoes and jackets on I find myself dreading it. I find myself think up some way to get out of walking/running. In my opinion, I feel that running is a type of public embarrassment, no matter how private it may seem to the teacher or other classmates. It may seem ironic, how PE stands for Physical Education but some people feel it should stand for Public Embarassment.

Julia, Grade 9
of trying to understand experience in order to help students realise their own healthiness: a way that I think of as moving for pleasure (not the scientifically and politically defined concept of Health). The following is a narrative based on teaching field notes taken from September 2014-July 2015.

A conversation around moving for pleasure

It is Tuesday morning and still dark out.
Fifty four Grade 9s are in the gym preparing to run to the float plane dock.
After a day and night of heavy rain we make our way out along the valley trail through the forest and out to the lake that has burst its banks.
Some run ahead splashing and pushing each other, shouting in excitement.
Some jog quietly by themselves and some walk, huddling together for warmth.
I see one at the front stop and take her shoes and socks off to carry while she runs (up to her knees) through a flooded section of the trail!
I try to follow with others but after about fifty yards my feet start to go numb and we turn back laughing, and shrieking: gasping for air.
When we return to the gymnasium there is a large game of dodgeball* going on.
Four students sit at the back of the room on top of a pile of mats
I sit with them, stretching.
As I watch the game I see a student get hit by a large ball and fall backwards onto the floor: picking herself up she makes her way toward the back of the gym
I go to see if she is okay
“I’m not upset because of the hit, it’s the way they just laughed and carried on . . .”
she says with tears in her eyes.
Returning to the students at the back of the gym I ask one if she likes the game
“Yes . . .” she says
“Really?” I ask, “…do you play it in Spain?”
“…Yes . . . we do,” she replies smiling.
I ask her . . . what number would you say this game is? … on a scale of, 1-10?
If, 1 is the worst and, 10 is the most enjoyable game you have ever played,
“I dunno …” she says, “… maybe 8 …or 9?”
“Wow! I was thinking that you didn’t like it! OK show me…go and play…”
As she walks over to the game Kathy (another international student), who was sitting next to her tells me “. . . that’s what I would say in Switzerland to the teacher if they asked me if I liked the game . . . but if a friend asked I would say something different . . .”
Then David to my right adds quickly,
“… yeah . . . you say one thing to the teacher and something else to your friends . . .”
“So if I want to understand your experience of physical education how can I . . .”
I say “… if you don’t tell me your real feelings?”
“… GOOD QUESTION!” David responds moving closer to me, “… like you don’t see everything - you only see part of it – you don’t see what happens in the changing rooms - you only see what happens out here.”

The start of this conversation with David, (Sofia and Kathy), that lasted a whole semester, reveals the extent to which students’ feelings are often hidden from teachers and the difficulty of attempting to understand the experience of physical education. Many students may feel unable to express their feelings during activities and class discussions or to a teacher who asks and genuinely cares and so in this kind of inquiry we have to work hard at understanding what is happening in lessons for students. Epicurean hermeneutic pedagogy (a pedagogy of pleasure) emphasizes the task of opening up conversation and keeping the conversation open, not shying away from the task of talking about feelings and pretending that ‘all is okay’: that everyone is happy. What might be the effect of regularly asking students how they are feeling and listening attentively? In what ways might discussing and sharing feelings help? Gadamer (1960) says that a genuine conversation broadens perspective and leads its participants: a conversation around pleasure might expand the comfort zone of students and help inspire movement. It may lead to a shared understanding (a fusion of horizons) helping a class and their teacher ‘connect.’

Here I start thinking of the Epicurean exercise of building friendship: a process of admitting and sharing feelings and of asking for, receiving and giving advice. I think also of the Epicurean tenet that ‘only friends can give advice’. The task of cultivating friendship (a sense of trust and solidarity) in secondary school
physical education is not easy: it takes patience and humility. To help, I think of friendship as a verb rather than noun: I think of enacting friendship through simple acts of kindness that may be conveyed in conversation or in my physical movement, (listening and not judging, admitting and sharing weaknesses/concerns with someone, putting away equipment for them, picking them up when they fall over, congratulating them heartily).

… At the end of the lesson I call the students in and congratulate them on the run. “WOOOH! That water was cold!!!… did you see Kathy running through it?!” The class laughs. I ask if they had enjoyed the game, and after waiting a little … I ask if anyone felt a little scared: “Or was it just me … with so many balls flying around?! – you guys can throw hard!!”

I begin asking them what changes they might make to dodgeball to make it safer and more enjoyable for everyone … but there’s not enough time left to draw out a conversation … Standing in front of them, just before they rush off to change, I smile and extend a hand to the girl who got hit to help her to her feet: “… are you OK?” I ask.

Afterwards I find David waiting to see me. He tells me he has thought of a way for me to get to know the experience of students in PE,

“… what if I talk to people in my grade about their experiences and then tell you?”

“That would definitely be an insight but I feel it’s a bit like getting you to spy on them … how about journaling?”

“… yeah, maybe …”

Throughout the year David did not write.
Looking back he probably felt he did not have enough time, there was so much going on in his life. I didn’t push him to start writing his feelings down.

Our conversation seemed to hinge on me allowing him to talk.
I didn’t want to create any formal structure outside of ‘conversation’ and I didn’t want to coerce a conversation that seemed to be emerging naturally and so I just listened.

In what ways might a genuine conversation with one student inform the way I teach a class?

“What about getting a discussion group together?” I asked.

“… yeah, and I think we should focus on those who have had bad experiences in PE …” he says.

The next week, David waited behind after a lesson and told me he had thought of someone for the focus group,

“… and I asked around if people had had bad experiences in PE … most of it was like pretty small stuff like making a mistake, falling over or messing up in front of
others and being laughed at – getting called names … like last year in PE people would like laugh at you and say stuff under their breath … people don’t think it’s a big deal and it kind of goes unnoticed by the teacher,… so they don’t change it …”

We talked as I was putting away equipment.

“Some people get picked on all the time, like Jonas who’s basically been picked on ever since elementary. In gym lessons they would always say and do stuff to him … they used to call him retard …”

As David talks I feel a sudden flood of emotion
I feel privileged to be in the middle of this conversation . . .
what might be the effect of those who have had bad experiences telling their stories? In what ways might their stories move the way we think about what is most important in physical education?
What might be the effect of listening to them attentively?
The conversation helped me see the need to cultivate an environment of trust and respect: I saw the educational relevance of attending to all of ‘the small stuff’ that easily goes unnoticed
– that may be undermining a student’s ability to move.
I thought of creating activities that might assuage (smooth) the way and ways of growing interpersonal relations.
I set up a variety of simple teambuilding exercises around themes of communication, trust and problems solving and worked with the class to create a guide for ways of being that cultivate pleasure: this was the Grade 9 class that had been quite wild).
Students co-created a schedule and worked in pairs to lead activities.

As well as working from and with the student body to learn about the experience of being in physical education, I need to participate, experience and write about the experience of physical education from my own perspective. Gadamer (2013) talks of *theoria* the original philosophical way of giving oneself over to an event in order to know more fully what happens, (“… being outside oneself is the positive possibility of being wholly with something else…” [p. 127]). In Epicurean times ‘theoros’ were delegates sent to festivals to know by ‘being there’ what happened. This is an alternative way of attempting to understand the experience of teaching and learning that contrasts starkly with modern *theoretical*
approaches that seek technical-rational understanding. What are the sensations and feelings of being and moving in physical education lessons? Epicurus asks me to trust sensations and question my preconceptions and feelings in order to know better what is happening. An embodied focus upon understanding the experience of physical education (taking part, trusting sensations and questioning feelings with other participants: what happened and what did it feel like?) might help me understand and cultivate an environment conducive to pleasure.

The shared hermeneutic task of understanding embodied experience (theoria) is very human and always in flux: it requires a sustained willingness to move and explore the experience of moving with and for students. Moving together for pleasure holds the potential not only to ‘expand horizons of understanding’ but to inspire and captivate. Experiencing sensations of pleasure (peace, freedom, joy and laughter) together in physical education may dissolve the invisible barriers that divide and disconnect us, allowing a more frank and meaningful conversation that is necessary to community.

“Hermeneutic pedagogy requires a giving of oneself over to conversation with young people and building a common shared reality in a spirit of self-forgetfulness a forgetfulness which is also a form of finding oneself in relation to others” (Smith, 1999 p. 39).

… Later in the year David’s class participated in an introductory weight training course (6 lessons) at the local rec. centre and walking back to school after one lesson I asked him if he enjoyed the lesson and if he was going to use the weight room in his own time.

“It’s weird though, those exercises they were showing us – my body just doesn’t do those things I can’t move like everyone else …”

I talk about us all having our own way of moving
I talk about technique not being the most important thing
“… the most important thing maybe is that you move your own way eh? You don’t have to go to the weight room – it’s just one way of exercising - a lot of people find it’s just not for them …”
As we walk David tells me he was shocked that he got an A in his mid-term report for PE.
“I usually get a low grade in PE – why did I get an A?!”
“You’ve participated in all of the activities and persevered even when you find activities difficult … and you’ve been actively trying to understand what is happening in this course in terms of relations, - you even tried to help find ways that it could be better for others. In a course that is all about healthy living that’s what it is all about!”
I talk about the irrelevance of standardized testing and the pitfalls of summative assessment when trying to encourage people to move and be physically active, “Health and fitness professionals stopped using standardized testing and replaced it with a more personalized approach a long time ago.”
He tells me how most teachers post grades in the classrooms for everyone to see: “… they don’t post names – they use student numbers instead … but everyone finds out the student numbers —. and then they make comments to others about their grades …”
I wonder out loud about what might happen if there were no grades – might it be more relaxing for all, but then I think to myself how ‘getting an A in PE’ had shocked David and started this conversation perhaps leading him to begin questioning and realizing his own healthiness. In a practice of emptiness (of wholeness/holistic practice) it is not the system I guess but the way you engage with it that matters.

During Grade 9 David was going through a momentous period of change, his parents were getting divorced and he was adjusting to living in two different places: he was suffering from a medical condition for which he was having exploratory tests at hospitals in the city and he was experiencing socially transitioning gender. One of the best things about this inquiry was that by taking a more thoughtful, hermeneutic approach (paying more attention to detail: words, body language, events and feelings) I was more aware and able to respond to his situation than if I had been focused on technical goals and outcomes. Being present and listening to David built trust and support: our conversation about the
experience of physical education allowed us to begin understanding from different perspectives the difficulties of going to school and of participating in physical education. He had taken it upon himself to convey the feelings of other students in physical education and towards the end of the course to share his own situation and through all of this my perspective was raised. The overall process of ‘attempting to understand’ also seemed to have a positive influence on the rest of the class. I remember standing on the sidelines with David during one lesson asking him questions and listening, getting the distinct feeling that the rest of the class were aware of us and what we were doing as they played. The class that was difficult to teach (‘quite wild’) had started to settle down. Listening to David seemed to make a difference to my communications with the other students. It felt like a more ‘genuine conversation’ (that could inform and lead my practice) had begun to emerge. Is this an example of how friendship, (the “spiritual exercise par excellence” (Hadot, 1995, p. 89) for Epicureans may serve to universalize, raise the level of consciousness above self, and bring about a sense of community in secondary school physical education?

At the beginning of the year David had talked about changing the experience of being in physical education and in particular the level of suffering (social embarrassment, anxiety, physical hurt) caused by ‘interpersonal relations’. While Epicurean hermeneutic pedagogy accepts that we cannot eradicate suffering it places emphasis on the task of opening up and listening to feelings of students and responding in a way that cultivates an atmosphere of trust and solidarity. Helping students turn towards and become aware of feelings is an
effort to allow them to separate from emotions that may constrain and limit their capacity to move. In a practice empty of standards I find it rewarding to see students who might have given up, moving in their own way alongside those who play serious sport outside of school, moving together for pleasure…laughing and smiling.

When it comes to thinking about moving in relation to the modern concept Health, Epicurus broadens our view: instead of thinking about Health scientifically Epicurus asks us to think from a more human angle. We tend to live our whole lives inured to the simple but profound privilege of being alive (the pleasure of existence and pleasure of movement contained in the body). The desire to achieve material goals encloses and prevents us from realising the ‘healthiness of the moment’ (see Appendix B). Generally, we interpret Horace’s ‘carpe diem’ as an imperative to ‘seize the day!’ and so we miss Horace’s original idea: which was to let the day (the pleasure of existence) seize (read move) us! In the modern age we live towards seizing the world (making it our own), as if it were possible, and we educate the younger generation to follow. Epicurus asks us as educators to risk focusing on natural (embodied) pleasure and happiness: to focus on developing students’ awareness of and receptivity to the empty (read whole) pleasure of existence through movement. Epicurus broadens the way we might think about promoting ‘health’ by asking us to meditate on the simplicity of life and what makes us happy as human beings: he asks us to listen to the cry of the flesh ‘not to be hungry, thirsty or cold’, and in doing so intimates the importance of also listening to the cry of soul not to be abandoned, unheard or
unloved, the need for young people to move and feel at home in their bodies and the World.

*In the above narrative Dodgeball illustrates the kind of activity that may be counterproductive to the task of cultivating pleasure (trust and solidarity) in physical health education. An Epicurean sensibility (not to suffer or cause suffering) has led me to veto the game. If students ask me now (as they often do during a course) if they can play dodgeball I say: “You’re getting older and bigger and some of you can throw really hard – do you really want to play a game where there’s a high chance someone could get hurt? I want this to be a place where everyone feels safe to move and play without worrying about anything. Does that make sense? I’m being sensitive right?” In this way, dodgeball provides an opportunity to communicate my caring ‘Epicurean sensibility’: to say what it is I am trying to do as a physical educator and the conversation may lead into the way we live curriculum.

(Weekend notes-February, 2018)

Not assessing health in secondary school physical education

When I worked in the world of corporate health and fitness we would never have thought of offering group health and fitness assessments. The idea of fitness testing was intimidating to many who came to inquire about the gym. With adults who wanted to start exercising we took a sensitive and personal approach: we did all we could to take away the intimidation of coming to the gym so that people would be more likely to attend and adhere to their exercise plan. The aim was for them to enjoy visiting the gym. For example, in an effort to dispel any fear of fitness testing we stopped booking ‘Fitness Assessments’ and started making introductory ‘Lifestyle Consultations’ instead. In these consultations we took away the scientific language that surrounded what we were doing: took away the normative charts for health, along with weighing scales and skin fold calipers, to reveal the task and skill of listening to and becoming more in touch with
feeling of being in one’s own body, because that was the skill people who wanted to feel healthy needed. The way we practice secondary school physical education might reflect a similar approach: we might take away the normative charts and tests for assessing progress to allow the student to begin practicing the skill of being in touch with the feeling of being in their body: attuning to the feeling of healthiness contained in their own bodies and in physical movement.

Towards the end of the data collection period in this inquiry I realised that for the first time in 12 years I had forgotten to conduct the fitness testing in PE. Through a consuming process of ‘journaling’: every day and on weekends I had become ‘sidetracked’ by a different conversation with students around feelings and the pleasure of movement … and a different kind of curriculum had emerged: a curriculum that felt just as rewarding (if not more). Not remembering to conduct the fitness testing felt like a betrayal of tradition: the plaques on the gymnasium wall commemorating record scores for many years gone by. I asked the students how not having fitness testing had influenced their experience of PE, and after reading their posts and talking with them I was surprised to hear that by not doing the fitness testing I had allowed some to feel they could trust me more. Forgoing fitness testing provides an example of how emptiness (that in this instance led to not attempting to assess health related fitness) may provide a fuller more meaningful experience for students. A pursuit of pleasure cultivates feelings of trust and care that may encourage students to connect with develop their own style of moving.

(Weekend Notes-June, 2015)

How did not having fitness testing influence your experience of Grade 10 PHE?

It made it more positive, more comfortable. I didn’t have to worry about improving or feeling less to someone who did improve. I was more happy and enjoyed gym a lot more. It also made my relationship with Mr. train more positive knowing I could trust him not to make us do, 12 minute runs. It was great.

Poppy, Grade 10
Acknowledging Health as a technically and politically defined construct and choosing to prioritise the pleasure in physical education may be quite sensible. Moving pleasure to the top of the educative agenda allows time for a deeper exploration of the experience of being and moving in physical education that technically defined models of health education tend to foreclose. Turning towards the canon (sensations, anticipations, feelings and thoughts) and conversation to understand and explore the experience of being and moving in physical education asks students and teachers to be more in touch with the feeling of healthiness. Learning to live and move according to pleasure opens up the idea that being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kai</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fitness Tests that we have done in previous years forced us to do better. Not having to do them made the class more enjoyable and less competitive. We were able to focus on objectives of sports and strategies. The dreaded, 12 minute run was definitely my least favourite part of this assessment. Instead of making us reflect on our abilities, it made us compare with our peers. Doing a short run to the fire hall or a jog in the forest is a fun alternative.

If I didn’t do as good as my partner or my friends, I always felt really down afterwards. The twelve minute run was especially bad, because putting running and endurance in the same sentence means I’m toast. Anything longer than a hundred metre sprint I have a lot of issues with. Another thing that I disliked about fitness testing was when other people were waiting to use the station and so they were watching me. I don’t like it when people watch me, in P. E. especially because I always think they are judging my physical abilities, which are not very good. I am fine if I am judged by my personality; it they don’t like that then I wouldn’t want to be friends with them either. However, I feel that being judged by physical attributes is unfair and I don’t like it.

Because for the past 2 years fitness testing has been part of gym class, my PE experience was changed a bit, but not for the negative. It was nice not to have the added pressure especially because I do my own fitness testing at the gym for extra-curricular sports. It gave the class more time to collaborate, bond and have fun together.
happy is important. All of us are prone to various forms of worry: what we need is a way of cultivating a strong sense of everyday pleasure and contentment. Gadamer (1996) proposes that health manifests in a sense of inner accord: “… it is the rhythm of life, a permanent process in which equilibrium re-establishes itself” (p. 114). While inner accord cannot be measured, it must somehow be taken into account by an educator. Gadamer (1996) talks of feeling (palpare) and the ancient art of “drawing out the localisation” (p. 108) or source of suffering in order to alleviate it. In living curriculum with student as educators we provide a kind of treatment (or care) for them and from an Epicurean perspective it is important to find a way that is healing:

What is important is to recognise the other in their otherness, as opposed, for example, to the tendency towards standardisation promoted by modern technology, the autocratic control of education by school authorities or the blind insistence on authority by a teacher or a father. Only by means of such recognition can we hope to provide genuine guidance which helps the other to find their own independent way. Treatment always also involves a certain granting of freedom. It does not just consist in laying down regulations or writing out prescriptions.

(Gadamer, 1996 p. 109)

This quote appears to speak directly to a secondary school physical health educator and to the educational relevance of ‘moving for pleasure’ (which Epicurus positions as synonymous with health). Gadamer’s ‘granting of freedom’
to students resonates with an Epicurean sensibility to allow “sufficient degrees of freedom” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 175) for students to choose to move and experience the pleasure of movement: the pleasure of being in their own bodies: of being healthy. This is not an easy path to follow for the secondary school teacher. Moving away from dominant models of learning and health promotion that tend to define, prescribe and evaluate movement towards a more open responsive cultivation of pleasure and the pleasure of movement may feel radically different (and at times very difficult) for an educator. Epicurus suggested that such work is necessary for any kind of transformation when he said that in order to practice a real philosophy that heals educators “… must free themselves from the prison of general education and politics” (Inwood & Gerson, 1994, p. 39).

From the ancient Greek (and Epicurean) perspective, “… health manifests itself in a general sense of well-being” and “shows itself … where … we are open to new things, ready to embark on new enterprises and, forgetful of ourselves, scarcely notice the demands and strains which are out upon us. This is what health is” (Gadamer, 1996, p. 112). This may be the importance of experiencing pleasure and the pleasure of movement in secondary school physical health education: moving for pleasure provides a way of growing for both students and their teacher, (see Appendix A). Gadamer (1960; 2013) talks of experience leading to more experience (an experienced person being open to new activities and ways of moving). Pleasure based physical education is oriented around experiencing the pleasure of existence and the pleasure of movement and experiencing a growing absence of anxiety. It seeks to expand a student’s boundaries, to widen their
comfort zone and range of movement in the world. Kretchmar (2006) talks of physical education offering students an expanding array of ‘I cans’ and a pursuit of pleasure relates to this in that a sustained conversation around pleasure may “serve to humanise the fundamentally unequal relationship” that exists between a physical educator and student, expanding the student’s sensation of freedom in secondary school physical education.
RELAXING SPORT

Secondary school physical education has a tradition of using Sport to strengthen and develop an individuated sense of self, (-identity, -confidence, -esteem, -image). Psychological models of learning underpin efforts to help students travel along Callois’ ‘continuum of play’ (from paidiae towards ludos), mastering the skills and complexity of sports, understanding and performing them to higher levels. In this way the modern construct of sport feeds a pursuit of self (an accumulation of self-esteem), occluding an alternative more open pursuit of play and moving for pleasure.

Schools often recognise this and create two ‘streams’ of secondary school physical health education: one for students who want to take sport seriously and another for those who want to take a more recreational course. Few schools focus on providing one program to teach all students the benefit of moving and playing for no other reason than pleasure. The ancients might suggest devoting more time to play (paidia) in secondary schools as a way to enhance students’ ability to connect with what is other, to realise the profound pleasure of existence, and to be happy. Foregrounding play (the original element of sport that has receded with time) is a way of cultivating receptivity to pleasure and natural happiness. In what ways might adopting play and a more playful approach to the task of living curriculum help students be more receptive to the pleasure of movement in secondary school physical education? In what ways might play act to counterbalance the modern pursuit of self (see Appendix B) that tends to isolate, alienate and lead to depression?
Physical Education as Play-Work (Wendy Russell, 2015)

Russell (2015) talks of a disposition in education to reduce and use play to achieve developmental ends when in reality the complex phenomenon of play cannot be reduced. The true value of play lay in its wholeness. Entangled in tradition we tend to work under an assumption that we can break play down and establish causal links between certain types of play and the development of the child. Ethical, epistemological and ontological assumptions lead to instrumental applications of play and the privileging of some forms of play over others. Russell (2015) argues for an ‘intra-action’ of ethics, ontology and epistemology: there is no primacy: nothing is prior but all at once: as educators we are always ‘entangled’ and what we need is some kind of ‘ethico-onto-epistimo-ology’ that reconfigures play-work around what is “relational, affective and affecting, embodied, situated and irreducible to representation in language” (p. 192). It is, suggests Russell (2015), through cultivating an ethic of “openness, playfulness, humility, patience and restraint” (p. 200) in our practice that we may begin to broaden perspective and transform the experience of being in physical education for students. This description of play-work resonates with the idea of creating an emptier (relaxed) curriculum and a therapeutic application of pleasure in secondary school physical education.

Playful Ways of Inter-being

Openness is described by Russell (2015) as “being comfortable with not knowing, in terms of both children and play work colleagues as others and in terms of play's unpredictability and spontaneity . . .” (p. 200): playfulness is an
attitude of ‘not taking play too seriously (as it is far too important for that)...’: humility, “... requires an uncertainty regarding ourselves ... in terms of our relationships with children and especially children at play, ‘we work in a field of not knowing’” (Russell, p. 200). Patience and restraint involves not demanding that the other explain or define themselves in a way that we can understand. It is perhaps a disposition of not doing, of waiting and seeing. This is not to be confused with doing nothing. It requires a mindfulness and openness to the unknown and to uncertainty, perhaps even a sense of wonder at what may emerge rather than anxiety at what might happen . . . an embodied sensibility, which responds to its proximal relationship to the other through a mode of wonderment. (Russell, p. 200)

This description of the mindful play-worker helps me begin to think of play as a construct around which to foster pleasure and happiness in secondary school physical education. The ancient concept of play (briefly described below) has potential if taken up to broaden the concepts of competition and competence contained in sport: an emphasis on play helping to draw out the interdependent aspect of each phenomena: together we strive for excellence (com-petito) and together we venture with others (com-petere). Play may also return us to a broader understanding of ‘success’ contained in sport: allowing us to embrace the ecological aspect of success and what it means to succeed as a human race: play being a process through which community develops: a process by which we
continue: a way for taking up ‘the lamp of life’ (Lucretius) that sustains us as human beings.

Physical Education as a ‘Pleasure-sphere’

Robert Pfaller (Pleasure Principle, 2014, pp. 73-98) contrasts the work of Johan Huizinga (1938) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* and Roger Callois (1961) *Man, Play and Games* to help us understand both the recession of play in physical education and its potential as a focus for any practice interested in promoting the pleasure of movement in physical education. Play has the potential to captivate, enchant and absorb a person and to dissolve self-consciousness providing a temporary escape from the seriousness of everyday life. Huizinga theorises a ‘play-sphere’ in which we enter into a different psychic-state, the ‘hallowed spot’ in his theory (Pfaller, 2014, p. 76) being a place where people enter into play of their own accord. Perhaps this is what Kretchmar (2000, p. 169) alludes to when asking educators to cultivate playgrounds in physical education that ask students to surrender themselves to them: maybe he is asking for us to think of ways that secondary school physical education might be more of a play-sphere: more of an invitation to move? In what ways might play and a more playful approach in physical education help cultivate an environment and atmosphere that invites and communicates the intrinsic value of pleasure?

There is a history of resistance in the field of physical education to playing (and moving) for no other reason than play (movement). Discourse tends to write off pedagogy that embraces pure play as superficial, defining such practice as ‘rolling out the ball’ or ‘supervised recess’ (Hellison & Templin, 1991, p. 45). We
tend to describe who we are and what we do in secondary school physical education using a technical, goal oriented rationale or, as Russell (2015) intimates, we reduce play to achieve quantifiable, developmental outcomes. In an era of widespread unhappiness and rising levels of loneliness (see Appendix B) it may be beneficial for students in secondary schools to experience and practice moving playfully for pleasure: to realise the pleasure contained in a more playful application of sport.

Sport’s original attraction lay in it not being real: our love of playing relies on our knowing that play is not a serious endeavour. The emptiness of play, of playing for no extrinsic reason, is a lack of seriousness that we give ourselves to when we play and it is this ‘lack’ of seriousness, (that Huizinger calls the ‘sacredness’ of play), that becomes lost if we take it too seriously, (read attempt to use play to progress students towards learning outcomes prescribed by sport) in secondary school physical education.

Pfaller (2014) points to the spiritual value of play, and the ancient idea that games are ‘gifts from God’, that when played for the sake of play allow us to experience the pleasure of being human. From an Epicurean perspective cultivating a ‘play-sphere’ in physical education holds the potential to afford students the fullness of pleasure (peace of mind, inner freedom a good indwelling spirit and contentment, joy, exultation and delight): it is synonymous with cultivating a ‘pleasure-sphere’. Pfaller (2014) refers to an increased intensity of affect generated by what we might think of as ‘pure play’ (play and playful movement that happens for no other reason). Huizinga’s ‘sacred seriousness’
suggests a focus on pure play in physical education might help it become an almost holy place for students where they can experience and celebrate Life:

One of play’s fundamental operations is establishing spatial and temporal borders – between the playing field and its environment, between the length of the game and the time beyond it…This demarcation establishes the decidedly celebratory atmosphere, and the greater involvement of participants …affective conditions …are also the result of such spatial and temporal demarcations …the hallowed spot (is essentially) a playground. (Pfaller, 2014, p. 76)

This points to the potentially deeply educational value of offering an environment and atmosphere in secondary school physical education where students can experience pleasure and the pleasure of movement. Play may help diffuse not only the seriousness of sport but the dominant instrumental and developmental worldview that dominates secondary school physical education. It may bring back the idea of physical education potentially being an experience of something much bigger than the individual self. Through this more relaxed (broad) lens we may start to view sport as offering the kind of movement that truly moves us as human beings.

Formally speaking, there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for purposes of sheer play. The turf, the tennis-court, the chess board and the pavement-hopscotch, cannot formally be distinguished from the temple or the magic circle. (Huizinger, as cited in Pfaller, 2014, p. 77)
The Fullness of Pleasure Contained in ‘Pure Play’

Pfaller (2014) refers to Spinoza’s play of the world: play is a phenomenon that cannot be mastered or conquered. In entering into it people forget their individuated sense of self and experience a connection with what is other. Embracing play and adopting an attitude of playfulness in physical education may be relaxing, therapeutic and educational for all. In play ‘purposive relations’ are ‘suspended’ temporarily (Gadamer, 1960, p. 105): play represents an order: the sustainable continuity of play ‘following itself’ offering an ease,

the ease of play - which naturally does not mean that there is any real absence of effort but refers phenomenologically to the absence of strain … experienced subjectively as relaxation. The structure of play absorbs the player … and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, … the actual strain of existence … This is also seen in spontaneous tendency to repetition that emerges in the player and in the constant self-renewal of play. (Gadamer, 2013, p. 109)

Through play and playful movement students may experience the pleasure of moving ‘freely’. From this perspective a playful approach may not only be more engaging but more sustaining for students and teachers.

If we want young people to surrender themselves to movement (for the sake of the pleasure contained) maybe we should not attempt to assess or judge their ability to move. Maybe in order to allow students to move more playfully we must accept play as something more than what can be measured. As an educator in pursuit of pleasure I allow students to play and I join in, intervening when I see
a need to help or ensure safety, but I do not attempt to formally ‘assess’ a student’s ability to play. I never stand with a clipboard, watching and writing about their movement. I attempt to give feedback in an informal, joyful and celebratory way. If I try to ‘improve’ anything it might be the collective experience of play with ideas on how to make a game more inclusive or enjoyable: “Any issues with this game? What changes might we make?” A less serious and more playful approach encourages students to relax and move more freely in their bodies: to smile and laugh. I whoop and holler their names out loud and through joining in (surrendering myself) I begin to understand more clearly the task of cultivating pleasure in secondary school physical education. Entering into the play of curriculum allows me to focus more fully on understanding and responding to the natural desires and needs of students.

Playfully Dismissing the idea of ‘Assessment’ in Physical Education

In Gadamer’s Truth and Method (1960) the notion of how to play a game well and the assessment of play is questioned. A game or activity in physical education makes demands on the players and in effect judges them: it is a test in itself. The experience of playing and being left to play (of being tested by the game or activity) may be enough and the effect of attempting to assess play counterproductive: it may even have the effect of discouraging play. To attempt to assess a student while they play may constrain movement or in some way inhibit it. This reminds me of a ‘Game Performance Assessment Indicator’ (GPAI) that I developed with a fellow teacher as part of an assignment for my Master’s degree in Teaching Games for Understanding at UBC. While the assessment tool (a peer
assessment tool) was awarded, 100 percent and looked good on paper in application it took too long for students to implement: it took away the time students needed to play. Over time and with the students I pared the game performance assessment indicator (GPAI) down to simple feedback from peer to peer, focussing on discrete aspects of play (for example when playing badminton aspects of ‘hitting space’, ‘returning to base after a shot’, ‘hitting long’ and ‘using a variety of strokes’). By taking part, observing and conversing with students I find that methods of assessment (on top of the natural test that playing games provides) often deter students from fully entering into play. Not assessing allows students to begin to hear and respond to the silent invitation of play and it allows time to make adjustments that allow play to begin to flourish. This idea of not assessing so that more can happen requires trusting and believing in the appeal of play and patiently devoting time to it. Eventually through seeing the value of a more playful approach I have put the idea of formal assessment aside and focussed on giving friendly informal feedback through conversation and discussion.

When it is entered into voluntarily, a game becomes a presentation of the people playing it (a portrait) and in this sense also it may be misguided to attempt to assess play in that we should not attempt to aesthetically differentiate or evaluate students. This resonates with the ancient belief that games are gifts handed down to us that when played provide a spiritual outlet or expression of who we are. We appreciate this readily when we watch young children playing games but as they mature into secondary school students we tend to prioritise a
different form of adult play called sport that is defined by performance indicators. An over-emphasis on assessment and a preoccupation with progressing intentional skills in physical education may prevent students from entering into play and may stop a game from truly being played (experienced). I have found not assessing movement bestows trust and allows it to unfold, not assessing creates an openness for students to move into, an open invite to play allows students to enter into play voluntarily. By experiencing the unconditional embrace of playing and moving voluntarily, students may begin to feel a sense of belonging in physical education and an affiliation with their bodies and the freedom they contain. Although it may sound strange because it contrasts starkly with the learning theories that are used to implement modern physical health education curriculum, a practice of emptiness that focusses on a playful cultivation of pleasure may be what allows physical education to be a more meaningful experience for students. Cultivating a child-like disposition to move for pleasure (by relaxing sport into play) holds the potential to broaden perspective, transform ways of being and cultivate happiness.

Relaxing Sport towards Playful Movement

When I was on study leave I received an email from Kevin (a colleague of mine for the last, 13 years who is an experienced teacher of 33 years:"

Hi All you PE types,
I wanted to share a story with you to prove that you can teach an old dog (me) new tricks, Pete you would have been proud of me, the way I let things flow.
I was doing hurdles today and I was prepared to do my plan of showing them the fastest way to go over the hurdles so they could win a race. Before I did that I let them go over the hurdles a bunch of times to see if they would be able to figure it out. I was using the blue mats folded
on edge as the hurdles (6 lanes x 4 hurdles each in the gym). So they started off kind of doing it right and after the third or fourth time they started doing 360’s over the hurdles, and cartwheels over them, and roundoffs, and going over sideways, and just as I was about stop them all and stop all the laughing that they were doing and good times they were having to make sure they were doing it the “right” way I stopped myself and thought “Welcome to the new pe curriculum”. So we had creative hurdle jumping and also they got into trying to go fast as well once they had the fun. Let it flow.

In Kevin’s email I hear the suggestion that through a focus on pleasure in our practices we may become aware as educators of constructs including our own habits and predispositions that may constrain the experience of movement in secondary school physical education unnecessarily. I hear the value of relaxing curriculum so that students may move outside the instrumental/developmental lens: the educative (transformational) value of viewing the experience of physical education in relation to pleasure. Pleasure questions the necessity of prioritising certain “right” ways of moving and overtly accepts the equal value of “all of the laughing” and “the good times” students might have in physical education. A pursuit of pleasure asks me to explore the more undefined and open space a ‘less serious’ (read more play-full) curriculum might offer students.

**Free Play and the Cultivation of Receptivity to the Pleasure of Movement**

**Wed Oct, 22nd**

Students filter into the gym and begin sliding out of the changing rooms in their socks carrying their running shoes, asking if they are still getting the equipment out for free play before they go outside. Some start playing and Kevin talks to a peer tutor before the warm up.

“Shall we let this go a little longer?!” asks Kevin with a smile. The atmosphere seems to be contagious, with friends pulling each other into a wide variety of games. Students swing on the ropes at the back of the gym laughing and helping each other get on and off. Five are skipping double-dutch style, a couple are hula-
hooping and four practice their juggling…. students who are playing a game of keep up with a volleyball start dancing and singing along to the music: and a small group of boys playing soccer start dancing over the ball before passing it on: and a rapid game of tag springs up around the room. Spontaneous dancing and singing is great to see at the beginning of lessons and it is quite powerful in that it breeds a relaxed feeling of joy that threatens to spill over into other activities. This free play at the beginning of each lesson may be used to cultivate an atmosphere that invites movement. It is a conscious move to devote time at the beginning of lessons for students to play and move with friends free from instruction. An unspoken invitation to play at the beginning of every lesson is an effort to cultivate a feeling of joy and belonging: students run out form the changing rooms to get to the equipment that has been placed outside of the store room. I circulate and join in the play asking students how they are feeling. Through this regular practice students might begin to associate physical education with pleasure: they may experience feelings of freedom, joy, exultation, delight, solidarity and belonging (friendship).

Before we go outside to run Kevin speaks to the two classes: “there are many benefits to the run and why we do it … as well as the fitness benefits, it’s a sunny day out there today: it has been raining for a while and is going to get a lot colder so today is a good opportunity to get out and enjoy the beautiful environment we live in – it’s also a chance to visit with friends – you can run or walk together which is always good…” He leads a warm up for the two classes and when we go out to run Kevin runs at the front while I walk at the back of the group.

Friday Feb, 27th

What a video this would make! No formal instruction … no interruption of the natural flow of movement – I do not intervene but participate in the play, helping students find equipment and responding to their needs as the lesson progresses. Kyle joins in with friends in a circle game of ‘volleyball’ with one of the big exercise balls which was good to see after the volleyball earlier this week when he left the room in frustration returning to sit dejectedly on the bench: “ I can’t do it …” he had said when I asked him what was wrong. James and Daikichi play basketball taking long shots: they hit the scoreboard high on the wall and immediately look over, anxious about my reaction: “… don’t worry – you didn’t mean it - it’s going to happen … the last scoreboard had lots of dints in it …” I say and they laugh, seemingly relieved I do not ‘over react’. I shoot a few hoops with them and move on to let them play. Paul asks if we have a football or a rugby ball that he can play with and just as I am about to say no, (we keep the footballs and rugby balls in the outside store room and as they are quite dangerous to be used during free play when there are so many students moving freely in the open space), I change my mind and say, “Yes! Look in here …” opening up the store room just outside the gym, “… WOW! This is cool” – he looks around at the tackle bags, balls, footballs and outdoor equipment. I throw him a ball and he smiles. A passing game develops
with three other students and I get drawn into playing. I show them the spin pass and how to drop-kick the ball. The game of volleyball with the large exercise ball is developing into a wild game of keep up that allows heading, kicking and punching with both hands. Two students are playing badminton in one corner (without a net) and I notice one fall over and lie in a heap on the floor. By the time I get to her she is laughing so hard she cannot get up. I take a piece of chalk out of my pocket that’s there from a previous lesson on gymnastics, and as she lays in a ‘splat’ position I draw around her declaring it a crime scene – ‘Look!’ I say as we stand looking at the outline of her body “… it looks like you fell from a building – Splat!” Ten minutes later another student playing in the big ball volleyball falls and I draw another chalk outline of a body on the floor – two crime scenes in one lesson! Two strange body shapes on the floor for others to look at and wonder.

Students leave for water breaks (the fountain is outside the gym in the hallway) red faced and breathing hard before returning into the gym, laughing to carry on playing. One asks if she and her friend can go outside to sit in the sun: (I had left one side door open as an invite to play outside) – “… sure,” I say and they run over to the door. I wait a little before going to see what they are doing. I find them running up and down the snow banks on the side of the basketball court shrieking and laughing: ‘… you look like you need a bucket and spade!’ I say jokingly, ‘… it’s like you are playing on a beach out here!” Sitting in the sun had morphed into climbing and sliding down the snow banks.

Inside the big ball kick-punch-volley-ball game has upped a notch with students shouting encouragement to keep the ball up, laughing at each other’s mistakes: breathing hard, big smiles and beaming eyes. Six are playing badminton games on two courts with no nets and the volleyballs, basketball and rugby ball are still moving. Music plays and the lights on one side of the gym have been switched off and in the far corner of the gym I notice a drop of sunlight (that is coming in from between the side exit doors), ‘hovering’ just above the gymnasium floor. Kyle is lying down with his eyes closed, smiling, practicing his breathing, the drop of sunlight resting on his stomach as it rises and falls with each breath. It is time to put the equipment away, the seventy three minute lesson is over. I turn on the lights and walk over to the store room, “come on - time to put the stuff away – TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL!” I say with a smile to the students who are making their way to the changing rooms still catching their breath.

At the beginning of the aforementioned lesson during the free play the whole class were moving joyfully and Kevin’s words from a Grade 8 lesson earlier in the day, (“should we let this go on for a bit longer?”) had come to me. Kevin had often wondered what might happen if, when the free play was going well, we were not to intervene … not to try and start the lesson and today had seemed like
the perfect time to ‘let it flow.’ I remember turning to my peer tutor Luke (Grade 12), and saying “should we let this go on for a bit longer? Wouldn’t it be great if they could carry on moving with this much energy?!… I bet you they can’t keep this going for the whole lesson.”

Maybe the fact that the students had sustained a high level of joyful participation without direct instruction had had something to do with a patient cultivation of receptivity to the pleasure of movement in my practice: weekly relaxation sessions, student led lessons, visits to the recreation centre and choice day (every Friday). We had practiced being and moving in a more open curriculum together for three months before this lesson ‘happened’. The students had been practicing ‘free-play’ at the beginning of their lessons since the beginning of Grade 8 physical education and maybe they had become receptive to the deep value of experiencing pleasure and the pleasure of movement (relaxed mind, inner freedom and good indwelling spirit, joy, exultation and delight). An extension of free play for the whole lesson had not been planned but we had been working up to it in this inquiry (it had been coming even if I was not aware of it!). When Paul had asked for a rugby ball I was just about to call everyone in to start teaching a lesson. ‘Changing my mind’, saying ‘yes’ to Paul and allowing him to take and play with the ball and then joining in reflected a heightened receptivity to play and the pleasure of movement that was ‘calling out to me from all sides’. I myself had been ‘persuaded’ to carry on playing. Orienting curriculum and pedagogy around pleasure seemed also to have developed my receptivity and a willingness to hear and respond to the call of pleasure that is always there.
I had an experience of a different type of teaching: of trying to leave the whole (73 minute) lesson open, of attempting to let play continue to unfold, and it had been thoroughly absorbing. I felt quite ‘weightless’. The lesson had been a revelation. I felt that I had experienced something new about teaching and talked with my more experienced colleagues about ways that ‘not trying to teach’ or ‘not appearing to be teaching’ could be good teaching. Ron, who had been teaching in the school since its inception was surprised it was the older Grade 10s that did this “… the Grade 8s you might expect to be absorbed in play but the Grade 10s who tend not to be so enthusiastic about PE? – that’s amazing …” My colleagues have often remarked on the decline in enthusiasm in physical education that seems to occur in our school from grade 8 to Grade 10. How did it happen then that the Grade 10s played all lesson without direct instruction?

In the emergent design of a weekly structure, Friday was explicitly called ‘choice day’ when students could choose what to do. Not coming together to plan out the lesson, just carrying on playing ‘freely’ was a different way of enacting choice that had felt quite authentic. Not having to come together to make a plan as a group allowed students to follow a more natural course and the play sphere that had emerged had been sustainable. It had felt like a more natural choice day.

Gradually over the last three years since this lesson happened I have moved away from the term ‘choice’ towards terms such as open play and free-play. This year (2017-18) one class of Grade 10 students began referring to their Friday lesson as ‘Free-day Friday’. Choosing to move may be more of an unspoken thing and the natural inclination to move for pleasure may be cultivated
‘informally and gradually’ by allowing students to move and play together at the beginning of a lesson and then expanding their play without stopping the movement: “do you need a net setting up? … Here – try serving like this?” I talk to the individuals and pairs and small groups of students that emerge during the free play at the beginning of a lesson and I start expanding the games they play and if they respond I try to let the lesson continue to evolve. If a group is playing with the basketballs I bring out the backboards and some colours for them to make teams, and go back to them after a while to suggest modifications that might make their game more inclusive or challenging, ‘can everyone on your team take a shot?… what about playing ‘first team to get everyone to score wins?’ During the free play I set up a net for those playing volleyball and allow them to play their own games while helping one student practice her overhand serve and as the others naturally begin to copy us as we serve to each other across the net the formal lesson begins to take shape. We set up a game: me asking what modifications they might make to allow longer rallies to develop? I move on, putting out some juggling balls, boxing mitts and ropes as invitations for the students who are in pairs and I set up and start playing a target game with another student who appears to be alone. This is a way of progressing a lesson that attempts to invite and continue to invite movement based upon the assumption that by deciding to accept the invitation to move students are more likely to experience the pleasure of movement - more likely to enter a pleasure sphere (and experience a different psychic state). A playful pedagogy works to dissolve the barrier that exists between teacher and student during whole class instruction.
taking away the unnecessary façade of prefacing and summatig each lesson with generalised learning statements. Viewed through the lens of pleasure teaching is more than ‘implementation’ and different from ‘instruction’, ‘coaching’, or ‘facilitation’: it is an experience and encounter with and a response to the call of movement and the feeling of pleasure (peace, freedom and good spirit) contained within it. In practice I think of ‘cultivating’ rather than ‘constructing and managing’ pleasure: tending to the environment, ‘planting a seed’ and providing enough nourishment for movement and growth (emotional, physical, social, mental, spiritual) to unfold. This is the idea of a contemporary Epicurean garden offering therapeutic relief in a secondary school: a place in which students may learn to relax, experience inter-being and friendship, and be receptive to the pleasure of existence and the call of movement.
PART THREE: Curriculum as an Empty Path

An application of emptiness (fullness) in physical education changes tack away from a ‘deficit approach’ that assumes there is a lack of some kind, a lack of health or fitness or technique or know-how in the student body that needs addressing or fixing, to an approach that assumes there is abundance (a fullness) that needs to be allowed to play out, for example, the fullness contained in the student body when experiencing the pleasure of movement. ‘Curriculum as an empty path’ is a metaphor for the journey that opens when an educator starts to believe in abundance: when an educator starts to believe that in reality there is an irreducible wholeness to living curriculum that as a practitioner one may gradually learn to attune to and allow to play out when living curriculum. This might be thought of as the art of teaching: living curriculum according to pleasure with and for students that, if we were to take up in research, may inspire some kind of change in a field that tends to be limited by instrumental and developmental foci. Epicurus asks us to think of more human reasons for physical education; he asks us to think of what we (students and ourselves) need most in order to grow and flourish as human beings.

Into the woods:

“Hi Kevin, I’m thinking of taking a class into the forest for a walk and maybe a game of capture the flag this afternoon -”
“… that would be interesting - I built some more trails in there over the summer… it’s fairly wet at the moment, so you can’t go out into the beaver ponds or close to the lake, and the trails are a bit overgrown and still a little hard to see so it’s pretty easy to get lost,… but it’s doable - maybe it would be good idea for us to walk the trail together first …”
It’s lunchtime. “Let’s walk the reverse way, it’ll be easier and if it takes too long we can just turn back…” Kevin walks ahead pointing out various tripping
hazards, new foot bridges he has made and areas of the trail that still need work and I follow behind listening as he describes his experience of building the trail over the summer. We walk alongside a stream, cottonwoods swaying high above us in the wind as we pick our way through some underbrush out towards the open wetland area. Each time the trail changes direction Kevin stops so I can take note. A large cedar has fallen and smashed apart and the trail zig zags around and then through the tree: we pass through a tight passage walled on either side by the split open tree. As we walk on past the beaver ponds my gaze is drawn to the open sky and mountains to my right. The trail turns away and we duck into a forest. I close my eyes and wait for them to adjust to the darkness: old growth cedar and fir trees loom above and huge stumps left by the loggers during the, 1950’s ‘stand guard’ as we pad along the forest floor. We come to a clearing and pause to take it in, “… this is pretty cool …” Kevin smiles looking up at the high canopy, “… natural air conditioning … gives an idea of what this whole area must have been like before the logging …” I feel like I am in ‘a different place’: things have slowed down. It’s a couple of degrees cooler. I am enveloped in a deep stillness. It feels like I am in a dream. “We should get moving …” Kevin walks along and out onto the playing field with me following, my mind turning to the next lesson. Should I bring them on this walk today? It’s such a wonderful experience and perfect conditions. I have a few concerns about the class being engaged and safe and I find myself questioning what they would learn.

Kevin had shown me a way to experience moving in and with nature with the students. Looking back, I see this walk as a perspective changing exercise that allowed me to begin exploring a slower (more relaxed) form of learning based around aesthesis (sensory experience). At the time I was used to thinking of and describing physical education and my practice in terms of more immediate, measurable outcomes in relation to the concepts of self, health and sport. I see now that the trail offered a way for me and the students to begin moving outside of the developmental lens of learning, to encounter and experience interconnectedness with each other and the world around us.

Carter (Grade 9) bounces along, talking excitedly about building bike trails. He runs in front, picking out the trail for us, “… ooohhh!… do we turn here Mr. Train do we turn here?!?” “…Yes …” I say, wondering at his innate ability to find the way. We come to the fallen cedar that stretches out into the wetlands and
begin going through the ‘passage’ where the tree has shattered apart. The gap is wide enough for only one student to pass through at a time and so the group slows right down: students clambering over the upturned roots and onto the tree that lays on its side … they walk along the horizontal trunk, looking down into the ponds and out towards the mountains. I ask them all (26) to spread out across the tree so I can take a photo.

Just going for a walk with students in regular class time felt very different. I remember feeling quite exposed when taking the photo of the class up on the tree. In the more open undefined space I remember feeling quite uncertain of my role, and how to lead out the learning. I felt it difficult to experience the walk as I had with Kevin and also to allow the students to experience the trail like he had allowed me to. I found myself viewing experience in terms of ‘learning outcomes’. Why couldn’t I relax and just allow this walk be a break from the routine seriousness of school for students?! In a sense the forest was revealing to me my limited notion of learning.

Walking through the forest at lunchtime with Kevin had been a refreshing experience but I seemed not to trust it could be the same for a class of students in physical education. Walking in a large group as a mandatory activity might reduce the feeling of freedom and exploration that the walk had offered me. I seemed not to believe in the power of going for a walk together: or the ability of the forest to offer an escape from the artificiality of school. This lack of belief seemed to undermine my ability to let the forest speak for itself: I was stopping to ask questions, inform students and guide learning. Kevin had introduced me to the trail and the forest very subtly, he did not feel the need to justify the walk too much. He had let me take it in, stopping to pointing out various landmarks and he
had naturally conveyed a sense of wonder and joy that inspired. He devotes much of his life walking and building trails for people to explore, and understands the embodied value of ‘going for a walk.’ This is something that has taken me time to realise and explore in my practice, (the unspoken, embodied value of physical activity).

“Did you see that skull back there Mr. Train? What was that skull?” asked Carter, when I had stopped to allow the class to regroup, “... what skull - I don’t know ... I didn’t see it Carter ... where was it?” I say moving on towards the place where I had planned to play a game of capture the flag. As I start introducing the game and it’s rules, Reid interrupts holding up a little white skull: “look! Here it is ...” he passes me a narrow skull with two big eye sockets and two long brown front teeth curling down from the upper jaw bone “... wow ... it’s a beaver skull ...” We pass it around talking about the long brown teeth.

After making a plan to deposit the beaver skull in the science classroom, we set up teams, rules, and boundaries for a, 20 minute game of ‘capture the flag’. They hide their flags and start playing: running, jumping and hunting for each flag, whipping over tree stumps and ducking under branches as they chase each other. I wander through the forest listening to the sound of their movement and their calls and shouts. Looking out from a small hill I decide to dip down into a small valley and cross a stream that marks the side of the playing area. ‘Maybe I’ll be able sneak in behind the other team and capture their flag’ I think to myself. Just as I am getting drawn into the game I stumble across a spade and an axe stuck in the ground: ‘... What is this?! … I see a hammer driven into a plank of wood and a handsaw sitting in an old wheelbarrow. I am standing on the base of a large ramp leading up to a big drop. It’s a jump! Someone has been in here building a bike jump and it’s a monster!’ Quickly I turn to see of any students have followed me and feel relieved that they haven’t as I do not want to introduce the class to the jumps.

In my heightened awareness of the risk of coming into the forest with a large class of students, the jump had provoked a sudden reaction of fear in me. Outside the normal boundaries of physical education, hidden in the forest, it confronted me with an alternative type of movement. Booth (2009) talks of the gradual codification and de-pleasuring of physical activity that has led to a modern society offering ‘timid freedoms’ and ‘weak choices’ for young people: a society where
ilinx and moving for thrills runs ‘counter culture.’ He highlights prejudice in the
field of physical education against the study and practice of pleasure, (which is
“embodied in individuals, and irreducibly immediate and intimate” (Booth, 2009,
p. 135). In Russell’s words (2015), today we are borne by a system where “…
particular forms of playing (and moving) [emphasis added] are valued over others
for their perceived effectiveness in developing the desired skills and healthy
bodies” (p. 196). I realise now the irony of standing there in the forest on the lip
of that jump (that students had built in their own time!), fearful of inadvertently
introducing a physical education class to the bike jumps and the potential
pleasure, thrill and exultation of flying through the air and landing weightlessly
on the downslope, that they contained.

In this first walk in the woods, I not only encountered an inner reluctance
to relax and allow students to experience the simple pleasure of walking through a
forest, I also encountered an inner resistance to introducing students to an
alternative type of alluring and thrilling movement (ilinx or vertigo).

I have since expanded the way I use the forest trail system to include the
jumps offering the chance for students to walk and run over and through them,
jumping off the peaks and landing in the troughs (there is no bike use permitted in
the forest). Forest activities include walking and running in pairs, map reading,
orienteering, and various teambuilding games plus using the space to inspire
reflection (students for example, choosing locations within the forest that speak to
them as metaphors for their lives).
Moving outside (walking and running, biking on paved trails, snowshoeing and orienteering, and playing forest games) through the fall, winter, spring and summer over the last three years has provided students with a way of experiencing and learning to appreciate and connect the physical environment in which our school is set. I have become more open to the value of this kind of learning, a slow unfolding (broadening of awareness) based upon sensory experience (aesthesis) and to the value of embodied experience and exploring it with students. Over the last three years we have expanded the movement outdoors so that in Grade 9, students cycle to the sailing club for four afternoons of sailing and in Grade 10 students are offered a three day canoeing course.

Walking through the forest now I see the students and myself as part of the nature and am interested in the way we interact and move in it: In what ways might the walk capture their attention (what will they hear, see and feel) and how might this influence the way they move? In what ways might it provide a refreshing break from the school day? The forest walk provides an opportunity for me to explore how the natural landscape invites movement and this acts as a metaphor to inform and expand my thinking and practice as a teacher. It was a couple of weeks after my first walk in the woods that in an effort to provide a sense of adventure I asked Grade 8 students to plan and lead two weeks of indoor activities. The forest that had presented a more open landscape (and a less perceptible path) had inspired me to open up the design of curriculum for students inside the school building.
A theme of risk in a pursuit of pleasure (Smith, 1998)

A pursuit of pleasure has the sense of embarking on an adventurous journey. Smith (1998) outlines a ‘responsible pedagogy of risk’ that requires ‘letting go’ of control while at the same time not abandoning students: a pedagogy that accepts, as a child grows older “… we must confront the possibility of not being needed anymore, or at least not in such an obvious way” (pp. 137-139). As educators the aim is to allow students to find their way: he talks of the difference between over protecting and taking the responsibility to allow students to encounter risk and take responsibility for their own movement. In what ways might pursuing the pleasure of movement in physical education (a venture shot through with space for spontaneous movement to evolve) help secondary students ‘find and be on their way’? In what ways might experiencing such a curriculum help a student move confidently out into the world? A courageous pedagogy of pleasure believes it is through encountering and negotiating a more open curriculum that a student may gain a sense of being in and of the world in terms of a resiliency and robust sense of their own wellbeing.

Relaxing curriculum and allowing an openness in which embodied feelings of pleasure can flourish requires a willingness on the behalf of an educator to take a risk. In a world where young adults are free to take risks (physical, emotional, social, intellectual and financial), Smith (1998) talks of a pedagogical responsibility to “… let go, stand back, observe, listen, appreciate, and respond to their forays into the world … to risk trusting the child to make his or her own way” (p. 12). The risk inherent in moving for pleasure is not akin to a
form of pain to be avoided as taking such a risk may be meaningful for students. Affording the “sufficient degrees of freedom” (DeWitt, 1954, p. 175) students need to experience the pleasure of movement in secondary school physical education requires a certain letting go of control and it requires a different kind of ‘wait time’ (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, pp. 205-206): a sustained patient restraint (Russell, 2015) that may not feel easy for a practitioner used to focussing on prescribed learning outcomes. Movement may appear messy and chaotic to a practitioner who attempts to allow more space and time for movement to develop organically. Smith (1998) suggests, however, that taking up a pedagogical responsibility “… for discerning the risks that children ought to take …” (pp. 12-13) is a deeper form of care that goes beyond, “first level macho, entertainment and escapist values” and transcends “second level personal growth and maturation values.” It requires

an ethic that evolves out of an individual perception of risk tempered by social definitions of appropriate risk taking … expressed in one’s concern for the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and even financial well-being of one’s children. Too often our talk of risk taking falls short of this third level of responsibility. Too often the question of what makes a situation seem risky, especially in situations involving children, is put aside for the sake of managing our fears and instilling a “safety consciousness” in children.

(Smith, 1998, p. 13)
Smith (1998) asks me to think of my “response ability” as an educator in loco parentis overseeing the risk taking of students: the importance of being fully present and responding to what is happening, pointing out possible dangers that they may not see while at the same time seeing the risks they need to take. To live curriculum in a way that students may experience the freedom contained in movement, Smith suggests we think of the place, silence, atmosphere, challenge, encounter, practice, and possibility of risk in our practice. A pursuit of pleasure that allows spontaneous movement to unfold requires the kind of mindful moment to moment practice of attuning to context that holds the potential to raise what Smith (1998; citing Hildebrandt, 1987) refers to as ‘pedagogical consciousness.’

In what ways might physical education be a place designed to let secondary school students take risks: a place that provides some form of challenge that students can respond to and expand their sense of being in the world? The “pedagogical responsibility” (Smith, 1998, p. 13) in a place of risk is to see a direction for exploration and growth and provide a supportive atmosphere, to guide students as they move into spaces that have been designed to invite movement. A practice of pleasure that seeks to invite and persuade movement is based on recognising moments when students would prefer to ‘try it out unassisted’ and affording the space to move without instruction during lessons. Smith asks us to recognise the limits of our involvement as instructors of movement: ‘…beyond which we must grant children the ability to take risks on their own” (p. 23). It is to be expected that ‘our greater awareness of risk’ as adults’ may lead to a tendency to intervene, guide and redirect movement when
teaching. Smith asks educators to consider whose interests are being served when we intervene, the students or ours? As an educator attempting to promote natural affinity with movement I need to “exercise a degree of vigilance” (p. 23) in my thinking about the ‘supposed riskiness of children’s activity’ and develop an ability to respond rather than react to risk and what I may perceive as risky, messy or chaotic movement. Smith asks me to work through my apprehensiveness and appreciate physical education as an ‘encounter’ that requires me to let a young person ‘go their own way’. The task is to cultivate an atmosphere that invites and supports exploratory movement and Smith points out, atmosphere is modulated by modes of pedagogical presence, ways a teacher or parent is present to a child: “atmosphere is affected by the way in which the adult is present for the sake of the child’s explorations” (p. 88). Citing Snyder et al. (1980) Smith contends “Instructing makes the adult feel important but it robs the child of her independence,” (p. 90): genuine supportive pedagogy requires a “committed presence” (p. 92): a participatory approach of “being present, being in the present, and living presently with the child”: attuning to their experience of being and moving in secondary school physical education so that we can see ways of progressing in a way that allows them to expand their horizons of movement. Smith talks of affording students the security of being watched and students feeling they are not alone: it may suffice that we are there with and for them. In an atmosphere of playful exploration the adult–child relation is in constant flux: Smith suggests it is useful to talk of ways of being and modes of presence (supporting, guiding, instructing, evaluating, and to distinguish them as modes of
pedagogical relatedness). Through reflection we can bring a collective sense of security and a thoughtfulness shown by the dispositions which children and adults show towards playground activity… dispositions that furnish the medium within which it is possible for the adult and child to be open to each other and for them to be attuned towards each other and the possibility of risk-taking that the playground affords. The pedagogical atmosphere is felt… when they enjoy the playground together. (Smith, 1998, p. 98)

Playful spontaneous movement provides a way for young people to test the limits of adults and to begin affirming their own sense of independence. As a child gets older educators must accept the possibility of not being needed in such obvious ways, and accept that an increasing part of their role is to allow students to find their own way. Smith (1998, pp. 137-139) affirms this is a form of letting go that is not a form of neglect but a pedagogy involving a higher ethic of discerning the risk that students ought to take in physical education. “Relinquishing our fearful, safety conscious hold on them we grant them an independence. Letting go, we catch hold of the child as someone who is already well advanced on the path of maturity” (Smith, p. 139). The pedagogical responsibility of allowing more freedom to move and allowing students to take risks that need to be taken in order to gain a growing sense of independence is a deeper form of care. It aligns well with Watson’s second step of living with the emptiness of a more open curriculum (courageous pedagogy) and the difficult challenge of developing a contemporary therapeutic application of pleasure in secondary school physical
education. Affording students the educational opportunity to move for pleasure in secondary school physical education resonates with Smith’s ethic of taking responsibility to discern and afford the risks young people need to take in order to find and be ‘on their way’.

What Kind of Learning is this?!

In a more relaxed (open) curriculum free of instrumental and developmental goals an educator has more time to focus on attending to the moment. There is the possibility of a reorientation of students’ perspective of time so that instead of feeling that they are enacting curriculum for the future they gain a feeling of living it in and for the present: this is the ‘therapeutic’ component of ancient philosophies that were ways of living according to the reality of the present instant. Hadot (1995, pp. 217-237) outlines a major theme of Hellenist philosophies of existence in his chapter “Only the present is our happiness: The Value of the Present Instant in Goethe and in Ancient Philosophy”. Pleasure based learning is about learning to attune to and live in accord with the pleasure and natural happiness that is contained in the present instant.

Epicurean physical education strives not to take the construction of self too seriously and to focus instead on a compassionate practice of understanding based upon inter-being and friendship as ways of knowing. It aims to allow students and their teacher to practice being happy. Learning to be happy is a slow kind of learning that may unfold gradually. Understanding the interplay between embodied feelings of pleasure and pain in physical education aims at allowing students to accrue happy memories. In a society bent on accruing material
outcomes and accumulating self-esteem this kind of curriculum may provide
contrast and relief.

Moving in relation to pleasure prioritizes the relational skill of living happily over the mastery of discrete intentional skills and accumulation of self-esteem. It attempts to teach students the true interdependent nature of inter-being. Gradually, over the years of secondary school physical education through a focus on the pleasure of movement students may learn to recognise and accept the simple pleasure of existence and blessedness of being alive: they may learn to inter-be: to feel ‘at home’ in their bodies with one another and in the world.

‘Tarrying’ (‘stranger you will do well to tarry here where pleasure is our highest good’) might be thought of as dwelling in and realizing the infinite value of the present. Citing Gadamer, Ross (2006) refers to the ancient practice of tarrying as offering a temporality that is different to the modern “one sided way of experiencing time”. In tarrying our “… awareness of time passing is absent. Dimensional time cannot account for the tarrying experience” (p. 106). Tarrying has the quality of play in that when we tarry we are drawn into and utterly engaged by the moment and “… Gadamer specifies that, enveloped in a time which does not pass, the experience of being moved … reaches its greatest intensity or ‘volume’” (Ross, p. 106). Seen in this light the exercise of tarrying (experiencing the moment) may be an important part of creating meaningful (read moving) physical education.

Tarrying may be practiced by allowing students’ sensations of ‘free time’ during lessons, space for conversation during and between activities, and more
time to change and shower. Specific exercises that focus upon breathing, sharing silence, relaxing the mind and attending to sensory perceptions of the body teach students ways to relax and provide a different kind of physical education. There is nothing esoteric about such a pursuit of pleasure: learning to relax and be happy in a culture characterised by “ceaseless striving” (Hadot, 1995, p. 220) is a matter of urgency for us all, in that from an Epicurean perspective: “happiness can only be found in the present, that one instant of happiness is equivalent to an eternity of happiness … and that happiness can and must be found, here and now” (Hadot, 1995, p. 222). Learning to be receptive to what Hadot (1995), citing Goethe refers to as the “healthiness of the moment” (p. 222) in physical education may raise a student’s awareness of their own healthiness. It is in this sense that pleasure holds high educative potential: it may teach (enable) a student to relax and be happy.

A focus upon being receptive to the present moment (through an embodied practice of moving pleasure) counters a modern mode of designing and enacting curriculum around outcomes. ‘Moving pleasure’ to the top of the educative agenda places an emphasis on the fullness contained in movement. For Epicurus the challenge was to learn how to live in the present, and to know the healthiness of the moment. In all of the Hellenist schools of philosophy “…the instant was “pregnant” filled with meaning … which if [emphasis added] lived in all its reality and the fullness of its richness … was sufficient unto itself” (Hadot, 1999, p. 220). Experiencing and coming to know the pleasure of the moment through a focus on moving pleasure in physical education may be thought of as teaching students “… to profit from the present … and to act in the present or
upon the present” (Hadot, 1999, p. 220) in a culture where the present is seen as ‘trivial, banal’. Modern health education tends not to value the present instant and physical educators tend not to take up the educational challenge of studying or practicing pleasure. The pedagogy of being present and responsive to the present moment in physical education, (what might be thought of as an embodied mindfulness), is in danger of being lost. Epicurean physical education (living curriculum purposely for pleasure) seeks to encourage teachers and students to begin to consciously practice attuning to and living the actual moment.

Relocating the focus of curriculum away from constructing Self may allow students to begin to practice again living in the moment and in the movement of physical education, to the point that they may encounter “that splendid feeling of the present” (Hadot, 1995, p. 220, citing Goethe). There may be a wisdom in being led by the embodied experience of pleasure in physical education: the art of living curriculum in accord with pleasure of movement serving to reveal ‘the splendour of being’ (the fullness of the present instant). A journey for pleasure may teach us all to say yes to the moment, “yes to the world and to the natural self” (Hadot, 1995, p. 221). This is the purpose of pleasure based physical education: to curb the imagination of ego and affirm our non-egocentric connection with the world: to embrace the emptiness (read wholeness) of reality and feel fulfilled.

The simple pleasure of being together in physical education can be felt more when I relax, forget prescribed learning objectives, and focus instead on being receptive to the moment. When I relax students relax, when I smile and
laugh students smile and laugh. Relaxing plays a big part in the cultivation of movement. A relaxed atmosphere allows students to feel able to move, express their feelings and experience the pleasure of movement. This is part of creating a pleasure-sphere in physical education: offering openness for students to move, so that they experience the call of movement, deciding to swing, roll, jump, land, slide, dive and dodge, be still, balance on edges in light and dark areas, in noise and in silence.

Learning to live curriculum in the moment, responsively acting upon the moment, involves “knowing how to recognize and seize the favourable instant” (Hadot, 1995, p. 221). It may be a pedagogical skill that comes with experience. It may be a skill that relies upon our ability to relax and ‘go with the flow’. This makes me think of the saying, “when a bluebird lands on your window ledge - throw away the lesson plan” (MacKinnon, 1996). In what ways, then, might I respond if at the beginning of a lesson I see a gymnasium filled with bluebirds already flying?! Do I let them continue to fly? When and why might I intervene? In what ways might I learn to fly with them? What kind of learning is this?

On a hot sunny day towards the end of June, we walk down to the river and students take a dip to cool down. When we return to the gym, we turn the lights out and lay in the darkness savouring the coolness of the floor: “we should do our review of the semester now – here … like this – in the dark – can we?” asks one student. With students laying on a crash mat, and others strewn around them on the floor we begin reviewing the year, “my favourite part of PE was when ….” “… the worst part for me was…” “…next year I wish we could….?”
Laying there listening to our voices in the darkness of the gymnasium seems to keep the ideas of who we are and what we do in perspective. There is a vulnerability in this exercise that humbles me. A big part of embodied knowing is to accept our shared weaknesses and limitations as humans and rejoice in being part of something much bigger; the pleasure of being part of a group. I think of all the students I have shared this gymnasium with over the last, 13 years. Through such collective contemplation of shared experience in physical education (thanks today to one student’s ability to spontaneously act upon and seize the moment: “…we should do our review of the semester now – here … like this – in the dark …”), we might learn that we are most deeply moved by pleasure (the pleasure of existence and pleasure of movement) and begin to embrace it (base out lives around it) as students and educators. We might start to practice living according to what is natural and necessary, as opposed to what is artificial, exhausting and ultimately unnecessary. In this sense when applied in physical education, Epicurean philosophy may work to “… provide a cure for anguish and to bring freedom and self-mastery … to allow people to free themselves from the past and future, so that they can [emphasis added] live within the present” (Hadot, 1999, pp. 221-222).

An ongoing journey . . .

‘Curriculum as an empty path’ presents the task of understanding and way-finding that students and their teacher face when living curriculum. It is an ongoing journey of learning to read and interpret the context in which curriculum plays out while attuning to the pleasure of existence that is always there.
Relaxing and allowing students to relax involves taking a risk: playing and moving for pleasure in secondary school physical education is not ‘recognised’ practice and we may be fearful of not being taken seriously by fellow educators: “… So, Mr. Train!! This is what you do in PE is it . . . relaxing?! . . . playing?!” What kind of learning is this?!” Booth (2009) traces prejudice in the academy against the study and practice of pleasure. The Epicurean idea of relinquishing goals: that our desires can only be satisfied in the present not in the future (“all else is vain and senseless”) may sound almost heretical today but it may be very relevant to the generic aims of modern physical health education. Epicurus proposes living in the moment and in the movement of physical education as a way of relaxing egotistical desire that consumes and causes unnecessary suffering in our lives. To base teaching and learning in physical education around pleasure that can be experienced now is not a lazy from of pedagogy but an effortful move to teach the difficult skill of accepting pleasure that is always there. Pleasure based physical education aims at a quite radical transformation in our overall attitude towards time: “In enjoyment there is a kind of inner plenitude and over–abundance which makes it independent of time as well as of everything else. True pleasure bears its infinity within itself” (Guyau, as cited in Hadot, 1995, p. 224).

Pleasure challenges us to learn how to enjoy the present and truly live curriculum in secondary school physical education. A pedagogy of pleasure requires that we do not ‘put off pleasure’ or see it as a superfluous thing we can attach or detach. It is essential that we do not deny students pleasure, (inner peace, freedom and contentment, joy, exultation and delight), all of which are part of
what make them feel alive. Pleasure is their natural property and constitution. A daily focus upon experiencing pleasure in physical education might unveil the opportunity that each day presents: to live Life! – physical education – what a JOY! Imagine a curriculum intent on experiencing movement and play for no other reason than pleasure. Within the space and openness of such a relaxed curriculum students might become more aware of the taken for granted pleasure of being in their bodies and the world. A focus upon experiencing pleasure might gain momentum. It may teach us all how to live.
References


Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki. Mahwah,
New Jersey Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.


Bakewell, S. (2010). How to live or a life of Montaigne in one question and
twenty attempts at an answer. London: Chatto & Windus.

revisited. Quest, 61, 133-153.

Blankenship, B. T. & Ayers, S. F. (2010). The role of PETE in developing joy-
oriented physical educators. Quest, 62(2), 171-183, DOI: 10.
1080/00336297. 2010. 10483640

Publishers.

of Illinois Press.

Oxon.


Cochrane-Smith, M., Barnatt, J., Friedman, A. & Pine, G. (2009). Inquiry on
inquiry: Practitioner research and students’ learning. Action in Teacher
Education, 31(2), 17-32.


Fenstermacher, G. (1992). *Policy development and teacher education: An educative agenda vs. a system of schooling*, Invited presentation at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.


_QUEST_, 52(3), 260-272. DOI, 10.1080/00336297.2000.10491714


_JOPERD_, 77(9), 6-10.


_Teaching and Teacher Education_, 12(6), 653-664.


DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2014.942957


Appendix A:

An example of a modern physical education curriculum that was designed around the feelings contained in movement:

The Moving and Growing Curriculum, 1952

In, 1951, after the trauma of the Second World War, curricular theorists in Britain were inspired to think of placing freedom at the core of curriculum design in secondary school physical education. The Movement and Growing Curriculum of, 1952 reads as a celebration of peace. In an ode to joy, children were to be freed from the constraints and limitations of their culture and class with little emphasis on extrinsic or vocational outcomes but rather the intrinsic, inherent benefits of moving freely and realising inner freedom and ‘potential within’. The curriculum as cited in Evans and Penney (2008, p. 36) defines “…a view of teaching and learning that celebrates (as the title implies) the centrality and importance of playful ‘movement for growing’ through a range of activities…” Every child was considered to have an equal right to a movement education, “…leavened through a pedagogy emphasising creativity, spontaneity and risk taking.” The curriculum is based upon a poetic vision and provides a refreshing contrast and inspiration in today’s efficiency driven climate of schooling (Jardine, 2012, p. 79).

In today’s culture that is riven with terror, might we again have the courage to think of physical education in terms of its pacific value? What about the irenic and therapeutic value of moving for pleasure? What if curricula
theorists were to place pleasure at the core of curriculum design in physical education? In what ways might this influence curriculum and pedagogy and the experience of students in secondary school physical education?

In, 1952 curricula theorists valued the holistic, spiritual value of movement in physical education. ‘Movement and Growing’ endorsed a vision of humanity that rejected any analysis that sought to reduce the human experience of movement to that which could be physically measured:

*In the past the study of man led to an analysis which split him up into body, mind and spirit; at the present time we are becoming increasingly aware of his wholeness and of the interdependence of those processes that we have been accustomed to describe as physiological or psychological. It may not be long before we realise that the term ‘physical’—in relation to humanity—has a very limited meaning.*

Evans & Penney (2008, p. 37 citing HMSO, 1952)

Movement and Growing dared to think of curriculum as being an experience that moves human beings. This encouraged “…a different relationship between teacher and the class, and a different conception of discipline…”: “…it sought to disestablish traditional ‘drill’ centred pedagogies in the interest of establishing new social relations between students and between teacher and taught…” and it encouraged what Evans and Penney call “pedagogies of liberation” to emerge (HMSO, 1952, p. 51 as cited in Evans and Penney, 2008, pp. 37-38). Today nearly seventy years on while many of educators feel pleasure is important, few dare to propose pleasure as a rational, few theorists attempt to clearly outline the
importance of students experiencing pleasure and the pleasure of movement in physical education. After many years attempting to describe my practice in relation to pleasure to fellow teachers I feel that it is not that they do not agree, in reality many base their practice around the feelings of students, it is just that we are not used to talking about who we are and what we do in relation to pleasure. As educators we are not used to talking of who we are and what we do in terms of serenity, inner freedom, contentment, good indwelling spirit, joy, delight or exultation (!) and may fear not being taken seriously in our field which is dominated by technical, political and pseudoscientific discourse. It takes a lot of courage to openly try to begin talking about what is most meaningful (read human) in our practices, especially when the academic audience is using a different language. This may be a reason why it is very rare now to attend any scholarly conference in the field of physical education and see or hear any practicing teachers attempting to communicate what they feel is implicitly or intuitively most important in their everyday practice.

Performance Discourse (Displeasure)

Evans and Penney (2008) trace a gradual shift in discourse away from pleasure (“liberation, spontaneity, exploration and risk”) towards a ‘performance pedagogy’ based around achieving prescribed quantifiable learning outcomes. Modern physical health education has followed the dominant language of education (Tröhler, 2012) that prioritizes the technical, political and scientific value of educational activity over the aesthetic and ethical (Huebner, 2008, pp. 106-115). In highlighting the shift away from the ethical, aesthetic and spiritual
values of physical education, Evans and Penney (2008) offer a very real example of the ‘de-pleasuring’ of physical education alluded to by Booth (2009), a ‘de-pleasuring’ that has gained inertia globally for more than 60 years to the point that the dominant form of pedagogy in secondary school physical worldwide is described as one of authority and control (Kirk, 2012). Modern curricular language tends to constrain the way we describe who we are and what we do to the point we may lose sight of the relational aspect of physical education. A dominant instrumental and developmental lens tends to overlook and reduce “…the complexity and the mystery of a fellow human being … in that technical term of control – learner” (Huebner, 2008, p. 102).

Discourse in physical education constantly refers to secondary school students as ‘learners’ (for example, “The subject (physical education) [emphasis added] works towards involving learners in a range of physical activities … it has a role to inform learners … should focus on young people ‘Learning to Move’ and ‘Moving to Learn’…” [Capel & Whitehead, 2013, pp. 4-5]): perhaps revealing a fear of not being about ‘learning.’ Endless debate revolves around whether ‘learners’ learn about, through or in movement (Capel and Whitehead, 2013, refer to Arnold p. 24), limiting physical education to the realm of learning. This inquiry (like the Movement and Growing Curriculum of, 1952), asks: What about the cathartic value of forgetting about learning and moving freely? What about the ecstatic value of moving for pleasure - (being temporarily outside of everyday reality): running, sliding, flying and falling and being allowed to move outside of the lens of ‘learning’? In what ways might we allow students the feeling of being
invited to move and being accepted when they do?: feelings of being in their body and being embraced by the environment they are in, the experience of being at one with the ‘landscape’ of physical education? What about relaxing, sinking, rising or floating…melting into the background and not having to justify or explain yourself at all in terms of learning! Do we have the resources (and courage) to afford students such an experience? Do we have the ability to offer such a ‘counter space’ for students to experience within school?

Performance discourse places an emphasis upon the transmission and acquisition of knowledge and is underpinned by correspondence theories of learning. It views PHE as a means to an end, measuring achievement through attainment of pre-set learning outcomes. As such it is a manifestation of Tyler’s rationale for curriculum making and the dominant language of curriculum that Huebner (1966) describes as technical and political. Evans and Penney (2008) point out that this performance mode of education has grown progressively stronger (from the, 1970’s on) through state intervention and control in the re-contextualisation process of education. Teachers have gradually lost much of their professional autonomy as educators and their role in mediating and re-contextualising pedagogy to the extent that “performance codes are now normal across all levels of official education in the UK, reflecting and endorsing the performance cultures in which they reside” (Evans and Penney, 2008, p. 35).

Performance discourse defines thought and discussion around curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school physical education today (Kirk, 2010), exerting pressure on teachers and students to conform to its dictates. At one conference I
attended in the UK when I attended a ‘roundtable’ session to talk about my research and the value of pleasure based physical education I was told, “… you are missing the point? We are in a performance culture and so we have to be competitive…” It is in this sense that the deeply human importance of experiencing pleasure is in danger of being lost and the important task of making physical education more pleasurable (read more human) for all is misunderstood. Philosophy might help reframe our field in a way that responds to and helps reduce socially constructed performative pressures. It is not necessary for life to be a fight for recognition and social status. The experience of physical education, however, continues to be determined by leaders who are keen on proving themselves in terms of technical and political outcomes for which they gain recognition. This reminds me of a time in, 2015 when I spent one week observing and talking to teachers in a school in the town where I grew up in England in order to see the way curriculum was being lived:

Students line up outside the building in single file: teachers checking their school uniforms before allowing them to go and get changed for PE. The students are streamed into recreational or examinable PE. In every lesson I visit there is a clearly stated ‘L. O.’ (learning objective). The ‘L. O.’ is written on to a small white board and carried to wherever the lesson might be taking place (the tennis court, playing field, running track or gymnasium) so that teachers and their students can refer to it. A teacher tells me that the Headmaster expects to see the L. O. on display in all of the classrooms during his daily rounds. Others tell me this use of L. O’s is common in K-12 schools all over the country. Academic achievement in this school has improved every year since the introduction of a new Headmaster: there is a sign at the front of the school that proudly advertises “90% of students get a minimum of 5 GCSE’s (including English and Maths) at grade C and above”. The school is ranked ‘outstanding’ by the Office for standards in Education (OFSTED) and this has been achieved through following a system that focuses on achieving prescribed learning outcomes.
“Through well-developed systems and processes, leaders check and evaluate the school’s performance. These are clearly linked to the targets set for teachers and to their pay and performance.” (Ofsted, 2012).

At the end of the week I went to the Year 10 ‘celebration of learning’, attended by parents. Students played music (the violin and piano) and sang and several were recognised for dancing and playing sport nationally. At the end of the ceremony the Head addressed the year 10 students “This year group came to this school when I did and holds a special place in my heart. Every year since we have been here academic achievement in the school has been improving. Whilst extra-curricular activity is all very impressive, I know that it will not get in the way of your academic success and that we will break all records for exam results next year. Next year we want more than 90% of students getting 5 GSCE’s. This is important as it is your passport to success and we all need to work as hard as possible to make sure you get it!

My mind wanders to the unfortunate souls who may be sitting there in the audience knowing they are not doing very well at school, knowing that they are not going to get their ‘passports to a successful life’. Is it any wonder that in such a performative culture that there is a ‘reluctance to embrace pleasure as a rationale’ among educators (Booth, 2009, p. 134) or to overtly explore (Pringle, 2010) the educative value of pleasure? Epicurus provides a more encompassing and caring approach that if we were to trust it might be just as effective. Is it possible to imagine a time when pleasure may again become a learning objective in curriculum, research and pedagogy in physical education? Blankenship and Ayers (2010, p. 172) “…in a joy-oriented physical education program, teachers would help students develop their own playgrounds…” suggest that few educators explore the educational value of pleasure because of an underlying fear of not being taken seriously in a system focused on a utilitarian approach of producing measurable outcomes: pleasure and happiness tend to be seen as superficial in the modern theoretical landscape of curriculum.
Because the health-oriented outcomes are observable, measurable, and valued by society at large. PETE (physical education teacher education) professors often choose to focus on that side of physical education to be seen as a valuable part of education. Promoting the joy in movement as a valuable outcome in itself may not be conducive to professional status enhancement.

Blankenship and Ayers (2010, p. 174)

Might it be that scholars are afraid to attempt to study physical education in relation to pleasure and happiness, fearful that such work may not be heard or taken seriously?

This inquiry and dissertation openly considers the deeply educational value of pleasure. It asks why it is that a practitioner might feel that pleasure is a central component of their practice in secondary school physical education. It explores ways that pleasure may provide a touchstone or guide for a teacher and students, enabling them to truly enjoy the experience of living curriculum. Epicurus asks how else are students to come to know the benefits of movement if not through their feelings and the feeling of movement. Might it be that a focus upon experiencing the pleasure of movement helps students cultivate an affinity with physical activity? In what ways might pleasure be useful for practitioners concerned with living curriculum in ways that promote a love of moving in physical education? In what ways might pleasure be of prime importance for those who live curriculum?
A focus upon affording the embodied experience of pleasure in physical education may provide a healthy balance for the student who is preoccupied with attaining high grades or suffering from what we may call low self-esteem: the experience of pleasure being a way of attaining peace of mind, inner freedom, good spirit and contentment. Understanding natural pleasure (the freedom our bodies afford) may enable students to live happily amid the performative demands of modern culture to be socially competitive or ‘successful’. This is the ancient idea of philosophy being a therapeutic exercise that checks the drive of the ego: a practice of living in tune with reality (being happy with what is) that may help reframe the practice of physical education and possibly even of education.
Appendix B

A modern pursuit of self in a culture of unhappiness

(Pfaller, 2014)

Pursuit of an illusory Self

Pfaller (2014, p. 211) refers to Freud and psychoanalytic theory to illustrate ways that a pursuit of Self (as if it exists as in and for itself) may limit the ability to experience natural pleasure and happiness. In pursuit of an illusory self, (a self that is imagined by the ego), ego libidinal behavior accumulates self-esteeem through ongoing fulfillment of moral duty and as self-identity and status become increasingly established a person becomes increasingly cut off from reality (what is other) and the pleasure of moment-to-moment living. Self-esteeem acts as an obstacle to happiness (Eudaimonia). Pfaller describes a process of increasing self-enclosure leading to an inability to accept the pleasure of existence or bear happiness. He refers to Spinoza’s ‘virtuous ascetic’ who lives in pursuit of an imaginary victory (self-mastery) that always lies in the future: a person who cannot accept the healthiness of the moment as their limit: who cannot be happy.

For students to experience and practice the skill of being happy it may be necessary to focus on cultivating awareness of our shared weaknesses and limitations as human beings, (our collective tendency to be led by the ego), rather than to focus on constructing an individuated sense of self in secondary school physical education. “Do not let them fool you!” writes Pfaller (2014, p. 206 citing Brecht), don’t be seduced by a temptation to ‘become strong’ (read to succumb to
the egotistical imagination and desire to ‘be somebody’). In succumbing to the imagination of the ego we are lured onto a relentless hedonic treadmill: we learn to live and persevere through unnecessary suffering, imagining our Self heroic, securing victory, and receiving moral acclaim. Pfaller (2014, p. 207) describes a modern meme of unhappiness where

… there is no direct ‘pursuit of happiness.’ People do not aspire directly to gain in pleasure,…they are first inspired by the arduous efforts of culture to direct their activities to a ‘higher aim’ or social purpose.

Instead…people strive directly for their unhappiness.

In this inquiry I think of ways I might help students break out of a cycle that prevents them from being happy. Ego libidinal imagination feeds a cycle of proving and improving the Self and esteem and pride lead to ‘sad passions’ (reactions), “… in the form of anger, fervour, fear, ambition, guilt, obstinacy and the like . . .” (Pfaller, 2014, p. 215). The happiness derived from ‘accumulation of self-esteem’ is addictive and perhaps more powerful than what the Greeks thought of as natural happiness (Eudaimonia). We have become accustomed to prefer working hard, pushing ourselves and gaining recognition over the difficult task of being happy with what is: of accepting the embodied pleasure of existence as our limit. The challenge for educators today, it appears is to be aware of the meme of self (and the dangers of pursuing self-esteem) and somehow ‘rise above it’. In what ways might secondary school physical education help young people who are born into a culture of unhappiness free themselves? Pfaller (2014, p. 216) refers us to the Epicurean exhortation to learn to live in ways that are receptive to the
emptiness of reality: to be happy with everything we need to be able to be happy
with nothing: “Pleasure is always there: the question is simply that of whether one
succeeds in experiencing it as pleasurable.” It is this task of learning to be happy
– learning to be receptive to the fullness of Life and blessedness of being alive
that Epicurean physical education attempts to afford students through a focus
upon the experience of moving for intrinsic benefits rather than extrinsic rewards
while at the same time working to support them as they move in an emptier more
open curriculum.

The pursuit of the illusory self (in a culture of narcissism) described by
describes a codification and gradual ‘de-pleasuring’ of human movement and
physical activity in society and a subsequent ‘reluctance to embrace pleasure as a
rationale’ for physical education. Might this be more than a ‘reluctance’ to
embrace pleasure? Is it possible that we have inherited through our tradition a
shared ‘inability’ to experience and understand the value of what Epicurus
thought of as true pleasure and happiness?! Borne as we are by the culture Pfaller
describes, to what extent are we able to stop viewing and using curriculum as a
vehicle for Self-development and to explore instead ways of cultivating
awareness? In a culture where the idea of a substance and self dominates, pleasure
and happiness have lost their original meaning and attraction: we no longer relate
to the concepts of pleasure and happiness in a spiritual way (and subsequently
they do not move us). As one conference attendee commented, “…to prioritise the
pleasure of movement in physical education would be to miss the point! – we live
in a competitive culture…our young people need to learn how to compete in order to survive…what relevance is pleasure – what good is it to them?!” (Phys Lit. Conference, 2015).

Epicurus might say that because young people are born into a performative culture it is important for them as students to identify and be receptive to the pleasure of existence. Curriculum and pedagogy that does not prioritise understanding and experiencing pleasure and the pleasure of movement and what they afford us as human beings, (peace of mind, freedom, good indwelling spirit, joy, exultation and delight), does not provide students with important practice. If they do not practice moving for pleasure and do not experience the happiness contained in movement regularly during their educational years students may lose their natural affinity (connection) with movement and the world. Not orienting experience in physical education around pleasure and the pleasure of movement (peace of mind, inner freedom, good spirit, joy, exultation and delight) may prevent students from connecting with their bodies in a way that may sustain them throughout their lives. Pfaller (2014) suggests that an overly serious pursuit of self (esteem and pride) in schools may actually decrease students’ receptivity to natural happiness and wellbeing! Borne as we have been for so long by a tradition of substance and self it may be no surprise that we do not see this: or that we have lost our ability to understand the educative value of pleasure. It may be that we all feel a little isolated, lonely and unhappy with our lives and may not know why or how to ‘fix’ our situation.
When it comes to the art of living according to natural happiness Pfaller (2014) and Epicurus might say we are out of practice.

A Modern Practice of Self and Unhappiness (Robert Pfaller, 2014)

Both Robert Pfaller (2014) and Pierre Hadot (1995) in their work of understanding ancient schools of happiness, contrast the spiritual practice of *askesis*, exercises aimed at dispensing the ego and cultivating universal consciousness (the skill of living in accord with what is other) with a modern practice of *asceticism* and cultivation of Self that tends to enclose, isolate and act as an obstacle to natural happiness. For Pfaller (2014) and Hadot (1995), Michel Foucault (1990) in *The Use of Pleasure*, takes from Hellenist philosophy to offer ‘a model for life,’ and an ‘aesthetics of existence,’ but in doing so he over-emphasises a cultivation or practice of Self. Foucault reduces the central element of philosophy ‘*askesis*’ which sought to transcend or ‘raise the level of self’ (Hadot), to *asceticism* (techniques for the cultivation of Self). This may be, speculates Hadot, because Foucault realizes a loss of ‘universal reason’ and sense of the cosmos in modern society. Foucault offers a way of living with (managing) desire that we are able to grasp: the idea of *using* pleasure (through regimen and dietetica) to strengthen or affirm Self. Pfaller, (2014, p. 221) calls this a “misguided care of the self” and offers that, contrary to Foucault, “... for the ancient philosophies of happiness control (enkratiea) never meant self-mastery, but instead always control over imagination - including mastery over the fabrication of fictions of oneself.” Controlling the imagination, keeping in check the idea of a Self: seeing the Self as a vain pursuit and choosing instead to live in
accord with the universe all may sound quite strange today. In a culture based on the idea of reality being made up of a substance it may appear to us as unfeasible or even crazy to base our lives around a pursuit of natural pleasure and happiness. Where ancient Epicurean schools chose to pursue pleasure (serene tranquillity, inner freedom, good indwelling spirit and contentment), we tend to want more and live our lives in pursuit of self (-importance, image, esteem, identity, pride, status, fulfillment, advancement). Watson points out that most of us equate emptiness with a lack or privation of some kind when in actuality the concept represents the irreducible fullness of existence.

It is easier today to think of curriculum and pedagogy as a construction of Self: a process of each individual student ‘becoming stronger’ than it is to think of physical education being a therapeutic practice of moving for pleasure, of inter-being, and friendship. Have we lost an ability to envision physical education in terms of the freedom it may offer students? Are we receptive to the idea of physical education being an exercise of transcending or ‘raising the level of self’? In what ways might trying to understand and afford the pleasure of movement (hermeneutic pedagogical inquiry) humanise and deepen the experience of physical education for students? In what ways might accepting the contextual, interdependent, and inter-relational aspect of reality in physical education allow a more meaningful experience for all?

Interestingly, Pfaller (2014, p. 196) refers to Spinoza’s Ethics and the idea that happiness (our sense of blessedness) is what lends us as human beings the fortitude to avoid temptations, distractions and false pleasures. Being happy with
what is (accepting the pleasure of everyday existence) is what allows us to see through egotistical desires that may lead to unnecessary suffering. Happiness (Eudaimonia) is what allows us to forego false pleasures, not foregoing pleasures, (denying Eros and desire) that yields happiness. This theory turns the puritan work ethic of suffering to gain reward that underpins a long tradition of ‘pain based physical education’ on its head. It raises the idea that students may not need to experience and heroically push through pain under the assumption that it strengthens and builds character (‘no pain no gain’): it raises the notion that ‘pleasure based physical education’ (learning to relax, learning to embrace the pleasure of the moment that is contained in movement and learning to be happy) may be relevant, necessary and more educational.

In a field that does not overtly accept the educative value of pleasure, educators do not commit time and patience to the challengingly open task of understanding and cultivating pleasure. Ironically, a focus upon pleasure may appear too relaxed, too leisurely or open. There is a strong puritanical suspicion of pleasure and happiness that deems it trivial when in reality it presents the allusive aim we are always trying to achieve: the aim of inspiring young people to be healthy (read happy). Evans and Penney (2007) point out that it took considerable scholarly effort for physical education to be taken ‘seriously’ in education (a long time, for example, for physical educators to become salaried on an equal level with teachers in other subject areas) and so it may take extraordinary courage to explore the possibility that it may be the less serious side of physical education that is most meaningful for students. Are we able to think of ourselves as
practitioners who focus upon affording students the opportunity to experience pleasure and to practice being happy? As educators are we able to embrace pleasure and happiness? In what ways might a fear of not being taken seriously prevent educators from exploring the value of studying and practicing pleasure in physical education?

Whilst discourse in physical education does not ‘overtly accept’ the educative value of pleasure, teachers and students in secondary schools might naturally relate to the value of orienting curriculum and pedagogy around a practice of pleasure. The reward, of placing pleasure not the construction of self as a pillar of coherence in physical education, as well as raising levels of pleasure amongst the student body, may be a more relaxing, pleasant and happy teaching day! Overtly accepting (and fully exploring) pleasure as an orientation for practice might also influence career longevity.

Pleasure provides an alternative lens to consider who we are and what we do as educators. Are we happy? Is going to work a pleasure? Do we think it important to practice being happy when we teach? In what ways might we cultivate pleasure and happiness? In what ways through our practices might we become more aware of and receptive to the pleasure contained in movement? Recently a senior colleague of mine, a physical education teacher of more than twenty years, told me that she likes the work I am doing around pleasure because it provides another way to reflect on and talk about what we do as a department.

Is it possible (as Epicurus and Pfaller (2014) suggest) that focussing on the development of Self in physical education may be preventing students from being
happy? In what ways might relaxing (emptying) curriculum transform physical education and allow it to become centred on the task of becoming receptive to the pleasure of movement? Pfaller points out that it is through ‘object libidinal behavior’ and an orientation to what is other (the ‘not-self’) that students may experience and learn to be receptive to the ‘healthiness of the moment’. In a modern society obsessed with substance and Self, Epicurean physical education offers an alternative rationale for relaxing the focus of curriculum away from a pursuit of an illusory self towards a practice of ‘moving’, ‘inter-being’, ‘being happy’, and ‘exercising friendship.’