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Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction:  
Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity.

A Master's Thesis

By

Adam B. Hanson

Submitted to the Graduate College of Winona State University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Leadership Education/Sports Management

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER I .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background of the Problem.....	2
Problem Statement .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Theoretical Framework .....	4
Carroll Model of School Learning .....	4
Research Questions .....	5
Significance of Study .....	5
Definition of Terms .....	6
Limitations .....	7
Delimitations .....	7
Summary .....	7
<b>CHAPTER II.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Historical Perspective.....	9
Daily Physical Activity .....	11
Scheduling Challenges.....	12
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Individual Difference Variables: Aptitude, Perseverance, and Ability to Understand .....	14
Instructional Variables.....	16
Summary .....	17
<b>CHAPTER III .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Research Design .....	18
Rationale for the Research .....	19
Research Questions .....	19
Research Setting .....	19
Sample.....	20
Selection of Participants.....	20

School A .....	21
School B .....	21
School C .....	21
School D .....	22
School B .....	22
Role of Researcher .....	22
Instrumentation.....	22
Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Ethical Considerations.....	23
Data Collection.....	23
Institutional Review Board.....	24
One-to-One Interviews .....	24
Focus Group Interview .....	24
Document Review .....	25
Triangulation .....	25
Data Analysis .....	26
Summary .....	26
<b>CHAPTER IV.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>RESULTS .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Review of the Problem Statement.....	27
Review of the Research Design.....	27
Demographics of the Participants .....	28
Findings.....	29
One-to-One Interviews .....	29
Emerging Theme 1: Schedule Balance and Common Prep Time .....	30
Emerging Theme 2: Scheduling Requirements and Barriers .....	31
Emerging Theme 3: Benefits of Physical Education Every Day .....	32
Emerging Theme 4: Extending the School Day.....	33
Focus Group Interview .....	34
Emerging Theme 1: Changing the Current School District Schedule .....	35
Emerging Theme 2: Providing More Time for Physical Education.....	36
Document Review .....	37

Summary .....	38
<b>CHAPTER V .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Conclusions .....	41
Theoretical Framework .....	41
Implications of the Study .....	42
Recommendations for Future Research .....	44
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>52</b>

## Chapter I

### Introduction

In order to create time for other school subjects, many elementary schools reduce physical education programs due to the lack of federal laws and support (Cooper, Greenberg, Castelli, Barton, & Martin, 2016). Lack of support for physical education has resulted in most children and adolescents in America not meeting the current parameters set for daily physical activity (Beauchamp, Rhodes, & Nigg 2016). Students aged 6 to 17 need 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate to vigorous exercise, as recommended by the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2018) concluded that regular fitness and movement promotes lifelong health, well-being, and prevention of various health conditions in children and adolescents. Providing elementary schools with a competent physical education program gives students the opportunity to achieve the goal of 60 minutes a day (SHAPE America, 2013).

Since children spend much of the day in a school building, it is an ideal place for physical activity and movement (Perna et al., 2012). Health officials believe a physical education program promotes physical activity, provides many health benefits, and that creating time for a program should be a priority for schools (McKenzie & Lounsbery, 2014). Children receiving daily physical activity show improvement in overall health and physical fitness levels (Kirkham-King et al., 2017). Health benefits include lessening the possibility of high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and high blood cholesterol, building and maintaining healthy bones and muscles, and positive social and mental health (Elliot, Erwin, Hall, & Heidorn, 2013). Studies by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2018) found multiple academic benefits accrue when adolescents participate in the indorsed level of 1 hour a

day of physical exercise. These advantages include increased academic achievement, academic behavior, and cognitive skills.

At the state level, only 39 states require physical education in elementary schools by law (Whitehouse & Shafer, 2017). In the state of Minnesota, there is no required number of minutes for physical education, but schools with Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade need to provide some sort of physical education as mandated by state law (SHAPE American, 2016a). The Minnesota Department of Education (2015) conducted a study showing only 18 to 24 percent of elementary schools offer the indorsed amount of 150 minutes per week of physical education set by SHAPE America. Because there is a lack of time to fit all subjects during a school day, many elementary schools limit physical education due to no state law requiring a specific number of minutes (Minnesota Department of Health and Education, 2017).

Locally, Mankato Public Schools offers physical education to its elementary students in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Students have physical education class for 50 minutes, 2 times a week (Mankato Area Public Schools, 2019). This amount of time is less than the suggested minutes per week of physical education for elementary schools (SHAPE American, 2015). Although Mankato Public Schools provides physical education, exploring policy changes to increase physical education minutes could improve student comprehension and behaviors (Dills, Morgan, & Rotthoff, 2011).

### **Background of the Problem**

Only 42% of children ages 6 to 11 years old in the United States are meeting the suggested amount for 60 minutes of daily physical activity (Beauchamp et al., 2016). Lack of fitness and exercise is a contributing factor to childhood health risks and obesity. A study by Hales, Carroll, Fryar, and Ogden (2017) found 1 in 5 school-age children, and adolescents (6 to

19) are obese. The CDC (2018) summarized that physical inactivity in children leads to increased risk factors that cause cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Children that are inactive also risk decreased academic performance and behaviors. Physical activity influences better grades, consistent school attendance, cognitive performance, and classroom behaviors. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2014).

Physical activity recommendations fall short with elementary aged children because of the amount of physical education received during the school day. In the United States, 32% of children and adolescents lack enrollment in a quality physical education program. (SHAPE America, 2016b). In some schools, physical education reduction or elimination allows increased academic learning time for other school subjects (Brusseu & Hannon, 2015). The Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America, 2015) recommends that each week elementary schools provide 150 minutes of instructional physical education and 225 minutes for middle and high schools. Currently, there is no federal law that mandates how much physical education a student should receive in a given week or year (Cooper et al., 2016). Other factors that inhibit a quality physical education program include financial pressures, facility availability, and lack of equipment (Institute of Medicine U.S., 2013).

This study contained evidence of the numerous benefits of being physically active, yet providing time in a daily schedule is a challenge for schools. Physical education provides the chance for physical activity and contributes to children reaching 60 minutes a day. However, due to the variety of reasons stated in this study, school officials should perform more exploration in rethinking elementary physical education practices. Despite all the available information on physical education and activity, there is little documentation on how physical education teachers

and school leaders change current practices to give students more opportunities to be physically active.

### **Problem Statement**

Little is known about how to create more time for physical activity by improving elementary physical education practices. Currently, children and adolescents do not accomplish the goal of 60 minutes of daily physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Physical education teachers and school administrators at the elementary level are unable to offer more time for a physical education program, which provides physical activity occasions for students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of K-5 elementary principals in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. This exploration examined the potential curricular scheduling impact upon physical education delivery systems, as reported by elementary school administrators.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework explored how elementary children gain and sustain physical activity, and the time needed to learn compared to the actual time spent on learning. This framework included the Carroll Model of School Learning.

#### **Carroll Model of School Learning**

Carroll (1967) argues that learning is a function of effort spent in relation to effort needed, mainly connected to time. The Carroll Model of School Learning is composed of five elements that include aptitude, opportunity to learn, ability to understand instruction, quality of instructional events, and perseverance (Carroll, 1963). Learning and effective instruction

significantly affect the time allocated and time engaged for learning. (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Because there are limited moments given for physical activity during the school day, modifications to classroom management and school day schedules need consideration for the opportunity to learn and move (Carroll, 1989). Carroll (1963) argues that learning is a function of effort spent in relation to effort needed, mainly connected to time.

The research in this study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological research design. This research method was determined to be the most appropriate to address the research questions and gather the experiences from the sample participants. A purposeful sampling method was used for identifying key participants meeting the criteria for this research. Interviews and a semi-structured standardized interview guide aided the collect data process.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher developed research questions that explored the experiences of school leaders with physical education programming. The following questions guided the study:

RQ1. What strategies do elementary school leaders employ to allocate school time for physical education?

RQ2. What are the perspectives of school leaders on addressing physical education programming for elementary students?

RQ3. What are the academic benefits and disadvantages of increased physical education time?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study could have significance to numerous stakeholders. Results could contribute to existing literature on how physical education programs contribute to physical activity levels in elementary students. The potential benefits of the study could influence physical education

teachers, school administrators, elementary students, and families of elementary students.

Physical education teachers and school administrators may benefit from using strategies to create more time for physical activity and physical education. These results and strategies from the study may be beneficial to increase physical activity and fitness in elementary students. Families of elementary students may also benefit due to improved health of the students, leading to fewer health issues and the need to see a doctor.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following vital terms crucial for the understanding of this study are:

**Academic Performance:** How students show success in a school setting and includes the behaviors, achievement, and cognitive skills students displayed at school (The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2018).

**Adolescent:** Students in the age range of 10 to 19 years old and mainly attended school at the secondary level, grades 6 through 12 (U.S. Department of Human Health Services Office of Adolescent Health, 2017).

**Children:** Students in the age range of 5 to 10 years old and mainly attended school at the elementary level, grades Kindergarten through 5 (Corsi-Bunker, 2010).

**Elementary Students:** Students attending primary (elementary) schools in grades that range from Kindergarten to 5th grade (Corsi-Bunker, 2010).

**Physical Activity:** Movement by a person's body that increases energy and heart rate above a resting level. Movements such as planned, repetitive, structured, work related, or leisure are all considered physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

**Physical Education:** A school subject offered that teaches students the knowledge and skills needed to sustain and maintain an active lifestyle (Minnesota Department of Health and Education, 2017).

**Physical Education Curriculum:** Physical education curriculum is an academic subject characterized by a planned, sequential K–12 (course of study) that is based on the national standards (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

### **Limitations of the Study**

How truthful participants responded is a limitation to the study. Willingness to participate is another limitation because participants in the study are volunteers. Because participants work for a district or school, fear of repercussions or discipline for responding may contribute to the veracity of the participants.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study delimited to five elementary schools in south-central Minnesota. All five schools are similar in demographics and size. The elementary schools delimit to include only schools that offer an elementary physical education program. Participants are delimited to elementary school administrators. These principals have at least 2 years of experience as a school administrator.

### **Chapter Summary**

Five chapters comprised the research for this Master's Thesis. Chapter one introduced the problem of a lack of time for physical activity and why physical education is essential. The chapter included the background of the problem and why the issue is of importance, along with identifying the definition of terms, limitations, and delimitations involved in the study. The chapter also included research questions and the significance of the study. Chapter two explored

the historical and theoretical background of the problem. Exploration of the quality and relevance of previous literature and studies is provided in chapter two. Chapter three encompassed the research methodology and design for the study. It included the research rationale, selection of participants, and procedures used. The fourth chapter contained the results and findings of the study. Chapter five is the final chapter and highlighted a discussion on the results of the study. The study concluded with future recommendations for research in creating increased curricular time for physical education.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of K-5 elementary principals in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. This exploration examined the potential curricular scheduling impact upon physical education delivery systems as reported by elementary school administrators. The literature review provided background and research on studies relevant to physical education and physical activity guidelines for elementary aged students. Chapter two contains four sections that structure the literature review: Section one examined the historical perspective of physical education in the United States; section two highlighted background information on the importance of daily physical activity for children; section three looked at challenges school leaders face creating a schedule including fitness and wellness, and section four provided an overview of the theoretical framework supporting this research.

### **Historical Perspective**

Physical education first developed overseas before the discovery of the United States (Fuld, 1907). Fuld (1907) explains ancient Greece's physical fitness served two purposes: developing the human body for an appealing view and training preparation for soldiers. When this earliest form of fitness education began, only men participated. (Leonard, 1923). Leonard (1923) proclaims it was not until the nineteenth century when different systems of physical training started and grew in the United States. Early fitness testing and techniques in strength training commenced in exercise programs during this time in the 1800s (Patterson, 2004). Continued development of athletics and exercise in schools led to the creation of a new profession by physical education pioneer Gulick during an American Medical Association

meeting in 1885 (Guedes, 2007). Guedes (2007) stresses Gulick's advocacy for daily physical fitness for children amidst the school day education gave direction and inspiration to the construction of this new school subject.

The progression of physical education continued in the early 1900s. Training programs for teachers launched at universities included athletics, dance, and recreation in a curriculum for schools to use. (Newman & Miller, 1990). World War I prompted the government to focus more on physical fitness, which directed states to start requiring physical education classes for school-aged youth (Verburgge, 2012). Verburgge (2012) declares military drills and sports were the focus for male students and calisthenics for female students in academic exercise programs. In 1918, a national vision statement developed by the Public Health Service established promotion of physical fitness, wellness, and healthy habits for the youth of the nation (Roetert & Pate, 2018). This vision statement resulted in some states creating laws related to school wellness. Only eight states had laws in place for physical education in 1918, but by 1938 that number grew to thirty-six (Roetert & Pate, 2018).

War for a second time brought focus to the nation's fitness and activity levels in schools during the 1940s. With America's involvement in World War II, changes in physical education curriculum provided increased student participation and improving overall fitness (Conner & Bohan, 2014). After World War II, schools continued to increase fitness and health requirements. The growth of exercise in schools resulted in more interest in teaching physical education as a profession, leading to over four-hundred colleges and universities in the United States offering programs by the 1950s (Vlcek, 2009). However, by 1956 the interest in physical activity had faded, resulting in researcher Kraus from the American College of Sports Medicine professing that adults and youth needed to engage in regular daily exercise more often (Wylie-

Rosett & Jhangiani, 2015). President Eisenhower established the President's Council of Youth Fitness, which endorsed increasing school funds for equipment, instructors, and time towards physical education programs in elementary schools. This initiative on youth wellness in schools continued into and through the 1960s under President Kennedy's leadership (Wylie-Rosett & Jhangiani, 2015).

The 1970s and 1980s brought a threat of unimportance and removal of physical education in schools. The need for schools to educate youth about physical fitness seemed to diminish at the time due to the anti-military climate (McCullick, Schempp, & Schuknecht, 2000). In the 1990s, teaching children skills of health and fitness to live an active lifestyle became the focus of physical education curriculum in schools (Institute of Medicine, 2013). A lifetime of health and fitness is still the goal of physical education programs. Aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and bone-strengthening activities engage children to help them reach the guidelines of sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous daily physical activity a quality school program provides (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Physical education is essential to all students and designed to develop skills for movement and the knowledge to design a plan for living a life of health and fitness (SHAPE America, 2018).

### **Daily Physical Activity**

Suggested physical activity guidelines dated from as far back as two thousand years ago and evolved over the years. Paffenbarger, Blair, and Lee (2001) recognized that to sustain good health, exercise is a critical element. However, the amount and time of physical fitness recommendations did not exist. The American Heart Association (1972) concluded aerobic exercise reduced the risk of cardiovascular disease and how it is vital for good health but gave no endorsement on the amount needed. This changed in 1995 when a report issued by the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine defined everyone on most, preferably all, days of the week should accumulate thirty minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity (Blair, LaMonte, & Nichamen, 2004).

The fitness activity standard of thirty minutes a day for a minimum of five days a week remained in place for thirteen years. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) fashioned a report called the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans in 2008. In this document, the strategies for obtaining health and physical fitness increased to one hour a day for youth ages six to seventeen. Aerobic, muscular, and bone strengthening exercises are most beneficial to increase the overall health of a person. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2018), the guidelines for fitness endured with new health aspects presented in the manuscript. These ranged from brain health, risks of sedentary behaviors, and immediate and long term effects on how people function, sleep and feel due to an individual's activity levels (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

### **Scheduling Challenges**

When No Child Left Behind began in the early 2000s, it left school leaders and teachers with the challenge of making time to include all subjects for students (Cooper et al., 2016). Cooper et al. (2016) believed due to this act, schools had fewer resources and time dedicated to physical education programs to produce more time to teach other core subjects. To alleviate this problem, Beauchamp, Rhodes, and Nigg (2016) suggest extending the school day by another thirty to sixty minutes to allow for more opportunities to cover all academic topics. Along with the lack of length in a school day, there are other barriers that limit the chance for fitness and movement. Facility availability, lack of equipment, and financial constraints inhibit some

educational institutions from offering classes dedicated to physical activity (Institute of Medicine U.S., 2013).

Even though the benefits of health and wellness provides the argument for physical education in schools, there are some that believe the opposite. Polish (2015) indicates providing classes for fitness may contribute to other issues for students. Bullying, a feeling of exclusion in activities, and time away from other subjects are a few of the arguments against providing children classes for physical activity (Polish, 2015). These opinions against physical education led to solutions provided by professionals in the field. SHAPE America (2015) justifies the value of health and wellness by producing a checklist for schools to help plan a quality program. Advocating to make physical education a core academic subject would also aid school officials in validating the benefits it provides (SHAPE America, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

At the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1963, Carroll conceived the Model of School Learning (Carroll, 1963). Initially rooted in the study of foreign language, the model includes looking at the aptitude of students, new procedures for better organizing instruction, and understanding the complexities of pupil achievement (Carroll & Spearritt, 1967). However, this model of school learning seemed relevant to apply in any subject matter and cognitive skill associated with learning (Carroll, 1989). The Carroll Model of School Learning is composed of five elements that include: aptitude, opportunity to learn, ability to understand instruction, quality of instructional events, and perseverance (Carroll, 1963, 1989). Carroll (1963, 1989) believed these five factors incorporated a school model that would lead to academic achievement. Figure 1 illustrates Carroll's view of how the time needed to learn relates to each of the other four components, which results in the academic success of a student.

Figure 1. Carroll's (1963, 1989) Model of School Learning.

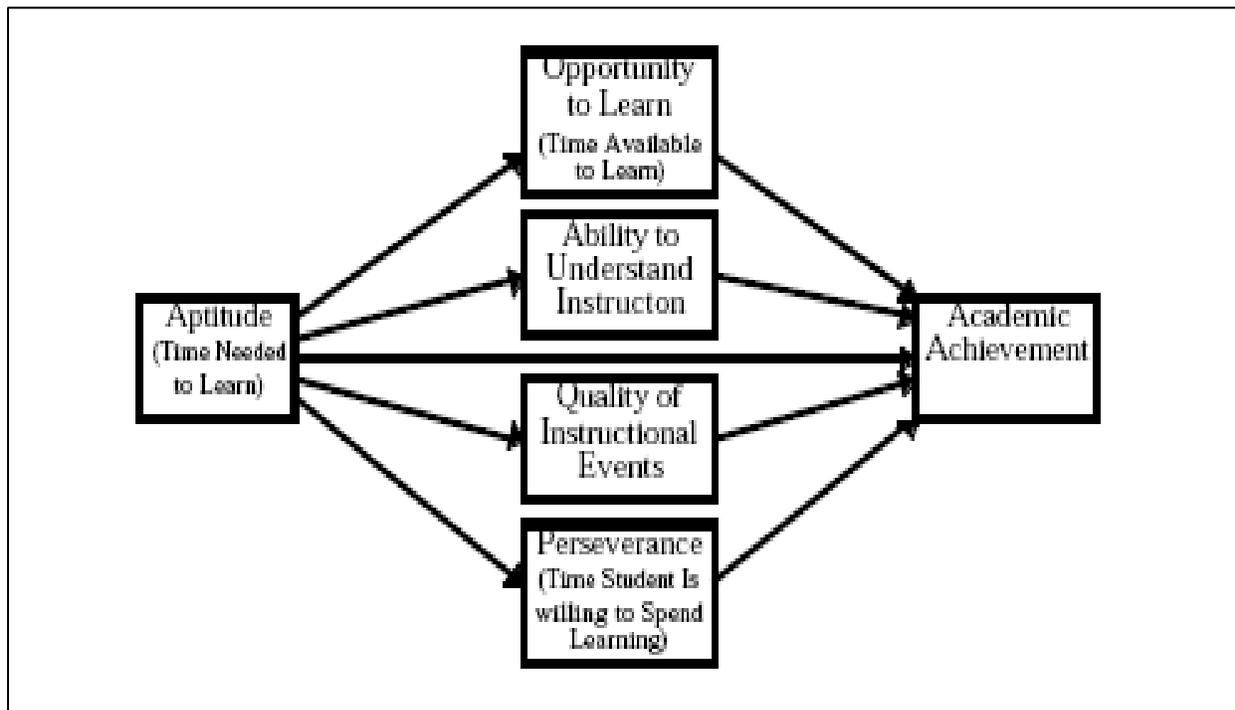


Figure courtesy of Reeves & Reeves (1997). Effective dimensions of interactive learning on the World Wide Web. In B.H. Kahn (Ed.), *Web-based instruction* (pp. 59-67). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

This formula for education implies when adequate time to perform a task is provided and exceptional instructional skills are delivered, learners obtain a high degree of knowledge (Millman, Bieger, Klag, & Pine, 1983). The five parts in the model align into two classes of variables that influence learning achievement: individual differences and instructional differences (Carroll & Spearritt, 1967).

### **Individual Difference Variables: Aptitude, Perseverance, and Ability to Understand**

Aptitude, perseverance, and ability to understand instruction are all individual differences impacting students' capacity to retain knowledge (Carroll & Spearritt, 1967). Carroll (1989) classified aptitude as a factor determining how much time was needed for a person learning the curriculum, instruction, or a task to a level of understanding in an ideal setting for teaching and

student motivation. A student that needs minimal time to be taught has a higher aptitude compared to someone with a low aptitude and in need of more than average time to show comprehension. Instead of looking at standardized testing when related to aptitude, acceptable levels of academic achievement are possible by pupils when provided enough time (Reeves & Reeves, 1997). Slavin (1995) professed to teach a subject for a more extended period of time does not always result in knowledge; however, if student incentive, quality of instruction, and appropriateness are at an elite level, it's possible increased instructional length will result in quality education. The issue of time management for teachers affects aptitude (Assaf, 2015). Assaf (2015) indicates that when a limited daily schedule spent on academic subjects and an inability to meet the different needs for each student results in varying outcomes of educational achievement.

Perseverance is the amount of time a student is willing to spend on learning (Carroll, 1963). In a way, motivational learning is defined by perseverance and a person's inspiration to put forth the effort to study (Carroll, 1989). Park, Jung, and Reeves (2015) proclaimed confidence, initiative, motivation, and drive are traits in people that push study habits. Also, these traits are different in each individual and may or may not affect the capability to figure out a learning task. In some examples, students encouraged to persevere showed no differences in academic achievement than those not encouraged, besides asking for more time to meet academic criteria (Millman et al., 1983). Millman et al. (1983) advanced that time allotted by an individual for learning is different for everyone.

The ability to understand instruction does have a collaborating relationship with perseverance but also stands as a separate learning component for each individual (Hymel, 1974). Hymel (1974) asserted the measurement of an individual's listening skills, reading

comprehension, communication abilities, and overall intelligence is needed to gauge instructional understanding. These mechanisms in students' conception of knowledge are directly tied to differences in their thinking. A learner needs to show language comprehension, along with the ability to recognize the tasks being taught in order to show instructional understanding (Carroll, 1989).

### **Instructional Variables**

The opportunity to learn and the quality of the instruction are two instructional variables in this model. Opportunity to learn represents time allowed, provided, and available for obtaining knowledge (Carroll, 1963). A school's schedule, programs, and content in the curriculum determine how much of the day is spent on a subject. This allocation of time does not always account for the individual needs or willingness to acquire knowledge (Hymel, 1974). Also, the chance to learn might create more limitations internally in a student's mindset on how much time is needed than the external factors that are presented (Carroll & Spearritt, 1967). By documenting and illustrating factors influencing the opportunity to learn, it provides discussion points for the success of academic programs in schools (Scherff & Piazza, 2009).

Academic content and time spent on teaching curriculum are critical components for the opportunity to learn, which directly impacts the value of instruction (Elliot & Bartlett, 2016). Carroll (1989) postulates if the presentation of a topic is unacceptable, then the length of instruction should increase. Also, if the number of lessons taught is a minimal amount, a more competent level of education is needed for learners. Slavin (1995) deems what is being taught and tested needs to be clearly specified. Clarity for student comprehension is considered the aspect that is most important when discussing the quality of instruction (Slavin, 1995).

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Chapter two provided literature pertaining to the topic of elementary physical education instruction and needed time for physical activity. The chapter started with historical background information on physical education in America. A review of physical activity guidelines and academic scheduling challenges followed. The chapter concluded with an examination of Carroll's Model of School Learning, which is the theoretical framework that guided the study. Chapter three will provide information on the methodology provided to conduct this study further.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of K-5 elementary principals in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. This exploration examined the potential curricular scheduling impact upon physical education delivery systems as reported by elementary school administrators. Chapter three included the research design, rationale for the method, and research questions. Setting, sample, and selection of participants are also present in the chapter. Chapter three continued by explaining the role of the researcher, as well as instrumentation used, data collection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, triangulation, and analysis of the data. A summary concluded this chapter on methodology.

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative inquiry guided the research, explicitly targeting elementary school administrators' role in scheduling time for physical activity in schools. Creswell (2018) postulates that in a phenomenon, exploring how it develops shared patterns of behavior over time and views of individuals involved are what researchers use to establish meaning. Qualitative research explores behaviors in people and offers insight into why these actions take place (Rosenthal, 2016). The research design should occur in a natural setting and may change throughout the process (Creswell, 2018). Results from the data describe the experiences and behaviors of school administrators as related to scheduling physical activity during the school day. The development and implementation of interview protocols assisted in the research design process. Administrator interviews included principals of elementary schools in the same school district, with at least two years of experience.

### **Rationale for the Method**

When exploring research or data for a phenomenon, using a qualitative research method establishes more information for the occurrence (Creswell, 2018). There is a need for additional information regarding the amount of time allotted for physical activity during the elementary school day, so a qualitative approach is best. A qualitative method involves asking questions, recording observations, collecting data, and making interpretations instead of using standardized instruments (Johnson, 2012). Qualitative research methods allowed for further exploration of the topic of elementary physical education programs and the time allotted for fitness and exercise within the school day.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher developed research questions that explore the experiences of school leaders with physical education programming. The following questions guide this study:

RQ1. What strategies do elementary school leaders employ to allocate school time for physical education?

RQ2. What are the perspectives of school leaders on addressing physical education programming for elementary students?

RQ3. What are the academic benefits and disadvantages of increased physical education time?

### **Research Setting**

The Minnesota River School District (MRSD) provided the setting for this inquiry. Located in south central Minnesota, MRSD is composed of two high schools, one alternative school, two middle schools, ten elementary schools, and one school for special education students. Student population exceeds 8,500 students, with a racial composition of 75.02%

White, 11.91% Black, 6.23% Hispanic, 4.31% Multiracial, 2.09% Asian, 0.29% American Indian, and 0.13 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Students receiving free and reduced lunch account for 34% of the population, 15% are in Special Education, and 6% are English Language Learners (ELL) (Minnesota River Public Schools Demographic Data, 2018). Three schools in the MRSD are Title I schools (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

### **Sample**

The purposeful convenience sample consisted of five K-5 elementary school administrators who hold primary leadership responsibilities at different elementary schools in a southern Minnesota school district. Purposeful sampling is used for meeting the criteria for participation in this study. Creswell (2018) proclaimed selecting participants with a purpose best helps in comprehending the issue and research questions for a qualitative study. Using purposeful sampling aids the researcher in identifying and selecting cases with descriptive information that is related to the phenomenon of relevance (Palinkas et al., 2015). If a study is phenomenological, the sampling size should range from three to ten individuals (Creswell, 2018). All participants are public K-5 elementary principals with a minimum of two years of experience, employed in the same school district, and who have the primary responsibility for curricular scheduling in their buildings. A sample of convenience will be required due to the proximity of the research to midwestern schools.

### **Selection of Participants**

Convenience sampling drives the selection and recruitment of participants. K-5 elementary principals in a southern Minnesota school district were invited to participate in this sample. Principals who are the primary school leader were identified from the district website. Leaders beyond K-5 are excluded. An overview of each principal's elementary school includes

student enrollment and ethnicities. The percentage of students receiving ELL services, Special Education, and free or reduced school lunch, along with the principals' background information, is also part of the overview.

### **School A**

School A is an elementary school that serves 401 students as of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Students enrolled at School A are 87.03% White, 5.24% Multiracial, 3.74% Hispanic, 2.00% Asian, 1.50% Black, and 0.50% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. ELL provides services to 1.00% of students, and 15.00% of the student population receives Special Education. The school's free and reduced lunch program enrollment is 22.00%. The school principal is a White male with 6 years of experience.

### **School B**

School B is an elementary school that serves 436 students as of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Students enrolled at School B are 71.56% White, 11.24% Black, 9.40% Hispanic, 6.42% Multiracial, 1.15% Asian, and 0.23% American Indian. Special Education provides services to 22.00% of students, and 8.00% of the student population receives ELL. The school's free and reduced lunch program enrollment is 47.00%. The school principal is a White male with 15 years of experience.

### **School C**

School C is an elementary school that serves 522 students as of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Students enrolled at School C are 79.31% White, 8.62% Black, 7.09% Hispanic, 4.02% Multiracial, and 0.96% Asian. ELL provides services to 5.00% of students, and 16.00% of the student population receives Special Education. The school's free and reduced lunch program enrollment is 35.00%. The school principal is a White male with 7 years of experience.

**School D**

School D is an elementary school that serves 388 students as of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Students enrolled at School D are 76.55% White, 13.92% Black, 5.41% Hispanic, 3.61% Multiracial, and 0.52 % Asian. Special Education provides services to 19.00% of students, and 10.00% of the student population receives ELL. The school's free and reduced lunch program enrollment is 40.00%. The school principal is a White female with 8 years of experience.

**School E**

School E is an elementary school that serves 386 students as of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Students enrolled at School E are 62.18% White, 19.69% Black, 8.03% Hispanic, 7.51% Multiracial, 1.33 % Asian, 1.30% American Indian, and 0.52% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. ELL provides services to 12.00% of students, and 18.00% of the student population receives Special Education. The school's free and reduced lunch program enrollment is 45.00%. The school principal is a White male with 9 years of experience.

**Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study, a researcher's role is to collect data and perform all other aspects related to interpreting results (Creswell, 2013). This would make the primary instrument the researcher. Creswell (2018) asserts individuals involved in research should disclose personal biases, and assumptions from the onset could influence interpreting results. Developing research questions and strategies to establish reliability throughout is also a responsibility of a researcher.

**Instrumentation**

Creswell (2018) believes the researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative study. Interviews, conversations, and observations help with the collection of data. During interviews,

open-ended questions are essential when studying a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). While conducting interviews, the researcher may use a variety of formats ranging from focus groups, informal, structured, and unstructured approaches (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). All questions should relate to the specific phenomenon of interest (Englander, 2012).

### **Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Ethical Considerations**

An essential aspect of any form of research is respecting the rights of the participants involved (Backhouse, Cori, & Day, 2000). Information on the consent process and related forms provide details to contributors before consenting to involvement. Neuman (2003) indicates participants should also receive an overview of the research process, a risk statement, the right to cease participation, and any data collected from interviews. Before involvement and interviews take place, consent from the individuals involved needs to occur. Subjects in the study were confidential and only known to the researcher. Individual participants, their school, and school district were identified through pseudonyms (e.g., Principal 1, MRSD) only. All data was stored in a password protected computer and/or flash drive and in a secure office. All audio recordings were destroyed upon completion of the study.

### **Data Collection**

The collection of data first occurred after review and endorsement from the Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After IRB approval, participants were contacted, and informed consent was obtained. One-to-one interviews were also arranged. A focus group of additional K-5 administrators was scheduled to gather district data for triangulation. Finally, a document review of curricular scheduling of physical education programming and school district policy comprised the data collection. All data was analyzed by the researcher using a phenomenological qualitative methodology. Data was transcribed, coded, analyzed, categorized

for thematic emergent trends, and reported in an aggregate report. Research findings may be disseminated by the researcher.

### **Institutional Review Board**

Any research by Winona State University faculty, staff, or students that includes human subjects needs approval by the IRB to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects. The IRB consists of a community representative, a prisoner advocate, and faculty members with various disciplines (Winona State University, 2019). Each principal might require permission from the school district before data collection. Methods for collecting data included one-to-one interviews, a focus group interview, and a review of documents.

### **One-to-One Interviews**

The process for the one-to-one interview with elementary school principals used an interview protocol. These interviews inquired about the role of an administrator when scheduling time for physical education and fitness. A favorite technique for obtaining data, one-to-one interviews allows participants to explain lived experiences and feelings (Moustakas, 2004). A 45-minute block of time to conduct the interview was arranged with each principal. An audio recording allowed for transcription of responses and research of the interview. Interviews occurred at each principal's school. Participants were asked if they are open to further clarification of emergent data.

### **Focus Group Interview**

Barrett and Twycross (2018) proclaim focus group interviewing is a method for collecting data when a group of participants speaks with a facilitator about an issue or concern. The focus group for data collection included three participating principals from the one-to-one interviews and four other K-5 elementary principals in the district. An open discussion of

strategies, processes, and experiences with scheduling physical education was the focus of the group. The focus group was 20 minutes in length and in a confidential location. Audio recording with the permission of the participants occurred for transcription. Audio recordings were destroyed at the end of the research project.

### **Document Review**

The last step in the data collection process was reviewing public documents that contribute to understanding responsibilities and expectations when scheduling time for physical activity by school officials. Exploring documents that are both print and electronic is a systematic procedure for reviewing documents (Bowen, 2009). A document review of state requirements for physical education curricular offerings and school district policies completed the data collection portion of the study.

### **Triangulation**

Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) regard triangulation as a method for converging different information sources to test the reliability of a source. When developing a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon, there is a need for multiple methods or data sources (Patton, 1999). One-to-one interviews, focus group interviews, and document review by the researcher create a triangulation method of data collection.



Figure 2. Data methods for triangulation.

### **Data Analysis**

Being true to participants' views and perspectives is a critical part of data management and analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Defining, exploring, categorizing, mapping, theorizing, and explaining are all possibly a part of analyzing data (Richie & Spencer, 2002). Throne (2000) considers through all phases of research; a researcher must engage in the analytic process to transform raw data into new knowledge. Connecting themes and creating a narrative from the analysis is part of the data coding and labeling process (Creswell, 2002).

### **Summary**

The methodology for the study was the focus of chapter three. A phenomenological approach to exploring a school principal's experiences and abilities in providing opportunities for physical education and activity guided this chapter. Research design, rationale for the method, and research questions began the discussion. The chapter also included sections on the setting, sample, and selection of participants. Explaining the role of the researcher, instrumentation, ethical considerations, data collection, and analysis of the data concluded the chapter. Chapter four presents the findings and results of the study.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of K-5 elementary principals in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. This exploration examined the potential curricular scheduling impact upon physical education delivery systems as reported by elementary school administrators. Chapter four reviews the problem statement, the research design, and presents the results of the findings for the study. The findings are compiled from the experiences of five elementary principal interviews, a focus group of elementary principals, and a document review of curricular standards for physical education programming and school district policy on curriculum instruction.

#### **Review of the Problem Statement**

Little is known about how to create more time for physical activity by improving elementary physical education practices. Currently, children and adolescents do not accomplish the goal of 60 minutes of daily physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Physical education teachers and school administrators at the elementary level are unable to offer more time for a physical education program, which provides physical activity occasions for students. The results of this study could contribute to existing research and literature on the importance of scheduling physical education curriculum for elementary aged students.

#### **Review of the Research Design**

Qualitative inquiry drives the research, explicitly targeting elementary school administrators' role in scheduling time for physical activity in schools. Creswell (2018) postulates that in a phenomenon, exploring how it develops shared patterns of behavior over time

and the views of individuals involved are what researchers use to establish meaning. Qualitative research explores behaviors in people and offers insight into why these actions take place (Rosenthal, 2016). The research design should occur in a natural setting and may change throughout the process (Creswell, 2013). Results from the data describe the experiences and behaviors of school administrators as related to scheduling physical activity during the school day. The development and implementation of interview protocols assist in the research design process. Administrator interviews will include principals of elementary schools in the same school district, with at least two years of experience.

### **Demographics of Participants**

Elementary school principals in K-5 buildings from a southern Minnesota school district participated in the study. Principals that are the primary school leader for their building were identified from the school district website. The total potential participants in the school district were ten elementary principals. After IRB approval was obtained, participants were recruited through an email invitation. Nine principals agreed to participate in the study. All participants were required to have a minimum of two years of experience, be employed in the same school district, and are responsible for curricular scheduling in their buildings. Participants were selected based upon the inclusion criteria. Anyone not meeting the inclusion criteria was excluded from this study. The demographics of the principals consisted of six males and three females, experience ranged from six to fifteen years, and all were Caucasian. Table 1 presents the demographics of the principals that participated in this study.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Principals*

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
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	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	
	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Years of Experience</b>			
<b>Career Experience</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Career Experience</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>0-5</b>		<b>0-5</b>	
<b>6-10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6-10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>11-15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11-15</b>	

**Findings**

Five K-5 elementary principals from the school district agreed to participate in one-to-one interviews. The demographics of the principals in the one-to-one interviews consisted of four males and one female, experience ranged from six to fifteen years, and all were Caucasian. Individual interviews were conducted with participants after IRB approval was obtained. Principals were contacted through an email invitation, and informed consent was obtained after an agreement to participate. A 45-minute block of time to conduct the interview was arranged with each principal. An audio recording allowed for transcription of responses and research after the interviews. Interviews occurred at each principal’s school. Participants were asked if they are open to further clarification of emergent data.

**One-to-One In-Depth Interviews**

When reflecting on thoughts and experiences as a K-5 elementary principal, themes emerged from the participants’ answers. The researcher analyzed the data using the constant comparative method of coding data for selective thoughts and information to form categories for emergent themes. Each theme was present in various parts of the one-to-one interviews. The four themes

were; 1) Schedule Balance and Common Prep Times, 2) Scheduling Requirements and Barriers, 3) Benefits of Physical Education Every Day, and 4) Extending the School Day. The percentage of the participants discussing each theme was 100%, except for extending the school day was only 80%. Table 2 provides a summary of the key emerging themes.

Table 2

*Themes Formulated from One-to-One In-Depth Interview Data*

Theme	Theme Description	% of Participants Discussing
Theme 1	Schedule Balance and Common Prep Times	100%
Theme 2	Scheduling Requirements and Barriers	100%
Theme 3	Benefits of Physical Education Every Day	100%
Theme 4	Extending the School Day	80%

Themes presented below include textual quotes from participants. The quotes are from audio recorded interviews conducted by the researcher and were then transcribed into written form. Only quotes that apply to the emergent theme are included.

**Emerging Theme 1: Schedule Balance and Common Prep Times**

All the participants believed that having balance and common prep time for classroom teachers is a significant factor in creating the academic schedule for their school. Creating shared time to collaborate and plan for classroom teachers was a theme consistently expressed by each principal. One principal expressed,

“I think it is trying to balance the wants and needs of the different people involved in it. Our special area folks would like to be able to have, really for those folks that are coaching, the opportunity to have prep at the end of the day. So that they do not have to bring a substitute in on the days that they do have to leave early for coaching. Our classroom teachers want to be able to collaborate as much as possible, so having a common prep time for many teams is valuable (Principal In1).”

Another one said,

“Obviously, what we would love to always be able to provide is a common prep for our teachers. And so, consistency in common prep behind their everyday schedule as well. It's something that our staff really wants to do, be able to have that time to meet. The challenges then become being able to schedule that in a way that doesn't overlap pieces again because of our size (Principal In3).”

Principal In4 stated thoughts on academic pressures and its effect on scheduling,

“I think a lot of times with the pressures that schools face with achievement scores on reading and math, that sometimes will be the precedent to make sure that we're providing time for classroom teachers to communicate and talk about math and reading assessments and achievement. There are times when the physical education schedule can get affected by that.”

Common prep time's importance in a schedule is expressed throughout the participants' responses and impacts curricular scheduling for all classes.

### **Emerging Theme 2: Scheduling Requirements and Barriers**

The requirements set forth by the school district was another factor that drives each school's academic schedule. All participants felt the required number of days and minutes for

each academic subject did not give them much flexibility in creating the schedule. Some principals also articulated they felt limited in offering choices throughout the day due to the requirements set forth by the school district. A principal reflected,

“I use the parameters given. I don’t know where those parameters came from, but twice a week, 50 minutes in PE. We certainly live by the 60 minutes of movement a day, so we are a little bit limited that they get PE twice a week for 50 minutes or 100 minutes sometimes in Kindergarten that’s split up over four days. But we are a little locked into twice a week PE classes (Principal In2)”.

Principal In5 stated,

“To be quite honest with you, I don't necessarily put a lot of additional thought beyond what we have agreed upon across a district within our elementary schools of what our kids are receiving. But, when I think big picture, I kind of have parameters I have to work within, so really right now, I have what I have. Every kid at School E is going to get two days of PE over the course of five (days).”

Each participants’ comments emphasized that the required minutes for each school subject restricts flexibility and creativity in a schedule. This barrier in scheduling limits the principals’ ability to increase or decrease time in subject areas based on the needs of their school.

### **Emerging Theme 3: Benefits of Physical Education Every Day**

Being able to provide physical education every day to elementary aged students was a theme that all participants indicated. Each participant felt that the benefits of providing daily physical activity for students is needed in a K-5 elementary school schedule. Physical education offers students opportunities for physical fitness, as well as social, emotional, and academic improvement according to the principals. Principal In1 thought,

“Kids benefit from the opportunity to move, and they benefit from the opportunity to learn in that environment and all of the skills that go with learning in that environment. Everything from perseverance, sportsmanship, and following rules and all those pieces to the physical fitness aspect they get from it.”

Another participant expressed concern about the amount of physical education students were receiving.

“Unfortunately, we only have phy ed two days a week. I wish we had phy ed five days a week, that would be great, but that would be a whole different kind of schedule. I just, honestly, I don't think it's enough. I think that if we could provide more, it would benefit our kids. Physical activity is so important, and I know that it helps kids feel better about who they are and about themselves. It gives them energy, and kids need to move. The pressure that the kids have in the classroom to perform, it is pretty intense. So, if we could provide more time, I think it benefits us, but that's maybe bigger than where I'm sitting (Principal In4).”

Some of the participants also stated they try to offer physical fitness opportunities during various parts of the day, along with what students receive in a physical education class. Morning breaks, recess, walking/jogging paths, and school events are just a few examples of ways schools try to promote activity and movement.

#### **Emerging Theme 4: Extending the School Day**

When asked to provide solutions on how K-5 elementary schools in the district could provide daily physical education, a common theme was extending the school day. Four out of the five participants offered that extending the school day would provide more time for physical education and other academic subjects. One principal stressed this belief by stating,

“Lengthen the school day. I do think our school day’s a little bit too short. We wouldn’t have to teach more content necessarily, but we could spread it out a little more over a little bit longer day. But a little bit longer day, I feel that you could add a number of things to the day (Principal In2).”

Principal In3 discussed the opportunities created by extending the school day,

“If I could create a school day that instead of going from 8:00 to 2:30 every day, we go from 8:00 to 3:30, now I can add more reading instruction and math instruction, but I can also add opportunities to maybe have PE every day. I would love to have daily PE for a half of a block, and then the other half is going to be your art, music, media.”

Increasing the minutes in a school day is a solution the principals believe would increase time for all academic subjects. More information and research would be needed to expand the school day.

### **Focus Group Interview**

Ten K-5 elementary principals in the school district were invited to participate in the focus group interview session. Seven of the ten volunteered to partake in the focus group, and three of the principals were also participants in the one-to-one interviews. The demographics of the principals in the focus group consisted of four males and three females, experience ranged from six to fifteen years, and all were Caucasian. During the focus group interview, two key themes emerged. These themes were changing the current school district schedule and providing more scheduled time for physical education. Table 3 presents the themes that emerged from the focus group discussion.

Table 3

*Themes Formulated from Focus Interview Data*

Theme	Brief Discussion
1	Changing the Current School District Schedule
2	Providing More Scheduled Time for Physical Education

### **Emerging Theme 1: Changing the Current School District Schedule**

During the one-to-one interviews, a common theme that emerged was requirements set forth by the school district had an influence on how the principals set the daily academic schedule. Extending the school day was offered as a solution to add more flexibility to each buildings' schedule. In the focus group, the topic of extending the school day led to a discussion on changing current practices in scheduling for the school district. Changes to the current school day in the district could provide more time for other subjects, including physical education.

Principal F2 expressed,

“Well, if the skies the limit, I would prioritize something less academic. Because I think that we give kids a lot of that and feel that they have enough of that, in my opinion. So, if we had a longer school day, which I would personally love, I would want to prioritize special area types of things, STEM kind of things, or experiences, I think.”

Another principal suggested,

“I think more along the lines of choice-based options for kids. Whether that is maker space options, if there are more types of phy ed options, or maybe it's just more dramatic play options for the little kids, and that sort of thing (Principal F5).”

Principal F8 stated thoughts about why and who would be involved in a decision to extend the school day,

“I think that it depends on why you’re extending the day, the people that drive that why, the stakeholders, are going to have some input on how that’s going to look. I’m going to add that, the biggest hurdle to that, well not the biggest hurdle, but a huge hurdle in that is the contractual stuff with teachers, as I see it.”

Comments made by the participants showed that more research to extend the school day is needed. Also, the inclusion of other stakeholders would be involved in changing the current school district schedule.

### **Emerging Theme 2: Providing More Scheduled Time for Physical Education**

Providing daily physical education and its benefits was another point the participants conveyed interest. This led to a discussion on increased physical education time during the school day. Many factors would need to be discussed and decided if the school district increased time for physical education. Principal F1 shared thoughts on the individuals that would be included in offering more time for physical education,

“Director of teaching and learning, school board, superintendent would be involved.

Probably would have some parent advisors in there. I think that because it would impact the secondary, you’d have student voice from the middle school and high school level.”

Another gave examples from past experiences,

“I think that it depends too if you’re looking at minutes verse days. I was in a school district where we did have it every day, but it was only 25 minutes instead of 50. They alternated other specials with it, so instead of music once a week, you would have that twice a week opposite your art or 25 minutes of phy ed. So, we had it every day, so

minute wise, you're getting it the same amount. So, it goes back to the goals of your program too, are you looking at getting kids moving every day or increasing the overall time during the week, what's the goal (Principal F7)?"

Most of the participants believe physical education is essential to students, but time and support is an issue when scheduling classes.

### **Document Review**

The document review included the 2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Physical Education and a document on the Minnesota River School District policy for physical education curriculum. Both documents influence how physical education is provided to students. These documents are used by school officials to determine how a physical education program is designed and implemented in elementary schools.

### **2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Physical Education**

The goal of the document is to guide schools in providing individuals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue a lifetime of healthy physical activity. The document is guided by the following five standards for all grade levels:

1. Demonstrate competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
2. Apply knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics to movement and performance.
3. Demonstrate the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
4. Exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
5. Recognize the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.

The standards also include specific grade level focus areas and benchmarks for K-12 students. This literature supports the belief of the participants that physical education is valuable to elementary aged students in enhancing physical fitness and social interactions. There is no mention of the required number of days or minutes students should receive physical education during an academic week or school year. School districts are free to determine what curricular time is provided in elementary schools, which aligns with the experiences of the principals in this study.

### **Minnesota River School District Instructional Curriculum Policy**

The purpose of the instructional curriculum policy for the Minnesota River School District is to provide a plan for courses and subjects offered to students in the school district. The document states that all programs offered by the school district need to meet the standards and benchmarks established by the Minnesota Department of Education. The superintendent develops guidelines and directives relating to the instructional curriculum, that are then implemented as school policy by the school board. Financial considerations are also used when determining instructional curriculum. At no point in the document is there inclusion of elementary principals in curricular decisions, which was expressed by the participants during interviews.

### **Summary**

Chapter four provides the findings for this qualitative study. The chapter begins with a review of the problem statement and research design. Demographics for the participants are provided, along with the results and themes from the one-to-one interviews, focus group, and document review. Chapter five will discuss the interpretation of the findings, implications for

educational leadership in physical education instruction, and future recommendations for research in creating an academic schedule for activity.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of K-5 elementary principals in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. This exploration examined the potential curricular scheduling impact upon physical education delivery systems as reported by elementary school administrators. The previous chapters provided an introduction, literature review, methodology, and findings for the study. The importance of elementary administrators' viewpoints on scheduling time for physical education curriculum is demonstrated through the study.

A qualitative method guided the research, explicitly targeting elementary school administrators' role in planning time for physical education curriculum in schools. Qualitative research explores behaviors in people and offers insight into why these actions take place (Rosenthal, 2016). A phenomenological research design allowed for further exploration of the lived experiences of K-5 elementary school principals when scheduling time for physical education programs. The following questions were used throughout this study:

RQ1. What strategies do elementary school leaders employ to allocate school time for physical education?

RQ2. What are the perspectives of school leaders on addressing physical education programming for elementary students?

RQ3. What are the academic benefits and disadvantages of increased physical education time?

One-to-one interviews, a focus group, and document review comprised the data collection. Four main themes emerged from the one-to-one interviews: (1) schedule balance and

common prep times, (2) scheduling requirements and barriers, (3) benefits of physical education every day, and (4) extending the school day. From the focus group interview, two themes emerged: (1) changing the current school district schedule and (2) providing more time for physical education.

### **Conclusions**

After conducting interviews with K-5 elementary principals, examining the findings of the research, and reviewing the literature, the researcher drew four conclusions from this study. The following conclusions also provide answers to the research questions that guided the study:

1. K-5 elementary principals felt school district requirements impacted how the daily academic schedule is created in each elementary school building. (RQ1)
2. Planning common prep time for teachers influences how specials, like physical education, are scheduled during the school day. (RQ1)
3. All participants stated that children would benefit from more physical education time during the school day. (RQ2, RQ3)
4. Extending the academic school day would add more time for increasing physical education opportunities in elementary schools. (RQ2)

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework explored how elementary children gain and sustain physical activity, and the time needed to learn compared to the actual time spent on learning. This framework included the Carroll Model of School Learning. The Carroll Model of School Learning is composed of five elements that include aptitude, opportunity to learn, ability to understand instruction, quality of instructional events, and perseverance (Carroll, 1963). Carroll

(1963) argues that learning is a function of effort spent in relation to effort needed, mainly connected to time.

The findings of this study hold true to Carroll's theory on school learning. Based on comments from the participants in this study, the opportunity to learn is lacking during the school day. Participants felt that there is not enough time for all academic subjects, including physical education classes. If there is a shortage of academic time available for students, then it will influence student learning according to Carroll's model. The opportunity to learn is a vital step in this model and needed in order to provide adequate time for students to obtain and retain knowledge. Further research comparing current practices in other school districts could support this theory and the findings of this study.

### **Implications of the Study**

The results of this study elucidate that K-5 elementary administrators are limited in the ability to create more time for physical education programs. School district scheduling requirements and planning common prep time for teachers drives the daily academic schedule for elementary schools. Participants in this study identified the need for more physical education for elementary aged students. Additionally, extending the school day was suggested by participants as a possible solution that could create more time for all subjects, including physical education. By answering the research questions using the data collected, the researcher produced the following implications for leadership practice:

**Conclusion 1:** K-5 elementary principals felt school district requirements impacted how the daily academic schedule is created in each elementary school building.

**Implication:** School district officials and elementary administrators would benefit from a comprehensive review of the elementary academic schedule and what subjects are presented to

students. The findings in this study support Brusseau and Hannon's (2015), research that physical education programming reduction is used to increased academic learning time for other school subjects. The number of days, minutes, state standards and content should all be included in the review.

**Conclusion 2:** Planning common prep time for teachers influences how specialist subjects, like physical education, are scheduled during the school day.

**Implication:** Evaluating the benefits and disadvantages of planning common prep time for teachers may help to create a more effective schedule. Time for teachers to collaborate is essential, but how much time is needed during a week should be reviewed. By adjusting current practices for common prep time, it may allow for more flexibility in scheduling opportunities.

**Conclusion 3:** All participants stated that children would benefit from more physical education time during the school day.

**Implication:** School leaders may want to consider the amount of time allocated for physical education each week. The recommendation that each week elementary schools provide 150 minutes of instructional physical education is not being met (SHAPE America, 2015). With all of the K-5 elementary principals expressing the need for more physical education and the benefits it provides students, reviewing current practices should be addressed.

**Conclusion 4:** Extending the academic school day would add more time for increasing physical education opportunities in elementary schools.

**Implication:** Providing more time in the school day might be a pivotal factor in supporting the needs of elementary aged students. This solution supports Beauchamp, Rhodes, and Nigg (2016), suggestion that extending the school day by another thirty to sixty minutes allows for more opportunities to cover all academic topics. Exploring extending the school day should

involve school officials, as well as input from teachers and families. If more time is allotted, daily physical education could be achieved.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

More research is needed to explore ways to increase curricular time for physical activity in public elementary (K-5) physical education programs. A larger sample size is needed to validate and contribute to the findings of this study. Further research could include more school districts and elementary administrators in Minnesota with larger student populations.

Investigating other samples may provide different results and greater insight into this study.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**RESEARCH STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION**

Hello,

My name is Adam Hanson, and I am the physical education teacher at Hoover Elementary. I am currently a graduate student at Winona State University in the Sports Management/Leadership Education program. I am reaching out to invite you to participate in a research study for my final capstone project. This study is designed to explore the experiences of K-5 educational leaders in scheduling curricular time for physical education programs. Your participation in the study would entail a 30-45-minute one-to-one interview with me at your school. If you are interested in participating in this study, please read and sign the consent form attached. When that is completed, we can set up a time to meet. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Adam Hanson

**APPENDIX C**  
**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity.

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to explore ways to increase curricular time for physical activity in public elementary (K-5) physical education programs. There are no substantial risks or benefits from participating in this study.

The study will begin on September 12, 2019, and end March 3, 2020. We estimate participating in the study will require 45 minutes of your time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview that will last approximately 45 minutes.

Data collected during this study will be stored on a password-protected computer. Names will not be associated with the written data. Instead, individual participants, their school, and district will be identified through pseudonyms (e.g., Administrator #1, SD#1) only. After one year, all data will be appropriately destroyed. If the results of this study are published or presented, no names will be associated with the data cited.

For questions about this research project, contact Adam Hanson at 507-383-1425 or [adhanson15@winona.edu](mailto:adhanson15@winona.edu), or you can contact the faculty advisor for this project, Dr. Tarrell Portman, at 507-457-5335 or [tportman@winona.edu](mailto:tportman@winona.edu). For questions about research subjects' rights or research-related injuries, contact the Human Protections Administrator Brett Ayers at 507-457-5519.

Participation in this study is voluntary. A decision not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. A decision not to participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with the school district or Winona State University. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

**AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in the study described above. Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, had an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and have decided to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX B****RESEARCH STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Topic: Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity.

Throughout this interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use names or identifiable information in your stories.

Interview Question 1: What are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Interview Question 2: Please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Interview Question 3: When making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school day?

Interview Question 4: How would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Interview Question 5: If you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Interview Question 6: Please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Interview Question 7: Are there any comments or thoughts you'd like to add to the information you have provided?

Interview Question 8: Are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

#### Focus Group Protocol

Does everyone agree to this conversation being recorded?

Topic: Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity.

After interviewing a few K-5 elementary principals in the district, there were some common themes that emerged. The goal of this focus group is to have some discussion of these common themes. Because this discussion is being recorded, please allow for one person to speak at a time.

Focus Group Question 1: If extending the elementary school day was an option to increase time for academic subjects, what steps would need to be taken add time to the school day?

Focus Group Question 2: If the school district were to provide physical education classes 4-5 times a week for elementary school students, what would need to change in the current daily schedules for elementary schools?

**APPENDIX D**  
**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

**One-to-One Interviews**

**Interview 1 (Principal 1)**

Interviewer: Okay, so um, you are okay that I record this conversation?

Principal 1: Yep, that's fine. Principal 1, principal School B.

Interviewer: Great, so throughout this interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use any names or identifiable information in your stories of anybody else.

Interviewer: So, question 1, what are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Principal 1: Well, I think it is trying to balance the wants and needs of the different people involved in it. Um, our special area folks would like to be able to have, really for those folks that are coaching, the opportunity to have prep at the end of the day. Um, so that they do not have to bring a substitute in on the days that they do have to leave early for coaching. Our classroom teachers want to be able to collaborate as much as possible, so having a common prep time for many teams is valuable. Our lower elementary, our K-1 folks would really like to be able to do 25-minute blocks and so being able to create a schedule that enables them to move from one special to another after 25 minutes is desirable, not always achievable for us. And then there are not a whole lot of folks that are jumping on wanting the first prep of the day but with the way schedules are made there really isn't any way around it and we do the best we can rotating those less desirable times and give everyone the opportunity to have them.

Interviewer: Question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 1: Really for us it's, um, there are, we have somebody available for all the spots that are opportunities to have it, so they get plugged in. We really make sure that we don't have two different phy ed classes having the same class, so being very mindful of that. Also, spacing out the phy ed classes so they are not back to back. Ideally would be having a scenario having a day between their phy ed classes.

Interviewer: Question 3, when making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school day?

Principal 1: Well, I mean, all of our kids in the district receive phy ed a minimal of twice a week. Whenever it's possible, we try to do that 25 minutes of phy ed for our primary kids, but it's really something that because of the way our district is structured, everybody gets that opportunity to have phy ed taught by a licensed specialist.

Interviewer: Question 4, how would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Principal 1: I think that the best-case scenario is if we could do 25 minutes, 4 days a week. With the way our buildings are set up and the need to have financially responsible decisions, we can't have a phy ed teacher or two phy ed teachers assigned to a building and then have unassigned time for teaching. So, we're not able to get to that, that would be ideal if we could have that opportunity for kids more often than twice a week if that's 5 times a week or 4, it would be great. We just haven't been able to figure out a way to achieve that yet.

Interviewer: Question 5, if you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Principal 1: I think if it (physical education) was 25 minutes every day, that would be a good thing. Thinking through what that would look like and how that would domino into other special areas that would likely, in my mind, entail extending your school day a little bit. Because if you're going to start taking away minutes from other specials something's got to give in being able, we give ample time to get the academic side of things in there. Kids benefit from the opportunity to move, and they benefit from the opportunity to learn in that environment and all of the skills that go with learning in that environment. Everything from perseverance, sportsmanship, and following rules and all those pieces to the physical fitness aspect they get from it. It would be ideal to be able to do that. We just haven't been able to find that mix yet.

Interviewer: Question 6, please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Principal 1: I don't know (laughing). I don't know if you have a structure where you hire people part-time so that they are more available for your buildings. So, you could say you set up an ideal schedule where you set up 25-minute blocks because we have this part-time phy ed teacher there. We are not going to get the best phy ed teachers then, we lose out there because quality people want to work full-time, for the most part, and want to be able to make more money. So, that's not very feasible. Not sharing phy ed teachers between buildings is going to leave phy ed teachers with a very minimal load and scenarios where it's not exactly 30 sections in a building of teaching. It's something as administrators have talked about a little bit but really has not gone anywhere because we don't see a way to do that. I guess you could look at and say, hey, we are going to do two phy ed teachers at a building, and they are just going to fill up their schedule teaching phy ed, so those kids are going to get extra phy eds and addition phy eds. The downside then, like I mentioned earlier, you're losing academic time now. So, without

extending your school day, you start saying now we've lost 50 minutes over the course of the week of our math or reading opportunities to teach. Within our current structure, it's challenge to be able to figure out what that would look like.

Interviewer: Question 7, are there any comments or thoughts you would like to add to the information you have provided?

Principal 1: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Question 8, are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

Sure, yep, yeah.

### **Interview 2 (Principal 2)**

Interviewer: Should be good. You are okay that I record this conversation?

Principal 2: 100%, no problem.

Interviewer: Could you please state your name for the interview.

Principal 2: Sure, Principal 2

Interviewer: The topic that I'm covering is Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity. Throughout the interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use any names or identifiable information in your stories.

Interviewer: Interview question 1. What are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Principal 2: Huh, um, not a ton. I wish we could get things more often like I wish they had art more than once a week, and music more than once a week, and PE every day, physical activity every day. So, there is that limitation. The actual making of the schedule isn't so difficult, um, so not a huge thing. I just wish they had access to those special area classes more often. And, in kindergarten we try to give kids access to PE 4 days a week, so that makes the schedule a tiny more complex, but really not undoable. So, we are able to do that, and I wish I could do that for everybody like everybody had physical activity every day with something else then.

Interviewer: Gotcha, ok, interview question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 2: I use the parameters given. I don't know where those parameters came from, but twice a week, 50 minutes in PE (Principal 2 then had to stop to take a quick call on a walkie

talkie). Kindergarten again has split, so they have 25 minutes of PE and like 25 minutes of media. So, I just use the parameters given, try to give grade levels collaborative time so that they have common prep at least once a week, so I have to be able to do that. Is that enough?

Interviewer: Yeah, no, that's fine. Question 3, when making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school year or day?

Principal 2: Well, we certainly live by the 60 minutes of movement a day, so we are a little bit limited that they get PE twice a week for 50 minutes or 100 minutes sometimes in Kindergarten that's split up over 4 days. But we do try to push that idea of 60 minutes of movement a day, so we encourage kids to do our ALPS course, we encourage kids to walk and bike to school, we encourage kids to be active outside of the day, things like fitness logs take priority. But we are a little locked into twice a week PE classes.

Interviewer: Question 4, how would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Principal 2: Well, I think students need to move every day; it doesn't always have to be in PE class. But, I do I wish they had all of those special area classes more often, I do, that's probably the theme you're picking up on. There is only x amount of time in the day. So, they do get a lot of movement breaks; they get recess at least once a day, sometimes twice, even three times a day in the younger grades when the weather's nice. There is a ton more movement just within the classroom, then there was even just a few years ago. Lots of movement breaks, brain breaks, and body breaks. But I do think it's really important, but I don't necessarily allocate it in the schedule anymore than I did 15 years ago.

Interviewer: Ok, question 5, if you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Principal 2: Well, I'd even be happy if they had it (physical education), not even significantly more minutes a week, but just every day. So, if they had like 25 or 30 minutes everyday and couple that with another access to Art twice a week instead of once a week. I do think that would probably be better for kids.

Interviewer: Question 6, please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Principal 2: Lengthen the school day. I do think our school day's a little bit too short. We wouldn't have to teach more content necessarily, but we could spread it out a little more over a little bit longer day. I don't think that would be the world's worst idea. Um, that's about the only one I have. Teachers could own a little bit more, you know especially in a longer day. Classroom teachers could own a little bit more of that then too, and they could also help provide some opportunity for physical activity. They don't necessarily know all the content or know

everything around it. But a little bit longer day, I feel that you could add a number of things to the day.

Interviewer: Question 7, are there any comments or thoughts you would like to add to the information you have provided?

Principal 2: Um, no.

Interviewer: Question 8, are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

Principal 2: Sure, for sure, I always help anybody that needs it.

### **Interview 3 (Principal 3)**

Interviewer: So you're alright if I record this conversation?

Principal 3: Yep.

Interviewer: Alright, could you please tell us your name?

Principal 3: Sure, yep. Principal 3.

Interviewer: Ok, so my topic is Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity. Throughout this interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use any names or identifiable information in your stories.

Interviewer: Interview question 1. What are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Principal 3: I think there a number of factors that come to mind. One is that, because obviously of our size and the number sections that we have to provide becomes challenging because it'd be ideal if we could have one full-time teacher here or two full-time teachers here, but you end up with the 1.6 or whatever it ends up being that we need. That means you have to share somebody with other buildings. So, it can be a challenge to make sure that they're at those other schools a certain number of days and in our school. Sharing space comes to mind as well because we just have one gym here. It's not ideal to put kids in the cafeteria for gym obviously, and so making sure that we are able to schedule within the gym only. Our gym's not big enough for you to close the door and have two full gyms, either. So, it's somewhat of a smaller school, so that creates a challenge as well. For like 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we don't ever double up in the gym with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. So, that limits then again where I can schedule and what I can schedule also. But, knowing it's a priority to schedule two days a week and now the current 5-day schedule, 2 times in that 5 days, we can make that happen. So, that's something we just continuing to work

on, but yeah I would probably say the facilities, right, time and facilities, and people are probably the biggest challenges we run into.

Interviewer: Interview Question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 3: Say it again. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Um, interview Question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 3: Well, factors would include how many periods we have during the day to schedule classes in there. Again, going back to what days of the week do I have one teacher, two teachers here as well. I'm trying to work with my principal colleagues as we create those schedules that work at all buildings. I'd say thinking about, um give me that question, the second piece I lost.

Interviewer: That's ok, yeah, no, just what factors are considered when you're scheduling a time for physical education classes.

Principal 3: So, obviously, what we would love to always be able to provide is a common prep for our teachers. And so, consistency in common prep behind their everyday schedule as well. And I would love to be able to provide a consistent common prep for our specialty teachers as well so they can have a chance to meet also. So, that was something I was able to do last year one day a week, where they always had the same prep so our specialty teachers could meet. It's something that our staff really wants to do, be able to have that time to meet. The challenges then become then being able to schedule that in a way that doesn't overlap pieces again because of our size.

Interviewer: Interview question 3, when making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school day?

Principal 3: It's obviously a priority that we make sure kids are active and healthy, learning those lifelong skills and all those things they are going to pick up in in physical education. And so, I'm a proponent of physical education in schools, and I understand why we make sure kids would have it twice in a five day cycle. I would love to, love to increase that, see them being actually active more than that, whether it 4-5 days of the week, and I don't know if it's always physically having a class in the gym or if it's just being active outside in addition to your days in PE. Can we be more intentional with our playground staff to get kids active and things like that as well? But, I definitely think it's an important piece of a kids' day, just as much as I think that music is and art is and all those pieces also. But, obviously the long-term health and wellness of a kid is important, and so you get that through your physical activity, and a lot of that is going to be laying the foundation in class.

Interviewer: Question 5, if you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Principal 3: So, I can do whatever I want, huh. Well what gets challenging in there while I say I wish we could do it more often, to do that I think you take away from something, and so I think that's where the challenge is. So, if I could create a school day that instead of going from 8:00 to 2:30 every day we go from 8:00 to 3:30, now I can add so more reading instruction and math instruction, but I can also add opportunities to maybe have PE every day. I would love to have daily PE for a half of a block, and then the other half is going to be your art, music, media. But, I would love it if we are able to increase the amount of access kids have to that time, which I know comes a lot of changes, but within the current structure I think that where we are is kind of where we have to be.

Interviewer: I actual missed a question, I think. Question 4, how would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Principal 3: I think it's; I think it's about accurate where it. Teacher 1 was an elementary PE teacher for a number of years and so looking at our schedule and Teacher 1's schedules in the past their very comparable to what other schools are doing. So, I don't feel like there's a deficit that we're not doing enough time or anything like that. Obviously, a 50-minute block of special creates a challenge when you're talking about you know, maybe a kindergarten group that can't stay for a full class, but you need to split those into blocks, we don't do that here. But only a 50-minute period makes that a challenge if it was an hour that would be even better. But again, if you're going to change specials to become an hour, where do you then take away from someplace else. Or, if you go down 5 minutes and say, let's say each class is 45 minutes just so that way special area teachers can breathe in between classes and have some transition time. You know, I would see that as a benefit. Obviously, you don't want to see kids have less time, but for the adults in it, there are times where I think we could use some of that. The time to breathe for a moment, the time to use the bathroom when you need to, prepare for your next class, and you know equipment needs to be set up, um it's a challenge.

Interviewer: Interview question 6, please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Principal 3: I think with some sort of block schedule, in the sense that, you know that time they go to special areas is split between two areas. I think that would be one way that it could be done. I think that what gets challenging in that is that if I'm an art teacher, and now you're saying that they're going to go to the physical education 5 days a week let's say, or 4 days a week, whatever it ends up being, you've cut my time in half in essence. So, I'm giving up half of my class to you, and I still have standards to teach, and I have things I need to do. That's a challenge for others. Right? And so, I think the balance is making sure a kid has all those areas they're going to need. As much as I believe in physical education, I think there's kids that, while they need to be

active and moving, they really need those arts, they really need those music classes. That time spent in maker space or learning about books or checking out books and those things. I think some media things we could do differently, and I know a lot of schools have gone to that where media is more of a push in content area then it is a go to a class and learn. Those things can be integrated really easily into some different academic areas, as well. But I think that you know, with music and art like, I know everything they're trying to cover in given year and asking them to reduce the amount of time they see kids in the year would be a big challenge as well.

Interviewer: Um, sorry, interview question 7, are there any comments or thoughts you would like to add to the information you have provided?

Principal 3: Um, no, I don't think so. I think that one of the, as we are talking a lot about schedules, it's ah, scheduling is a really fine balance of trying to make a lot of people happy. The kids are the ones that really don't care at the end of the day. They'll do, I mean they care, you know, but their going to do what we tell them to do. If we say, ok this is your year your special schedule you go to PE 2 days a week, another year it's 5 days a week. I don't know if they're going to complain a lot, their going to say ok if that's what you're tell us what our schedule is we are going to do it. And so, where it gets the adults involved, that's where it gets to be tricky right. So, we're trying to make sure that our physical education teachers are feeling valued, when it comes time to scheduling things, I know we got some classes that on day 1 they have, in our case we have co-teaching classes going on in day 1 and on the second they come during the 5 day cycle they only have one of those two teachers. So, splitting those classes in that essence can be a challenge, and we're trying to do, like I said, what I'm trying I do where I can have common, consistent preps for my the rest of my kids and staff as well so they have that. So, I think that's where it gets challenging, as well. And so, I appreciated that the district as a whole we've had some conversations about that and they've said that they'll continue to support us in making changes as necessary. If that means increasing the FTE's we spend on PE in order to avoid those things and so that's something my phys ed. teachers and I will sit down and make sure that we have a schedule we all feel good about at the end of the year but also one that reflects the desires of the staff and make sure that people, as close as we can, make people happy with the scheduling.

Interviewer: Interview question 8, are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

Principal 3: Absolutely.

#### **Interview 4 (Principal 4)**

Interviewer: Okay, so um, you are okay that I record this conversation?

Principal 4: Yes.

Interviewer: Alright, could you please state your name for the interview?

Principal 4: Um, my name is Principal 4

Interviewer: And what school are you at?

Principal 4: I am principal at School A.

Interviewer: So, my topic is Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity. Throughout this interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use names or identifiable information in your stories of anybody else.

Interviewer: Interview question 1, what are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Principal 4: I think probably the biggest one is trying to create common prep times for grade-level teachers and then how that sometimes affects the physical education part of it. Making sure that the phys. teachers are able to meet with their classes two times a week, which isn't, that's not the tricky part, but try to make sure that they're kind of spread out so they're not back to back days if possible and then in most cases most schools have more than one phy ed teacher. We want to make sure that the one phys. ed teacher gets to meet with the same classes each time. So, one, for example like one third grade class would meet with one of the phys. ed teachers one day and then later that week meet with a different phys.ed teacher just to help with the relationships part of it and the assessment part so that it's not too tricky for the phys.ed teachers. Also, just creating time for the phys. ed teachers to be able to communicate and have their own professional learning community. That's probably been the biggest challenge the past few years. And then space isn't too bad, but sometimes we run into an issue where two 5th grade classrooms might have to share a gym, and you know that sounds like not a big issue, but when you get, you know, close to 60 5th graders in one gym. That gets hard to teach, that's a hard teaching environment. So, doing that and then in the winter, you know, we're pretty confined to the gym space only. So, that can be challenging, especially when teachers are sharing the gym. So, I'd say those are the biggest challenges every year that we faced

Interviewer: Interview question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes? I know you kind of said that already, but is there's anything else?

Principal 4: Um, could you repeat that question?

Interviewer: Sure, what factors are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 4: Scheduling a time, ok. Yeah, some of the things I mentioned before, making sure that students get two days a week. More than, so then the days are a little split up, so they get

activity throughout the week. Other than that, it's pretty standard. I mean, it's, I mean, the whole schedule kind of revolves around those specialists, making sure that we provide the special that we need. We always kind of start with phys. ed because I want to make sure it's spaced out the best way it can be. Unfortunately, we only have phys. ed two days a week, I wish we had phys. ed five days a week, that would be great, but that would be a whole different kind of schedule.

Interviewer: Interview question 3, when making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school day?

Principal 4: Well, we make sure that they have it 2 days a week. We do other things to like before school they do the ALPS trail, and they get a chance to have their recess and those types of things. But I think a lot of times with the pressures that schools face with achievement scores on reading and math, that sometimes will be kind of the precedent to make sure that we're providing time for classroom teachers to communicate and talk about math and reading assessments and achievement. There are times when the physical education schedule can get affected by that. For example, gym space and for example the spacing about during the week. So those are a challenge and a trade-off that comes up too.

Interviewer: Interview question 4, how would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Principal 4: I just, honestly, I don't think it's enough. I think that if we could provide more, it would benefit our kids. Physical activity is so important, and I know that it helps kids feel better about who they are and about themselves. It gives them energy, and kids need to move. The pressure that the kids have in the classroom to perform, and it is pretty intense. So, if we could provide more time, I think it benefits us, but that's maybe bigger than where I'm sitting.

Interviewer: Interview question 5, if you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Principal 4: Yeah, I think, I think the 50 minutes I think is a good one, is a good session of physical education. If we could do it every day, I think that would be ideal.

Interviewer: Is there anything else, could you expand upon a little more? Like how many times a week, would you want it to be 50 minutes each day a week, or would you think it would be something different than that? Or 50 minutes a day, I should say?

Principal 4: Yeah, I think 50 minutes a day, you could get a lot of, you know with the cardio or strength training within, within that 50 minutes. I think that would be sufficient for our kids with the age that they are

Interviewer: Ok, interview question 6, please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Principal 4: (Long pause) Yeah, I've never looked at and never tried to draw it out and see what that would look like. Just thinking of my head, I mean that that would be quite a task to be able to do that. So, I think we would have to hire maybe. I don't know, you know, that's, that's a good question.

Interviewer: Even if it's just one thing that you can think of like, I don't know. I don't want to lead you in your answer.

Principal 4: If classroom teachers were able to take part in, say okay, these 50 minutes, we're going to work on exercise, and it's not just the phys. ed staff because it's not possible to teach every classroom every day by just the phys. ed teachers. Unless I'm not thinking about it correctly, but I mean it could be possible if we make it a requirement that the kids have to be active. The hard part is going to be space. You know when the weather is nice, yeah, that would be easy, the class of teachers could do some things outside or things like that. But, we would probably need some bigger facilities if we were going to do something like that because the phys. ed would be teaching their classes, and then we would have to have another space for people to go, which could happen. Did I answer that question?

Interviewer: Yeah, I think so. If that's all, you have that's totally fine. Interview question 7, are there any comments or thoughts you would like to add to the information you have provided?

Principal 4: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Question 8, are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

Principal 4: Yes. No problem.

### **Interview 5 (Principal 5)**

Interviewer: Alright, so you're okay that I record this conversation?

Principal 5: Absolutely

Interviewer: Alright, could you please state your name and where you are principal at?

Principal 5: I'm Principal 5, principal at School E.

Interviewer: Ok, my topic is Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity. Throughout this interview, I will ask you questions. There are no word limits for your response. If I need more understanding, I will say, "Please tell me more?" or "Can you clarify what you mean?" You can feel free to provide examples or anecdotes to help with your answers, please do not use any names or identifiable information in your stories.

Interview question 1, what are the most significant challenges you face when creating a schedule for your K-5 elementary school?

Principal 5: Good question. I think probably the biggest challenge is to being able to, well I'll say this, we've run into the past couple years here, being able to consistently give students. How do we fit it in and make sure that students are getting what they need from their physical education time, and it's consistent with the same teacher? You know, how can we make it work, so it's not splitting up or dividing our literacy blocks, our math blocks, all those types of big things as well. So, balancing all those pieces together and making it fit well is tricky. And then I think PE having it two, two times per week can sometimes create, well I shouldn't say that it doesn't really create another barrier, but it does create a difficulty sometimes and making sure that the teacher, especially when sometimes we have shared teachers, getting the chance to see the same group on both days.

Interviewer: Interview question 2, please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 5: Well, the biggest factor is, you know, following, we basically have like seven periods out of the day that we can run a physical education. And so, just making sure that, or any of our specials, so they all run in the same rotation. Making sure that our teachers are getting a chance to, where do we fit in their prep, where do we fit in their break along the way. It's not an ideal situation where they teach straight through all day long, and they don't have any brake really till the end of the day, you know besides lunch. So that's one thing. Can you say the question one more time?

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, no problem. Please describe factors that are considered when scheduling a time for physical education classes?

Principal 5: Yeah, the other big factor is really trying not to disrupt reading blocks and math blocks at the grade level because it can get tricky to start that, leave it, and come back to it. And you know math and reading are our two highly protected subject areas and so trying to get as much protected time there but still making it work so we get our or specials in, our PE in at a time without a lot of disruption there. So, that's kind of the biggest thing.

Interviewer: Interview question 3, when making leadership decisions, what importance do you place on the need for K-5 elementary aged students to receive physical education and fitness during the academic school day?

Principal 5: Well, to be quite honest with you, I don't necessarily put a lot of additional thought beyond what we have agreed upon across as a district within our elementary schools of what our kids are receiving. I think what we don't do is kids don't miss out on specials because of something else that they don't have. Does that make sense? A kid isn't going to miss PE because they also have EL services or need reading, additional reading support. We're not going to pull them out of a special class to make that happen. And that is a little different sometimes things like that happen at the secondary level. Sometimes kids have less access to those things. But, when I think big picture, I kind of have parameters I have to work within, so really right

now, I have what I have. Every kid at School E is going to get two days of PE in the course, over the course of five. What I do encourage our teachers to be doing because I think it's really important that our kids get as many active types breaks as they possibly can. Since we, the way that we are structured right now there's not additional PE time in there. We do try to maybe push in some like jamming minutes and like active GoNoodle types of things to getting kids moving. So, we see the value in getting your heart rate up, and how that connects back to your thinking, right, how a student does better academically when they are engaged physically as well. So, it'd be kind of a nice problem to have more flexibility with how that works, but I also know with shared staff, and everything would be pretty tricky. Unless as an entire elementary school model across the board we are following some levels of how we're doing it together because we have a lot of shared staff.

Interviewer: Interview question 4, how would you describe the amount of time allocated for physical education in the district in relation to your perception of the needs of K-5 students?

Principal 5: That's a really good question. I think. So, I always like to try to think in a perfect world a kid would have some level of a PE class every single day. I think that would be great. But what I also always try to consider too is, it's really important to have that for students. But I also think about what other options or how do we make sure kids are getting the things that they want to be doing within that as well. So, like I know that I have kids who love PE and would love to have it every single day. I've other kids that doing two days of PE in the course of a week, from an engagement level, that's probably as much as they want to do. And, so I don't also want to create a situation where we have students in a class that they aren't excited to be in five days a week. So, I think about in that lense of how do we make sure kids have some choice and voice a little bit and what they get to do. But I do think if we were to move to a place where we had PE happening more regular, like let's say every day or three days a week, or four days a week, whatever, I think it could be really interesting to see within that, like what could that additional time look like in PE. You know could there be opportunities for that to become a little bit more personalized to like interest level time as well, you know, just thoughts I have.

Interviewer: Interview question 5, if you could create the ideal school schedule, how much time would be used towards physical education classes during a typical school week?

Principal 5: Well, in an ideal schedule, like I said, I think we would have a block of time every day that kids could get into physical education. I think I would, a really great balance to me would be the kids who want to take it every single day get an opportunity that. The kids that aren't interested in doing it every day, at least have an opportunity to do it maybe every other day. I think that would be awesome. But how we balance that out, I don't know, but I think that would be pretty awesome, and I think our kids would really benefit from that. So.

Interviewer: Interview question 6, please provide 2-3 suggestions on how K-5 elementary schools in this school district could provide daily physical education classes to all students?

Principal 5: Well, so suggestion number one would probably have to be working within (long pause) it's been working probably within our teacher, working within our teaching and learning department and working with our director of teaching and learning. But also it becomes a bigger conversation because one of the things you'd have to do is really start to engage probably our teachers' association. Because right now the way that we do PE at the elementary, it's really part of specials, you know, once you even get the middle school it becomes a little bit more unique because it's offered more often. But, K-5 it's offered a little bit more than our art, music, and media, but it's still considered part of those special classes. So, I think that a big conversation there is how do you work around, like how do you advocate within our teacher group because if we're adding more time there something kind of has to come up late or we have to look at an extended day, and we got to figure out how we make that work. Which again would come back to having to have agreement amongst our teacher union and then has to be bargained for, and we got to figure out the funding for. So, the suggestion would be working within those two parameters, coming up with, if that was something that we wanted to pursue. We want to work with our director of teaching and learning, work with them closely to come up with a proposal that also gets vetted by the teacher union as well.

Interviewer: Interview question 7, are there any comments or thoughts you would like to add to the information you have provided?

Principal 5: Well, I think probably the biggest thing for me is we definitely live in a time where our kids are spending way more time on things like devices and screens than they really need to be. And, therefore, what comes off the plate for them is more creative, active outdoor play. So, knowing that how do we invade some of that in the structured way back in the school. I think that's where PE becomes more vital to our students. I think the more we can continue to make sure that through our PE young aged students are really learning life skills of like the value of how physical education is something that is part of what you, hopefully, will be thinking about for the the rest of your life. I think that's really important. Those are probably the biggest things.

Interviewer: Interview question 8, are you willing to be contacted again if I need clarification on this interview?

Principal 5: Absolutely

### **Focus Group Interview**

Interviewer: My topic is titled Rethinking Elementary Physical Education Instruction: Creating a Schedule for Physical Activity. After interviewing a few K-5 elementary principals in the district, there were some common themes that emerged. The goal of this focus group is to have some discussion on these common themes. Because this discussion is recorded, please allow for one person to speak at a time. So, my first question is if extending the elementary school day

was an option to increase time for academic subjects, what steps would need to be taken to add time to the school day?

Principal 6: Negotiating with the teachers, the contract, would be a priority.

Principal 2: Transportation would need to be considered.

Principal 1: It would be a conversation with the community and what is their appetite for extending the school day.

Principal 2: Stamina of students would be considered.

Principal 6: Additional staff, phy ed staff.

Principal 7: Space.

Interviewer: Let's say if you were to get approval to extend a school day through all those things. How would scheduling change for you? What would you prioritize adding more of?

Principal 7: I don't know that would be something that this group would decide without input from other places. Right?

Principal 2: Well, if the skies the limit, I would prioritize something less academic. Because I think that we give kids a lot of that and feel that they have enough of that, in my opinion. So, if we had a longer school day, which I would personally love, I would want to prioritize special area types of things, STEM kind of things, or experiences, I think.

Principal 8: I think STEM, health and wellness, language potentially.

Principal 5: Well, I think more along the lines of choice-based options for kids. Whether that is marker space options, if there is more types of phy ed options, or maybe it's just more dramatic play options for the little kids, and that sort of thing.

Principal 2: But choice is a very good idea. With choice, what are their strengthens, what do they want to pursue, what are they passionate about. I think that would be awesome.

Interviewer: One other thing that came up in some of my interviews is how you know, the time during the day is dictated. It's kind of out of your hands at times with how much time is allowed for physical education and the other specials. So, if extending the school day were to happen, who ultimately would be in those final decisions of, ok we're going to have this much time physical education, this much time art if we extend it? Like I know you would all be involved, but who else would be involved in that decision?

Principal 1: Director of teaching and learning, school board, superintendent would be involved. Probably would have some parent advisors in there. I think that because it would impact the secondary, you'd have student voice from the middle school and high school level.

Principal 5: I think it would be probably important to consider, if you were to do that, then you're probably essentially changing the whole model of how you deliver the specials anyhow. So, maybe thinking about it in terms of 50-minute blocks, or 45 minute blocks kind of changes up a lot anyhow. You know, right now, it's kind of very dictated by the amount of time we have them in our day. Where every kid gets through those five, over the course of five days, two PEs and everything else, if we start to extend time, you have the ability to open up a conversation with your director of teaching and learning and all kinds of people about changing up your whole format, so you can move towards a more choice based option verses more space based options with the current specials.

Principal 8: That's the thing, I think that it depends on why you're extending the day, the people that drive that why, the stakeholders, are going to have some input on how that's going to look.

Principal 1: Yeah, and even if you extended the day, even let's say 42 minutes, to get 7 periods in a day, that's 6 minutes a period. So, it might be a real fundamental shift if you want to do things differently, beyond the 7 period day. Forty two minutes would be a pretty big addition to the day, with minimal change to what you're offering specials in those blocks.

Interviewer: Alright, anything else to add to that?

Principal 8: I just, I'm going to add that, the biggest hurdle to that, well not the biggest hurdle, but a huge hurdle in that is the contractual stuff with teachers, as I see it.

Interviewer: My second question then is, another thing that came up a lot in my interviews was that the people I interviewed felt that it would be beneficial to have physical education more than two times a week, 50 minutes. So my second question is if the school district were to provide physical education classes 4-5 times a week for elementary school students, what would need to change in the current daily schedules at elementary schools. So, what changes would need to be made to what currently is current practice?

Principal 9: For most of us, more gym space.

Principal 2: More staffing.

Principal 7: Yeah

Principal 6: New contract language.

Principal 5: I think it's a really great question, but I think again it comes back to hearing some more student voice around that kind of thing before. Adding more movement is great, adding more opportunities for kids is better, right, so like what do we do to make sure kids are getting what they need in their interest areas so that it's not just that we'll be making all kids have more PE, over giving kids more opportunities to do the things that they love to do, so that they aren't getting the opportunity to deal more with things in school. So, I think that it's a really good idea to think about more movement, because every kid could use that, but I think that it's a bigger

picture of how that looks for all of our specials so that it's we're think more holistically about every kid and what they may need and want to give the best that they can be.

Interviewer: Anything else to add?

Principal 7: I think that it depends too if you're looking at minutes verse days. I was in a school district where we did have it every day, but it was only 25 minutes instead of 50. They alternated other specials with it, so instead of music once a week, you would have that twice a week opposite your art or 25 minutes of phy ed. So, we had it every day, so minute wise, you're getting it the same amount. So, it goes back to the goals of your program too, are you looking at getting kids moving every day or increasing overall time during the week, what's the goal?

Interviewer: That's all I have for questions, any other thoughts you'd like to add before I go, that may have come up? (no response) Ok.