EPHE 246 Active Health

Case Study

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**Introduction:**

For my case study, I chose to interview my mom. I chose her for several reasons. First, I don’t know anyone in Victoria that really knows about active health and could provide a good enough interview. Second, my mom is a teacher, and therefore would be ideal to interview as she is in the same profession as I am going into. Finally, she has raised me to be aware of my health, whether it was through sports, eating right, or making good choices. She has always been there to support my family and I in being active.

**Definition of Active Health:**

My personal definition of active health is the stance of being active and living in a healthy manner in every aspect of your lifestyle in order to gain a better fulfillment of life.

**Interview Content:**

1. What is your name and what is your job?
   1. My name is Sharon Foster. I am a Grade 2 teacher.
2. What is your definition, or thoughts on what active health is?
   1. Active health is activities that people enjoy doing that help you to be physical. They allow you to release stress, and include things like exercise, yoga, eating healthy, visiting with friends, balancing things in your life, and letting yourself pursue new interests.
3. How important is your health and healthy living to you? And Why?
   1. Extremely important. In order to have a productive life and enjoy it, you must be physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy. If you don’t make time for these, the quality of your life suffers along with your relationships as stress builds.
4. Do you incorporate active health in your job, life, or family? And how?
   1. Yes. During work, I do P.E./gym with my students for 20-30min a day. Part of this is yoga, fitness walk/run outside, along with regular gym activities (games, dance, ect.). As part of the curriculum I teach my class about healthy eating and the food groups along with substance abuse. In my personal life I have made great efforts to go to the pool three times a week for fitness and swimming, and I do yoga at least once a week. I take time to get spiritually connected through prayer, church, meditation, or time in nature. As we get older it’s more important to eat healthy. With my family history of medical issues, there can be much risk. My current goal is to break the chain of poor health that my parents had so even though I have the genes of their illnesses, I’m trying to prevent getting them myself. With regards to my family, I stay active with them during the summer. I have three sons, and a husband. We often go boating, wakeboarding, kayaking, and camping in the summer time. In the winter we cross country ski, downhill ski, snowboard, and skate with my family. As my sons are grown-ups now, my husband and I still do these activities without them. As a consciously aware mother of our family’s history of health, I’ve tried very hard to raise my sons to be health conscious. I have tried to change my husbands diet to fix this as well, and have built family meals according to healthy requirements.
5. Do you have much opportunity to incorporate active health in your classroom? How do you do it?
   1. Yes, because I can design my curriculum. I put in ‘brain breaks’ and fitness activities throughout the day. We not only do P.E. in the school, but I also take them on alternate P.E. activities such as skating in winter, swimming, bowling, and even walks around the neighborhood. My class also has a program that allows the students to eat fruits and vegetables all day long, whenever they want, as snacks, and all are encouraged to have a bottle of water with them.
6. Are you able to follow the requirements for developing youth? (30min dpa)
   1. 3/5 days I meet the requirement in the classroom, and the other two days I meet 15min of my program activity in class, and the rest is usually filled through their lunch breaks or recess. So essentially I do meet the requirements every day, however sometimes there are complications like assemblies or field trips that take out time for physical activity.
7. Do you plan out these activities beforehand yourself, or does the school provide them?
   1. I plan them myself, however I have to follow the outcomes of the physical education program that the school gives me.
8. What do you try to do for activities? Do they incorporate everyone?
   1. They always incorporate everyone. We do movement activities with and without equipment. These are things like tag, locomotor movements, animal walks, balancing, throwing and catching. There are also simple games with and without equipment. These are things like Ghostbusters (tag), basketball, volleyball, and floor hockey. There are also skill developments, which include badminton and tennis. We also work on building strength, balance and endurance. These are done through teamwork relay games, obstacle courses, and yoga. We also do various dances and gymnastics that help with coordination. We also make simple meals in the classroom, like fruit salad, with the kids.
9. Does your school have a lot of active health awareness?
   1. Yes. We have fruit and vegetables delivered to the classroom twice every week so that the students can sample various foods. We have different groups come to the school talking about things like Zoomba, tennis, and gymnastics. The whole school also participates in Jump Rope For Heart, the Terry Fox Run, Track & Field day, and Play Day.
10. Does your school do anything to promote active health like nutrition or healthy lunches?
    1. Yes. We have fruit and vegetables delivered to the classroom twice every week so that the students can sample various foods. We also have a hot lunch program every Friday, and the PAC offers more healthy food in it. The school also doesn’t allow pop or candy in the school.
11. Are these steps/promotions helping the situation? Are they successful?
    1. In my opinion there are still too many students that aren’t physically fit. There are more that have a hard time running around than there were 5 years ago. So it is helping kids become more aware, but with that being said, we only have the kids for about 6 hours a day, and once they leave the school many do sedentary activities. I also think that some sports are too expensive for families, especially those with more than one child, so they don’t put them in organized sports. Secondly, both parents are usually working. Many times they come home too late and are too tired to do any active activities with their kids. Third, is that there are many kids from single homes, and the single parent can’t afford a home with a backyard. They live in apartments or trailer parks with no opportunity or place to play outside. Finally, some parents are too afraid to let their kids play in the backyard or streets, and because they won’t go out with them, the kids are encouraged to just play video games or watch a movie.
12. Does your class understand the importance of healthy living? Does your school?
    1. My class does, because we’ve spent a lot of time on healthy choices and how it affects them and their learning. My school is very conscious of healthy choices. We just invested in a class set of snowshoes, and the school has hockey players come to read and talk about healthy choices. Some students do a DARE program, and others go on long field trips, and many have other activities in each grade.
13. What have you done in the past to incorporate active health in your life
    1. As a teenager I was a lifeguard and a swimming instructor. During university, I was an examiner for bronze medallion and bronze cross. When I became a parent, we chose to become more active and go outdoors more, and we still do not have cable television, which has helped the situation.
14. Is healthy living more important now, than it was back then?
    1. More so now, because as you age you must keep moving for your body to stay agile and healthy. It also prevents illness and injuries.
15. Do you have any plans to incorporate active health even more in your school/class?
    1. Not exactly. We’ve already been doing more activities than most classes do, and as the weather gets nicer, we try and go outside as much as possible.
16. Have there been any challenges you’ve encountered incorporating active health in your school? In your life? How did you fix them?
    1. Yes. A major one is time. In order to meet the demands of the curriculum, sometimes it is hard to incorporate P.E. Also some families and parents don’t buy into active living, so their kids come to school with unhealthy food and no breakfast. I try and fix these through integration and awareness (newsletters, handouts, ect) and so does the school with newsletters or speakers. Yes, when I took my masters degree there was no time to be active, as I would teach all day and then come home to study. I had to pencil it into my schedule to make it work.
17. What are other challenges you can think of if you tried to take a bigger step towards active health in your school?
    1. Most likely parent’s opinion and lack of staff support.
18. Do you have any advice or wisdom for others incorporating active health in their lives/work?
    1. You have to be persistent, you can’t give up, and you need to start small. The little changes can become a habit, grow bigger, and become routine as opposed to a chore.
19. Has this interview changed your opinion, position, and/or thoughts on active living?
    1. No, because I already have it completely incorporated in my life, and I knew of its importance already.
20. Do you have or use any resources regarding active health? What are they?
    1. I use several resources: Dairyland, which provides a study on the 4 food groups, HeartSmart Kids, the Ministry of Education website, and FoodSmart.

**Analysis:**

After reflecting on the interview with Mrs. Foster, it seems that she was a perfect choice for the case study. For starters, she is a teacher. As such, she complements most of the EPHE 246 course, as well as my occupational goal. She is also my mother, which provides me with an even further insight to her personal life.

Mrs. Foster’s definition of active health comes quite close to the course’s definition. The course defines it as the process of developing an individual’s physical, emotional, social, and environmental well-being. Everyone has their own definition of active health, and Mrs. Foster’s definition touches base on all of the aspects of the above definition. It just uses different wording, but gets the same point across, immediately signaling that she is aware of what active health means. Upon elaborating on her views toward her health and health awareness, it was obvious that she knew it is important. Her responses told me that she knew that being active and staying healthy were linked to more than just physical stamina. They also showed that she understood the importance of being fit, and being a positive influence on those around her, such as her family or students. She also stated how she wanted to ‘break the chain’ of health problems in her family, and by living actively and in a healthy way, she could hopefully prevent things like diabetes that she could inherit. I found this quite incredible to see her take such a strong stance against disease by being active and making good choices. She is able to balance this active lifestyle through her job, where she uses P.E. to help kids be active. In her personal life she strives to be active by attending yoga and swimming every week in a routine, and by incorporating her family in various activities during the seasons. Her ability alone to take on such a widespread lifestyle is amazing. The fact that she uses her own time to build meaningful lessons to get the point through to her students makes her truly special as most people would not dedicate such an extensive amount of time for others.

Mrs. Foster not only takes up most of her own time to design lessons, but also tries to do more than the bear minimum. When designing her lessons and games, she makes sure everyone is included and no one is left out, which is fantastic. She tries to incorporate healthy choices in her classroom by encouraging students to bring fruits and vegetables to snack on whenever they want, and to also bring bottled water to drink as opposed to juice.

Her elementary school also supports active health. They bring in speakers to talk about health, and even provide vegetables for the kids to sample in the classroom twice a week.

When asked whether the active health awareness was working, Mrs. Foster did not hesitate to speak the truth. She wasn’t afraid to admit that there were far too many kids who were not being active enough. She also provided insight on why this might be. These insights included things like parent influence, money issues, and even belief systems, as some parents do not buy into active health. I found it quite remarkable that she was not oblivious to these facts and was very quick to answer this subject. Many people might choose to place false belief in the system or turn a blind eye, but she stands out and points out the issues, which is another reason that makes her special.

It was also interesting to see how this interview did not really change her views towards active health, because she is already doing so much to incorporate it. However, it did manage to open my eyes further towards the time and dedication it takes to balance it in the work place, and in your own personal life.

Since Mrs. Foster is a teacher, some of her resources were similar to the ones we’ve seen in the course. She mentioned how she used IRP’s and the Ministry of Education’s website to help with curriculum standards and programs. She talked about how she did her best to meet the 30min/day required for her students, and the different areas of P.E. she taught her students, which corresponded with the requirements. She also provided some other materials like the Heart and Stroke Foundation’s, *HeartSmart Kids* (Storoschuk, 2002), which offers some programs to keep kids healthy. She also mentioned how she used Foodstyles (Foodstyles, 1983) from Dairyland, to help teach her students about the food groups and to help with her food unit.

**Conclusion:**

After reflecting on the interview, and the analysis, I have concluded that Mrs. Foster was a perfect choice for the case study. She knew the importance of active health, and had no trouble incorporating it in her life. She made time to exercise, and made healthy choices to help her, as she gets older. It was obvious how important healthy living is to her, as she makes such an effort to keep active. As a teacher she is a perfect role model for her students to look towards. She stays active, she eats healthy, and she encourages others to do the same thing. By incorporating resources and dedicating many hours outside of work to plan out activities, Mrs. Foster strives to lead an active lifestyle, and to teach those around her the same. Her energy, motivation, and dedication allow her to do so much for her students, her family, and for herself. Mrs. Foster is truly an advocate for active living, which is clear if one observes her job and her personal life.

**Appendix and Bibliography:**

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\*See interview content and Analysis for further details.