News: exergaming steals the show at AAHPERD

The national physical education show in Florida last month was full of exergaming, not only on the exhibition floor but also in the seminars, poster sessions and workshops.

Even before the conference began there was a special NASPE session "Using Technology in Physical Education Teacher Education" in one of the conference hotels. The use of technology to as a tool to make PE teachers life easier included Web 2.0, electronic student response systems and online assessments. Multiple sessions were presented by Derrick Mears (Western Washington University), Lisa Hansen (University of South Florida), Joanne Leight (Slippery Rock University) and Patrick Fine (Chesterfield Elementary School).

The highlight of the pre-conference was an excellent, in-depth presentation by Lisa Hansen on exergaming (Active Gaming) and Interactive Fitness. This started with issues around obesity, the decrease of general levels of physical activity and the role Recreational Screen Time (RST) has to play in this decline. The obvious choice of using technology for fitness instead of against fitness was presented, backed by research.

The most important aspect of the presentation for me was the thinking around implementation, to ensure exergaming is as effective in the real world as it can be proved in the lab. Gamercize was used as a demonstration piece for a lesson plan to illustrate "hands-on" the key of the presentation. Using Gamercize and running through the lesson plan showed a subject's resting heart rate of around 60 peak at 130 with an average of 120 throughout the 30 minute piece.

The first of the two formal sessions that delivered the exergaming message at the conference was "#351 - A Critical Look at Fitness Technology for Kids" by Dan Drury of Gettysburg College, parent of two and exergame evaluator. This session concentrated on the factors that make exergaming work, Intensity, Duration, Mode, Frequency and Progression.
Both the exercise physiologist view and kids perspective had equal billing to give a presentation that woke the delegates up to the fact not all exergames are created equal. Giving PE a structured approach to evaluation is an excellent idea and the entire piece was well received.

The second session that shook the halls of the Tampa Convention Center was "#551 - Exergames: Bridging the Gap between Video Games, Activity and Fun" by Stephen Yang of SUNY Cortland, parent of two and long standing exergame guru. This session focused on doing rather than talking and included short introductions by notables such as John Foley (SUNY Cortland), Lisa Hansen (USF), Richard Coshott (Gamercize UK), Andrea Oh (iTech Fitness) and Aaron Hart (Station PE).

The workshop started with brief introductions and key messages from Stephen’s team before breaking out into Q and A sessions with the presenters. All the time the students from SUNY Cortland were getting their game on with DDR, Gamercize and Gamebike - while wearing heart rate monitors which were displayed on the big screen!

The common theme for the sessions was - oversubscription! Dan’s presentation had delegates sitting and standing in the corridor outside while Stephen’s workshop had attendance well beyond the capabilities of the PA system and even had exergaming spilling out into the concourse!
Wait and see what impact exergaming has on AAHPERD and the regionals in 2010, it is sure to be much bigger based on the demand from Tampa.

Active Gaming and Working Foundation