Welcome to Sport Education

***Before You Start . . .***

Along with physical fitness, dance, aquatics, and outdoor and adventure pursuits, sport is a central part of the movement culture in most countries. Going for a run or a mountain bike ride, playing a round of golf, being a team member on a volleyball or tennis team in a community league, or doing some rock climbing all are worthy ways of spending one’s available leisure time.

Few would argue that sport is a dominant feature in today’s world. When taught appropriately and effectively, it offers wonderful opportunities for people to learn new skills, find their own limits, and contribute to the health of a society. As Siedentop (1991) has noted, introducing children to sport (as a form of play) may well be one of the most humane things we can do in educating children.

Launder and Piltz (2013) noted that physical educators are key players in ensuring that children learn about sport in its pure form. Thus, it places school physical education programs at the center of efforts to introduce children to the best of what sport experiences can offer.

School physical education programs are part of several settings where youth can learn to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that reflect a physically active way of life. Others might include club sports, YMCAs, parks and recreation programs, private instructors, city leagues, and so on. Schools are especially important, because it is the one setting to which virtually all children and youth have access during their formative years.

***The Place of Sport Within School Physical Education Programs***

Physical educators’ training, beliefs, and prior activity experiences will greatly influence the focus and type of program offerings in a physical education program. For example, teachers who value and have significant knowledge and experience in health-related fitness are more likely to devote more curriculum time to such activities. Similarly, teachers who have strong beliefs, experiences, and backgrounds in outdoor or adventure pursuits will likely devote more time in the program to such activities.

Most physical educators bring with them a history of experiences that, in part, has led them to choosing physical education as the profession of choice. Yet, the way sport is taught in physical education programs often leaves many students uniformed, disliking sport, being bored by it, and worst of all, marginalized for feeling that way. Siedentop (1994) pointed to the disconnect between how children are taught about sport in most physical education programs and the way sport is experienced in other settings (e.g., interscholastic or community forms of sport competition).

For too long, students who actively participate in club sports, city leagues, or interscholastic sport programs have described the teaching of sport within physical education programs as boring, repetitive, unimportant, and meaningless. As Sport Education has made inroads in various parts of the world, it is increasingly clear that when implemented effectively, it offers a more complete, authentic, and above all a more positive sport experience to all students. Of course, ultimately the success of a physical education program is best judged by the degree to which students who have completed the program in fact continue to find ways to engage in sport or other forms of physical activity.

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, over the past few decades, there has been a decided shift in the overall program offerings in school physical education. Especially in post-primary schools in the U.S., the menu of activities offered has shifted to one that consists of fitness content (notably strength conditioning). One reason for this has been the increased focus on increasing physical activity levels of children and youth from a public health perspective. With the increase in the percentage of overweight and obese youth, the physical education field has reacted by emphasizing more health-related fitness content. And with the finite amount of time allocated to physical education, less time is allocated to teaching sport.

***Sport Education Within School Physical Education Programs***

If we are serious about getting K-12 students to value sport and all its fundamental features, to become skilled and informed sport consumers, we need to get them to experience all the key facets of sport in a developmentally appropriate manner. The Sport Education curriculum model as originally developed by Siedentop (1994) offers this opportunity. You should understand that implementing a full Sport Education program does not have to keep you from having a health-related fitness focus or social responsibility emphasis. In fact, goals and objectives within such orientation would blend nicely with a Sport Education program. As we show in Chapter 19, a physical education program can have a dual theme of sport and fitness. We provide an example of how Sport Education can be offered along with Fitness for Life (e.g., Corbin & LeMasurier, 2014).

***Sport Education: Main Characteristics***

As you will note chapter 1, Sport Education should not be equated with sport as we see it in interscholastic, intercollegiate, and professional leagues, yet it does reflect many of its essential features. They include:

1. ***Use of teams***
2. ***Formal competition***
3. ***Seasons instead of units***
4. ***Performance records and standings are kept and published.***
5. ***Multiple roles beyond being a player***
6. ***Festivity***
7. ***Culminating events at the end of a season***

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| **Overcoming Inertia . . . or How Do I Start?** Some Suggested Strategies |

As you become more familiar with all the features of Sport Education, infusing it into your program may seem like a daunting task. It is our hope that the following suggestions will help you on your way.

***First and foremost: Just do it!*** Imagine if Columbus had waited for a complete and accurate map of the world’s oceans. He might still be sitting in the harbor. So do not be afraid to make mistakes. You will make them. It is not a perfect world and that is just fine. Learn from the errors and you will do better during the next season.

***Consider your scheduling flexibility.*** Know your school’s calendar (including assemblies) and your physical education program yearly plan very well. Work with your colleagues to determine if it is possible to extend your time at a particular part of the facilities.

***Start with a sport that you are familiar with.*** The chance of being successful will go down dramatically if you not only are trying out Sport Education for the first time, but also are trying to familiarize yourself with an activity that you have never taught before. If you are most experienced in soccer in terms of designing appropriate learning tasks, go with that one.

***Start simple.*** You would not expect students to be highly proficient after an initial exposure to volleyball. So don’t feel like you have to have full command of how to do Sport Education. For example, as far as student roles are concerned, we suggest you start off with a sport season that includes at least referees, scorekeepers, coaches, and fitness (or conditioning) coaches.

As you gain more experience, you can add other roles such as team statisticians, team scout, and so on. Another example could be that you limit the scorekeeping to points (or goals) scored and turnovers. As students become more familiar with the scorekeeping role, you can build on that and add the tracking of additional (more advanced) performance indicators (e.g., assists, blocks, saves, 1st serve success rate, unforced errors).

***Adjust the model to your local conditions.*** Teaching conditions vary so much that you will likely need to make adjustments to make a go of it in your school. Limitations might range from facilities to class sizes, equipment, your colleagues, and so on.

***Phase in your students’ involvement in designing the season gradually.*** The ultimate success of Sport Education depends in large part on the contributions that students make in designing the season. For example, do not tell students that it is now their responsibility to organize and implement well-organized practices and then assume that they will be able to do that. Likely during the early part of the season, you will want to model several classwide practice tasks, scrimmage tasks, and mini games that teams can then use to practice and prepare for games as the season gets underway. Another example would be refereeing. You will likely find students having the hardest time with taking on this role. Thus, it is vital that you build in some time to explicitly teach about how to be an effective and fair referee. Build in class time to conduct workshops for referees, scorekeepers, and so on.

***Use only modified game formats.*** As tempting as it is, do not succumb to the pressure or desire to play the official game of volleyball. As shown in chapter 6, it is vitally important that your students learn to play the sport under modified conditions. Be sure to take advantage of all the various types of modifications. They could range from modifications in rules, scoring, equipment, team size, game restarts, field or court dimensions, and so on. It is important that the fundamental nature of the game is kept intact. For example, in a modified version of softball, one can play with teams of 5 without a real outfield and still keep the basic goals of the game intact. In basketball, a 3v3 game on half court, with a junior-sized ball, lower baskets, and where hitting the rim scores 1 point, keeps the fundamental character of the sport intact.

***Keep up-to-date on developments in Sport Education through workshops, conferences, and publications.*** As Sport Education gains popularity, you can look for more and more people to write about ways in which they have used, expanded, or modified Sport Education. There is a good chance that there will be presentations at state, regional, or national conferences and there might professionals who are willing to do a workshop or training session in your part of the country.

***Choose your student group wisely.*** When you take the plunge and try a Sport Education season, do it with just one group. It is important to consider the selection of the class that will be first introduced to Sport Education. First, we suggest you choose a group that you are comfortable with and that already has demonstrated some basic self-management skills. Again, you want to maximize the chance that the students respond positively to your first effort. Such groups can become excellent advertisement for your other groups as well.

Related to this, the timing of the first introduction should be considered. For example, middle school physical educators might consider introducing Sport Education first to sixth graders on the outset of the school year. These students are new to the school and have a less well-defined conception of how you “do PE” in middle school. It may be a much harder sell to eighth graders.

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| How the Physical Education Experience Will Be Differentfor You and Your Students Within Sport Education |

Sport Education’s fundamental goals and essential features offer good insight into how your roles and those of your students are going to change dramatically. What follows are brief outlines of the main roles for both.

1. ***Changes in Teachers’ Key Roles***
   1. New and different planning demands
   2. No longer being the central figure
   3. Assisting students in gradually investing more in the program and taking on more responsibility
   4. Making assessment and grading of student more meaningful and authentic
   5. Continuously reflecting on your teaching practices and looking for ways to further improve your Sport Education efforts
2. ***Changes in Students’ Roles and Responsibilities***
   1. Active participation as players
   2. Demonstrating leadership
   3. Accepting all others in the class
   4. Solving problems
   5. Supporting and encouraging teammates and other peers
   6. Taking responsibility for own behavior
   7. Actively engaging in the planning of the sport season
   8. Teaching each other
   9. Learning

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| It’s All in the Planning . . . |

We are not trying to fool you into thinking that starting Sport Education does not take extra effort on your part. As with learning anything new, you will likely spend a significant amount of time preparing and planning for your first Sport Education season. Evidence from teachers who have infused Sport Education into their programs makes clear that as you gain more experience, you can indeed involve students in the planning and design of new seasons.

Consider keeping a personal log, and keeping track of what went well and what backfired. This will help you “work smarter–not harder” in your planning for subsequent seasons. Ultimately, your effort should make for more complete and more positive learning experiences for all your students. Remember that your goal is not to develop future star high school, collegiate, or professional athletes. Rather, you are aiming to get all students to want to engage in sport in a competent, informed, and confident manner.

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| ***Navigating the Sport Education***  ***Web Resource*** |

We encourage you to modify resources to ensure that they fit your own teaching situation. Needless to say, the competition format for an Ultimate season with a class of 34 using a round-robin competition format will require adjustments if you have 48 students. If the materials presented here do not fit perfectly within your teaching situation, we want you to have the option of making any needed modifications. All we ask is that you keep a reference to the original source (the small caption generally located in the bottom right hand corner of the page at the end of the file).

Resources such as assessment forms, score sheets, checklists, and worksheets are presented in standard black ink print for easy duplication. Electronic versions (generally Excel files) are provided for those teachers (and students) who are comfortable with the use of either laptop computers, PDAs, or tablet computers.

Each chapter’s resources can be downloaded from the chapter page or the entire resource can be downloaded from the Introduction page.

***References***

Corbin, C.B., & LeMasurier, G.C. (2014). *Fitness for life* (6th ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Launder, A.G., & Piltz, W. (2013). *Play practice: Engaging and developing skilled players from beginner to elite* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Siedentop, D. (1991). *Developing teaching skills in physical edu*cation (3rd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Siedentop, D. (1994). *Sport Education: Quality PE through positive sport experiences*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.