# **Chapter 1: Activities**

## **A Sociocultural Perspective on Teaching Health and Physical Literacy**

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Employing a sociocultural perspective, the following activities engage students in critical reflective learning experiences to support transformative learning that leads to changes in personal understandings and possibly behaviour. Founded on the work of Schön (1983), the examples presented here offer carefully planned activities and teacher facilitation that will help students

* reflect *in* action (i.e. during or immediately following a planned activity),
* reflect *on* action (i.e., think back on past experience), and
* reflect *for* action (i.e., plan actions to take in future experiences).

When posing questions, resist the temptation to tell students what they experienced and learned. Instead, help them *discover* what they experienced by using carefully designed, open-ended questions and follow-up questions. Plan to incorporate sufficient time for students to engage with the questions at hand. Without this space for reflective practice, the activity becomes an end in itself, and students lose an opportunity for learning.

Within a sociocultural perspective, reflective practice becomes assessment *for* learning (formative assessment) rather than assessment *of* learning (summative assessment). In addition, the activities are meant to be used in lessons focused on broad sociocultural topics, such as inclusion and team building. This approach accords with the notion of physical literacy by helping students explore decisions “that are both beneficial to and respectful of themselves, others, and their environment” (Mandigo, Francis, Lodewyk, & Lopez, 2009, p. 7).

In the following examples, questions denoted by an asterisk (\*) support critical reflective practice and prompt students to think critically about social relations and who exerts cultural hegemony—that is, dominant influence (i.e., power) over others in a particular situation.

# 1. Team-Building

This example is geared to students in grades 4 through 8.

***Learning goal:*** Explore how cooperative (collaborative) and competitive situations affect performance.

***Equipment:*** Varies depending on the team-building activity selected.

***Setup:*** Divide your class into groups of 8 to10 students, depending on the activities selected. Refer to the set-up for each of the activities selected, which will vary depending on the team-building activity selected.

***Instructions:*** Select as many team-building activities as you have groups (for possibilities, see the web resource for chapter 10). For instance, Hoop the Loop and Marble Run are excellent selections because they require groups to exhibit cooperation, participation, and mutual support in order to succeed. Explain each activity to the class and then assign an activity to each group to complete while you observe group interactions and performance.

***Assessment:*** Debrief the activity by asking reflective questions related to group interaction and success. Here are some examples:

* What did your group just do together?
* How did you participate in the activity? And, how did it make you feel and why?
* On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being least and 10 being most), how effective was your group in completing the task? Why so?
* How did you contribute to your group in completing the task?
* What could you and your group do to be more effective? (Let’s try some of these suggestions using another activity.)

Rotate the activities so that each group attempts a new one and repeat the reflective questions following completion of the second activity.

This time, select a new team-building activity and have all groups complete the same one. Watch carefully what happensduring the activity in terms of cooperation, collaboration, group interaction, and success. Facilitate a discussion about cooperation and competition. Here are some possible questions to ask:

* How did you feel while doing this activity? What, if anything, surprised you?
* While doing this activity, did you feel different than you did when each group completed a different activity? If so, how?
* Did your group work differently this time? If so, how? Ask additional probing questions related to cooperation vs competition.
* \*When do we use competition in our daily lives? What about cooperation?
* What skills are needed for cooperation and competition?
* How can you use the skills practiced today to help you work in collaborative groups in the classroom?

***Safety:*** Depends on the activities selected. Generally, keep the area clear of obstructions and remind students to attend to their own safety and that of their classmates.

***Questions for your own critical reflective practice:***

* What role do cooperation and competition play in your life? How do your approaches to cooperation and competition factor into your teaching?
* Which students do you relate to most easily—those who are cooperative or those who are competitive? How do you ensure that you also reach out to those in the other group?

## 2. HPE Vocabulary Scramble

This activity, which is appropriate for students in grades 2 through 12, is a useful tool for checking students’ prior knowledge in health and physical education.

***Learning goals:***

* Work collaboratively using various literacies.
* Demonstrate health and physical education knowledge.

***Equipment:*** Create different-coloured sets of laminated alphabet game cards. It is best to have one set for each team and each set to be a different color for organizational purposes.

***Setup:***Position teams of five to seven students each so that they are equally distant from the centre of the playing area. In the centre, place full sets of alphabet letters (create five sets using laminated, coloured card stock).

***Instructions:*** Tell students that the object of the game is to be the team that correctly spells the most words related to health and physical education. Teams get one point for every correct word and two points for every correct word with more than five letters. In the first round, everyone gets to retrieve a card at the same time (which helps to stimulate the game). In subsequent rounds, only two players are allowed to retrieve a letter at any one time; in those rounds, each player returns with one card and tags the team’s next runner, who goes to the centre and retrieves another card. This process continues until either one team has used all of its letters or you end the game.

***Variations:*** Use cards that indicate locomotor skills for players to perform as they move to get the next letter.

***Assessment:*** Debrief the activity by asking questions.

* What do you notice in looking at your words?
* What, if anything, surprises you?
* In looking at your words, what area of health and physical education do you seem to know the most about? The least?
* How does this activity help you, or the teacher?
* \*What literacies do we tend to value at school? Why do you think this happens?
* \*How does health and physical literacy help challenge dominant forms of literacy?
* \*What are the social benefits of health and physical literacy?

***Safety:*** Keep the area clear of obstructions and remind students to keep their eyes open and their ears listening.

***Questions for your own critical reflective practice:***

* How would you describe your health and physical literacy? How does your own literacy influence your teaching?
* What do you like to teach in your health and physical education classes? What does this preference say about your literacy? Now, consider what you may *not* teach in your health and physical education classes.

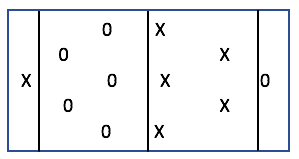
## 3. Promoting Inclusion

The following activity, which is appropriate for students in grade 5 or beyond, lends itself to exploring concepts of student alienation and power relationships (e.g., “In soccer the other day, no one was passing me the ball. I felt left out, so I went and sat on the bench.”). Adapted from Fitzpatrick (2013), the activity uses a simple invasion or territory game (refer to chapter 14 for examples of invasion and territory games) that has few rules and requires little skill.

***Learning goals:*** Students explore the effects of inclusion and exclusion in physical activity and build strategies for being inclusive.

***Equipment:*** pinnies of varied colours, balls or other throwing objects such as a rubber chicken, and pylons

***Setup:*** Divide the class into groups of two teams and provide a pinny to each player using a different colour to distinguish each team. Designate an end zone with pylons for the end receiver, or have the end receiver stand on a large mat in the end zone to restrict the player’s movement. The object of the game is to score a point by invading the opponent’s territory and successfully passing a ball to the team’s end receiver while defending your own territory. Players may not move while in possession of the ball and thus may only pass to teammates to move the ball up the playing area.



***Instructions:*** If space allows, maximize participation by running two games at the same time. After several minutes of play, change the game by adding new rules during a game stoppage.

***Variations:*** (1) Ask for two volunteers from each team and then inform them that they are no longer allowed to touch the ball in any way during the game, yet continue to play the game. (2) Select two of the strongest players from each team and have them participate without touching the ball. (3) Only the girls or the boys may touch the ball.

***Assessment:*** What do you think will happen? Will students who are excluded express frustration and perhaps anger (e.g., “What a dumb game!”)? This is your opportunity to facilitate a discussion about issues of power. Here are some possible questions:

* What happened during the game?
* Ask those students who were not permitted to touch the ball how they contributed to the game.
* How did you feel when you were allowed to touch the ball but the others were not? Why?
* How did you feel when you were *not* allowed to touch the ball? Why?
* \*How does it feel to be excluded?
* \*What are some other examples of exclusion in schools? In your neighbourhood? (You may wish to classify student answers into categories of exclusion based on factors such as race, gender, weight, and ability.)
* \*How can we change the game so that everyone feels included?
* Can someone play one’s best and yet not be the best? What are some ways in which one can play one’s best and also increase the whole team’s level of participation? Possible suggestions offered by students might include the following: passing before attempting to score; passing to a player who hasn’t yet received a pass; pass only and do not attempt to score to support other players.
* During the next game, try one of the suggestions shared in class or your own strategy to help increase your whole team’s participation. Following the game, ask students what strategy they tried to enact and what they experienced during play.
* How can you use these strategies in other school situations? Or at home?

***Safety:*** Depends on the activity chosen. Generally, keep the area clear of obstructions and remind students to keep their eyes open and their ears listening.

***Questions for your own critical reflective practice:***

* Have you experienced exclusion in a health and physical education class? How have your own experiences influenced your teaching?
* Are you an inclusive teacher? How so? What do you do to ensure that no one feels excluded in your classes? Do you provide students with choice in equipment, tasks, and games?
* How do you evaluate your teaching to ensure that you are an inclusive teacher?

Adapted from K. Fitzpatrick, *Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education, and Urban Schooling* New York, NY: Lang, (2013).

## 4. Gender Stereotyping

This activity is appropriate for students in grades 2 through 5 (i.e., ages 7 through 11). As background, Cherney and Dempsey (2010) suggest that students may exhibit a peak of rigid gender stereotyping between ages 5 and 7, show greater flexibility between ages 6 and 12, and exhibit intensified stereotyping during adolescence.

***Learning goals:***

* Explore the effects of gender stereotyping in physical activity.
* Build strategies for being inclusive in physical activity.

***Equipment:*** variety of magazines, access to computers

***Setup:*** none

***Instructions:*** Have children bring in various toys or pictures of toys (e.g., from magazines or the Internet); alternatively, make this an in-class activity by having students cut out pictures of toys from magazines or print out pictures from the Internet. Next, pair students up and have them assign their toys to one of three categories: for boys, for girls, or for neither or both. Then have each pair share one or two examples along with their reasoning. After the sharing, facilitate a discussion about the characteristics of the toys in each of the categories. What conclusions can be drawn? For instance, toys associated with boys are often related to competition, fighting, aggression, and increased physical risk; in contrast, those associated with girls are often related to color (especially pink), appearance, physical attractiveness, or domestic orientation. Toys categorized in other ways often bend gender stereotypes. Here are some possible questions for students:

* Why did you place this toy in the boys category? Girls? Both? Neither?
* What similarities do you see among the toys in each category?
* What makes a toy belong in a certain category? Why so?
* How have you learned these ideas about toys?
* \*What happens when children use toys (or play games) that are not typically associated with their gender?

***Variations:***

* Extension 1—For older students, you may wish to create a continuum line from strongly feminine to strongly masculine that includes a neutral category. Have students place their toys or images of toys on the continuum line based on their rating of each toy, then facilitate a discussion similar to that described for the original activity. You can use the same approach to explore gender stereotyping in relation to school subjects, physical activities, sports equipment, and clothing. To add a bit of playfulness, you might come to school dressed in a piece or color of clothing that contradicts gender stereotyping and begin the lesson with a discussion of your attire.
* Extension 2—For older students, you may also wish to incorporate media literacy components. For example, you could have students watch a female completing a figure skating routine and then suggest words to describe what they are seeing or note the words used by the announcers (typically, words such as *graceful*, *flowing*, *light*, *beautiful*, *fluid*). Then do the same thing with a sequence from a hockey game and generate a list of descriptive terms (typically, terms such as *vicious*, *aggressive*, *hard*, *solid*). At this point, you probably have two lists that strongly reinforce gender stereotyping. Next, switch the lists; that is, have students team up (or operate as an entire class) to rewatch the videos and apply the list of terms generated for the hockey game to comment on the female figure skater and vice versa.

***Assessment:*** To debrief the activity, have students discuss the role of media in gender stereotyping and the role of sport in perpetuating gender norms.

***Safety:*** It is essentialto create a safe space at the beginning of this activity, and one great way to do so is to develop a class contract that articulates ways in which students want to feel supported through this activity. Everyone can then refer back to the contract during the class.

***Questions for your own critical reflective practice:***

* How might gender play a role in your teaching? In what ways might your teaching be gendered, or not gendered?
* How might your own gender influence your students in health and physical education class? What do you do to address the influence of gender in your classes?

## 5. What the World Eats

This activity, which is appropriate for students in grades 1 through 6, explores types of food from various countries. It is best preceded by a lesson(s) that names and describes (in terms of color, size, shape, and texture) different types of foods eaten by children in the class and helps them classify those foods into appropriate categories.

Although the Canadian food guide classifies food into four distinct groups (vegetables and fruits, grain products, milk and alternatives, and meat and alternatives), we recommend (particularly for older students) classifying foods into more distinct categories—for example, fruits, vegetables (including root vegetables such as carrots, beets, and parsnips, as well as tuber vegetables such as potatoes, yams, and cassavas), grain, meat and eggs, legumes, dairy products, and nuts and seeds. Images of food are readily available on the Internet and in supermarket flyers; in addition, food photo cards can be purchased from various outlets (e.g., staples.ca or teacherspayteachers.com).Alternatively, food can be brought from home, and the lesson can culminate in a trip to a local community garden where students learn about new types of food by using the senses of sight, taste, touch, and smell.

The following activity is based on the popular book *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* (Menzel & D'Aluisio, 2007), which uses photography to explore what families from 30 countries eat during the course of one week. The photos provide abundant teaching opportunities to explore food from a sociocultural perspective.

***Learning goals:***

* Identify various foods and put them into appropriate food categories.
* Recognize that people around the world eat different kinds of food.

***Equipment:*** food photographs from *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* or access the many photos with your students that are widely available on the internet (e.g. http://time.com/8515/what-the-world-eats-hungry-planet/)

***Setup:*** none

***Instructions:*** Group students in pairs and have each group choose photographs from two countries, including Canada, and ask them to perform the following tasks.

* List five foods that you recognize and five that you do not. Describe each food in terms of characteristics such as colour, size, shape, and food category.
* Now, work with another pair of students by having each person name and describe one of the recognized foods. Next, work together to name, describe, and classify one or two of the unrecognized foods.
* Do the previous task with another group. This time, pay attention to what is different between the food eaten in a particular country and your own.
* (Here, you can facilitate a discussion of sociocultural differences in foods eaten in various countries.)
* What similarities do you see between the foods your family eats and those of a family from a different country?
* What differences do you see (e.g., predominance of food groups in the diet, sources of food, packaging)? Why are there differences (e.g., preferences, sources of food, cost of food, availability)?
* How is the food that your family eats similar to or different from that of the Canadian family? What do you think are the reasons for the differences (e.g., geographical location, availability of food, cost of food, varying cultures within Canada)?
* \*Whose cultural foods are most evident in your school lunchroom?
* \*What might happen when children bring in foods that differ from the foods of their classmates?

***Variations:*** Students can use their own lunches as the focus. Where did particular food items come from? How many hands touched them before they ended up in a student’s lunch? For a culminating task, you can ask students to choose one photograph of foods from a different country and circle the ones that they would like to have in their own dinner (older students can plan a dinner for their family using foods shown in the photograph). Students can also explain why they picked the chosen photograph and why they included the foods they did.

***Assessment:*** To debrief the activity, facilitate a discussion of the roles played by food in society.

***Safety:*** Be sure to inquire about food allergies.

***Questions for critical reflection in your own practice:***

* What influences your own food choices (e.g., taste, nutritional content, parents, ethnicity, etc.)? Are there good foods and bad foods? If so, what makes you think so?
* What do you identify as the primary purpose of teaching nutrition? Is it to promote behavioural change? To explore factors that influence why we eat, as well as our food choices? How might children’s relationships to food and their bodies be affected by your teaching practices?
* Some schools allow only fruits and vegetables to be eaten during snack breaks. How might this policy affect students and their families, particularly those who are disadvantaged by factors such as gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status?
* How can eating certain foods or commercial brands act as a form of “social camouflage” that reduces one’s risk of being teased or promotes belonging to a particular peer group? (See Ludvigsen and Scott [2009].)

## 6. Sit Spot

This activity lends itself to grades K-3 but can be easily adapted for any age group. It provides students with opportunities to engage in practices that foster mindfulness—the ability to maintain active, nonjudgmental attention to one’s environment (e.g., sights, smells, sounds), bodily sensations (e.g., heart and respiratory rates, body temperature, tingling, numbness, pain), and thoughts and feelings (Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The activity also draws on the work of Young, Haas, and McGown (2010) in field ecology, in particular their use of the “sit spot” to foster outdoor observational skills. A sit spot requires not only a physical space but also the practices of sitting and stillness—a quieting of the mind—in order to open one’s senses and direct them outward, inward, or both. In order to use this activity effectively, you are encouraged to practice mindfulness yourself before to teaching it to students.

***Learning goals:*** Maintain active attention to one’s environment, then to one’s bodily sensations, and then to one’s thoughts and feelings—all without judgment.

***Equipment:*** For each student,a hoop or foam pad to designate the sit spot; paper or sketch pad; clipboard or other hard surface for backing; and drawing or painting tools

***Setup:*** Use the space available to you and improvise where possible. Any setting can be used to practice mindfulness activities, but we recommend using the outdoors: a school playground or a natural space such as a grassy area, school garden, or surrounding treed area. Walk around the school grounds or natural areas in the vicinity of the school to identify suitable locations where students can observe nature (e.g., birds, animals, insects, plants, trees, a garden, or even clouds). Take your students to the same location or sit spot repeatedly(initially once per week and then once per month) throughout the school year and at different times of the day so that they can note subtle differences with time of day (e.g., light, shadows, outside temperature, wind, insect or animal activity, personal mood) and the seasons (e.g., location of the sun, the moon, foliage).

***Instructions:***

* Activity 1—Have students sit in a semicircle facing a natural space or object to focus on (e.g., tree, flower, grass, leaf, cloud). Ask the students which people or animals are exceptional observers and what qualities make them so. You can use real-life individuals such as Helen Keller; fictional characters such as Judy Moody, Gilda Joyce, and Sherlock Holmes; or animals with powerful sensing abilities, such as owls (sight), deer (hearing), and bears (smell). Now, inform students that they are going to learn to be good observers of nature, their environment, and themselves. Ask them to sit quietly on their sit spots and observe the chosen object with care and attention for two or three minutes (build on this time with each visit to the sit spot). Next, ask students to draw what they see, then have them share their drawing and observations with the group as you help to identify key characteristics, such as texture, color, shape, lighting, shadows, and movement. Repeat the activity on another day and include another sense. Ask students to sit quietly with eyes closed, or wearing blindfolds, and listen to the sounds around them; detect any smells; or feel the wind, the sun, the cold air, or the rain on their body or face. After three to five minutes, have students share their experiences. The goal is to progress so that students can use all of their senses and direct them outward.
* Activity 2—Identify a boundary for the students and ask them each to select a sit spot to use for the remainder of the year in order to quietly observe nature. Each student will repeatedly use the same sit spot to practice active attention to the environment first, then to the experience of his or her body, and finally to his or her mind (thoughts and feelings). With each visit, ask students to notice what has changed in nature since their last visit and to notice any changes in themselves—for example, heart rate (increasing or decreasing sense of internal calm), breathing rate, body temperature (feelings of cold or heat), and mood. Encourage students to share their experiences with a partner, with the class, or simply with themselves. Encourage them to keep a journal or sketch pad that documents the changes they notice and experience. Support students in expressing themselves by planning for ample time and opportunity to do so, listening to them intently, and using sentence stems (explained later, in the discussion of assessment) and questioning. With time, students will recognize that connections with nature can affect their emotional state.

***Variations and differentiation:*** These activities can be performed with any age group—the older the group, the faster you can move through the progression, and the longer the activity can last. Older students can also record their observations, feelings, and thoughts in a journal or in an artistic manner. Resist the urge to have students use digital technology to record observations and experiences; attachment to technology is often associated with disconnection from nature. You can also have students establish a sit spot in the classroom as a place to sit still and quiet their minds.

***Assessment look-fors:*** Sometimes the most important learning cannot be quantified. Because the goal of this activity is to awaken sensory awareness and self-awareness, any assessment should be centred on assessment for learning and should use your observations and students’ self-assessments. To encourage students’ observations, offer sentence stems or starters, such as “I feel (hear, see, smell) . . . ,” “I notice . . . ,” and “I wonder why (when, how, what) . . .” To help you assess student learning, here are some sample questions to ask yourself: Is progression evident in the complexity of their responses to the sentence stems? Are their observational skills improving as evidenced by the level of detail in their drawings, paintings, or journal entries? Do students have a “sparkle in the eye” when engaged in the activities (Young et al., 2010, p. 261)?

***Safety:*** Know your school regulations for taking students outdoors and on field trips. Before each outing, look for hazards in the chosen location, such as debris, broken glass, ticks, ant hills, bees, or wasp nests. Be sure that your students are dressed appropriately for the weather and encourage them to come prepared to be outdoors—rain or shine, hot or cold. Observations can always be recorded once they are back indoors.

***Questions for your own critical reflective practice:***

* The slow education movement is influencing all fields. What do you think of the movement in the context of health and physical education?
* Does mindfulness play a role in your own teaching practices? If so, what is that role? If not, why not, and how might you change that?
* Today’s health messages often focus on the need to get students more physically active, but mindfulness advocates for the opposite—it is about slowing down. How do you negotiate this tension with your students?