

in physical education. Sport education solves that concern because it gives all students the chance to know and love sport and the opportunity to have a good educational and social experience as part of a team.

Many of us now believe that continuing the business-as-usual approach to physical education in schools puts us at increasing risk in the curriculum. Students, parents, and administrators expect more, and sport education provides a means to fulfill their expectations.

Quality PE Through positive
Sport Experiences

Sport Education

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CHAPTER

1

The Sport Education Model

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Sport education is a curriculum and instruction model developed for school physical education programs. That may not sound new, let alone revolutionary; indeed, sport skills and games have been taught in physical education for most of this century. Still, as I explain the model, you will find that sport education is not business as usual. You might even agree that sport education has the potential to revolutionize PE.

Sport education provides experiences that are more complete and authentic than typical PE sport. In this model students not only learn more completely how to play sports but also to coordinate and manage their sport experiences. They also learn individual responsibility and effective group membership skills.

Teachers in third grade through high school classes have developed the sport education model following its initial trials in several elementary schools in central Ohio. As teachers at different grade levels and places heard about the projects, they too became interested in trying sport education. These teacher-trials resulted in modifications that enriched and extended the model. Every example and feature of sport education described in this book has been tried in schools.

Sport education went well the first time I tried it. I enjoyed it and, more importantly, the children really enjoyed it too!

—Elementary PE specialist

The sport education model spread more rapidly after published materials appeared (Siedentop, 1987; Siedentop, Mand, & Taggart, 1986). More recently, a nationwide curriculum project in New Zealand high schools used the model (Grant, 1992).

Sport Education Goals

The sport education model has considerably more ambitious goals than most PE sport programs. It seeks to educate students to be *players* in the fullest sense and to help them develop as competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspeople.

- A *competent* sportsperson has sufficient skills to participate in games satisfactorily, understands and can execute strategies appropriate to the complexity of play, and is a knowledgeable games player.
- A *literate* sportsperson understands and values the rules, rituals, and traditions of sports and distinguishes between good and bad sport practices, whether in children's or professional sport. A literate sportsperson is both a more able participant and a more discerning consumer, whether fan or spectator.
- An *enthusiastic* sportsperson participates and behaves in ways that preserve, protect, and enhance the sport culture, whether it is a local youth sport culture or a national sport culture. As members of sporting groups, such enthusiasts participate in further developing sport at the local, national, or international levels. The enthusiastic sportsperson is involved.

These goals are lofty. Physical educators must understand and believe that in teaching the forearm pass, the foot trap, or a zone defense they contribute not only those specific outcomes but also, in a sense, to society.

Sport Education Objectives

Sport education has immediate and comprehensive objectives, which students can achieve through their participation:

- Develop skills and fitness specific to particular sports.
- Appreciate and be able to execute strategic play in sports.
- Participate at a level appropriate to their stage of development.
- Share in the planning and administration of sport experiences.
- Provide responsible leadership.
- Work effectively within a group toward common goals.

- Appreciate the rituals and conventions that give particular sports their unique meanings.
- Develop the capacity to make reasoned decisions about sport issues.
- Develop and apply knowledge about umpiring, refereeing, and training.
- Decide voluntarily to become involved in after-school sport.

Is it possible to achieve these comprehensive objectives in regular physical education programs? Yes—but probably not with a business-as-usual approach to organizing and teaching the program.

Because of the time frame [students] developed in confidence, learned the rules, improved in skills, umpired, and helped teammates. These things seldom happen in physical education in such a positive way. Let's be honest.

—Secondary PE teacher

Long-Term Implications

What if sport education was done everywhere and done well? What would be the effects? Over a long term, sport education aims to contribute to a sound, sane, and humane sport culture that maximizes participation. The major ethic of sport education is “sport in all its forms for all the people.”

Sport cultures evolve. They get better in some ways and worse in others. The widespread interest in children's and youth sport over the past several decades is evidence of how central a developmental experience sport has become. Many people share a major concern that the experience is not always educationally sound. The extraordinary interest in professional and Olympic sport testifies to the degree to which elite sport has become central to the economic and cultural life of nations. Elite sport, however, is too often tainted with problems that diminish the sport itself, and athletes are often used and abused for economic or political purposes.

A second long-term purpose of sport education is to ensure that sport involvement at all levels is designed primarily for the benefit of participants. Practices that might harm either individual participants or the sport itself should be reduced or eliminated. Achieving this purpose requires increasing numbers of literate and enthusiastic sportspeople who have the knowledge to protect and develop sport

practices and the commitment to spend time and energy in such pursuits.

A third long-term purpose of sport education is to make sport more widely accessible so that gender, race, disability, socioeconomic status, and age are not barriers to participation. Sport in all its forms for all the people is a good slogan, but for it to become fully operational as a cultural ethic will require a new generation of sportspeople committed to making the slogan a reality.

Who will educate that new generation? I contend that physical educators bear this responsibility, simply because physical education provides the best opportunity to reach more children and youth because schools reach the largest percentage of children and youth, unlike extra-curricular children's and youth sport programs where gender, race, disability, and socioeconomic status are still too often barriers to participation. If "sport in all its forms for all the people" is a worthy ethic, then physical educators—in their roles as sport educators—have the potential to become the grass-roots guardians of a healthy, sane, participatory sport culture.

Sport Education in Physical Education

Let me make it clear that I don't advocate that physical education should be transformed totally into sport education. Sport education is not meant to replace physical education. It is not meant to reduce or eliminate attention to physical fitness, dance, leisure pursuits, and adventure education. Although chapter 8 shows how fitness can be developed in high school within the sport education model, this does not suggest that fitness is not an important goal of physical education, nor does it suggest that other kinds of fitness programs in physical education are not worthy. Many youth and adults have strong interests in outdoor leisure activities, and although these too no doubt could be done within the sport education instructional model, that fact does not mean that they are sports per se, nor does it diminish their importance as a distinct area of PE. Chapter 9 shows how sport education can be conceptualized as a part of the total physical education program at the high school level.

Having made it clear that I see sport education as one part of the physical education program, let me also make it clear that I disagree completely with the notion that sport should not be part of the physical education curriculum at all. I have seen it heard and argued—by physical educators—that sport should not be part of the curriculum because it is too competitive, it neglects the less-skilled student, it is the responsibility of the community rather than the school, it promotes elitism, or because the heterogeneous nature of most physical education classes

makes it too difficult to teach. There is no doubt that these problems occasionally occur in physical education but are they inevitable? The evidence presented in this book by teachers shows that appropriate use of the sport education model eliminates these problems.

This was a real mountain [challenge] from the start and to see it go through and generate the enthusiasm it did was quite worthwhile . . . particularly over things that I am often reluctant at letting the kids do To see the kids pick [the sport education model] up and run with it with all kids getting some benefit was unbelievable.

—Secondary PE teacher

Differences Between Sport Education and Physical Education

Sport education grew out of my dissatisfaction with seeing sport taught incompletely and inadequately in many physical education classes. Typical physical education teaches *sport skills* and *recreational games*. In a volleyball unit, for example, I've seen the serve, forearm pass, and set taught independently as isolated skills. Then the basic rules are introduced and students are organized into teams so that games can be played, often large-sided games where the demands of the game are not well matched to the developmental levels of the students. Strategy is noticeably absent. The skills, learned incompletely and in isolation, are seldom displayed appropriately in the game context. The game, for most students, isn't even much fun because their skills are inadequate and they haven't been taught to appreciate and execute the strategies involved. As a result, many students derive the fun in playing volleyball from social interaction rather than from playing a game well. Other students are simply bored because they are involved in what is clearly a trivial activity.

Sport in physical education has typically been decontextualized. This happens in several ways. Skills are taught in isolation rather than as part of the natural context of executing strategy in game-like situations. The rituals, values, and traditions of a sport that give it meaning are seldom even mentioned, let alone taught in ways that students can experience them. The affiliation with a team or group that provides the context for personal growth and responsibility in sport is noticeably absent in physical education. The ebb and flow of a sport season is seldom captured in a short-term sport instruction unit. It became clear

that, too often, physical education teaches only isolated sport skills and less-than-meaningful games. Students are not educated in sport.

Sport education grew out of these observations and concerns. It grew out of the desire to make the educational sport experience for boys and girls in physical education more authentic and complete. The direction of sport education became clear when the way in which sport is taught in physical education was compared to the way sport is typically organized and implemented in youth sport, school sport, and club or organized recreational sport.

Major Characteristics of Sport Compared to Physical Education

Figure 1.1 illustrates the typical context for sport. Six primary features characterize institutionalized sport and give sport the special meaning that makes it different from other forms of motor activity. These features are often neglected or are absent when sport is taught in physical education.

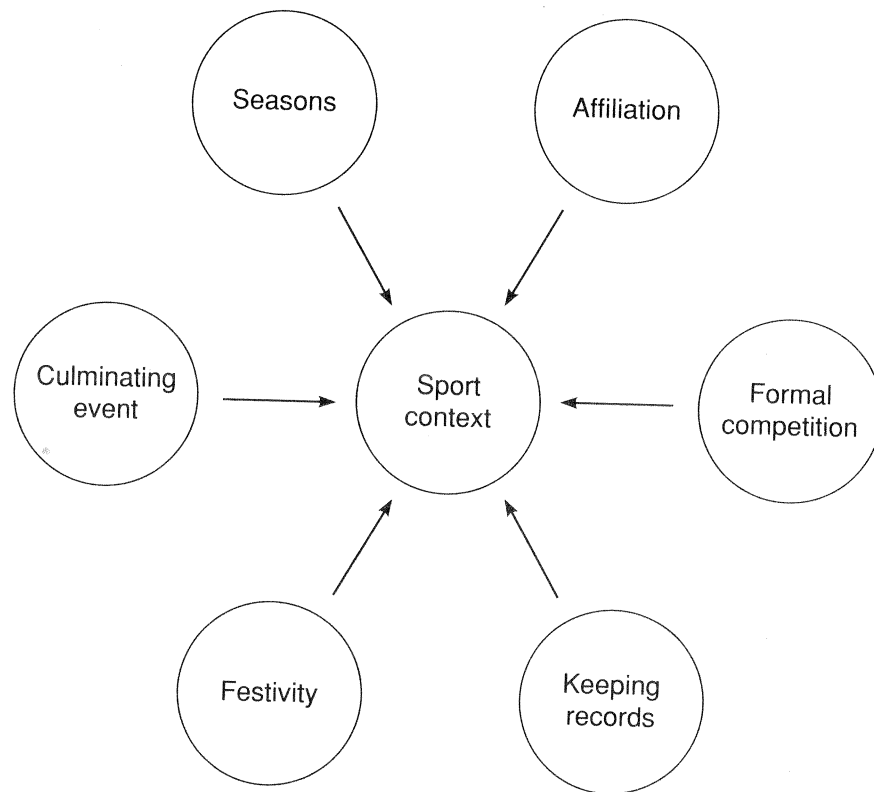


Figure 1.1 The primary features that define institutional sport and provide unique meanings for participation.

Seasons. Sport is done by seasons, and seasons are long enough to allow for significant experience. A sport season encompasses both practice and competition, and often ends with a culminating event. Physical education is organized in units that are often of short duration, sometimes lasting no longer than five to six lessons.

Affiliation. Players are members of teams or clubs and tend to retain membership throughout the season. Much of the meaning derived from sport participation and a large part of the personal growth that can result from good sport experiences is intimately related to affiliation. In physical education, students are members of the same class, but in terms of sport activity their team affiliation changes from day to day and often within the same lesson.

Formal Competition. Sport seasons are defined by formal competition that is interspersed with practice sessions and occurs in different formats: dual meets, round-robins, league schedules, and the like (see discussion of competition formats in chapter 2). The schedule is often fixed prior to the season so that teams and individuals can prepare appropriately. In physical education, there is seldom a formal competition. Because affiliation is typically absent, a formal schedule would have little meaning. The lack of affiliation and formal competition tends to make games less meaningful for participants.

Culminating Event. It is in the nature of sport to find out who is best for a particular season. The culminating competition provides goals for players to work toward. In physical education there often is a culminating event in a unit, but its meaning is diminished because of the lack of affiliation and the lack of a formal schedule leading up to the event.

Keeping Records. Records come in all forms and shapes: batting averages, shots on goal, steals, unforced errors, kills, times, distances, and the like. Records provide feedback for individuals and teams. Records help define standards and provide goals for players and teams. Records also become an important part of the traditions of a sport. In physical education, record keeping is likely to include little more than attendance, and perhaps a score on an isolated skill test.

Festivity. The festive nature of sport can be seen in the Olympic Games, Super Bowl, and World Series, where it sometimes seems to dwarf the competitions themselves. Regional track meets, the local Friday night football game, or a Little League baseball game have their own kind of festive atmosphere. The festive nature of sport enhances its meaning for participants and adds an important social element to the experience. In the typical physical education class, sport units are often devoid of any festive element.

The main features of sport—seasons, affiliation, a formal schedule of competition, a culminating event, records, and a festive atmosphere—are hardly ever reproduced in physical education classes. This is why I believe that sport has been taught incompletely and inauthentically.

Incorporating Sport Characteristics in Sport Education

The first sport education effort began quite simply by trying to incorporate the six features of sport into a physical education unit. Since then, the many teachers who have utilized the model have found ways to make the sport education experience more complete, authentic, developmentally appropriate, and educationally sound. The main characteristics of sport, when applied to sport education, require the following kinds of changes from the more traditional approaches for teaching sport in physical education.

Seasons. Sport education seasons are longer than typical physical education units. The first sport education season was an 11-lesson unit (50 min per lesson) in an elementary school where children met once every four days, so it lasted nine weeks. A government sponsored sport education curriculum project in New Zealand high schools (Grant, 1992) produced models based on a minimum of 20 lessons. The elementary curriculum model shown in chapter 5 uses five sport seasons per school year. The high school model shown in Chapter 9 has four sport seasons per year.

We are always practicing and learning more skills. It is not like PE because in PE you are practically changing what you are doing every period.

—High school student

Sport education units are longer for two reasons. First, there is more to accomplish because sport is taught more completely and more authentically. Second, it takes more time for students to learn to be competent games players so that strategic play within competitions reaches an appropriate level, given the backgrounds and developmental capabilities of the students.

Affiliation. In sport education, students quickly become members of teams and maintain that affiliation through the season. Team membership allows for role differentiation and individual responsibility relative

to the group, which, in turn, creates the potential for self-growth. Team membership creates enthusiasm. It can also create problems, but it is in working through those problems of peer relationships within teams that children and youth grow and mature. Students typically have different team affiliations with each new season (in the elementary model in chapter 5, students are members of a team for the school year).

Formal Competition. In sport education, a formal schedule of competition is arranged early in the season. The formal schedule often requires that teams make decisions about optimizing team performance in various competitions. The formal schedule allows for individual and group goals to be set. The sport education season focuses heavily on practice early in the season as team members learn skills and teams develop strategies. As the season progresses, less time is devoted to basic practice and more time is devoted to competition and to competition-specific practice. The elementary soccer model shown in chapter 3 describes how progressively more complex competitions can be used to gradually introduce more complex skills and strategies. The formal schedule allows for teams to prepare for upcoming competitions by working on weaknesses or preparing new strategies. The format for scheduling competition can be as diverse as the world of sport.

Culminating Event. In sport education, the season ends with a culminating event. This might be a one-day track and field meet, a 3 vs. 3 volleyball championship, a gymnastic team competition, or the bringing together of place winners from two separate competitions. The culminating event should be festive, designed to provide a fitting climax to a sport season. It should also involve all participants, because total participation is one of the ways that sport education differs from other forms of sport.

Record Keeping. In sport education, records are kept and used to enhance the educational experience. Records can be as simple as shots on goal and saves for a 2 vs. 2 soccer competition for fourth graders or as complex as complete sets of basketball statistics (shooting percentages, rebounds, steals, assists, and turnovers) for tenth graders. They can also involve judging performance as in gymnastics, diving, or skating, with students acting as judges. Records have many uses. They provide feedback for individual and group performance. They can be used to set goals for future competitions. Records provide teachers with an authentic form of assessment. They provide part of the local tradition of the sport within a school, such as the fifth grade girls' team long jump record, the top score in balance beam for seventh graders, or the highest team total of the year for aces in a team tennis competition.

Festivity. In sport education, teachers attempt to make each season festive. Teams have names and can develop uniforms. Records are publicized. Individual and group performance is recognized and appreciated. The gym can be decorated for a culminating event. The rituals and traditions of the sport are emphasized and honored.

These characteristics are present in nearly all sport education units, regardless of school level or sport. You will see these characteristics expressed differently in the many examples in this book, but they will all be present in each example.

How Sport Education Differs From Sport

Having described how we have tried to make sport education more similar to authentic forms of sport, I now need to emphasize several important ways in which it differs from youth sport, interschool sport, and elite sport. There are three ways in which sport education differs from institutional sport—participation requirements, developmentally appropriate involvement, and more diverse roles. These differences are due to the fact that our model is concerned with sport education, not merely sport activity.

Participation Requirements. Sport education demands full participation at all points in the season by all students. This consideration affects the size of teams and the nature of competitions, among others. Elimination tournaments are not appropriate. Large teams are not appropriate because research shows that having too many students on a side during play means that play will be dominated by more-skilled students (Siedentop, 1990). Culminating events should be events for all students, not just the top finishers or teams. All students experience all roles, not just the more gifted students or the natural leaders.

Developmentally Appropriate Involvement. The forms of sport used in sport education need to be developmentally matched to the experience and abilities of the students. My own view is that no full-sided, adult form of sport is appropriate for sport education. Teachers have had more success with soccer competitions that begin with 1 vs. 1 or 2 vs. 2 and seldom move beyond 5 vs. 5. In basketball or volleyball 3 vs. 3 is useful even for high school students. The nature of the game also has to be modified in most cases, even though it is important to preserve the essence of the game. For example, badminton is a racket sport with the objective of hitting the shuttlecock so it lands within the opposite court boundaries but cannot be returned by the opponent. This means that court sizes are smaller; nets are higher or lower than normal, depending on purpose; rules are modified; and equipment is

changed to make the game more friendly for students—all without changing the basic nature of the contest.

Diverse Roles. Sport education assigns students more roles than is typical for children's, youth, or school sport, where the only role to learn is performer. In sport education students learn to be coaches, referees, and scorekeepers. In some sport education variations, they also can learn to be managers, publicists, broadcasters, and trainers. Thus, sport education contributes not only to a more complete understanding of sport but also to a form of career education for sport-related professions.

Developmentally Appropriate Competition

One of the reasons sport has been downplayed or taught only in restricted forms within physical education is that teachers fear the many abuses of competition that occur all too regularly in interschool, collegiate, and elite sport. Many of these abuses are attributed to an overemphasis on competition, a win-at-all-costs philosophy, that far too often is related to economic gains that have little to do with sport as sport, or the well-being of participants. This issue needs to be faced straightforwardly because it is a legitimate educational concern. Sport education provides the vehicle through which these abuses can be eliminated as children and youth learn about and experience educationally appropriate competition.

Sport education presents developmentally appropriate competition to all students regardless of skill level, gender, or disability. The issue in sport education is not too much or too little competition, but appropriate competition. There is much to be learned from appropriate competition, both individually and as a member of a competitive group: The biggest lesson is to play hard, play fair, honor your opponent, and accept that when the contest is over, it is over. What matters most is taking part fairly and honorably, not which individual or team wins or loses. These lessons need to be taught and reinforced as key components of sport education.

There is also a widespread, general misunderstanding of what competition means, and it is fair to suggest that in sport education students have the opportunity to learn the broader meaning of competition just as they have the opportunity to experience a more complete and authentic form of sport.

Competition has three central meanings (Siedentop, 1981):

- It is first of all a festival.
- It has a deeply important meaning related to the pursuit of competence.
- It refers to various states of rivalry.

Sadly, the latter meaning is generally assumed by most laypersons.

Festivity

A fundamental meaning of *competition* is to come together, which refers to the festive nature of the word. This meaning of competition is least understood and often neglected. Festivals mark significant events and are typically laden with ritual and tradition. Certainly, all of us have experienced a great sports festival of one kind or another. Festivals are meant to be celebrated! Thus, it is incumbent upon sport educators to find ways to help students learn to celebrate their participation in sport by creating a festive atmosphere.

Pursuit of Competence

A second meaning of competition, one that is particularly important to an ongoing involvement in sport, is the pursuit of competence. Clearly, the words *compete* and *competence* are etymologically related. A sport competition creates a forum where participants test themselves, set new goals, pursue those goals, and then test themselves again. Thus, standards of performance and records are important to sport. In the pursuit of competence, competition is almost never against someone or some team; It is a contest with oneself to surpass objective standards of performance.

Rivalry

The third, and more common, meaning of competition is rivalry. There are many different kinds of rivalries in sport: person against person, team against team, and person against a clock or other objective standard. Some would have us believe that sport is a zero-sum competition in which one person or team wins only to the extent that another person or team loses. However, discussion with athletes immediately reveals the silliness of such a proposition. Imagine telling 5,000 runners who have just completed a 42K marathon race that they are all losers because they didn't finish first! Imagine telling a team that had improved its record dramatically to finish a strong third place in an eight-team league that it is a loser because it didn't win the championship! Indeed, rivalry tends to have its strongest meaning when it is clearly viewed as part of the festive nature of competition and in terms of the standards and traditions that are created by the sport forums where competence is pursued. These are the meanings of competition that underlie sport education.

Your Role as Teacher

Sport education is not a throw-out-the-ball model where you abdicate your professional responsibilities. It is true that as students gain experience in sport education and as students become more mature they take on more of the responsibilities for the sport education season. However, it is just as true that we are still the architects of the educational environment and the persons who are ultimately responsible for its efficiency and vitality.

To create maximum time for sport education, we must be good planners and class managers. This means developing managerial and transitional routines that save time and minimize disruptions (Siedentop, 1991). Because there are many roles to learn in sport education, we must define those roles, teach them, and design good practice with feedback so students can learn their roles well. Because skill and strategy development are key concepts in nurturing knowledgeable games players, you must help students to acquire game-related skills and to understand and be able to execute a range of strategies.

I have always been concerned about the social interaction aspect of phys ed and how you change the attitudes of boys and girls and their roles in sport. I have come to the conclusion that it doesn't work [producing positive outcomes] in a 1:30 ratio with the teacher dominating. You can change attitudes when [students] are working on things subconsciously in a small team. This unit [sport education] has produced outcomes that I have been trying for years to produce in a normal situation.

—Secondary PE teacher

Because values and fair play are so central to sport education, you must above all explain, model, and provide purposeful practice for good sporting behavior, not in the abstract, nor on a written test, but when it counts, during competition itself. Values and attitudes are formed slowly and need to be attended to constantly. This requires that you design an educational environment where fair play and sporting values are taught, practiced, and reinforced consistently.

The models shown in the various chapters of this text describe variations on a theme, the theme being sport education and the variations being those designed by creative teachers to make the model work so

that it reflects their values and the needs of the local context. The next chapter provides basic information necessary for you to successfully implement the sport education model in your curriculum. You now should have a good sense of what the model is about and what it is intended to accomplish. In chapter 2, we turn to the nuts and bolts of doing that well.

CHAPTER 2

Implementing the Sport Education Model

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Like any other educational model, sport education can be done well or poorly. The success or failure of the model depends on how you implement it. This chapter has guidelines and suggestions to help you begin implementing the model and to help you subsequently to build on your success. The suggestions in this chapter come directly from teachers who have used the model.

Initial Planning

If you try sport education, then you want to be successful, for both your sake and your students. This makes planning important. Planning for a first try should take into account the particular sport, the students' level of involvement, the necessary materials to move the unit forward smoothly, and strategies for producing a festive atmosphere that motivates students. Follow these important planning suggestions.

- Choose a sport you know well. Sport education teachers report that heightened student interest frequently brings questions related to technique and strategy. You are effective when you can give answers to those questions quickly and confidently. Choosing a familiar sport also makes it easier to teach skills and knowledge for the roles of referee, scorekeeper, and statistician.