

The Fifth Dimension: Extending the Physical Education Program

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"Although many professionals do not agree on the goals of physical education programs for children, they can acknowledge when a program is successful in reaching its stated goals. Thus, quality refers to the attainment of program goals and not to the goals themselves" (Hoffman, 1987, p. 44). Many physical education specialists feel that regular instructional time is insufficient to meet a broad range of program goals. To attain the goals of their programs, the teachers in this study found physical education classes alone to be inadequate.

The seven specialists in this study meet with students between 45 and 80 minutes per week of regularly scheduled instructional time. This amount of time is not adequate to facilitate skill acquisition and is below the national average, as cited in the National Children and Youth Fitness Studies (Ross, Dotson, Gilbert, & Katz, 1985; Ross, Pate, Corbin, Delpy, & Gold, 1987). In order to increase the opportunity for students to acquire skill and participate in activities, the teachers have planned and conducted intramurals and special events as a significant part of the physical education curriculum. These special programs are primarily an addition to the already existing physical education curriculum, requiring extra time, effort, and planning on the part of the physical educator. It is not surprising that those individuals who are labeled "effective teachers" would include such activities in their programs. All the physical education teachers in this study completed a survey regarding the special events and programs they conducted during the past school year. These events and programs fell into three distinct categories: culminating activities at the end of units, intramurals, and special events or programs, both at and away from school (see Table 1).

The type and number of culminating activities conducted at the end of units varied with teaching experience. Veteran teachers planned more culminating activities than did beginning and less experienced teachers. The types of culminating activities most frequently used were a track meet in the spring, a gymnastics meet, and various tournaments for such sports as soccer, basketball, volleyball, and badminton. Some unique and special culminating activities were also identified. One teacher integrated a pioneer square dance with the third grade's classroom unit on pioneers, one teacher planned a bike trip at the end of a bicycle unit, and another teacher had a bicycle rodeo. Other unique activities included an acrosport demonstration, an obstacle course, and a school camping trip.

Of the seven teachers studied, four conducted an intramural program. Of the three who did not, two were beginning teachers and one was a veteran teacher.

Table 1 — Special Programs Conducted by Effective Elementary Specialists

Teachers	Culminating activities	Intramural activities	Special events
Veteran teachers 10+ yrs	Parents night Field days Ropes course (adventure unit) Tournaments (archery, soccer, VB, BB, badminton) Track & field meets and awards Acrosport demonstration King/queen of court (badminton) Superstars/obstacle course Certificates of achievement (fitness, rope, VB, BB, badminton, tumbling & gymnastics) Bike trip (bicycling unit) Awards (captains, teamwork, sportsmanship, neat feet) Gymnastics meet	Veterans: 2 yes, 1 no Floor hockey (2) Lacrosse (2) BB (2) New games Badminton VB Around the world Four square Newcombe	Highlights of the hills Outdoor education camp Field days Adventure unit Sports week "Exercise" your right to read week Olympics Arts extravaganza Jump rope assembly for school/parents Gymnastics demonstration & safety assembly Dance in conjunction with music teacher Jazz dance assembly Special activities for exceptional children's week Jump rope for heart
Intermediate teachers 3-5 yrs	Track meet Intramurals in conjunction with or following units (VB, team handball, BB, gymnastics) Tournaments (VB, frisbee golf) Pioneer square dance (3rd grade pioneer unit) Bicycle rodeo (cycling safety unit) Fun run (track unit) Jump rope for heart Circus (manipulative unit)	Both: yes VB (2) Team handball BB Gymnastics (2) Track Soccer Floor hockey Flag football Large-group games Jump rope	Open house Obstacle course Kindergarten Olympics Gym night for parents and children Right to read week (sports/activity books) Field days Jump rope for heart Initiatives course
Beginning teachers 1 yr	Track meet Cross-country (fitness unit) Gymnastics meet & demonstration assembly	None	Gymnastics assembly Fitness & Olympics discussion groups and articles in celebration of the Olympics Initiatives

This was the first year that the veteran teacher could not hold intramurals due to scheduling changes within the school. One of the beginning teachers could not have intramurals because of safety patrol duty before and after school, while the other beginning teacher did not have intramurals because of facility scheduling and the overwhelming duties and responsibilities that accompany the first year of teaching. Intramurals were held primarily during lunch time, with some teachers using time before and after school, depending on school schedules, facility usage, and coaching responsibilities. Some of the more common intramural activities were floor hockey, basketball, gymnastics, volleyball, and lacrosse. Unique activities in these intramural programs were archery, flag football, new and large group games, and team handball. In many instances, intramural activities were selected as a follow-up to units that had been taught and for which students had shown strong interest.

The last category, special events, provided a wide range of creative and exciting activities that were incorporated into these programs. Two of the most common events were "Jump Rope for Heart" and "Field Days," which incorporated large group games, relay races, and cooperative activities. However, there was more diversity than similarity in these programs, reflecting the diverse interests of the teachers. Again, it was noted that beginning teachers did not plan as many special events and programs. During "Right to Read Week," two teachers attempted to get their students to read books about sports and other activities. Along similar lines, another teacher coordinated special activities in physical education with "Exceptional Children's Week." One teacher, in an attempt to increase parental awareness of physical education, planned a "Gym Night" for each grade level. During the evening parents and children in that grade came to the gym and participated *together* in physical education activities. This special program introduced parents to what goes on in physical education classes. This same teacher set up six obstacle courses in the gym for the beginning-of-the-year PTA Open House, and while parents were talking to teachers, children were free to negotiate the obstacle courses. Other teachers integrated various subject areas into their physical education programs through team teaching with the music teacher, holding a jazz dance assembly, and presenting an "Art Extravaganza," a ball handling routine put to music.

Locke (1986) has challenged physical educators to take "full membership" in their schools and communities. "Committee membership, attendance, and participation in meetings, collaborative enterprises with specialist colleagues in art, music, special education and guidance, as well as steady visibility as school citizen are essential parts of full membership" (Locke, 1986, p. 62). As can be noted by the above activities and programs, the teachers of this study take full membership in their schools and communities.

At a time when many physical education programs are being decreased and eliminated, physical educators must respond to the challenge and sell the potential of their programs (Seefeldt, 1987). These teachers appear to be making a concerted effort to gain support for their programs by educating parents and administrators about the importance of physical education. Our discussions of special events and programs revealed various methods that were used to communicate physical education happenings to parents and teachers. Six of the seven teachers used either a physical education newsletter, a letter to parents, the school newsletter, or a sports letter to share what was going on in their gyms. These methods followed closely the concepts of communication, content, continuity and consistency,

cooperation, commitment, and credibility, which Nelson feels are critical to effective communication: "A good public relations program helps the public understand and appreciate today's physical education and convinces them that physical education is not just an extra or a frill, but is basic to a child's education" (Nelson, 1986, p. 64).

Six of the seven teachers had some kind of special event or activity away from school. Primarily, these activities focused on outdoor education with students participating in a ropes or initiative course. Even though these teachers are fortunate enough to have access to an outdoor education camp, it must be realized that they do take advantage of such an opportunity for their students.

The beginning teachers in this study did not plan as many culminating activities of special events as did the more experienced teachers, nor did they conduct intramural activities. The lack of such activities can partially be explained by scheduling difficulties at both schools. However, the first year of teaching is filled with many new and overwhelming responsibilities (Ryan, 1970, 1980; Veenman, 1984; Weinstein, 1988). Beginning teachers often underestimate the complexity of the various nonteaching tasks to which they must attend. The literature has reported that the most frequent perceived problems of beginning teachers are classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student work, organization of class work (Veenman, 1984), difficulty using a variety of teacher strategies, physical exhaustion, and at best a sense of survival (Huberman, 1985). Both beginning teachers seemed to have shielded themselves from the added pressure of intramurals in their first year. Their goals were limited to what they felt were feasible, given their respective teaching situations. In both cases, the organizational issues of managing the program took priority. Given time, experience, and support, these effective beginning physical educators intend to expand the parameters of the physical education programs to include more attention to intramural activities and special events.

Not only were we interested in finding out the kinds of special events and programs these teachers planned, we were also interested in why they planned such events. Realizing that these events were additions to their physical education programs and required extra time and effort, the purposes for providing such events became very important. One of the most prevalent reasons for planning such events was to provide students with more opportunities to practice and acquire skills they were learning in physical education classes. A second reason involved exposure of parents and teachers to the physical education program. A third reason was that the children became excited about and enjoyed the special events and programs, and this provided another way of recognizing them for special achievements. Finally, as one teacher expressed it so well, "When special events go off well, I feel proud of myself, which rejuvenates me. So basically, special events are for the kids, and for me."

In the final analysis, these elementary specialists have developed programs that extend well beyond the regularly scheduled instructional program. In order to accomplish goals more completely, engender more enthusiasm among their students, work with other school faculty, and communicate the importance of the subject matter to parents, the teachers have been willing to devote the time and energy necessary to develop and implement the total program. Nobody seems to have *required* this effort from them. It is a burden they have placed upon themselves. The fact that these events are "special" and are perceived as such by students, teachers, and parents may explain why the effort has been made.

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