Creating Caring and Equitable Communities for Children of *ALL* Abilities

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SESSION OBJECTIVES

Participants will have an opportunity to learn about:

(a) The theory and benefits of Adventure Based Learning (ABL);

(b) Sequencing, facilitation, and debriefing adventure based activities that promote community and cooperation for all ability students; and

(c) Strategies and necessary modifications to help students with cognitive and physical disabilities experience equitable physical education.

SESSION PROGRAM

Objective 1: The Theory and Benefits of Adventure Based Learning (ABL)

What is ABL (i.e., adventure education)?

- ABL
    - The deliberate use of sequenced activities – particularly games, initiative activities, and problem solving activities – for the personal and social development of the participants (Cosgriff, 2000)

- ABL or adventure education programs use the natural environment to create new experiences that provide emotional, physical and social challenge to the participants (Ewert, 1989).

- These programs are concerned with two relationships: interpersonal and intrapersonal (Priest, 1990).
    - Interpersonal relationships are related to how individuals function in a group situation, and include elements such as communication, cooperation, trust, problem-solving, leadership and conflict resolution among others (Priest, 1990).
    - Intrapersonal relationships are related to how the individual functions within himself or herself, and includes constructs such as self-concept, self-efficacy and spirituality among others (Priest, 1990). Also included in intrapersonal relationships is the concept of lived-positive emotionality (LPE). LPE is the idea that positive feelings experienced by the individual can lead to psychological and physiological benefits, such as increase cognitive functioning (e.g., higher creativity and problem-solving ability), resiliency towards stressful situations, and greater feeling of social acceptance.

- The premise of participation in adventure education programs is to increase self-awareness brought about by the positive change experienced through participation and active reflection during the debrief. This lived-experience is a phenomenon that can be organized by the physical education teacher at the start of the school year to promote a caring classroom where all students feel and have the opportunity to be successful.

- Physical educators have assigned a low level of importance to adventure education both as a curricular model and in-service training. It was suggested that this may be in part due to lack of training in how to implement such a program (Collier & Herbert, 2000).
    - Without training and knowledge, the success of an ABL program is significantly compromised
    - Teachers who use adventure education activities can meet all three learning domains in physical education (motor, cognitive, and affective) while at the same time create a caring classroom ecology (Stuhr, 2005).

Objective 2: Sequencing, Facilitation, and Debriefing ABL Activities that Promote Community and Cooperation for All Ability Students and

Objective 3: Strategies and necessary modifications to help students with cognitive and physical disabilities experience equitable physical education.

Sequencing

- The activities selected should move a group through the sequence of
    - Community Building – cooperation and communication
    - Trust – positive emotionality and physical safety
    - Problem solving
    - Challenge

Facilitation and Debrief

- In order to have students who exhibit cooperation, trust and problem solving abilities, physical education teachers need to instruct and practice these life skills. Teachers also need to understand that care is a bi-directional phenomenon, one that requires both teacher and students to believe that care exists in the classroom.

- Using the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) physical educators can help students stay active and at the same time start to practice important life lessons.

- The cycle begins with a **brief** (e.g., a story, poem, quote, a message, or any form of framing the main point of the activity), then the **activity**, and then a **debrief** (e.g., *The What, So What, and Now What* questions), to discover important intra-personal and inter-personal characteristics to apply towards daily life.

Building a Community

- Community Brief – using a short poem
    - Hug O War - By Shel Silverstein
    - I will not play at tug o' war. - I'd rather play at hug o' war, - Where everyone hugs - Instead of tugs, - Where everyone giggles - And rolls on the rug, - Where everyone kisses, - And everyone grins, - And everyone cuddles, - And everyone wins.

- Activity 1
    - Evolution (Frank, 2004)
    - Focus: Acting silly, mixing, ice-breaker
    - Materials: None
    - Rock/Paper/Scissors is a great way to resolve student conflict
    - Description: Make sure everyone knows Rock/Paper/Scissors, and agree on the rules for the game. Show everyone the following motions: egg (squatting down), chicken (hands under armpits squawking like a chicken), dinosaur (arms up, roaring), superhero (choose an action depicting your favorite superhero), know-it-all or smarty-pants (arms crossed looking smug). Objective is to get as high up the chain as possible in any given amount of time. Everyone begins as an egg. Find another egg and play Rock/Paper/Scissor until someone wins. Winner becomes a chicken and finds another chicken while the non-winner stays an egg and finds another egg to start again. This continues for a set period of time. When a person reaches the top of the chain, the smarty-pants, they stand out of the circle, arms crossed, looking smug. This person can select to challenge or decline a challenge from other smarty-pants.
    - Modifications for students with disabilities
      - Cognitive impairments: Use fewer morphing stages, play Rock/Paper/ Scissors for a while before starting the activity. Change Rock/Paper/Scissors to a more simplistic motor movement.
      - Physical impairments: Create motions that all students can perform. For those students who can not, or have difficulty with morphing their body, use another creative way to express the egg, chicken, dinosaur, superhero, and smarty-pants. Example: A student who has cerebral palsy and has difficulty kneeling down and squatting like an egg can instead use their arms to create an egg shape or create a fist to signal the egg morphing motion. For students who have difficulty with fine motor skills teachers can modify the Rock/Paper/Scissors motions to a movement all students can perform successfully. The key is for all individuals to be comfortable transforming their body into the various morphing motions and feel part of the activity and overall caring classroom ecology.
      - Visual impairments: Have students with impairments feel the shape of the Rock/Paper/Scissors and allow them additional time to recognize each shape.

- Activity 2
    - Have You Ever… (Rhonke, 1994)
    - Focus: Get-to-know-you, ice-breaker
    - Materials: Polyspots
    - Description: Participants stand in a circle on a polyspot. One participant volunteers to stand in the middle of the circle. The participant in the middle calls out something that they have done that they believe other participants have done as well (e.g., "Have you ever broken a bone"). Once the participant has spoken anyone who has done what has been said must quickly travel to an open polyspot (i.e., no running). The participant in the middle must also travel to an open polyspot, but not the polyspot to their immediate right or left. The participant who is left without an open polyspot to go to ends up in the middle.
    - Modifications for students with disabilities
      - Cognitive impairments: Prompt these students ahead of time to be thinking about what they will call out once they are leading the activity in the middle. Provide these students with additional time, if necessary, when they are in the middle.
      - Physical impairments: Depending on the extent of the physical disability teachers can modify the size of the circle, the distance between each polyspot, the motor skill (e.g., walking, skipping, slow motion, running, etc.) being performed in traveling to the polyspot, and also pair up with another student or an instructional aide for assistance traveling to each polyspot. If necessary, allow these students to travel to the polyspot right next to them.

- Debriefing strategy and questions
    - *One Word Quick-Whip*
    - Was it difficult for you to act silly in the first activity? Why or why not?
    - What did you learn about yourself in these activities?
    - What did you learn about your classmates during these activities?

Helping Students Cooperate

- Cooperation Brief – using a statement and a question
    - Life is sometimes fast past and sometimes out of control in terms of the responsibilities we have to attend to on a daily basis. When life gets to be too much to handle we may feel as though are stress levels are extremely high and too much to handle. When this happens to us what can we do to mange and cope with stressful situations?

- Activity 1
    - Pairs Tag (w/ nursery rhyme or song)
    - Pairs Tag X 2 (Frank, 2004)
    - Focus: Cooperation, teamwork, communication
    - Materials: 4 cones (to mark boundaries)

- Description: Student chooses a partner. Rules – If you are it, you must tag your partner and no one else. When tagged you must sing a song or nursery rhyme before chasing your partner. No running. Extension – have both students pair up and play against another pair (e.g., pairs^2)
- Modifications for students with disabilities
  - Cognitive impairments: Try slower speeds for all students.
  - Physical impairments: The motor skill (e.g., walking, skipping, slow motion, running, etc.) being performed in traveling can be modified. Use scooters or wheelchairs to help create movement equity. Reduce the size of the activity area. If necessary, provide these students with a foam noodle to help extend their reach.
  - Visual impairments: Pair up each student with another student or an instructional aide for assistance traveling. In pairs, have one student try wearing a blindfold while their partner communicates (verbally or through touch) to them which direction to travel. Note: When using blindfolds make sure to use *safety bumpers* (i.e., arms straight out in front of their body with hands out in case they bump into another person).

- Activity 2
  - Twisted Sister (Stuhr, 2005)
  - Focus: Problem-solving, cooperation
  - Materials: A large stationary structure - a wall or fence serve as the best structures.
  - Description: Each student in a group will hold hands in a straight line, shoulder to shoulder with one student on the end placing his/her free hand on a stationary structure (i.e., tree, wall, or fence). On the teacher-directed signal, each group will try to create a way to cross all the arms in the group without any group member releasing her/his hand grip. There are five ways this scenario can be solved. Challenge the students to think of a plan or strategy before they act. Once one group solves the first initiative solution have them try to find another solution. See if all of the groups can discover at least three of the solutions.
  - Grouping: Teams of 6 work the best. With too few students in a group the problem is not challenging enough. With too many students in each group the problem is too challenging.
  - Facilitation Tips: To avoid the comment, “I have to hold his/her hand...” act as though it is not a big deal when explaining the holding hands part and quickly move right along.
  - Modifications for students with disabilities
    - Cognitive impairments: Provide students with prompts or hints when necessary. Place students in groups where there are student leaders who can assist and be encouraging.
    - Physical impairments: Depending on the extent of the disability allow these students to be placed in groups with smaller numbers. Provide these students with alternative ways to solve the problem (i.e., change the criteria where appropriate).

- Debriefing strategy and questions
  - *Strike a Pose Triad*
  - What role does communication play in these activities and in helping us resolve stressful situations?
  - What roles does support play in helping someone get through tough situations?
  - What worked and what did not work for you during these activities?
  - How does it feel to be a leader/follower?

SESSION DEBRIEF and CONCLUSION

Overall Session Debrief

- Strategy: Posing a question
  - If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Conclusion

- As teachers we must instill within each child a love of learning and the enthusiasm to continue to be physically active for life. Building community through cooperation, trust, problem solving, and challenge activities can help cultivate pro-social skills and a love for physical movement that hopefully will transfer to other areas of life within and outside of physical education.

ABL RESOURCES

Adventure Activities Website - www.wilderdom.com

Frank, L. S. (2004). *Journey toward the caring classroom: Using adventure to create community in the classroom and beyond.* Oklahoma City, OK. Wood 'N' Barnes Publishing & Distribution. ISBN: 1-885473-60-5

Panicucci, J. (2002). *Adventure curriculum for physical education: Middle school.* Beverly, MA: Project Adventure Inc.

Rhonke, K. (1994). *The bottomless bag again.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company

Stuhr, P. T., & Baringer, B. (2005). Jump start the beginning of your school year: Using cooperative activities to get everyone involved. *Future Focus, Ohio Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*.

YMCA Camp Website - http://www.manitowish.org/programs/initiatives.html