

# String Orienteering: Strategies that Work for Elementary School Students

## **AAHPERD National Convention and Expo 2014**

Orienteering is a sport which requires participants to navigate through a specific environment. Typically this is done with the aid of a map and/or compass. The object of orienteering is to use a defined form of movement to locate a series of points (referred to as "Control Points") and reach a designated finish line. String orienteering is simply orienteering but with the course route marked by a string that participants follow.

### **Teaching Considerations for Orienteering**

- Activity needs to be developmentally appropriate and safe
- Consider completing a gymnasium/class based orienteering activity before doing a full scale outdoor session
- Plan and develop the route ahead of time
- On the day of activity, place string along route before class begins and examine route for safety
- Be sure to collect string and any controls following activity
- Consider students with special needs when planning your route and control points
- When selecting control points consider developmental level of students and time you have to complete activity
- Circulate around the area being used while students are completing the activity
- If going to an outside of school location or an area where young students may be out of site, utilize parent volunteers or *buddies* from an older class to assist in supervision
- Have an activity planned for those groups that finish quickly

### **Benefits of Incorporating String Orienteering into your PE Program**

- Inexpensive activity (maps and compass are not mandatory)
- Introduces students to alternative environments for physical activity and the sport of orienteering
- Fosters integration with other curricula (e.g., geography, science, math, language arts)
- Can be used to develop several aspects of physical fitness (e.g., cardio vascular, muscle endurance)
- Encourages decision making, leadership, communication, and teamwork
- Easy to make it developmentally appropriate
- Develops basic navigational skills and acts as a foundation for future orienteering activities
- Safe and fun for students

### **Progressions to a String Orienteering Activity**

- Simplest version = provide students with a map. Simply have students follow the string and establish they have passed each control (e.g., collect a flag or some other object from each control)
- Add physical tasks to do at control points (e.g., 10 jumping jacks, etc.)
- Make control points a general area where they have to search out the flags
- Students must add things to their map (e.g., have unmarked controls along course that the students must add)
- Have students answer directional or topographical questions at control points based on reading their map and/or observing their natural surroundings (e.g., Have you increased or decreased elevation since previous control?)
- Provide students with a compass and have questions at controls that require students to use the compass

### **Positive Learning Outcomes Associated with Orienteering**

- |                           |              |                      |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| - Cooperation             | - Leadership | - Functional Fitness |
| - Motor Skill Development | - Safety     | - Active Living      |