

Discovering String Orienteering: An Effective Alternative Environment Activity

Dr. Brent Bradford: Assistant Professor – Concordia University College of Alberta

Dr. Nathan Hall: Assistant Professor – University of Winnipeg

Dr. Clive Hickson: Professor – University of Alberta

One of the most effective ways to introduce children and youth to physical activity in parks and other outdoor environments is through school based physical education programs. Orienteering is well suited to these programs because it fits nicely into Physical Education Program of Studies.

(Hall, Bradford, & Hickson, 2015)

What is Orienteering? 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 (Bradford, Hall, & Hickson, 2015).

String Orienteering: orienteering with the course route marked by a “string” that participants follow

Why Orienteering?

- Physical Activity!
- Enjoyment! Perceiving the environment as a space where enjoyment can be experienced through physical activity!
- Exposure! Being exposed to new environments!
- Discovery! Discovering potential places where they can be active within a specific environment (e.g., playgrounds, trails, splash pads, sports and game facilities).

Teaching Considerations for Orienteering

- Ensure the activity is 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
- Place string along the route before class begins (on the day of activity)
- Examine the route for safety
- Be sure to collect string and any controls following the activity
- Consider students with special needs when planning the route and control points
- Consider developmental level of students and time allotted for completing activity ... when selecting control points
- Circulate around the area being used while students are completing the activity
- Have an activity planned for those groups that finish quickly
- Designate parent volunteers or *buddies* from an older class to assist in supervision, if the activity will be outside the school location or in an area where young students may be out of site

Benefits of Incorporating String Orienteering into your PE Program

- Provides an inexpensive activity (maps and compass are not mandatory)
- Introduces students to alternative environments for physical activity and orienteering
- Fosters integration with other curricula (e.g., geography, science, math, language arts)
- Helps develop several physical fitness aspects (e.g., cardiovascular, muscular endurance)
- Encourages decision making, leadership, communication, and teamwork
- Promotes the ease of designing developmentally appropriate activity for participants
- Develops basic navigational skills
- Promotes safety and enjoyment
- Acts as a foundation for future orienteering activities

Progressions to a String Orienteering Activity

- **Simplest Version:** provide students with a map. Simply have participants 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 participants must search out the flags
- Participants must add things to their map (e.g., have unmarked controls along course that participants must add)
- Have participants answer directional or topographical questions at control points based on reading their map and/or observing their natural surroundings
 - o **Example:** Have you increased or decreased elevation since previous control?
- Provide participants with a compass and have questions at controls that require them to use the compass

Positive Learning Outcomes Associated with Orienteering

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

References

- Bradford, B., Hall, N. & Hickson, C. (2015). Finding Your Way through an Orienteering Lesson. *Runner - Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (HPEC)*, 47(1), 29-30.
- Hall, N., Bradford, B., & Hickson, C. (2015). Orienteering: A Fun Way to get Physically Active in an Outdoor Environment. *Runner - Journal of the Health and Physical Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (HPEC)*, 47(1), 9-12.

Contact Information:

Dr. Brent Bradford: brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca
Dr. Nathan Hall: na.hall@uwinnipeg.ca
Dr. Clive Hickson: clive.hickson@ualberta.ca

Additional Resources:

Orienteering for Schools: www.o4schools.com

International Orienteering Federation: www.orienteering.org