TOWARDS COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doctor Glenn Kirchner is an internationally recognized expert in elementary school physical education. He received the Margie Hanson Award for Distinguished Service in 2000 for his contributions to elementary school physical education programs in the United States. His teaching career includes elementary through university teacher education programs. He has traveled to many countries as an expert clinician and visiting professor. As an author, his books include *Introduction to Movement Education*, 2nd Edition (1978), *Physical Education for Elementary School Children*, 10th Edition (1998), and *Children’s Games from Around the World*, 2nd Edition (2000). He has also produced over thirty instructional films that have been used in several countries.
TOWARDS COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

By
GLENN KIRCHNER
Professor Emeritus
Simon Fraser University

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.
Towards cooperative learning in elementary school physical education / by Glenn Kirchner.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

GV443.K472 2005
372.86–dc22
2005044008
To
Diane
Thanks for your support, ideas and patience
There is a strong contemporary trend toward establishing a more cooperative learning environment in all grades and with all subject areas. The reason for this educational shift is based upon substantial research evidence indicating cooperative teaching strategies are superior to individualistic and competitive methods. To support this statement, cooperative teaching strategies produce higher academic achievement in all subject areas and in all grade levels. Children show a significant increase in individual and group motivation, a more positive attitude towards the subject matter and show a higher level of inferential and creative thinking. Other studies reveal a positive improvement in interpersonal relations among children with different ethnic backgrounds. And children who work in cooperative learning groups demonstrate more positive social behavior than students working in traditional structured learning situations.

Although there are several acceptable definitions of a cooperative teaching strategy, four essential elements are common to all definitions. First, each learning group, regardless of size, must be a heterogeneous mix of the abilities, interests, and ethnic and personal backgrounds represented in the class. Second, and perhaps the most important element, is positive interdependence. This means the members of each group perceive they cannot reach their goal unless they work cooperatively together. Third is individual and group accountability which means that each individual is assessed and the results reviewed by the individual and his group. This process ensures that every member of each group knows who needs help, support, and encouragement. The fourth element is social collaborative skills. If an individual who does not understand and use social skills such as sharing ideas and equipment, respecting another person’s point of view, encouraging and praising teammates, there is little hope in establishing a cooperative learning environment within the group. Arranging heterogeneous working groups
is the responsibility of the teacher. The remaining three elements must be taught to children in a gradual and systematic way if a cooperative learning environment is to be established.

Virtually all investigations that have proven the superiority of cooperative teaching strategies have been done in academic subject areas, with almost none in physical education. Our current physical education programs stress individualistic and competitive teaching strategies which have been successful with highly skilled and physically fit children. They have not been successful with children who have minimum levels of motor skill and who lack an appropriate level of fitness. New problems, such as children who are overweight, obese, undernourished, or new arrivals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, require more cooperative programs that can integrate these children into a more cooperative learning environment.

This book is not a collection of cooperative games, although there are several included, or a selection of gymnastic, dance, and fitness activities that require children to work together. It is a book that begins a process of gradually introducing creative and cooperative teaching strategies into the physical education program. The six cooperative components of fun, cooperation, success, participation, equality, and trust, described in Chapter 4 are the important catalyst or factor that allow teachers to change existing games, dance, and gymnastic activities into cooperative activities. These components are also used to guide children through a process of creating their own cooperative activities. When these components become part of movement challenges and tasks in games, dance, gymnastic and fitness activities, they also emphasize the cooperative learning elements of heterogeneous groupings, positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, and many social collaborative skills.

As a writer of other physical education books, I know it is important to provide photographs, sample lesson plans, and student and teacher follow-up comments on how these new ideas work. The creative and cooperative results of teacher’s and student’s work is proof that we can create a cooperative learning environment in our physical education programs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the teachers and children who have contributed so much of their time and talent to this book. It is truly an international contribution as there are games, photographs, and drawings from children in Canada, Korea, and the United States. I owe a special thanks to Mickey Greene, Brairwood Elementary School; Andrea Roland, Puntledge Elementary School; and Mike McComb, Village Park Elementary School for your great ideas and generous support.

To my university colleagues: Dr. Leon Greene, University of Kansas; Dr. Ye Jong Choi, Seoul National University; Dr. Marybeth Miller, Slippery Rock University; and Tammy Wirick, Simon Fraser University, thanks for all those special things you have done for me during the collection and writing of this book.

I wish to express my gratitude to the principals, teachers, and students of the following schools for their generous support and outstanding contributions to this book. Without your ideas, photographs, drawings and personal observations this book would not have been written.

Mr. Carl Holmes, Cuba Rushford Elementary School, Cuba, New York.
Ms. Patricia Dawson, Cuba Rushford Elementary School, Cuba, New York.
Mrs. Micky Greene, Brairwood Elementary School, Shawnee Mission, Kansas.
Mr. Mike McComb, Village Park Elementary School, Comox, British Columbia, Canada.
Mrs. Andrea Rowland, Puntledge Elementary School, Courteney, British Columbia, Canada.
Mr. Brian Revel, J.W. Inglis Elementary School, Coldwater, British Columbia, Canada.
Mrs. Deirdre DeGagne, Sandy Hill Elementary School, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada.
Mr. HaeWoon Chong, Seoul Karg-sea Elementary School, Seoul, Korea.
Mr. Hyon-woong Park, Jungbal Elementary School, Seoul, Korea.
CONTENTS

Preface ......................................................... vii

Part One
CHOOSING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Chapter 1. THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND
HOW IT SHOULD BE TAUGHT ......................... 5

Chapter 2. INDIVIDUALISTIC, COMPETITIVE AND
COOPERATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES ........... 13

Part Two
CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING
STRATEGIES IN GAMES

Chapter 3. GUIDING CHILDREN TO INVENT NEW GAMES . 27

Chapter 4. GUIDING CHILDREN TO INVENT COOPERATIVE
GAMES ............................................................ 51

Chapter 5. TEACHING GAME CONCEPTS AND SKILLS ...... 73

Part Three
CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING
STRATEGIES IN GYMNASTICS

Chapter 6. ADDING CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE
COMPONENTS TO GYMNASTICS .................. 95

Chapter 7. ADDING CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE
COMPONENTS TO MOVEMENT EDUCATION ...... 115
Part Four
CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES IN DANCE

Chapter 8. ADDING CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE COMPONENTS TO DANCE ................. 127

Part Five
OTHER SPECIAL USES OF CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Chapter 9. TEACHING PHYSICAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES .... 141

Chapter 10. TEACHING ACADEMIC CONCEPTS AND SKILLS THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES .... 161

Chapter 11. A TIME TO CHANGE OUR EMPHASIS ............. 181

Index ................................................................. 183
TOWARDS COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION