

**TOWARDS COOPERATIVE  
LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

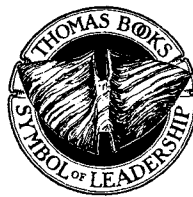
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# TOWARDS COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

*By*

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**CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.**  
*Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.*

*Published and Distributed Throughout the World by*

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.  
2600 South First Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62704

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© 2005 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07599-9 (hard)  
ISBN 0-398-07600-6 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2005044008

*With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing  
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*Printed in the United States of America  
UBC-R-3*

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Kirchner, Glenn.

Towards cooperative learning in elementary school physical education / by Glenn Kirchner.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-398-07599-9 – ISBN 0-398-07600-6 (pbk.)

1. Physical education for children—Study and teaching (Elementary)—United States. 2.  
Interpersonal relations—United States. 3. Group work in education—United States. I. Title.

GV443.K472 2005  
372.86—dc22

2005044008

*To  
Diane  
Thanks for your support, ideas and patience*



## PREFACE

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. Patrica 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

|                      | <i>Page</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|
| <i>Preface</i> ..... | vii         |

### **Part One CHOOSING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Chapter 1. THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND<br>HOW IT SHOULD BE TAUGHT .....       | 5  |
| Chapter 2. INDIVIDUALISTIC, COMPETITIVE AND<br>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<br>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<br>COMPONENTS TO GYMNASTICS .....         | 95  |
| Chapter 7. ADDING CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE<br>COMPONENTS TO MOVEMENT EDUCATION ..... | 115 |

**Part Four**  
**CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING**  
**STRATEGIES IN DANCE**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 8. ADDING CREATIVE AND COOPERATIVE<br>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<br>SKILLS THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES ..... | 161 |
| Chapter 11. A TIME TO CHANGE OUR EMPHASIS .....  | 181 |
| <i>Index</i> .....   | 183 |

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## **Part One**

### **CHOOSING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

**P**art One consists of two important chapters that set the direction and emphasis of this book. Chapter 1 describes the instructional goals of a quality physical education program. Chapter 2 explains the essential differences between individualistic, competitive, and cooperative teaching strategies, while the latter part of this chapter provides a rationale for stressing cooperative learning in the elementary school physical education program.





## **Chapter 1**

# **THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HOW IT SHOULD BE TAUGHT**

Key Points, page 5  
Chapter Objectives, page 5  
Goals of Physical Education, page 6  
Quality Physical Education, page 7  
Some Basic Concerns, page 8  
Towards Cooperative Teaching Strategies, page 8  
Summary, page 10  
How This Book Is Organized, page 10  
Suggested Projects, page 11  
References, page 11

### **KEY POINTS**

1. The goals of physical Education are the basis upon which the content and teaching strategies are selected and emphasized in a quality physical education program.
2. The elements of a quality physical education program expressed by NASPE should be present in all elementary schools.
3. Individualistic and competitive teaching strategies are excessively stressed in elementary school physical education programs.
4. Cooperative teaching strategies are superior to individualistic and competitive teaching strategies and should be emphasized in primary and intermediate grades.

### **CHAPTER OBJECTIVES**

1. To outline the basic goals of an elementary school physical education program.

2. To describe the elements of a quality physical education program.
3. To describe the basic differences between individualistic, competitive, and cooperative teaching strategies.
4. To outline how this book is organized for teachers to learn how to gradually incorporate cooperative teaching strategies in games, dance, physical fitness and gymnastic activities.

The first task in developing an elementary school physical education program is to begin with a clear statement of the instructional goals. Such statements are provided in numerous physical education textbooks and by national and state organizations. The most recent statement by the National Association for Sports and Physical Education indicates what students in grades K–12 should know and be able to do as a result of a daily quality physical education program. The following national standards provide teachers with a base to develop goals for their elementary school physical education programs (NASPE, 2004).

Students should:

1. Demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.
2. Demonstrate understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.
3. Participate in regular physical activity.
4. Achieve and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness.
5. Exhibit personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
6. Value physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expressions and/or social interaction.

## **GOALS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The goals each elementary school states for a physical education program become the basis for selecting the activities to be taught and the appropriate teaching strategies that will lead to a quality program. The following goals are in harmony with the United States National Standards, with Canadian Standards set by Health Canada (2003), and with leaders in the field ( Pangrazi, 2004; Graham, 2002; Kirchner & Fishburne, 1998). They are used in this book as a basic criteria for the selection and emphasis of activities and for the inclusion and emphasis of teaching strategies.



Figure 1.1. Develop and maintain optimum levels of fitness.

1. To provide a learning environment where children develop a positive and lifelong attitude towards participating in physical activity.
2. To assist each child to develop and maintain an optimum level of physical fitness and health.
3. To help each child develop effective body management and useful physical skills in games, dance, and gymnastic activities.
4. To provide opportunities for each child to enjoy play experiences.
5. To provide opportunities for children to use their own creative and intellectual talents.
6. To provide opportunities for children to understand, appreciate and use social collaborative skills.
7. To assist each child to develop a positive self-image.
8. To provide opportunities for children to work as cooperative members of a group.
9. To provide opportunities for children to understand and demonstrate individual and group accountability in a variety of movement experiences.

### **QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

According to NASPE, a quality physical education program for elementary school-age children should include a thirty-minute physical