

USA School Tennis

A CONCISE HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING STUDENTS IN AN ACTIVITY SETTING

Effective class management skills characterize quality teaching. Effective teachers take guidance from these assumptions: that teaching is a profession, that students are in school to learn, and that the teacher's challenge is to promote learning. These assumptions imply a responsibility to a range of students, both those who accept instruction and those who do not. Teachers must maintain faith that students who have not yet found success will eventually do so. Instructing the majority of children in a class is relatively easy, but making appreciable gains among low-aptitude and indifferent students is the mark of an effective teacher.

Class Management Skills

Class management skills are a prerequisite to effective instruction. Moving and organizing students quickly and efficiently requires comprehension of various techniques coupled with student acceptance of those techniques. Observers of the teaching process agree that if a class is unmanageable, it is unteachable. Teaching management skills should not be viewed as a negative or punishing proposition. Most students and teachers enjoy a learning environment that is organized, efficient, and allows a maximum amount of class time to be devoted to learning skills.

Class management skills should be taught to students in a manner similar to physical skill teaching. All skills need to be learned through practice and repetition until they become second nature. If teachers view class management skills in this light, they will have more empathy for students who do not perform well. Just as students make mistakes when performing physical skills, they will sometimes perform management skill incorrectly. A simple statement to the effect, "It appears that you forgot how to freeze quickly, let's practice," is much more positive than indicting a class for its carelessness and disinterest. One final thought; motor skills are practiced many times over without perfection ever being reached. In similar fashion, class management skills must be practiced many times while understanding that students will not always achieve perfection in this area.

From Instruction to Activity

A major goal of teachers is to have all students listen to directions prior to activity. The instructions should be specific and as clear as possible. A teacher who talks longer than 30 seconds during any single instructional episode will find a class beginning to lose interest. For this reason, teachers should alternate short instructional episodes with periods of activity. Too often, teachers sit students down and explain long and involved technical points of skill performance. In a series of points, most people remember only the first and last. This should help teachers understand that students will only be able to integrate and concentrate on one or two points during skill practice. Minimizing the amount of instructional content will reduce the

length of an instructional episode and eliminate student frustration from having to remember an excessive amount of material.

Teachers should tell students "when before what." This implies telling the class when to perform an activity before stating what the activity is. An effective way to implement "when before what" is to signal starting an activity by using keywords. Keywords could be "Begin!" or "Start!" or the school nickname. Instructions are implemented by a statement similar to "When I say Sun Devils [school nickname], I'd like you to...." Another common example is "When I say Go! I want you to find a partner and practice tossing and catching." Any number of keywords can be used to encourage youngsters to listen to the entire set of instructions. Since the keyword is not given until all directions have been issued, students cannot begin until they hear the selected keyword.

Stopping the Class

A consistent signal should be established for stopping the class. It does not matter what the signal is, as long as it always means the same thing. Using an audio signal (such as a whistle blast) and a visual signal (raising the hand overhead) is effective, since some youngsters may not hear the audio signal if they are engrossed in activity. Whereas a loud audio signal is used to stop a class, a voice command should always be used to start the class (see keywords above). Regardless of the signal used to indicate a stop, it is best to select a different signal than the one used to start the class. If children do not respond to the signal to stop, the procedure must be practiced. Asking a class to freeze on signal is effective practice. As children become more effective at stopping, their responses should be reinforced. Too often teachers reinforce skill performance but, fail to reinforce management behavior. If it is not reinforced regularly, it will not be performed well. To evaluate class effectiveness in responding to the stop signal, the teacher can time the latency of the response to the signal. If a class takes longer than 5 seconds to freeze and get ready for the next command, stopping and listening should be practiced.

Teachers must expect 100% cooperation when students are asked to stop. If some students stop and listen to directions and others do not, class morale soon degenerates. Students begin to wonder why they have to stop but other students don't. Teachers can easily scan the class to see if all students are stopped and ready to respond to the next set of directions. If a teacher settles for less than full attention, students will fulfill those expectations.

Organizing Students into Groups and Formations

Instructors should know how to divide classes into teachable groups. Simple activities can be used to accomplish this in an enjoyable and rapid fashion. For example, the activity **Toe to Toe** can be used to teach children to quickly find partners. The goal of the game is to get toe to toe with a partner as fast as possible. Other challenges can be to get foot to foot or shoulder to shoulder or to look into the eyes of a partner. Students without a partner are instructed to go to the center of the teaching area (marked by a cone or spot) immediately and find someone else without a partner. This gives students a secure feeling, as opposed to feeling unwanted while running around the area looking for a partner. Emphasis should be placed on rapid selection of the nearest person to keep children from looking for a favorite friend or telling someone that

"they are not wanted" as a partner. If students insist on staying near a friend, teachers can tell the class to move throughout the area and find a different partner each time "back to back" is called.

Another effective activity for arranging students in groups of a selected size is **Whistle Mixer**. When the whistle is blown a certain number of times, students form groups corresponding to the number of whistles and sit down to signify that they have the correct number in their group. Students who are left out go to the center of the area and find the needed number of members. Once this skill is mastered, students move quickly into proper-sized groups depending on the number of whistle signals. Hand signals can also be used to show the size of the groups to be made.

To divide a class into two equal groups, teachers can have students get back to back with a partner. One partner sits down while the other remains standing. Those standing are asked to go to one area, after which those sitting are then moved to the desired space. Getting into groups is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced on a regular basis.

Other suggestions for finding partners are to ask students to find a partner wearing the same color, with a birthday during the same month, with a phone number that has two similar numbers in it, and so on. To arrange students in equal-sized groups, the instructor can place an equal number of different colored beanbags or hoops on the floor. Students are asked to move throughout the area. On signal, they sit on a beanbag. All students with a red beanbag are in the same group, green beanbags make up another group, and so on.

Fall-in is an effective technique for moving a class into a single-file line or circle is to have students run randomly throughout the area until a signal is given. On signal, while continuing to move, students move to the perimeter of the area and fall in line behind someone until a circle is formed. This exercise can be done while students are running, jogging, skipping, or walking. As long as students continue to move behind another person, the circle will form automatically. The teacher or a student leader then leads the line into a desired formation or position.

Another method of moving a class into formation is to ask students to get in various formations without talking. They can offer visual signals but cannot ask someone verbally to move. Two groups can be used to compete against one another to see which forms the desired formation fastest. Teachers can hold up a desired shape drawn on a large card to signal the desired formation. Young students can learn to visualize various shapes through this technique.

Using Equipment

The first and most important guideline when using equipment such as balls, hoops, jump ropes, and the like is that every youngster must have a piece for personal use. When large equipment or apparatus is used, as many stations or groups as possible should be established. For a class of 25, six benches, mats, or jumping boxes should be the minimum amount of equipment available so students have only a short wait in line. One way to avoid standing and waiting for a turn is to use return activities. When using this approach, students are asked to perform a task or tasks on their return to the end of the line.

Instructors must demonstrate the proper method of using equipment. Youngsters should learn to get a piece of equipment and work with it in an acceptable fashion. Equipment should always be placed in the same (home) position when the class is called to attention. For example,

beanbags might be placed on the floor, balls placed between the feet, and jump ropes folded and placed behind the neck. Home positioning equipment avoids the problem of youngsters striking one another with the equipment, dropping it, or practicing activities when they should be listening. Positioning the equipment out of the student's hands is usually preferable.

Equipment should be distributed to students as rapidly as possible. When students wait for a piece of equipment, time is wasted. Often, teachers assign student leaders to get the equipment for a squad. This means that only the leaders are assigned a task, while other students sit and wait (and may become discipline problems). The easiest and fastest method is to have the leaders place the equipment around the perimeter of the area. On signal youngsters move to a piece of equipment and begin practicing immediately. The reverse procedure can be used for putting equipment away. This contrasts with the practice of placing the equipment in a bag and telling students to "run and get a ball." This approach often results in youngsters being knocked down and bruised. The child who first picks up a piece of equipment is entitled to retain possession of it. Others should respect this right and not attempt to take the piece away from the individual. This principle also holds for space possession. The child who first steps inside a hoop, on a mat, or into any designated space is entitled to occupy that space.

IMPROVING CLASS BEHAVIOR

The time out procedure is an equitable technique for dealing with classes on a day to day basis. An advantage of this approach is that it deals with children in a manner that is consistent with society. Rules are clearly posted and consequences are clear and easy to comprehend. It should be the approach of choice when problems are not severe.

Behavior games and contracts are used when effective management of an entire class is difficult. Peer pressure and contingencies are used to improve behavior. Behavior games and contracts require a greater amount of teacher monitoring and should be used only when necessary. As a general rule, use the time-out procedure for dealing with a few individuals and implement behavior games when a majority of the class is out of control.

Time-out

Teachers need to use a consistent approach for dealing with undesirable behavior that occurs randomly on an individual basis. The time-out approach moves youngsters out of the class setting and places them in a predesignated area when they misbehave. Being placed in the time-out area does not imply the student is a "bad person," but rather that a rule has not been followed. When placing students in time-out, teachers should communicate they are valued members of the class, but their misbehavior is unacceptable.

Being placed in time-out communicates to youngsters that they have disrupted the class and must be removed so that the rest of the class can participate as desired. Children can also use the time-out area as a "cooling-off" spot where they can move voluntarily if they become angry, embarrassed, or frustrated. If youngsters have been placed in the time-out area for fighting or arguing, they should be placed at opposite ends of the area so the behavior does not escalate. In addition, mandate that they stay in their half of the activity area until the next meeting of the class. This prevents contact between the two combatants and the possibility of continued animosity.

The behavior plan should be discussed and accepted by students, so they know exactly what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and understand what actions will be taken if they exhibit undesirable behavior. Desired behavior, as well as consequences for unacceptable behavior, should be posted in the teaching area. Examples of desirable behavior are listening when the teacher is instructing, keeping one's hands off others, and performing promptly the activities presented by the teacher. In most cases, the list of desired behaviors should number no more than three to five items. A larger number of behaviors confuses a class and makes it difficult to comprehend the focus of the management strategies.

A key concept to remember is that time-out does not serve as punishment if the youngster is reinforced. Time-out implies receiving no reinforcement. If class is a negative experience and the teacher does not reinforce students, taking them out of class will be a positive experience. For example, the student who is sent to the office may get to avoid school-work and visit with friends who come into the office. Notoriety can be achieved among peers for surviving the office experience and being able to tell others "I was not scared at all." Sitting on the side of the gymnasium and making faces at peers may be more reinforcing than participating in class activities. Remember! If students don't enjoy being in class, time-out does not work. A possible set of consequences for unacceptable behavior follows:

First misbehavior: The student is warned quietly on a personal basis to avoid embarrassment. This could be a peer or teacher warning. At times, students are not aware that they are bothering others and a gentle reminder by a peer or teacher will refocus the youngster.

Second misbehavior: The student is told to go to a predesignated time-out spot. This might be a chair in the corner of the activity area. The student must stay there until ready to reenter the activity and demonstrate the desired behavior. It is acceptable for the student to go to the area and immediately return to activity since the assumption is that they have agreed to terminate their misbehavior.

Third misbehavior: The student goes to time-out for the remainder of the period. If the misbehavior continues, the student will ultimately be serve time in an in-school suspension program. In-school suspension requires the student to leave his class of students, move into another room, and receive little, if any, reinforcement.

The foregoing steps assume that the teacher will communicate with the student about the misbehavior and the expected behavior. If these consequences are ineffective, the last alternative is to call the parents for a conference with the principal and teacher. Students and parents must understand that participating in educational endeavors is a privilege and that people who choose to disrupt society ultimately lose their privileges (e.g., incarceration in reform school, prison, etc.).

FITNESS ACTIVITIES FOR ALL YOUNGSTERS

Fitness Challenges

Too often youngsters are asked to perform a fitness load that is impossible for them. For example they may be asked to do 20 push-ups when both the teacher and students know they cannot do one push-up. The following fitness activities should be taught to children early in the year. Then, when push-ups or abdominal activities are assigned, they can select any activity they **want and can do**.

Youngsters must be given the opportunity to select activities they enjoy. The workload must be dictated by the student, not the teacher. No teacher knows how many repetitions of an activity a youngster can perform. Better that they allow each student to **do their best**. Fitness is not effective if it is something that is forced down a student's throat. Most will avoid activity in the future if they feel pressured and unsuccessful.

Stretching and flexibility activities should be alternated with aerobic activities to avoid excessively fatiguing youngsters. When youngsters are pushed too hard aerobically, they will express their fatigue in many different manners (i.e., complaining, quitting, misbehaving, or sitting out). Be aware of how far to push and when to ease up.

Arm-Shoulder Girdle Strength Activities

The following are examples of challenges that can be issued to help youngsters develop arm-shoulder girdle strength. They precede the push-up activities and should be practiced first. All the challenges encourage youngsters to support their body weight with the arms and shoulders.

1. Practice taking the weight completely on your hands.
2. In crab position, keep your feet in place and make your body go in a big circle. Do the same from the push-up position.
3. In crab position, let's see you go forward, backward, and to the side. Turn around, move very slowly, and so on.
4. Successively from standing, supine, and hands-knees positions: Swing one limb (arm or leg) at a time, in different directions and at different levels.
5. Combine two limb movements (arm-arm, leg-leg, or arm-leg combinations) in the same direction and in opposite directions. Vary the levels.
6. Swing the arms or legs back and forth and go into giant circles. In supine position, make giant circles with the feet.
7. In a bent-over position, swing the arms as if swimming. Try a backstroke or a breaststroke. What does a sidestroke look like?
8. Make the arms go like a windmill. Turn the arms in different directions. Accelerate and decelerate.
9. How else can you circle your arms?
10. Pretend that a swarm of bees is around your head. Brush them off and keep them away.

Push-Up Lead-up Activities

The push-up and crab positions are excellent for developing upper body strength. Allow students to rest with one knee on the floor in the up position rather than lying on the floor. Let students select a challenge they feel able to accomplish rather than being forced to fail trying to do push-ups. Many of the directives listed for the push-up position can also be done in the crab position. As youngsters develop strength, they make a controlled descent to the floor from the up position. The following are examples that can be done with one knee down (beginning) or in the regular push-up (more challenging) position.

1. Hold your body off the floor (i.e., push-up position).
2. Wave at a friend. Wave with the other arm. Shake a leg at someone. Do these challenges in the crab position.
3. Lift one foot high. Now the other foot.
4. Bounce both feet up and down. Move the feet out from each other while bouncing.
5. Inch the feet up to the hands and go back again. Inch the feet up to the hands and then inch the hands out to return to the push-up position.
6. Reach up with one hand and touch the other shoulder behind the back.
7. Lift both hands from the floor. Try clapping the hands.
8. Turn over so that the back is to the floor. Now complete the turn to push-up position.
9. Walk on your hands and feet. Try two hands and one foot. Walk in the crab position (tummy toward the ceiling).
10. With one knee on the ground, touch your nose to the floor between your hands. As you get stronger, move your head forward a little and touch your nose to the floor. (The farther the nose touches the floor in front of the hands, the greater the strength demands.)
11. Lower the body an inch at a time until the chest touches the floor. Return to the up position any way possible.
12. Pretend you are a tire going flat. Gradually lower yourself to the floor as if you were a tire going flat.

Abdominal Strength Activities

The basic position for exercising the abdominal muscles is supine on the floor or on a mat. Challenges should lift the upper and lower portions of the body from the floor, either singly or together. Since young children are top-heavy, (large head, small body), they find it difficult to perform most abdominal exercises. Therefore, begin early abdominal development with youngsters lying on the floor and lifting the head. Progress to a sitting position and gradually lowering (with head tucked) the upper body backwards to the floor.

1. Lift your head from the floor and look at your toes. Wink your right eye and wiggle your left foot. Reverse.
2. In a supine position, "wave" a leg at a friend. Use the other leg. Use both legs.
3. Lift your knees up slowly, an inch at a time.
4. Pick your heels up about 6 inches off the floor and swing them back and forth. Cross them and twist them.
5. Sit up any way you can and touch both sets of toes with your hands.

6. Sit up any possible way and touch your right toes with your left hand. Do it the other way.
7. In a sitting position, lean the upper body backward without falling. How long can you hold this position?
8. From a sitting position, lower the body slowly to the floor. Vary the positions of the arms (across the tummy, the chest, and above the head).
9. From a supine position, curl up by pulling up on your legs.
10. From a supine position, hold your shoulders off the floor.
11. From a supine position, lift your legs and head off the floor.

Flexibility Activities

Movements that include bending, stretching, swaying, twisting, reaching, and forming shapes help develop trunk strength. No particular continuity exists, except that a specified approach should move from simple to more complex. Vary the position the child is to take: standing, lying, kneeling, or sitting.

Bending

1. Bend in different ways.
2. Bend as many parts of the body as you can.
3. Make different shapes by bending two, three, and four parts of the body.
4. Bend the arms and knees in different ways and on different levels.
5. Try different ways of bending the fingers and wrist of one hand with the other. Use some resistance. (Explain resistance.) Add body bends.

Stretching

1. Keep one foot in place and stretch your arms in different directions; move with the free foot. Stretch at different levels.
2. Lie on the floor, stretch one leg different ways in space. Stretch one leg in one direction and the other in another direction.
3. Stretch as slowly as you can and then snap back to original position.
4. Stretch with different arm-leg combinations in several directions.
5. See how much space on the floor you can cover by stretching.
6. Combine bending and stretching movements.

Swaying and Twisting

1. Sway your body back and forth in different directions. Change the position of your arms.
2. Sway your body, bending over.
3. Sway your head from side to side.
4. Select a part of the body and twist it as far as you can in one direction and then in the opposite direction.
5. Twist your body at different levels.
6. Twist two or more parts of your body at the same time.
7. Twist one part of your body while untwisting another.
8. Twist your head to see as far back as you can.

9. Twist like a spring. Like a screwdriver.
10. Stand on one foot and twist your body. Untwist.
11. From a seated position, make different shapes by twisting.

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY PRACTICE SESSIONS

Regardless of the activity, an effective environment is characterized by a set of teaching behaviors that occur regularly. These behaviors do not describe a specific method or style and allow significant room for individual approaches to teaching. The focus is less on what the teacher does and more on what students are doing. For example, any style of teaching that produces high rates of player-engaged time and positive attitudes toward the sport is considered an effective learning environment. Regardless of teaching style, the environment is most effective when the following elements are present:

1. **Students are engaged in appropriate learning activities for a large percentage of practice time.** Effective teachers use practice time wisely. They plan carefully and insist on appropriate learning activities that deal with the subject matter. Students need time to learn; effective teachers assure that students use practice time to receive information and practice skills. Developmental skill sequences are matched to students' abilities and contribute to overall learning objectives.
2. **The learning atmosphere is success oriented, with a positive, caring climate.** Evidence shows that teachers who develop a supportive atmosphere foster learning and positive player attitudes toward sport. Appropriate social and organizational behavior needs to be supported by teachers. Students and teachers need to feel positive about working and learning in the physical education setting.
3. **Students are given clear objectives and receive high rates of information feedback from the teacher and the environment.** Students need to know what they are going to be held accountable for during practice. Arrange activities so students spend large amounts of time practicing to reach required team objectives. Teaching skills must have a clear-cut tie to the desired team goals. Positive and corrective feedback must be regularly offered. The environment is designed so students receive feedback on learning attempts even if the teacher is not available.
4. **Progress is monitored regularly and students are held accountable for reaching achievable goals.** Students are expected to practice and make progress toward team objectives. Students are able to assess and record their progress toward objectives. Students know exactly what is expected of them and how these expectations are tied to the accountability system. Rewards are available for small steps of progress toward larger goals.
5. **Low rates of management time and smooth transitions from one activity to another characterize the environment.** Effective teachers are efficient managers of students. Students move from one learning activity to another smoothly and without wasting time. Timesaving procedures are planned and implemented efficiently. Students spend little time waiting during instructional transitions. Equipment is organized to facilitate smooth transitions and to assure maximum time for practice.

6. **Students spend a limited amount of time waiting in line or in other unproductive behaviors.** Effective practices are characterized by high rates of time engaged in skill practice. This implies high rates of time spent practicing, drilling, and playing. The sporting experience should be activity based; students learn by practicing the activity, not waiting in line for an opportunity.
7. **Teachers are organized with high but realistic expectations for player achievement.** Structure teaching activities so they challenge but don't threaten students. Activities should not be too easy or too difficult. Students need success and challenge from learning activities. Expect students to learn, and hold them accountable for their progress.
8. **Teachers are enthusiastic about what they are doing and are actively involved in the teaching process.** Students need an enthusiastic model—someone who incorporates appropriate behaviors into his or her lifestyle with a positive and caring demeanor. Active involvement means active supervision, enthusiasm, and high interaction rates with students. These characteristics enhance learning regardless of the teaching style used; they are important for assuring player achievement and positive attitudes.

HELPING STUDENTS LEARN SKILLS

Know the Effect of Arousal

Arousal is the level of excitement stress produces. The level of arousal can have a positive or negative impact on motor performance. The key to proper arousal is to find the “just right” amount. Too little arousal and a player will be bored with learning. Too much arousal will fill a student with stress and anxiety resulting in a decrease in motor performance. The more complex a skill, the more excessive arousal may disrupt learning. On the other hand, if a skill is simple such as running, a greater amount of arousal can be tolerated without causing a reduction in skill performance. Optimally, students should be aroused to a level where they are excited and confident about participation.

Competition affects the arousal level of students. When competition is introduced in the early stages of skill learning, stress and anxiety reduce a child's ability to learn. On the other hand, if competition is introduced after a skill has been overlearned, it can improve the level of performance. Since most Farm level Little League students have not overlearned skills, teachers should avoid competitive situations when teaching skills. For example, assume the objective is to practice fielding and throwing. The teacher places students in squads and runs a relay requiring that they field the ball and throw to a target and return. The first squad finished is the winner. The result: Instead of concentrating on fielding and throwing form, students are more concerned about winning the relay. They are over aroused and determined to run as quickly as possible in order to win. Fielding is done poorly (if at all), the ball flies out of control, and the teacher is dismayed by the result. Unfortunately, competitiveness caused an excess of arousal among the young students who had not yet overlearned fielding and throwing skills.

Offer Meaningful Skill Feedback

Feedback is important in the teaching process because it impacts what is to be learned, what should be avoided, and how the performance can be modified. Skill feedback is any kind of information about a movement performance. There are two types of skill feedback, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic feedback is internal and inherent to the performance of the skill and travels through the senses, such as vision, hearing, touch, and smell. Extrinsic feedback is external and comes from an outside source, such as a teacher, a videotape, a stopwatch, and so on. Skill feedback should be encouraging (or constructive), given frequently, delivered publicly so all students benefit, and should be contingent on performance or (preferably) effort.

Knowledge of Results

Knowledge of results is extrinsic feedback given after a skill has been performed. Knowledge of results is a requisite for learning new motor skills. Knowledge of results is usually verbal information about performance, for example, telling students when they succeed or fail at a task. Knowledge of results provides information about an incorrect or unsuccessful performance. Learners need feedback about performance errors so they can adjust the practice trials that follow. This type of feedback need not be negative, but rather a statement of fact telling whether the skill performance resulted in a successful outcome. Most often, knowledge of results offers clear and immediate feedback to the student, i.e., they get or do not get a hit. Knowledge of results originates externally from a teacher, peer, or other source. Knowledge of results is not all that important for the beginning student because they need to learn proper technique without having to worry about the outcome. Knowledge of performance is discussed below and is very important for young students trying to learn new skills.

Knowledge of Performance

This feedback is similar to knowledge of results in that it is verbal, extrinsic in nature, and occurs after the performance. Knowledge of results focuses on the outcome of a skill, whereas knowledge of performance relates to the process of the skill performance. When using this type of feedback, refer to specific components of the learner's performance. For example, "I like the way you kept your eyes on the ball," or "That's the way to move toward the ball."

Knowledge of performance increases a player's level of motivation because it provides feedback about improvement. Many students become frustrated because they find it difficult to discern improvement. Feedback provides a lift and a rededication to continued practice. Knowledge of performance is a strong reinforcer, particularly when a teacher mentions something performed correctly. This feedback motivates students to repeat the same pattern, ultimately resulting in improved performance. The most important aspect of this feedback is that it provides information for future patterns of action.

Make performance feedback short, content-filled, and concise. It should tell the player exactly what was correct or incorrect (e.g., "That was excellent body rotation"). Concentrate on one key point to avoid confusing the player. Imagine a student who is told: "Step with the left foot, rotate the trunk, lead with the elbow, and snap the wrist on your next throw!" Such excessive feedback would confuse anyone trying to learn a new skill.

With young students, when choosing to reinforce knowledge of results or knowledge of performance, knowledge of performance is the correct choice. Knowledge of results focuses solely on the performance outcome and doesn't consider whether the skill was performed correctly. A student who manages to throw a ball into a basket might believe that the skill performance was performed correctly even though the technical points of the throw were performed incorrectly. The goal of a quality youth sports program is to teach skills correctly, with less emphasis placed on the outcome of the skill performance. In contrast, strong emphasis is placed on product (performance) rather than process (technique) when students compete at an elite level.

A final point about knowledge of performance: Allow time for students to internalize the feedback. Often, teachers tell a student something and at the same time ask them to "try it again." It is possible that the same mistake will be repeated because the student did not have time to concentrate on the feedback. Offer knowledge of performance feedback and move to another student. Follow-up on your feedback at a later time. This allows the student a chance to relax, internalize the feedback, and modify future practice attempts.

Design Effective Practice Sessions

Practice is a key part of learning motor skills. It is not enough that students receive the opportunity to practice; they must practice with emphasis on quality of movement (practicing correctly). This section explains how to design practice sessions that optimize motor skill learning.

Focus Practice on Process

The emphasis of practice often goes in two, sometimes conflicting, directions – product or process. Product-, or performance-based practice has the teacher asking students to do the best they can and then reinforcing those who reach the desired outcome (product). Process-based practice, however, has the teacher encouraging students to learn the skill correctly without concern for the outcome. This leads to a product-process conflict. Students who think the teacher is interested in the product will be unwilling to concentrate on proper technique. Focus practice on correctly learning a skill by placing emphasis on technique and encouraging experimentation. Emphasis on the outcome decreases a player's willingness to take risks and learn new ways of performing a skill.

A way to minimize this conflict is to make sure students know the focus of the practice session. In most cases, it is best for young students to focus on technique since they are learning new motor patterns. Excessive pressure to perform without mistakes will stifle some students' willingness to try (especially less gifted students). If it is necessary to evaluate a skill outcome, the teacher should tell students why the outcome is important and that "we will practice doing our best today."

Use Mental Practice Techniques

Mental practice involves practicing a motor skill in a quiet, relaxed environment. The experience involves thinking about the activity and its related sounds, color, and other sensations. Students visualize themselves doing the activity successfully and at regular speed.

Images of failure should be avoided. Mental practice stimulates students to think about and review the activity they are to perform. Some experience or familiarity with the motor task is requisite before the performer can derive value from mental practice. Mental practice is used in combination with regular practice, not in place of it. Before performing the task, prompt students to mentally review the critical factors and sequencing of the act.

Determine the Length and Distribution of Practice Sessions

Short practice sessions usually produce more efficient learning than do longer sessions. This is due to both physical and mental fatigue (boredom). The challenge is to try to offer as many repetitions as possible within short practice sessions. Use varied approaches, challenges, and activities to develop the same skill in order to maintain motivational levels. For example, using many different types of drills helps maintain motivation but still focuses on desired sport skills.

Another way to determine the length of practice sessions is to examine the tasks being practiced. If a skill causes physical fatigue, demands intense concentration, or has the potential to become tedious, practice sessions should be short and frequent, with an adequate rest pause between intervals. Stop practice when students become bored or tired and play a game until they regain their enthusiasm to learn.

Practice sessions that are spread out over many days are usually more effective than sessions crowded into a short time span. The combination of practice and review is effective for students because activities can be taught in a short unit and practiced in review sessions throughout the year. In the initial stages of skill learning, it is particularly important that practice sessions be distributed in this way. Later, when success in skill performance increases motivational levels, individual practice sessions can be lengthened.

Use Random Practice Techniques

There are two ways to organize the presentation of activities to be taught. The first is blocked practice, where all the trials of one task are completed before moving on to the next task. Since blocked practice is effective during the first stages of skill practice, learners find rapid improvement because they are practicing the same skill over and over. As a result, learners are often motivated to continue practicing. A drawback to blocked practice is that it makes learners believe they are more skilled than they actually are. When the skill is applied in a natural setting, performance level lowers, causing some students to feel discouraged.

The other method is random practice, where the order of multiple task presentations is mixed and no task is practiced twice in succession. Research showed that random practice was the most effective approach to use when learning skills. Blocked practice gave the best results during the acquisition phase of skill learning (this implies young students); however, students who learned a skill using random practice demonstrated a much higher level of retention.

The reason random practice results in better retention is related to the process of mentally generating solutions. When the same task is practiced over and over, students not only become bored, but also don't think about how to solve the problem. Since the same motor program is used over and over to complete the task, little effort or thinking is required. In contrast, students

using random practice forget the motor program used and have to consciously re-create the solution to be successful. Because students become bored quickly when doing the same task over and over, random practice helps minimize this side effect.

Offer Variable Practice Experiences

Motor tasks are usually grouped into classes of tasks. For example, throwing is a collection of a class of movements. Throwing a ball in a sport can be performed in many different ways; for example, at different speeds, different trajectories, and varying distances. Even though throwing tasks are all different, the variations have fundamental similarities. Movements in a class usually involve the same body parts and have similar rhythm but can be performed with many variations. These differences create the need for variable practice in a variable setting.

Practice sessions should include a variety of skills in a movement class with a variety of situations and parameters in which the skill is performed. If a skill to be learned involves one fixed way of performing it (a “closed” skill), such as placekicking a football or striking a ball off a batting tee, variability is much less important. However, most skills are “open,” and responses are somewhat unpredictable, which makes variability in practice the usual mode of operation (catching or batting a ball moving at different speeds and from different angles). Motor skills should be practiced under a variety of conditions so students can respond to a wide variety of novel situation.

TENNIS FOR YOUNGSTERS WITH DISABILITIES

Inclusion

Inclusion is part of a much larger picture than just being mainstreamed in the regular physical education class. The larger picture demands that youngsters be taught to use their abilities to become active members of the school and community. Inclusion demands that the school and regular classes get ready to include students with disabilities. Too often, the youngster with a disability has to adapt to the class and school. Adaptations need to be made to teaching materials, equipment used, and expectations so youngsters can meaningfully achieve individual and academic goals. Through inclusive education, children with disabilities can mature into adults who are fully participating members of society. Meeting their needs helps them achieve academic and physical goals and enhances their overall quality of life. Inclusive education teaches all children to function together regardless of whom or what they are. The focus is on valuing diversity, viewing the ability of others to contribute, and learning to become one with others regardless of differences.

Guidelines for Successful Inclusion

The concern is not whether to plan for inclusion, but how to do it effectively. Regardless of the setting, it is always necessary to teach a number of children with diverse impairments. Current learning strategies may not be appropriate for children with disabilities. Attitudinal

change by the teacher is important—accept children as full-fledged participants and assume the responsibility to educate all students.

An important consideration when planning the IEP is whether the child is ready for inclusion. Some children with disabilities have developmental lags that can limit successful integration into normal classes. Both the class and the youngster with a disability must adapt. When children are deemed ready for placement, consultation between the physical education teacher and the special education supervisor is of prime importance. In a setting where emotions and feelings can run high, be sure that regular communication and planning occur. The reception and acceptance of the special child must not be left to chance. A scheduled plan should be instituted before the youngster is mainstreamed. Special and physical education specialists should discuss the needs of youngsters and develop realistic expected outcomes. Early in the inclusion process, the special education teacher may have to participate in physical education classes to ensure a smooth transition. Emphasize what children can do rather than what they cannot do.

All students need opportunities to make appropriate progress. The educational needs of children with disabilities can be met without jeopardizing the progress of other students. Help all students understand problems related to having a disability. Encourage students to understand, accept, and live comfortably with persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities are functional and worthwhile individuals who have innate abilities and can make significant contributions to society. The concepts of understanding and appreciating individual differences merit positive development and include three aspects:

1. Recognize the similarities among all people: their hopes, rights, aspirations, and goals.
2. Understand human differences and focus on the concept that all people have some type of disability. For some, disabilities are of such nature and severity that they interfere with normal living.
3. Explore ways to deal with individuals who differ and stress the acceptance of all children as worthwhile individuals. People with disabilities deserve consideration and understanding based on empathy, not sympathy.

Inclusion should allow children to make commendable educational progress, to achieve in those areas outlined in the IEP, to learn to accept limitations, to observe and model appropriate behavior, to become more socially accepted by others, and in general to become a part of the real world. Guidelines for successful integration of children with disabilities into physical education follow.

1. Beyond the regular program of activities, meet target goals as specified in the IEP. This involves resources beyond the physical education class, including special work and homework.
2. Build ego strength; stress abilities. Eliminate established practices that unwittingly contribute to embarrassment and failure.
3. Foster peer acceptance, which begins when the teacher accepts the child as a functioning, participating member of the class.

4. Concentrate on the child's physical education needs and not on the disability. Give strong attention to fundamental skills and physical fitness qualities.
5. Provide continual monitoring and assess periodically the child's target goals. Anecdotal and periodic recordkeeping are implicit in this guideline.
6. Be constantly aware of the child's feelings and anxiety concerning progress and integration. Provide positive feedback as a basic practice.
7. Modify the regular program to meet the unique capacities, physical needs, and social needs of youngsters with disabilities.
8. Provide individual assistance and keep youngsters active. Peer or paraprofessional help may be needed.
9. Consult regularly with the special education consultant.
10. Give consideration to more individualization within the program so youngsters with disabilities are smoothly integrated. Individual attention is based on the target goals of the IEP.

Modifying Activities for Inclusion

Inclusion requires modifying activities to increase the opportunity for success. Children with disabilities are not the only students who need additional consideration; most youngsters benefit from modifications. Rules can be changed for everyone so that all youngsters have a chance to contribute to group success. When children learn to accept that everyone has a right to participate, physical education contributes to the development of quality citizens.

Be aware of situations that devalue a child socially. Never use the degrading method of having captains choose from a group of waiting children. Elimination games should be changed so that points are scored instead of players being eliminated. (This is an important consideration for all youngsters.) Determine the most desirable involvement for children with disabilities by analyzing participants' roles in game and sport activities (Figure 7.4). Assign a role or position that will make the experience as natural or normal as possible.

Offer a variety of individual and dual activities. Youngsters with disabilities may want to build confidence in their skills before they participate with others. Individual activities give children more practice time without the pressure of failing in front of peers. Try to arrange the environment so children with disabilities are not set apart from able classmates.

Overprotectiveness benefits no one and prevents the special student from experiencing challenge and personal accomplishment. Avoid the tendency to underestimate abilities of students. The following sections offer ideas for modifying activities to facilitate integration of youngsters with disabilities.

Modify Tennis Activities to Increase the Opportunity for Success

1. *Modify the tempo of the game.* Stop the game regularly for substitution. Auto-substitution is an excellent method for allowing students to determine when they are fatigued. They ask a predetermined substitute to take their place.
2. *Reduce the weight and/or modify the size of the projectile.* A lighter object moves more slowly and inflicts less damage on impact. A larger object is easier to track visually and

to catch. A beanbag will not roll when missed. A beachball or balloon floats and allows more time for reaction. Scarves can be used for practicing the service toss.

3. *Reduce the distance that a ball must be thrown or served.* Options are to reduce the dimensions of the playing area or add more players to the game. In serving, others can help make the serve playable. For example, in tennis, other teammates can bat the serve over the net.
4. *In games that are played to a certain number of points, reduce the number required for a win.* For example, play volleyball games to 7 or 11, depending on the skill and intensity of the players.
5. *Modify striking implements by shortening and reducing their weight.* Rackets are much easier to control when they are shortened. Softball bats are easier to control when the player “chokes up” or selects a lighter bat.
6. *Play the games in a different position.* Some games may be played in a sitting or lying position, which is easier and less demanding than standing or running.
7. *Provide matching or substitution.* Match another child on borrowed crutches with a child on braces. Two players can be combined to play one position. A student in a desk chair with wheels can be matched against a child in a wheelchair.
8. *Youngsters can substitute skills for each other.* For example, a child may be able to serve an object but may lack the mobility to return it.
9. *When learning to strike the ball, begin with one that is held stationary.* The use of a batting tee or tennis ball fastened to a string offers children the opportunity for success. In addition, a larger racket can be used and the youngster can choke up on the grip.
10. *Increase the size of the goals or targets such as hoops or carpet squares.* Another alternative is to offer points for getting near a goal. Since scoring is self-motivating, modification should occur until success is ensured.