Becoming an Effective Physical Educator

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Teachers in today's schools must assume many roles. Kounin (1970) defined three aspects of a teacher's role in relationship with students as those of instructor, manager, and person (Grossman, 1990). Within each of these roles, the physical educator can learn and practice specific skills to increase effectiveness in the classroom (Siedentop, 1991).

Current times bring increasingly tighter budgets, and accompanying administrative and public emphasis upon accountability. Many physical educators are being required to teach more (more students, more content) with less (less class time, less space, less equipment). To maintain their effectiveness, teachers must re-examine their procedures and teaching styles to determine if they are appropriately adapting to these constantly changing demands. Are they using time and energy efficiently? Are they focusing on the needs of students, or do personal needs control their teaching? Self-study and comparison with the skills used by expert teachers can lead to personal improvement of teaching and an accompanying reduction of stress and burn-out (Siedentop, 1991).

Self-assessment using Kounin's model (instructor, manager, and person) can provide valuable insight into personal effectiveness. Teachers may be functioning effectively as instructors, and simultaneously, less effectively in personal relationships with students. Management and discipline problems may be the source of greatest stress, preventing the instructor from communicating content effectively. A comparison of the skills used by expert teachers, broken into components using Kounin's model, will assist physical educators in their self-improvement efforts. A review of critical skills, using the checklists found in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 will enable physical educators to assess personal effectiveness, and discern areas needing improvement.

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Teacher as Instructor

Research has determined effective instructors plan each lesson thoroughly, and hold students accountable for learning. Physical educators must provide students with information that is optimally challenging, motivating, and fun. Effective planning includes attending to student pacing, interests, and measurable behavioral outcomes. Students must be held accountable for practice and activity time. Recognizing that students enter the class with varied skill levels and progress at varied rates, effective teachers provide a variety of tasks during independent practice times, thereby maintaining student interest. Students needing help are afforded more practice opportunities through techniques such as peer teaching, grouping according to skill, or self-paced time on tasks at stations or learning centers. Teacher feedback is given with value content and praise for improvement or close approximation. Students are not forced into competitive games with highly skilled children, and are not embarrassed or singled out, but are afforded opportunities to respond within a safe and positive environment. Plans which reflect these options are often organized around a theme, rather than a sport (Siedentop, 1991), and the atmosphere of the classroom, to the untrained eye, resembles a carnival or three ring circus. Activities are planned for maximal use of all available equipment, creatively set up by the

teacher, or available to the students to invent new ways to solve movement themes.

Expert instructors communicate new information to students using multiple examples and styles of teaching which match the learning styles of students. Effective instructors tailor the level of information to the readiness (physical, emotional, and cognitive) of students. Effective instructors include careful task analysis in their planning, and check for pre-requisite skills (including physical strength and fitness) prior to requiring students to attempt new challenges or taking risks.

In quality teacher education programs, pre-service teachers are taught a variety of techniques and study research findings about the merits of each style of teaching. Yet, once on the job, many teachers are found to discard innovative teaching and fall into a "throw out the ball" mode. A review and sharing of lesson plans and teaching strategies with colleagues can help physical educators avoid ruts and acquire new ideas. Dusting off the books from college and heading to a library periodically also renews the stale teacher. Comparing lessons plans with the checklist in Figure 1 can aid in the process of evaluating instructor skills.

Self-Quiz: Instructor Skills

1. Objectives were stated in behavioral terms.
2. Multiple demonstration/modeling was provided.
3. Variety of activities planned for students with varied skill levels.
4. Guided & independent practice arranged for maximum opportunities to respond and teacher feedback.
5. Evaluation matched/measured objectives.
6. Students kept on-task.
7. Students optimally challenged by the activities.
8. Lesson was fun.
9. Students were given feedback and praise.
10. Students had choices in activities.
11. Equipment was used to the fullest extent possible.
12. New ideas were incorporated into lessons taught previously.

Figure 1. Checklist for Becoming an Effective Instructor.

Physical Education Teacher as Manager

While most pre-service teachers have been taught skills enabling them to be effective instructors, many new and experienced teachers quickly become stale due to the amount of class time spent directing students to sit and listen, stop talking, follow directions, and cease behaviors which get in the way of effective delivery of the well-planned, picture perfect lesson. The teacher's role as disciplinarian may be one of the least desirable and most uncomfortable for pre-service, first-year and veteran teachers. This is substantiated by reports that stress in teaching is more often associated with managerial and behavioral problems than any other factors (Siedentop, 1991). Research shows that about one third of class time in physical education is devoted to management and transition time, one third to instructing students, and the last third in monitoring and supervising student practice (Luke, 1989; McLeish, 1985; Pierson, 1980; Siedentop, 1991). Furthermore, researchers on student behaviors in physical education classes have found that students spend most of their time waiting for the next portion of class to begin, performing management activities (such as setting up or handling equipment), and receiving information from teachers (Anderson, 1978; Pierson, 1980; Metzler, 1979; Siedentop, 1991). When academic learning time is reported, an average class of students gets no more than 10 - 20 percent of class time engaged in functional activity (Metzler, 1989). In summary, it appears that most physical educators are not effectively managing students and their behaviors to create an optimal learning environment.

The good news, however, is that management skills can be learned, and teachers can improve their effectiveness through practice and attention to the class environment (Siedentop, 1991). There is a growing body of classroom management literature to assist the pre-service or inservice physical education teacher in effective classroom management (Canter, 1976; Chernow & Chernow, 1981; Gordon, 1974; Grossman, 1990; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). A review

of this literature defines classroom management skills which can be used by the physical education teacher to increase effectiveness.

Managing the Environment

Effective managers do more than blow a whistle and give out orders. They must be attuned to all aspects of the environment, ensuring that the needs of the students are met. Maslow (1970) established a hierarchy of human needs which, if translated into educational focus, points out that students cannot attend to higher ordered functions such as self-esteem, sense of purpose or self-actualization, unless basic needs of physiological satisfaction, safety, or acceptance are first met (Grossman, 1990). For physical education teachers, this translates into the need for good managers to attend to the physiological needs of students before trying to teach them new psychomotor skills. For example, the effective physical educator will ensure the environment allows: 1) students who are thirsty opportunities to get drinks; 2) students who are afraid of risky skills to be challenged at a level where they feel safe; or 3) obese children who physically cannot run safely to work at a pace which meets their personal needs. Teachers attuned to student needs will reduce exercise loads when the temperature is too hot or cold, and allow students opportunities to use restrooms without public embarrassment.

While these needs take time away from class, effective managers recognize the first step to effective teaching is creating a positive, warm and accepting learning environment, ensuring the needs of students are met (Grossman, 1990). To avoid use of class time, procedures should be established and posted which afford minimal disruptions for the teacher and class, but recognize the basic human needs of students. The class environment self-quiz will provide a quick assessment of the conditions under which teachers and students are required to function (Figure 2). Teachers who do not provide for the basic needs of students will find students less motivated and unable to focus on task relevant cues.

Self Quiz: Classroom Environment

1. Students have access to water as needed.
2. Students are monitored for signs of overheating.
3. Students who express fear are provided alternative tasks.
4. Students are positioned with backs to the sun.
5. Passes are available for restrooms.
6. Equipment is padded and checked for safety.

Figure 2. Self-quiz on classroom environment.

Effective Managers Are in Charge

Research has identified effective classroom managers as possessing certain management styles. Teachers seen as being "in charge" have fewer behavior problems than those whom students perceived as not being "in charge" (Grossman, 1990). "In charge" teachers are described as authoritative, but not authoritarian (Goss & Ingersoll, 1981). Authoritative teachers are leaders who know how to intervene when necessary, but who allow students input into the decision-making process. Firm control is paired with warmth and genuine concern for the well-being of students. Teachers in charge provide structure which is perceived as stabilizing and secure. Limits of acceptable behavior are specified, but they are fair and reasonable (Goss & Ingersoll, 1981).

Gnagey (1981) contrasts authoritative and authoritarian styles managers. Authoritarian teachers are only concerned with maintaining order (Gnagey, 1981). The authoritarian often labels students, stereotyping them as to appearance, behavior, and socioeconomic status. Such teachers perceive students as irresponsible, undisciplined people who can only be controlled through extrinsic punishment. Authoritarians have difficulty establishing personal relationships with students and expect rules to be followed without question.

Teachers wishing to learn authoritative styles of management must first understand how students perceive rules and the authority figures who carry them out. Kohlberg (1984) theorized that individuals pass through various stages of

moral development. The first stage, extrinsic, which occurs during preschool and primary years, requires external control so that the children can learn right from wrong and can be protected from harmful situations. Their reasoning powers are not developed, and they need very strict guidance for proper behavior. For example, a preschooler must be prevented from riding a bike into the street, because she/he doesn't realize the danger of cars and doesn't connect the fact that falling in front of one is deadly. Physical educators working with young children must be direct and specific in behavioral control, stating exactly what behaviors are or are not acceptable. The behaviors must be spelled out, and when children follow rules, extrinsic rewards best reinforce correct behavior.

By the ages of 7-11 years, children move into the second stage, "natural consequences" or cooperative, reciprocal, or constructive stage (Kohlberg, 1984). Students at this stage are now able to understand why rules are necessary (provided they were managed consistently during the first stage) because they have learned that 1) proper behavior brings praise, safety, and acceptance; and 2) improper behavior results in punishment, bad feelings, or bodily injury. Students understand that rules are necessary, but may be quick to question rules which seem unfair or arbitrary. A second grader riding his bike into the street knows the dangers and risks, and will judge that he/she is capable of avoiding the cars and injury. The rule of not riding in the street seems unfair for one who has seen older youth and adults ride safely. The child in this stage will often be found asking "Why?" in response to directives. Effective teachers take time to explain the rules, discuss them, and change rules which are unjustified. Educators who rely on power to control students who have progressed beyond moral realism may find that their power techniques spark outright rebellion in students who want to be treated more maturely (Grossman, 1990). Students perceive such teachers as unfair, and don't like them.

The third stage, "intrinsic consequences", begins about junior high school. Young people entering this stage begin to behave appropriately because it's the right or good thing to do for the group as a whole. Educators who recognize this stage place greater emphasis on rational discussion, appeals to social responsibility, and reality therapy (Glasser, 1970). Youth must learn to function in a democratic society, and must be given the opportunity to learn how to exercise self-control for the society.

Physical educators have enlisted the support of school districts for their programs based upon the benefits of the leadership and social development skills inherent in the sports setting. Society and businesses have been quick to recognize the leadership skills taught in sports as they hire athletes. Allowing students to assume leadership roles means teachers must be able to give up some personal control, and take a closer look at his/her own needs, values, and life rules. This is the point where many teachers have difficulty. This is the time when **authoritarians** experience conflict in the teacher-as-manager role. The physical educator who is possessed by a need to maintain absolute control will run head on into brick walls of students who have progressed to the intrinsic stage. Students will weigh the class climate against their personal values and needs. When given a choice to take or opt out of physical education in high school, stage three students will choose the environment which allows them growth. The authoritarian manager is in conflict with personal moral development.

Growth requires opportunities to choose, to take personal risks, even to fail. Students who submit to external control are bound at either stage 1 or 2. While they are easy to manage or control in the class, they are not learning to make choices for themselves. Dogmatic teaching styles provide order, but not growth. The question of import becomes, "What type of citizens are we creating through the often observed styles of teaching modeled in many high school physical education programs?" It may be true that so-called "well-disciplined" individuals mind better, create fewer problems for teachers, and, in sports, even win more games. But it may also be true that these individuals never learn

self-control, and when finally are away from school control, become lost, have difficulty making the right choices on their own, and turn to drugs, violence, or other problems experienced by individuals lacking self-control. Is this one of the inherent goals of teaching physical education?

Authoritative (effective) teachers model behaviors of leadership, not dictatorship. They encourage student input into decision-making or problem solving situations. They exercise firm control, but with genuine warmth and concern for the growth and future development of their students. This control is perceived as stabilizing, and creates trust and security—thus meeting the basic needs specified in Maslow's emotional development schema.

Effective managers do set and enforce limits—but the limits have usually been the result of group or team decisions, and are judged by the students to be fair and reasonable (Goss & Ingersoll, 1981; Grossman, 1990). This type of manager is self-assured, because the focus is on the good of the group, and not around personal self-confidence or esteem issues. This type of manager doesn't live in fear of losing control. Students follow by choice, and not out of fear. Students don't rebel, but rather consider responsibly what behaviors will lead to the success of the class, and choose to behave accordingly. They have been allowed to manage their own behaviors, and have developed to stage three intrinsic levels.

Figure 3 provides questions regarding teacher leadership style. Authoritative teachers and managers will answer these questions in the affirmative.

TEACHER COMFORT WITH STUDENT INPUT

1. Do students help establish class rules?
2. Are students allowed to set consequences for infractions of rules/routines?
3. Do students have input into what games are played?
4. Do students have input into school curricular decisions?
5. Can students be trusted to make responsible choices?
6. Could the teacher's decision have been wrong?
7. Do students think classroom punishment is fair?
8. Would you want to be a student in your classroom?

Figure 3. Teacher comfort with student input.

Teacher as Person

Early research in teacher effectiveness created confusion based upon myths that successful teachers were "born" not made (Grossman, 1990). Evidence from quantitative studies on teacher, student, and outcome variables refutes this myth (Siedentop, 1991). The skills necessary for personal interaction with students can also be learned. The third aspect of teacher roles with students is defined by Kounin (1970) as that of "person".

Research has shown that students who like their teachers learn more and behave better than students who don't (Kounin, 1970; Anderson, et al. 1979). Students are more likely to have positive feelings toward teachers who listen and encourage them to express themselves; are genuine, honest, and sincere; are friendly; communicate understanding, acceptance, and empathy; and maintain a sense of humor (Gnagey, 1981; Aspy, 1977; Glasser, 1969; Weber, 1983; Wolfgang, 1986).

Teachers who are good managers know how to actively listen—interacting with the student, and providing the student with feedback of the teacher's understanding (Gordon, 1974). Active listening involves encouraging students to communicate what is troubling them, checking with them to be certain that the understanding is accurate, and communicating through paraphrasing that the teacher understands. Active listeners respond in a genuine, honest fashion. They don't judge, but accept the students' feelings as legitimate. Chernow & Chernow (1981) suggest that teachers may often not be genuine because they feel uncomfortable about expressing their true feelings to the students, especially negative emotions. The teacher-person has a right and a need to express feelings without guilt about natural feelings, so long as this is done in a manner that does not harm the students.

Being genuine is the first step to open communication and to allowing the student to recog-

nize that the teacher is a person, as well as manager and instructor. Teachers should take the time to visit with students in the halls and share a bit of their personal sides, such as what they enjoy doing in free time. Being friendly implies showing an interest in the students, having lunch with them, attending activities, sharing values and discussing opinions (Chernow & Chernow, 1981).

The teacher must be a friend with strength, who commands respect and trust, and who maintains the role of person in charge. Personal self-esteem must not be based upon acceptance and approval of the students. Maslow (1970) defines this type of person as a fully functioning, self-actualizing individual.

Teachers who are accepting treat all students with respect regardless of the way they behave or their achievement level. They accept and value the students as individuals . . . in fact learn from the students. They may reject the inappropriate behaviors, but separate behaviors from judgmental labeling of students. Empathic person-teachers try to understand the problem from the student point of view. They often even smile in remembrance from what it was like to be at "that" age and stage in life, and communicate that understanding to the student. Figure 4 provides a check of "person" skills. Periodically assessing interpersonal and communication styles will enable physical educators to maintain self-growth, and greater enjoyment of students in the classroom and school environment.

SELF QUIZ #4: EFFECTIVE TEACHER-PERSON SKILLS

1. Begin each new class with a smile.
2. Demonstrate genuine interest in student activities.
3. Attempt to perceive situation from student point of view. (Demonstrate empathy.)
4. Reveal personal feelings to students.
5. Acknowledge feelings of students and their right to those feelings.
6. Attend student activities without being required to do so.
7. Avoid labeling students.
8. Avoid judging students.
9. Look for the individuality and strength of each student.
10. Act friendly toward all students.
11. Encourage students to honestly express their thoughts and feelings.
12. Check out perceptions through active listening.

Figure 4. Effective teacher-person skills.

Summary

Experience often helps teachers acquire an understanding of the roles of instructor, a manager, and a person. Learning by trial and error, or through lessons experienced while on the job is a painful and tedious way to grow. Recognition that each role is not automatically assumed or learned, and that effective teaching is achieved by practicing skills, is tantamount to self-improvement. Continual self-evaluation will assist teachers, regardless of experience level, become more effective teachers. Classes in "Instructional Effectiveness" and "Classroom Management" have been added to the graduate and undergraduate curricula at most universities. The reference list attached also provides sources for self-study. Regardless of the method chosen to increase personal understanding of effective teaching skills, **professional physical educators owe it to their students to become the best teachers possible.** Such is the demand of the public cries for accountability. Such is the demand of becoming an effective physical educator.

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