

Exercise Programs for Teens

Ideas for Academy Physical Education Classes

Many of our teens are becoming "couch potatoes" long before their time.

By Lois Ortmann

M

odern life is both sedentary and stressful. With more and more activities and responsibilities being pressed upon us, we have less time to spend in physical activity. We relax from our desk-bound workday by watching TV or going out to eat. We rarely have to walk more than a few feet from our cars to the front door of the school or shopping center, and our "spare time" is spent grading papers and making lesson plans. And weekends? Hearty potluck dinners and Sabbath naps.

But many people have "seen the light" recently, having discovered the benefits of daily exercise to both physical and mental health. A variety of strenuous activities such as racquetball, jogging, and tennis have become popular. Last year some seven million Americans spent \$5 billion on membership fees for health clubs and \$738 million on exercise equipment for their homes.

A variety of activities can be included in the physical education curriculum.

Our challenge, as educators, is implanting in our students positive attitudes toward fitness so that they will adopt a life-style that includes vigorous physical exercise. This is no small task. The average teenager spends many hours facing the TV and computer terminal, or playing video games, rather than participating in sports, fitness, or recreational activities. Many of our teens are becoming

"couch potatoes" long before their time. We must show them how physical fitness and recreational activities can improve the quality of their lives. While physical education should teach the value of lifelong fitness, such classes also need to be fun, invigorating, and pertinent to young people's lives *now*.

Because of the emphasis Ellen White placed upon the physical aspect of education, Adventist schools were ahead of their time in requiring four years of physical education for all students in grades 9 to 12. Unfortunately, we seem to have lost sight of the need to balance the physical, mental, and spiritual in education.

Physical education has suffered from a number of setbacks, including an increased emphasis on academics, budget cuts, scheduling difficulties, lack of adequate facilities, and student work schedules. Because of enrollment declines, schools often have to cut back on staff. Usually this means that subjects considered less essential are eliminated, or are assigned to uncertified teachers. PE classes taught by untrained personnel often become little more than supervised play periods.

Budget cuts often force teachers to assume additional duties, with the physical education teacher being assigned to a variety of teaching and nonteaching activities that cut into the time needed to organize and coach intramurals and other extracurricular activities.

Because of these and other reasons, many academies require only two or three years of physical education for graduation. This is most unfortunate. Although many students still take physical education all four years, usually it is the student who desperately needs the conditioning who chooses not to take it if it is not required. To ensure fitness for every student, physical education should be taught on a daily basis in all of our schools.

How can we bolster the physical education program in our academies? We need to attack the problem from many directions, seeking innovative solutions to individual situations. Teachers and administrators can study ideas that have worked for other academies, and brainstorm together to develop new techniques

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and approaches.

Finding Creative Solutions

The North American Division and local conference curriculum guides for physical education offer specific recommendations as well as general guidelines for organizing and operating a well-rounded program. However, teachers will need to make some adjustments to meet the special needs of their schools and students. For example, the number of days per week that physical education is scheduled and the length of each class period will affect the way the program is organized.

If the physical education program will be staffed by an uncertified teacher, administrators should sponsor that person's attendance at workshops dealing with physical education. This will give the teacher some ideas for programs, curriculum, teaching methods, and organization. Even experienced physical educators can benefit from the fresh insights, new activities, sports, and games described at such workshops, in addition to the reports on recent research and methods in the teaching field.

One helpful workshop is the Cal

Poly Workshop for Physical Education and Coaching, conducted each summer on the San Luis Obispo, California, campus. One- and two-week programs are offered, including workshops that emphasize teaching methods and organization as well as others specializing in the teaching and coaching of specific sports and games.

Another source of information is the many reports and demonstrations provided at national, state, and local conventions of the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. The *AAPHERD Journal* also offers teaching ideas and reports to keep teachers up to date on new developments. Even a one-day visit to a nearby school with a good program can offer many ideas that can be used or adapted.

Physical education teachers need to know more than how to teach calisthenics and coach intramurals. They should be trained in first aid, CPR, sports medicine, injury prevention, supervision (of classes, sports, and intramurals), and the legal implications of sports and physical education. Keeping abreast of all these areas can be difficult. Continuing education programs can supply some information. The American Red Cross offers classes in first aid and CPR, as well as special courses like First Aid for Coaches.

For physical education classes to be accepted as having equal value in the curriculum with math, science, English and Bible, their content needs to have value to the students and measurable standards for grading purposes. Rather than just "throwing out the ball" and letting the students play, teachers need to plan activities so that both physical and mental learning takes place in physical education classes. When they study a sport or game, students can learn about its history, rules, and strategies, as well as the skills required to play successfully. This information can be distributed to the students as handouts or activity packets, or students can be asked to research certain aspects of the subject.

Evaluating Student Progress

Skill development as well as tests and quizzes should cover the above areas. Various methods can be used

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When mediation and discussion break down, or no game rule addresses the problem, the parties involved can be asked to play the Rock-Paper-Scissors game. In this game, a rock is signified by the closed fist; the paper by an open hand; and scissors by the showing of two fingers. The students face each other and place one hand behind their backs. On the count of three, both will show either rock, paper, or scissors. The winner is determined as follows:

- (1) Rock crushes scissors—Rock wins
- (2) Paper covers rock—Paper wins
- (3) Scissors cuts paper—Scissors wins

Both students must agree to abide by the outcome, then go back to the task or game they were working on before the problem arose. In this way students learn that it is all right to disagree, but they also learn how to resolve disagreements.

Keep It Moving

Whenever possible avoid making children wait in line. For example, if you are teaching soccer, and don't have a ball for each pair of students, use any kind of large or small ball available, and keep everyone moving. Use smaller balls for the more skilled players, larger balls for the less skilled.

Do not insist that everyone achieve the same skill level. Let the children choose to use a batting tee or have another person pitch the ball to them. Use the Slant Rope Theory. Place a rope, or mark a line, at a slant from a given straight line marked on the field. When the students practice throwing, catching, or kicking skills, have them stand facing a partner anywhere along the slanted line. As the students' skills improve, have them progress along the slant farther from their partner until the skill is mastered.

Individualizing Instruction

Do not require everyone to run a certain distance for endurance; rather, require a certain time span. Start with one minute, and each week increase the time by a minute, up to 12 minutes. This method allows for various fitness levels. Jumping rope, swimming, skipping, race-walking, or aerobics to music offer variety and are excellent substitutes for running.

Developing a physical education program can be one of your most rewarding experiences, because the children love moving. If well-taught, it can be one of the students' favorite classes of the day.

Children reveal their personalities most clearly through play. This presents the teacher with many opportunities to help them develop and grow in all parts of their lives. □

Daniel W. Berk developed a physical edu-

cation program for the elementary students and also taught academy-level physical education at Loma Linda Adventist Academy. He helped develop the high school guide in physical education for the Pacific Union Conference. Barbara J. Berk has taught physical education at La Sierra High School and Loma Linda Adventist Academy. A husband-and-wife team, they have taught classes, clinics, and workshops in physical education curriculum development for the elementary school. They write from San Bernardino, California.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), p. 13.

² Rayna Perry, *Handmade Equipment*. Adapted by physical instructor, Central Unified School District, Fresno, California.

³ Robin Reese, *Elementary Physical Education. Curriculum Development for the Classroom Teacher (K-6)*. Sacramento, Calif.: California State University, n.d., p. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵ Wayne E. Nelson, *The Rainy Day Survival Book*. May be obtained from Wagon Wheel Books, 8459 Edmaru Ave., Whittier, CA 90605, or call (213) 693-5976.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE MATERIALS

Capon, Jack. *Basic and Practical Lesson Plans for Perceptual-Motor Programs in Preschool and Elementary Grades*. Level 1. Front Row Experience, Ste. 217, 564 Central Ave., Alameda, CA 94501.

Dauer, Victor, P., and Robert P. Pangrazzi. *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children*. 8th edition, 1986. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022.

Educational Activities, Inc., P.O. Box 392, Freeport, NY 11520 (catalog).

Gallahue, David L. *Developmental Physical Education for Today's Elementary School Children*. 6th edition, 1985. William C. Brown Publishers, 2460 Kerper Blvd., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Kirschner, Glen. *Physical Education for Elementary School Children*. 1987. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022.

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to evaluate student progress and assign grades. Such evaluations also give the teacher a method of determining whether his or her instructional goals are being met. Standardized physical fitness tests given several times throughout the year can help assess progress and improvement in the area of fitness. Computer programs are available that tabulate

scores and provide reports for students and parents.

A good-quality physical education program should include a variety of activities. However, teachers in small academies often lack the facilities and/or equipment to offer the many different kinds of sport and recreation that interest their students. To overcome this difficulty, the teacher might look to programs or facilities in the local community for assistance. Because of lower demands during daytime hours, gymnasiums and pools, and even instruction in various activities can often be contracted for at lower rates during the regular school day or immediately thereafter.

Another alternative to consider is the use of contracts—forms stipulating that students will participate in a fitness program or sport on their own time. The contract should include the activity, the time required, the goals, and the method of evaluation. Designed jointly by the student and the physical education teacher, the contract provides a way for the student to earn academic credit if he or she successfully fulfills certain requirements. This is a good alternative for students who cannot fit physical education into their program due to scheduling problems, heavy academic load, or work conflicts.

Some activities that might be performed through contracts include racquetball, bowling, sailing, wind surfing, scuba diving, horseback riding, weight lifting, tennis, jogging, biking, skiing, or aerobics. If the activity is taught by an outside agency, the instructor can be asked to provide an evaluation of the student's performance. Or the student can keep a log of his or her activity and progress toward completion of the goal. A pass/fail system might be more appropriate than letter grades for these kinds of activities.

The activities described above are especially appealing to girls, who may not enjoy traditional sports. The coed nature of many of these activities allows the students to interact in a natural situation that prepares them to plan their own physical activity for a lifetime of fitness.

Physical education teachers and departments need to plan their programs around the areas they feel deserve the greatest emphasis and that can be achieved with the avail-

able facilities and equipment. However, teachers must seek to broaden their programs to include new activities and exercises. In that way, physical education will offer something interesting for every student. Young people should receive a well-rounded program that includes fitness, sports and games, and recreational activities.

Scheduling

Fitness education can be incorporated into the program on a daily basis or interspersed throughout the week as scheduling and emphasis permit. Many schools have such short class periods that cardio-vascular benefit may be difficult to achieve. However, fitness principles can be presented and activities outside of class can be planned to encourage students to maintain their own fitness schedule. School-sponsored runs can be planned to include the community and may even serve as fundraisers. Weekend workshops or sports days can offer the opportunity for fellowship with other young people as well as lectures and recreation activities.

Sports and games lend themselves well to the physical education class since most students enjoy the activities and are at an age when they are testing their physical strength and skills. Intramurals give the students an opportunity to increase their skills and have fun playing with friends. Tournaments and competitions can be included in the intramural program, or can be scheduled as special events.

In some cases, the students with more advanced skills may enjoy participating in carefully supervised interscholastic programs with nearby academies, in local Christian leagues, or under the direction of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes organization. These activities give participants a sense of working together toward a goal, and inspire enthusiasm and school spirit for all students.

Physical education classes should introduce recreational activities and games that help familiarize students with active pursuits in which they can engage after they finish school or with their families. This will help them make a commitment to a healthy life-style.

The challenges are clear. We must

Physical education teachers need to know more than how to teach calisthenics and coach intramurals.

seek and implement solutions that help our students recognize the importance of fitness to their mental and spiritual well-being. Through *study and partnership with Christ*, we can help our students achieve this goal. □

Lois Ortmann teaches physical education at Mountain View Academy, Mountain View, California.

COMPETITION OR COOPERATION? A Look at Sports and the Church

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a helpful addition to many school programs.

The church has updated the presentation of the gospel so as to appeal to modern-day people. Over the years, our ministry has changed its preaching style, music, activities, and use of the media. We must be open to new ways of doing things, recognizing that change is not necessarily bad. Change must take place so that we can relate to the modern generation of young people. We want our church and schools to be places they will want to attend.

When we try to define the difference between Adventist schools and public institutions, we must look at more than mere academics. After all, public schools offer math and English, so do we. However, we offer a curriculum in a Christian setting. We seek to integrate religion into each part of the curriculum. Why cannot we offer sport in a Christian setting? Our young people are bombarded with sports; there is no practical way this can be avoided. It is imperative that we teach them how to relate to sport in a Christian way. They need to learn that sport is only a small part of their life and not an all-consuming passion.

There is an enormous difference between sports at the University of Kansas or the University of Maryland or UCLA and

the sports offered at a small Christian college. Most Adventists know sport only as they read about it in the newspaper or watch events on television. This is *not* Christian sport. Christian sport can be operated without unethical recruiting, illegal drugs, or a win-at-all-costs philosophy. There need be no cheating so that players can remain eligible, no glorification of individuals or teams.

The sports program can be part of the curriculum, just like the band, choir, orchestra, gymnastic team, newspaper, or student government. It is neither more nor less important. Our schools are not trying to win national championships. Competition need not lead to rivalry. It can be a *striving together*; it need not lead to unfriendliness or hostility. It can remain simply, competition, which is not inherently evil.

The key to a successful sports program is competent leadership. We must have coaches who emphasize the thrill of participation, the challenge of doing one's best. We should be known as Christians in our play as well as in our religion. Our players offer a hand to an opponent who has fallen; we do not heckle officials or opposing players when they are making a free throw. We applaud good play—ours and theirs. Our players—and spectators—should exhibit the best sportsmanship of any school or church. By so doing, our schools will epitomize a Christian model of sports.

Not every school needs a sports program. One should be implemented only if a need exists, and if leadership is available to keep the program in proper perspective. The program must be evaluated periodically to see if its goals and objectives are being met. It may be helpful to establish review committees in various parts of the country to examine each program to determine whether it should be revised or discontinued.

We must proceed slowly and carefully, ever keeping before us the goals of Christian education. With constant, fervent prayer we can keep Christ foremost in interorganizational sports and provide another avenue that will lead many into a Spirit-filled life and ultimately into the kingdom of heaven. □

Dr. Walter S. Hamerslough is Executive Director of the Seventh-day Adventist Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Association (SDA-HPERA) and Professor of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at Loma Linda University, Riverside, California.

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¹ Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 512.

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³ ———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), vol. 7, pp. 173, 174.