Approaches to Teaching Physical Education

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Q1. What are 'approaches' or 'instructional' models of teaching?

A1.

These ARE NOT 'teaching styles'! Teaching Styles are an unproductive and narrow interpretation of learning that has been debunked in much of the educational and psychological literature. Think of 'approaches' or 'instructional models' of teaching as blueprints for teaching and learning. They are effectively the architecture that precedes the construction of learning that occurs in your class.

Therefore, an effective instructional model or teaching approach (unlike a teaching style) is a comprehensive and coherent plan for teaching that includes:
- ❖ a theoretical foundation
- ❖ intended learning outcomes
- ❖ teacher's content knowledge expertise
- ❖ developmentally appropriate and sequenced learning activities
- ❖ expectations for teacher and student behaviors
- ❖ unique task structures and learning activities
- ❖ assessments of learning outcomes
- ❖ benchmarks for assessing the implementation of the model

References/Evidence

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Q1a. What are the different instructional models and approaches used for physical education?

A1a.

There are currently eight dominant instructional models and approaches to teaching physical education. These are by no means the only approaches used to teaching physical education but they occur most frequently in the literature. Five (5) have been adapted for physical education from other settings or content areas. The remaining three (3) were developed exclusively for use on physical education settings.

The five models and approaches adapted for physical education from other settings included:
- ❖ Direct Instruction
- ❖ Cooperative Learning
- ❖ Personalised System for Instruction (PSI)
- ❖ Peer Teaching
- ❖ Inquiry Teaching

The three models and approaches developed exclusively for physical education are:
- ❖ Sport Education
- ❖ Tactical Games Approach (i.e Teaching Games for Understanding, Games-based Approach, Play Practice, and Game Sense)
- ❖ Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility through Physical Activity

References/Evidence

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Q2a. What is the Direct Instruction approach in Physical Education?

A2a.

This traditional PE lesson model typically relies upon the direct teaching of new skills in isolation followed by a drill to practice the new skill via repetition and then concluding with a game (or modification thereof) to apply the skill in context. This traditional model of PE instruction typically relies heavily on direct instruction teaching strategies. Unfortunately, many pre-service and even experienced teachers associate direct instruction as a 'poor' teaching approach as opposed to 'constructivist' teaching approaches being 'good'. The evidence is however, quite to the contrary. In Hattie's (2009) synthesis of research on direct instruction, he found it is one of the most influential teaching strategies linked to student achievement and direct instruction as a teaching strategy in physical education is no exception. In fact, some of the most effective physical education curriculum that has demonstrated improved FMS within primary/elementary schools using controlled trialled studies has been based on direct instruction teaching methods. Examples of these include Sport Physical Activity and Recreation for Kids PE study in the United States and Move it Groove it study in Australia.

According to Hattie (2009), direct instruction is incorrectly and frequently confused with didactic teacher-led, talking from the front of the class teaching where in contrast, direct instruction involves seven major steps of which can be used to create a very powerful PE lesson that will improve FMS development in your students.

These steps are:
1. **Be prepared:** Before the lesson, be prepared and have a clear focus on what the learning intentions or lesson outcomes are. These should be a match of both student and curriculum needs as discussed earlier.
2. **Establish the success criteria**: The teacher needs to know what the success criteria of FMS proficiency are and know how people learn. Firstly, the success criteria should be communicated to your students.
3. **Build a 'hook'**: There is a need to build in a 'hook' to capture your student's attention and commitment. The aim here is to put your students in a receptive frame of mind while also focussing their attention on the lesson and, as a teacher, being able to share your learning intentions/lessons outcomes with them.
Note – this needs to be more than just being able to play a game at the end. Quite often the 'game at the end of the lesson' is a bribe to control student behaviour through which is otherwise a didactic PE lesson.
4. **Perform guided practice:** Quite often in PE lessons of this type it will involve a 'drill' or a session of guided practice. This involves an opportunity for your students to demonstrate their proficiency of the FMS under the direct supervision of the teacher. It should involve the teacher ascertaining levels of proficiency, giving positive and meaningful feedback and identification of those require additional assistance or instruction. Remember 'practice makes perfect' is untrue. Only 'perfect practice makes perfect'.
5. **Conclude with independent and cooperative practice**: After a drill session, most PE lessons conclude with a game (or modification thereof). This is a time of independent and cooperative practice and can done once the students have mastered the skill. The game is important for the application of learned skills in context. These games need to be across enough different sporting contexts so that the skill may be applied to any relevant situation and not only the isolated situation in which the skill was originally learned.
6. **Lesson closure**: All PE lessons need closure and a means whereby the teacher can demonstrate or make statements to bring the lesson to a conclusion and the students are thereby helped in bringing what they have learned together in their own minds. Simply concluding a lesson with "Are there any questions?" is not lesson closure. Lesson closure involves reviewing the key learning points and tying them together in a relevant context of:
a.   What skills were learned?
b.   How they are applied?
c.   Why they are important?

The message from the evidence on Direct Instruction teaching methods is the power of stating the learning outcomes and success criteria, and then engaging students in moving toward these. Teachers need to 'invite their students to learn' while providing much practice, modelling, meaningful and appropriate feedback and numerous opportunities for the learning of skills. Below is an example of how a teacher might set up a PE lesson plan with the intent of using a direct instruction teaching strategy.

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Q1b. What is the Cooperative Learning approach in Physical Education?

A2c.

Evidence suggests that Cooperative Learning (CL) is more effective than both competitive and individualistic approaches to learning. Some evidence in physical education specifically states that cooperation is far superior to the narrow conception of competition (winning and loosing) in promoting achievement for all age groups. Certainly a recent review of literature highlights that Cooperative Learning can promote student achievement in the physical, social, cognitive, and affective domains. Cooperative Learning has also been shown to promote inclusion, engagement, and active participation in learning with diverse learners who hold varying learning needs. This CL approach to physical education is capable of meeting a wide range of educative goals in physical education.

The fundamental underpinning of a CL approach in physical education is that students' 'sink or swim together'. In other words, students are dependent on one another to learn and not just the teacher. Indeed, CL places academic and social learning on par with one-another and students are required to work together in small groups to learn without direct or persistent instruction from the teacher. Consequently, and in order for teachers to support students in working together and constructing new understandings, the teacher should plan for and implement a number of micro strategies. However, please note that these vary dependent on different interpretations of the CL approach adopted and might also be referred to as benchmarks, elements or PIES.

- Heterogeneous Groups: students should be organised into mixed ability, ethnic background and gender groups of 4-5 members. Students should work in these groups for the duration of a unit.
- Group Goals: teachers should plan for physical, cognitive, social and affective learning goals
- Role of Teacher: the teacher should support learners and their learning by providing adequate resources for group work, guiding students to new understandings and by providing specific advice and feedback as and when students need it.
- Positive Interdependence: students should be dependent on each member of the group in order to complete the group goal. For example each member of a group may adopt a role (a coach, recorder, encourager) during lessons or each member of the group may hold a different piece of information.
- Individual Accountability: students are assessed on their contribution to group work and their performance or measures are put in place to ensure each group member contributes to tasks. For example, tick sheets can be used to note each member's participation and contribution or each member's score in a task can contribute to the groups overall score.
- Promote face-to-face interaction: students have positive interactions with members of their group and they demonstrate good communication skills and the ability to work together. The teacher needs to plan for time for discussion during lessons and can organise a team by asking them to stand toe-to-toe, knee-to-knee, face-to-face.
- Group Processing: this is the time for students to reflect on their learning, how well they worked together and what the group needs to do to improve. This discussion involves all group members contributing and the teacher often provides the group with pre-planned questions. For example, what happened?, so what? And what now? Group processing often occurs at the end of a lesson but can also be used during lessons to help groups understand their successes and how they need to improve.
- Cooperative Learning structure: teachers should aim to follow a Cooperative Learning structure during lessons and over the course of a unit. For example, structures include learning teams, jigsaw, pairs-check-perform, and many more.

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Q2c. What is the Personalised System for Instruction in Physical Education?

A2c.

The Personalised System of Instruction (PSI) model was developed by Keller and Sherman during the 1960's. It was developed out of the field of experimental behavioural psychology and based on five major characteristics.

1. Self-pacing
2. Mastery learning
3. Teacher acting as motivator
4. Emphasis on the written word for study materials; and
5. Student proctors

The goal of using the PSI approach is to allow students to learn independently so that the teacher could interact with the students needing the most assistance. The PSI approach acknowledges that not all students have the same interests and abilities. It therefore allows students to progress at a rate that coincides with their individual abilities. Students with higher skills are allowed to progress at faster rates while other students may take additional time to complete each activity.

The evidence supporting the PSI are very similar to the other mastery learning programs however descriptions of the use of PSI to teach physical education are limited (Hannon et al, 2008). Tousignant (1983) described PSI use for teaching a high school tennis program. She acknowledged that the system has its drawbacks and potential benefits due to the need for careful planning by the teacher.

The key features to the effective implementation of the PSI model in a physical education program include;

1. Students proceed through the course at their own pace;
2. Students demonstrate mastery of each component of the course before proceeding to the next;
3. Teachers are involved more in 'tutorial-type' support of students in that they provide motivation for students to complete work, teaching intervention as required and help individual students attain the stated goals of the physical education course.

References/Evidence

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Q2d. What is Peer Teaching in Physical Education?

A2d.

Using peers as co-teachers (of themselves and others) is a quite powerful teaching strategy. Particularly if the aim is to teach students the ability to self-regulate and control their own learning and to becoming teachers of themselves. It is less effective if it is employed as a teaching strategy whereby older students simply teach struggling younger students.

In a physical education context however, peer teaching has been predominately used in primary schools and as a method of fostering inclusion of students with disabilities into regular physical education classes. In some specific physical education studies, the concept of Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) has been suggested as being a better teaching strategy than traditional approaches of peer teaching. In CWPT involves the whole class adopting reciprocal roles of tutor and tutee in the physical education classes. It has been demonstrated as an effective teaching strategy in regular and adaptive/inclusion physical education programs across primary and secondary school settings. Suggested key elements of CWPT to be used in physical education classes are

1. Teams – Small groups of 4 to 6 students are best.
2. Peer Dyads – Within each team, students are paired (or pair themselves) with a peer
3. Practice time and task cards – Tasks for each class are presented on a task card. The teacher demonstrates the task and the students follow the directions on the card which usually involves a detailed description of the activity demonstrate by the teacher. Short periods of up to five minutes are allotted for individual practice of the activity on the task card.
4. Partner check – Students are given time to do a partner check whereby after the tutee has performed the task on the task card several times, the tutor gestures whether the task was completed correctly. If the task was not completed correctly, the tutor indicates to the tutee which critical element of the task was incorrect.
5. Sharing team performance – After all the members of the team complete their practice, a member of each team posts the results of team in a location for teacher and peer review.
6. Goal Setting – At the start of each lesson the teacher establishes a specific goal for each team based on the performance results they posted from previous lessons.

One major advantage of adopting a peer teaching approach in physical education as articulated above is that it provides students with individual feedback frequently on their performance and the teacher can quickly identify those who need more assistance than others.

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Q2e. What is Inquiry-based Teaching in Physical Education?

A2e.

Inquiry-based teaching stems predominately out of Science Education and aims to develop challenging situations in which students are asked to observe and question constructs, posture explanations of what they observe; devise and conduct experiments in which data are collected to support or refute their theories; analyse data; draw conclusions from experimental data; design and build models; or any combination of these types of activities. As such, these types of learning experiences are designed to be open-ended in that students are not expected to simply reach the 'right' or 'correct' answer for the question they are confronted with. When an inquiry-based teaching method is being used, the teacher is more concerned with student 'processes' of reaching their conclusion.

In a physical education context, inquiry-based teaching approaches are often used when students already have a basic understanding of sports and games. Teachers can use this teaching strategy to help students understand when to apply certain skills. What to do they are not in possession of the ball, or where they can best move to receive a ball, or defend against a pass to name a few examples. Inquiry-based teaching can be used to foster student critical thinking in game situations and provide them with the opportunities to explore games and sports in new and innovative ways. However, if students do not have the basic understanding, proficiency and application of motor skills, the inquiry-based teaching approach may not be an appropriate teaching strategy.

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Q2f. What is Sport Education Approach in Physical Education?

A2e.

Sport education is a curriculum and instruction model designed to provide authentic, educationally rich sport experiences for students in the context of school physical education programmes. Sport education has an important curricular implication; that is, it cannot be fitted easily into a short unit, multi-activity program. Sport education also has important instructional implications; that is, its purposes are best achieved through combinations of direct instruction, cooperative small-group work, and peer teaching, rather than by total reliance on didactic and traditional skill, drill-oriented teaching methods. The Sport Education Curriculum Instruction Model has three primary goals. It seeks to help students become *competent, literate*, and *enthusiastic* sportspeople. ***Competent Sportspeople:*** have sufficiently developed skills and games understanding and can execute strategies appropriate to the complexity of play so as to be able to participate as a knowledgeable games player. Sport education emphasises strategic play rather than isolated skill development. Small-sided games are often used to teach gradually more complex skills and strategies concurrently. ***Literate Sportspeople:*** understand and value the rules, rituals, and traditions of sport. They have learned to distinguish between good and bad sporting practices, and are developing the willingness to act on that knowledge to improve the practice of sport. Such people are in short supply in the larger adult sport culture, and this goal represents the most optimistic long-term outcome for students who experience sport education. ***Enthusiastic Sportspeople:*** participate in sport as part of a physically active lifestyle and act in ways that serve to preserve, protect, and enhance their sport culture to make sport more accessible to more individuals.

Basic features of a 'Sport Education' based curriculum and teaching approach -Sport education has six key features that are closely derived from how sport is conducted in community and authentic sport contexts (i.e., they derive from the authentic form of the activity within the larger culture). These features are seasons, affiliation, formal competition, culminating events, record keeping, and festivity. ***Seasons*** refer to the 'units of work' in sport education and these are often two to three times longer than typical PE units. They may even take up an entire school term or half a semester. The assumption here is that less is more or that fewer activities covered in greater depth result in better educational outcomes than can be realised in the more typical, short unit, multiple-activity programme format. ***Affiliation*** is about students becoming members of teams/clubs at the start of a season and retain their team affiliation throughout the season. Students plan, practice, and compete as a team. This feature also derives from evidence that suggests that much of the social meaning derived from sport experiences, as well as a large part of the personal growth often attributed to positive sport experiences, is intimately related to affiliation with a persisting group. ***Formal competition***s are included as typical sporting seasons are defined by a schedule of formal competition interspersed with practice sessions. The affiliation and formal competition features combine to provide the opportunity for planning and goal setting that create the context for pursuing important outcomes that have real meaning for students. Of particular concern for primary/elementary teacher and PE specialists alike is that there needs to be a heavy focus on the practice sessions in order for skill acquisition to occur. Teachers need to become 'architects' of the educational environment and ensure that the students have sufficient support via direct instruction and guided practice to allow the students to acquire FMS. However, it is the students who are ultimately responsible for its efficiency and vitality of the competition and practice sessions. A ***Culminating event*** is included because it is in the nature of sport to find out who is best for a particular season and for others to mark their progress in relationship to that outcome. Culminating events create the opportunity for festival and celebration of accomplishments, which are a significant characteristic of play and sport. ***Record keeping*** such as (shots on goals, points scored, times, blocks, steals, assists, etc...) provide feedback for individuals and groups. Records help to define standards and are fundamental to defining goals (reducing turnovers, improving times in a race, placing higher in a round-robin competition). Records also help to define sport traditions locally (6th-grade record for the long jump, 4th-grade team record for fewest points allowed per game in basketball). Finally, ***Festivity:*** refers to fact that sporting competitions are occasions for festivity, from the major festivals associated with the Olympic Games to the Sunday football game to the family festival of a children's soccer match. In sport education, teachers and students work together to create a continual festival that celebrates improvement, trying hard, and playing fairly (posters, team colours, player introductions, award ceremonies, videotaping, etc...).

References/Evidence

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Q2g. What are the Tactical Game Teaching Approaches in Physical Education?

A2g.

It is worthwhile noting that this teaching approach is to be found in PE curricula across the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US and has been adapted in several different forms across these countries and may be known as any of the following; Teaching Games for Understanding, Games Sense, Play Practice, Games Concept approach, Games-centred learning or Tactical strategy.

Whatever name it may hold in your specific curriculum and literature is unimportant, what is important is that all these models above are derivatives from the original David Bunker and Rod Thorpe's TGfU model and may change slightly based upon specific interpretations, context and educative agendas.

Furthermore, all these models are underpinned by the "Games Classification System" whereby most games and sports placed in categories and taught based on sharing *similar intent*. The categories of games are Target, Net/wall, Striking/fielding or Territorial/Invasion games. This system assists teachers and students by recognising that skills and tactics learned in one particular sport CAN in fact be transferred into other games of similar intent and secondly, it removes any preconceptions that a teacher or student may hold to a particular sport (i.e. that's a boys sport OR I'm not good at netball) instead allowing knowledge to be shared and enthusiasm maintained.

Challenging children to find solutions to problems is a central feature of Tactical Games Teaching Approaches. This takes the form of presenting questions to students that cannot be answered simply with closed (yes or no) responses, but rather questions that are open and require children to think deeply about their answers and seek complex solutions. Students are faced with the dilemma of how to improve their own AND their team's performance. Unlike the traditional direct instruction approach, the tactical structure of 'game play' requires investigation. In order to accomplish this there may be a focus on the broader questions 'What does the team need to do and what do I need to do in order to succeed in this game?' Stressing the idea of the 'team' and the 'game' however, will encourage the students to think about their team tactics and the strategies they use in playing the game as a team. Deeper investigation of the questions 'What is strategy? or What are tactics?' may help to clarify for students the significance of these concepts and present opportunities to teach the meta-language of games.

Based on the early tactical games approach models, there are essentially six stages a teacher progresses students through. **Step 1-'The Game':** While an unmodified version of a sport presents a long term goal at which to aim and provides guidelines for teachers, it is necessary, in primary and elementary school, to introduce students to a variety of game forms in accordance with their age and experience. In doing so careful consideration should be made to the area of the play, the numbers to be involved and the equipment to be used in the attempt to present children with the problems involved in playing games. **Step 2 – 'Game Appreciation':** The importance of this step cannot be understated. Giving the students the rules from the very beginning acts as the primary cognitive activator. It immediately poses questions and highlights limitations. Remembering that rules give the game it's shape. Rules we intentionally leave out will not only alter the game but alter the questions and thinking that takes place in order to achieve success. When deciding on the rules of the games you teach, following 'Fundamental Rules of Games' can be used as a template to ensure that the game will have the necessary structure for later cognitive and skill development to occur. The four considerations for rules are:

a) *The modalities of scoring:* What is the game's target and the necessary skills involved in order to score?
b) *The players' rights*: What are the offensive and defensive rights entailed to players? These are based upon the modalities of scoring that complete those rights with respect to the equality of chances to score.
c) *The liberty of action*: What rights do players have with the ball to give the game a specific character?
d) *The modalities of physical engagement*: What rules ensure the respect of the three previous rules?

Additionally the rules will place constraints of time and space on the game, will state how points are scored, and more importantly, will determine the suite of skills required. It is goes without saying that alterations to the rules of a game will have implications for the team strategy and hence the tactics to be employed to achieve success. **Step 3 – 'Tactical Appreciation': Students should commence playing the game at this stage.** After they have been given some involvement and they start to develop an understanding of the rules (and flaws in the rules), it is necessary to consider now the tactics they are choosing to use, and those they could employ in the game. Ways and means of creating space and denying space must be found to overcome the opposition. The principles of play, common to all games, form the basis for a tactical approach to the game, e.g. achieving more penetration as a result of practising fast-break attacks. Of course game plans do not always work and tactics must be changed to meet the needs of the moment. It should be added that tactical awareness should lead to early recognition of opposition weaknesses e.g. a poor backhand, premature challenging for possession, a reluctance to catch a high ball, but this should not be allowed to destroy the game which should be modified to restore the competitive nature of an evenly matched game as 'healthy competition' is essential for learning to occur in the curriculum instruction model. **Stage 4 – 'Decision Making': (Using effective questioning to drill down to establish deep understanding of games)** Proficient students may only take a fraction of a second to make decisions and they would see no value in distinguishing between the "what?" and the "how?" In this instruction model there is a difference between decisions based upon "what to do?" and "how to do it?" therefore permitting both the student and teacher to recognise and attribute the consequences in their decision making process. 'Decision making' occurs in two distinct parts; a) "What to do?" While it is obvious that tactical awareness is necessary if decisions are to be made, it is in the very nature of games that circumstances continually change. In deciding what to do each situation has to be assessed and thus the ability to recognise cues (involving processes of selective attention, cue redundancy, perception etc.) and predict possible outcomes (involving anticipation of several kinds) is of paramount importance. For example, there is no value in understanding that attacking a space near the goal in an invasion game may be highly desirable but may carry the risk of losing possession, if the cues cannot be recognised in the first place.

b) "How to do it?" There still remains the decision as to what is the best way to do it and the selection of an appropriate response is critical. For example, where a large space is available but time is limited a quickly executed response may be appropriate whereas when time is available but accuracy is vital some element of control prior to execution may be necessary. Such situations often arise in the shooting area of invasion games. **Stage 5 – 'Skill Execution' (Teaching movement skills still remains significant:** skill execution is used to describe the actual production of the required movement skills as envisaged by the teacher and seen in the context of the student and recognising the student's limitations. It should be seen as separate from "Performance" and may include some quantitative or qualitative measure of both the mechanical efficiency of the movement and its relevance to the particular game situation. **Stage 6 – 'Performance' (Authentic assessment):** This is the observed outcome of the previous processes measured against criteria that are independent of the student. It is that by which we would classify students as competent or not yet competent players depending on the curriculum outcomes and should be a measure of appropriateness of response as well as efficiency of technique.

References/Evidence

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Q2h. What is Teaching Social and Personal Responsibility Approach in Physical Education?

A2h.

Don Hellison was responsible introducing the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility through Physical Activity as a potential teaching approach in physical education through his work in urban US schools. Past and present physical education, sport and even political leaders have claimed that a number of personal and social benefits are derived from participation in physical activity. The rhetoric of 'sport builds character' and 'play fair in class and you will play fair in life' are rooted in both the educational testimonies of Thomas Arnold from the 19th Century Rugby School and the ideals of Olympism spruced by Pierre de Coubertin. Unfortunately, this rhetoric and other idealistic claims about physical education and sport are outdone by evidence sourced empirically (and in the news headlines published in any leading outlet on a Monday morning. However, this evidence and rhetoric is not to say that the potential for social benefit from physical activity is non-existent. It is however a risky proposition to assume that such outcomes are achieved through mere participation in physical activity.

Hellison stresses that the conceptualization and implementation of teaching and learning of social responsibility through movement may be difficult because they involve more than a list of behaviours in a single context. He does however identify five hierarchical components of social responsibility an individual can exhibit during their physical education experience and this n turn provides a useful structure that teachers can use to intervene at various stages of physical education lessons as required.

At the lowest level (0), students show no responsibility for their behaviour or respect of the teacher and classmates. A Level 1 student is capable of respecting the rights and feelings of others. They exercise self-control of the behaviour and they respect the right to peaceful conflict resolution and the inclusion of others in the class. A Level 2 student will participate in class and demonstrate a concise effort in physical education class. Students are encouraged to explore the relationship between effort and outcomes, try new activities, accept challenges, and arrive at a personal definition of success.

A Level 3 student assumes an increased responsibility for their physical education and the actions they take in class. Most importantly they are capable of independent work. Students learn to identify their own needs and interests, set own goals, establish related tasks for achieving them and evaluate their progress. They have greater ability to disregard "peer pressures" and remain committed to being socially responsible. A Level 4 student shows the ability to care and help others during physical education. To reach this level Students are helped to develop interpersonal skills and to reach beyond themselves to others. They are encouraged to give support, show concern, and exhibit compassion without expectation of reward. Students are supported in their efforts toward the final level where they become contributing members of the community beyond the physical education class and the playing field.

References/Evidence

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