

Memo

To: Superintendents, Curriculum Directors, Principals, Physical Educators

From: Martha Hyder, Physical Education Curriculum Specialist
Utah State Office of Education

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Re: Dodgeball

The use of dodgeball as a learning activity in Utah schools has recently been in question. I have compiled some information you might find helpful in making curricular decisions. A vigorous debate (www.pelinks4u.org) has occurred in the past year between opponents and advocates of playing dodgeball in public schools. Generally, while there have been many positive modifications to the rules of traditional dodgeball, all of the skills and benefits which dodgeball advocates say may be developed through participation in dodgeball activities may also be developed in a variety of other developmentally appropriate activities. At the least, there is doubt concerning the use of dodgeball as a learning activity, while there does exist many good alternative learning activities that also give students practice in dodgeball skills such as throwing, catching, and dodging.

A review of the professional literature reveals that dodgeball (aliases include war ball, Bombardment, murderball, killerball, or poisonball) has as its' "main focus the attempt to inflict pain, harm, injury, and embarrassment on one's opponents" (Zakrajsek, 1986, in Williams, 1992). In addition to being a game where the objective is to throw a ball and hit others, dodgeball is also a low activity game in which a few skilled players dominate and those lesser skilled players who need the most practice are eliminated and removed from game play first (Belka, 1999; Greene, 2000; Sprenger, 1993; Williams, 1992; Zakrajsek, 1986). Neil Williams, author of the *Physical Education Hall of Shame* articles states, "Dodgeball merely encourages kids' worst basic instincts (the ones schools are supposed to try to eliminate) and is the last refuge of a lazy physical education teacher" (2001, e mail communication). The Council of Physical Education for Children has issued a position statement on developmentally appropriate physical education that specifically identifies dodgeball as inappropriate. Dodgeball has also been called a war game that uses children as targets. Because of these negatives, dodgeball has been officially outlawed in school districts in several states (Maine, Maryland, New York, Texas, and Virginia).

Locally, dodgeball and other activities involving hitting students with objects are not included in the Utah physical education core curriculum. Further, no one activity should dominate the curriculum, especially in the K-8 grades. Additionally, in the eight school years from 1990 to 1998, 488 injuries occurred during games of dodgeball in Utah elementary schools. In grades 7-12, 230 school injuries occurred during games of dodgeball in Utah secondary schools for the same time period. Utah analysts, school district physical education and athletic coordinators, and school nurses all admit that such accidents are greatly under-reported. Thus, dodgeball may be eliminated from the classroom and playground activity settings given the possibility of injury alone.

Please consider this information in making curricular decisions and providing educational experiences for our students.

Alternative Learning Activities:

Learning activities that may be alternatives to dodgeball that also teach skills which dodgeball is purported to teach include:

- 1) Catching & Throwing: (Large and Small Group Games)
 - Basketball Shoot-Out (Smith & Cestaro, p. 147)
 - Beat “Michael Jordan” (Smith & Cestaro, p. 147)
 - Hooper (Smith & Cestaro, p. 148)
 - Hot Shots (Smith & Cestaro, p. 150)
 - Pass-Over (Smith & Cestaro, p. 150)
 - Platform Football (Smith & Cestaro, p. 151)
 - Team Handball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 153)
 - Basket-A-Rama (Smith & Cestaro, p. 154)
 - Platform Basketball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 155)
 - Quadrant Football (Smith & Cestaro, p. 156)
 - Reaction Ball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 158)
 - Repeat Baseball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 159)
 - Three Base-Basketball/Football (Smith & Cestaro, p. 161)
 - Ultimate Football (Smith & Cestaro, p. 162)
 - Arena Football (Smith & Cestaro, p. 164)
 - Full-Court Basketball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 165)
 - Goal Ball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 166)
 - 3-on-3 Half-Court Basketball (Smith & Cestaro, p. 167)
 - Transitional Lacrosse (Smith & Cestaro, p. 168)
 - Ultimate Frisbee (may also be adapted for basketball, football, baseball, and all other types of throwing)
 - Speedball (also includes dodging)

- 2) Throwing & catching while being defended: Ultimate Frisbee, Hawaiian Football

- 3) Dodging:
 - Field Hockey (Individual, partner, and group drills)
 - Stickside Dodge (Philipp & Wilkerson, p. 114-115)
 - Nonstickside Dodge (Philipp & Wilkerson, pp. 114-115)
 - Scoop Dodge (Philipp & Wilkerson, p. 115)
 - Reverse Stick Dodge (Philipp & Wilkerson, p. 115)
 - Speedball

- 4) Quick decision making:
 - Speedball (Philipp & Wilkerson, p. 255)

- 5) Agility: (Individual Activities)
 - The Maze (Smith & Cestaro, p. 56)
 - Power Agility Circuit 1 (Smith & Cestaro, p. 63)
 - Power Agility Circuit 2 (Smith & Cestaro, p. 63)

Power Agility Circuit 3 (Smith & Cestaro, p. 64)
Multidirectional Speed Circuit (Smith & Cestaro, pp. 66-68)
Grid Drills (Smith & Cestaro, pp. 79-80)

- 6) Throwing/Catching (Skill Drills: note that students should first learn and refine throwing and catching skills before applying them in the more complicated and advanced applications of games, especially competitive games).

Basketball-Related Skills

Bounce pass (Smith & Cestaro, p. 116)
Chest pass (Smith & Cestaro, p. 117)
Overhead pass (Smith & Cestaro, p. 119)
Rebounding (Smith & Cestaro, p. 119)

Football-Related Skills

Catching (Smith & Cestaro, p. 121)
Handoff (Smith & Cestaro, p. 122)
Passing (Smith & Cestaro, p. 123)
Pass Patterns (Smith & Cestaro, p. 123)

Lacrosse-Related Skills

Catching (Smith & Cestaro, p. 126)
Throwing (Smith & Cestaro, p. 127)

Softball-Related Skills

Catching (Smith & Cestaro, p. 128)
Throwing (Smith & Cestaro, p. 130)

Soccer-Related Skills

Throw-ins (Smith & Cestaro, p. 134)

- 7) Team Cooperation:

Ship to Shore (Smith & Cestaro, pp. 68-70)
Amoeba (Smith & Cestaro, pp. 70-71)

Also, see Back Pocket Adventure Activities, by Karl Rohnke of Project Adventure.

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