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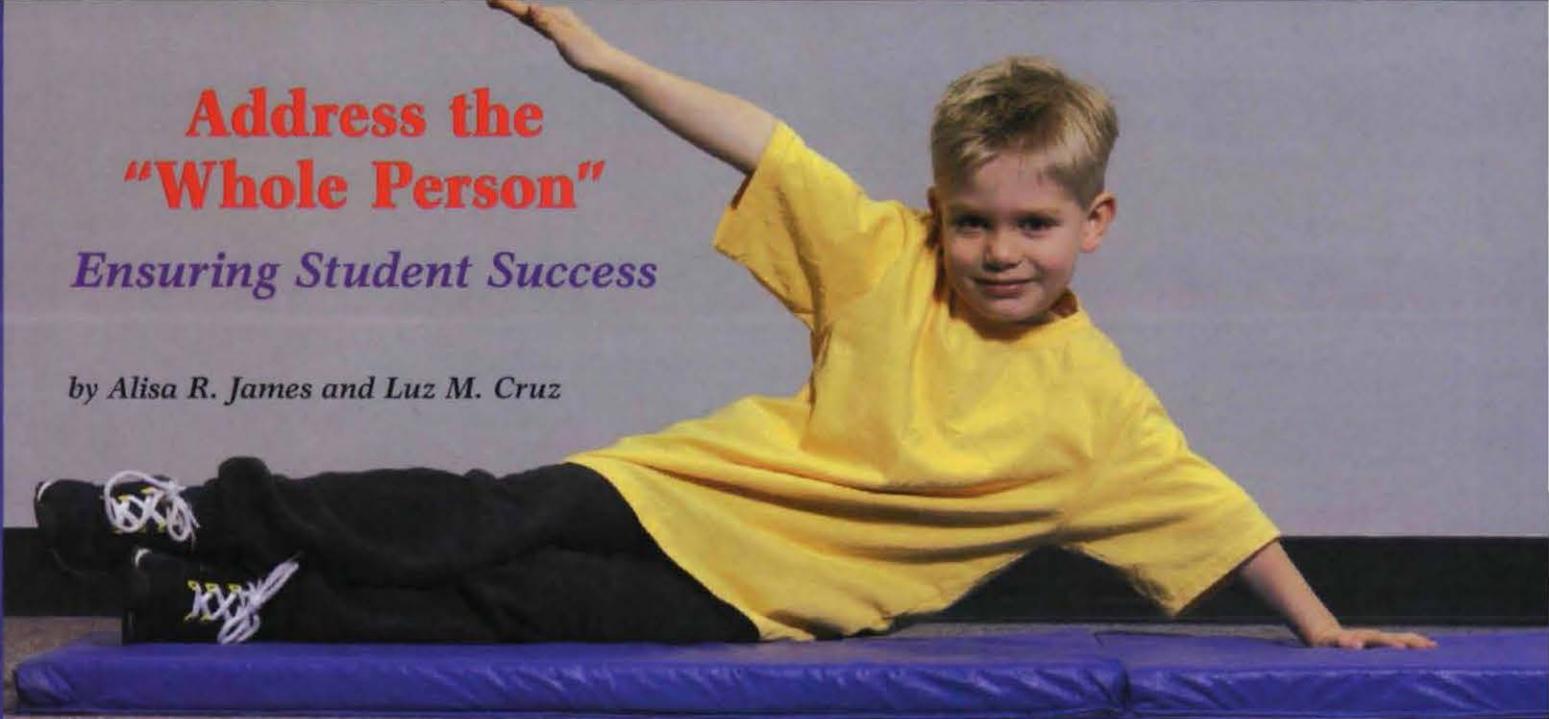
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Address the "Whole Person"

Ensuring Student Success

by Alisa R. James and Luz M. Cruz



Most physical educators became teachers because they were skilled movers and enjoyed the content of physical education. Although the content is important, there are other things to consider when attempting to accomplish our goals to meet the needs of all of our students. As teachers, we need to consider the whole person (motor, cognitive, affective domains) to ensure developmental appropriateness and, consequently, student success.

Instructional approaches provide one avenue to address all three domains when instructing our students. Effective teachers use a variety of instructional approaches (e.g., direct instruction, task teaching, guided discovery, peer teaching, etc.) to enhance the teaching-learning environment in physical education (Rink, 2002). Instructional approaches should be selected deliberately with regard to content and the developmental characteristics of students. The purpose of this article is to suggest possible instructional approaches that not only address students' levels of motor skill proficiency, but also consider levels of cognitive and affective development.

Graham, Holt/Hale and Parker (2004) have identified four generic levels of skill proficiency (GLSP), which can assist teachers in planning for, instructing, and assessing motor skill development. The observable characteristics of the four levels of the generic levels of

skill proficiency, GLSP (Graham et al., 2004), may generally be described as the following:

- **Precontrol Level**—lacks purposeful control of movement
- **Control Level**—performance tends to match intended movement more successfully, especially in static settings.
- **Utilization Level**—able to combine skills more successfully in dynamic settings; performance is almost automatic.
- **Proficiency Level**—is rarely seen in elementary school due to a lack of time for practice and refinement of skills.

Although children of the same age may be at various levels of motor skill proficiency, affective and cognitive development does seem to follow a more predictable pattern, which corresponds somewhat to chronological age. For example, early primary children often exhibit cognitive characteristics, such as having a short attention span and a vivid imagination. In the affective domain, they are rapidly developing a self-concept and are very egocentric.

According to Graham et al. (2004), children in the early primary grades (Pre K-K) are typically at the precontrol level of motor skill proficiency. Since these

Table 1—Instructional Strategies for Teaching Motor Skills to Early Primary Children

| Developmental Characteristic | Egocentric (Affective) | Short attention span (Cognitive) | Self concept is rapidly developing (Affective) | Creative and imaginative (Cognitive) |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Instructional Strategy | Students should have their own piece of equipment so they can focus exclusively on themselves. | Use activities of short duration and a variety of tasks. | Encourage student success by allowing for student exploration as well as a variety of correct responses to tasks. | Encourage creative play through activities such as stories and dance. |

Table 2—Instructional Strategies for Teaching Motor Skills to Early Intermediate Children

| Developmental Characteristic | Concrete thinker (Cognitive) | Seeks adult approval (Affective) | Eager to try new activities; frustrated when not successful (Affective) | Increased attention span (Cognitive) |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Instructional Strategies | Give one cue at a time. | Provide specific congruent feedback. | Use self-adjusting activities (e.g., move closer or use different equipment). | Provide refinement cues to improve skill performance. |
| | Give concrete examples and situations. | Acknowledge children's performance and effort. | Ensure developmentally appropriate tasks. | Allow time to practice and focus on skill acquisition. |

children are still learning how their body moves, many affective and cognitive developmental characteristics lend support to their exploration of movement. There are several instructional strategies that can facilitate the teaching-learning process for these children. Table 1 provides an overview of instructional strategies that address specific developmental characteristics when teaching motor skills to early primary children.

Although several instructional approaches can be used with early primary children, divergent inquiry may be one of the most beneficial. Divergent inquiry is an approach where the emphasis is on obtaining a variety of responses, not a single answer (Graham et al., 2004). This approach supports many of the affective and cognitive developmental characteristics early primary children possess. For example, since divergent inquiry presents a challenge and encourages children to find many answers, it supports their need to explore. It also enhances their self-concept by ensuring that their response(s) will be accepted. In addition, divergent inquiry challenges students to be creative and explore different ways to solve a problem, while still being able to focus solely on themselves and their exploration of a new skill. The child's short attention span is accommodated by divergent inquiry, since challenges change fairly quickly, and feedback is offered in a way that encourages creativity, exploration, and problem solving.

As students enter the intermediate grades, we see developmental changes in the three domains (motor, cognitive, affective). Although students in the intermediate grades (3-5) can be at any one of the four generic levels of skill proficiency, we might assume that they have become more proficient movers than they were in the earlier grades. When we consider their cognitive and affective development, they are becoming

more abstract thinkers and have an increased attention span. They are eager to try new activities but become easily frustrated when the movements are beyond their capabilities. Adult approval continues to be important for these students. Specific instructional strategies that address the affective and cognitive developmental characteristics of children at this stage of development are extremely important in the teaching-learning process. Table 2 provides an overview of several instructional strategies that support some of the affective and cognitive developmental characteristics that are typical of students at the intermediate (3-5) level.

One approach that works well with these students is direct instruction. In this approach, the teacher directs the practice of the students by telling them what to do and showing them how to practice it (Graham et al., 2004). Since these students have a longer attention span than early primary students, they are able to focus on learning the mature pattern of specific skills.

Children at this stage of development are becoming more abstract in their thinking, but they are more comfortable with tasks that are presented more concretely. The correct demonstration of the skill accompanied with appropriate refinement cues must be provided. These cues need to be given one at a time to allow the students the opportunity to process and practice each cue individually. It is also important for the teacher to give specific feedback related to the cues so that the students know if their performance is correct. This type of feedback gives children the adult attention that they still need at this stage in their development.

When using direct instruction, the teacher needs to structure the learning environment so that students have several opportunities to practice and experience success. Allowing students opportunities to self-adjust tasks, such as moving closer to or farther away from a

Table 3—Instructional Strategies for Teaching Motor Skills to Upper Intermediate Children

| Developmental Characteristic | Seeks independence (Affective) | Peer acceptance important (Affective) | Students can self and peer evaluate (Cognitive) | Students can think abstractly (Cognitive) |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Instructional Strategy | Use activities that promote independence and responsibility. | Allow for activities that enhance peer interaction. | Have clear and specific cues for observation. | Provide opportunity to analyze skill and strategy. |

Task: One partner will throw on the move to the target on the wall. The other partner, the "coach," will tell the thrower what to correct next time and assess their partner's throwing ability. Take four throws and switch places.

Coach's Name _____ Thrower's Name _____

Directions: Circle **always** if your partner demonstrates the cue correctly all the time, **sometimes** if they demonstrate the cue often but not always, and **never** if they never demonstrate the cue.

Cues:

| | | | |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|
| 1. Thrower throws as they run. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 2. Thrower keeps running after the throw. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 3. Arm goes way back. | Always | Sometimes | Never |
| 4. Thrower follows through with hand toward target. | Always | Sometimes | Never |

FIGURE 1 Peer teaching "coach's" assessment observation sheet

target, is one way to ensure success. Structuring tasks for success motivates students to continue to practice and minimizes frustration.

As students continue to develop through the upper intermediate level, in addition to changes in their motor skill proficiency, there are differences in cognitive and affective developmental characteristics. Some of these characteristics are that they are thinking more abstractly, actively seek independence, and strive for peer acceptance. Table 3 provides instructional strategies that compliment the affective and developmental characteristics of students at this level.

Peer teaching as an instructional approach is a perfect fit with the affective and cognitive developmental characteristics of students at the upper intermediate level. Peer teaching provides a way for students to learn a skill, receive feedback, and analyze skill and strategy, while interacting with their peers. When using peer teaching, the task is explained and demonstrated to the students who then take on the role of "teaching" or "coaching" their peer. Students observe and analyze their peer's performance and provide feedback to help improve the quality of the skill/task performance.

To ensure the effectiveness of this approach, simple and clear cues must be provided. One way to do this is to provide students with a peer assessment sheet on which the cues are easily identified. Figure 1 provides an example of a peer teaching assessment for throwing on the move that could be used with students at the utilization level of skill development.

Using a variety of instructional approaches can make the teaching-learning process exciting for both teachers and students. Ensuring that the approach is developmentally and instructionally appropriate is the key to the effectiveness of the chosen approach. A teacher who considers the characteristics of the "whole person" (motor, cognitive, affective domains) will definitely enhance the teaching-learning process and ensure student success!

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School Beverage Program and Youth Partnership Initiative

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