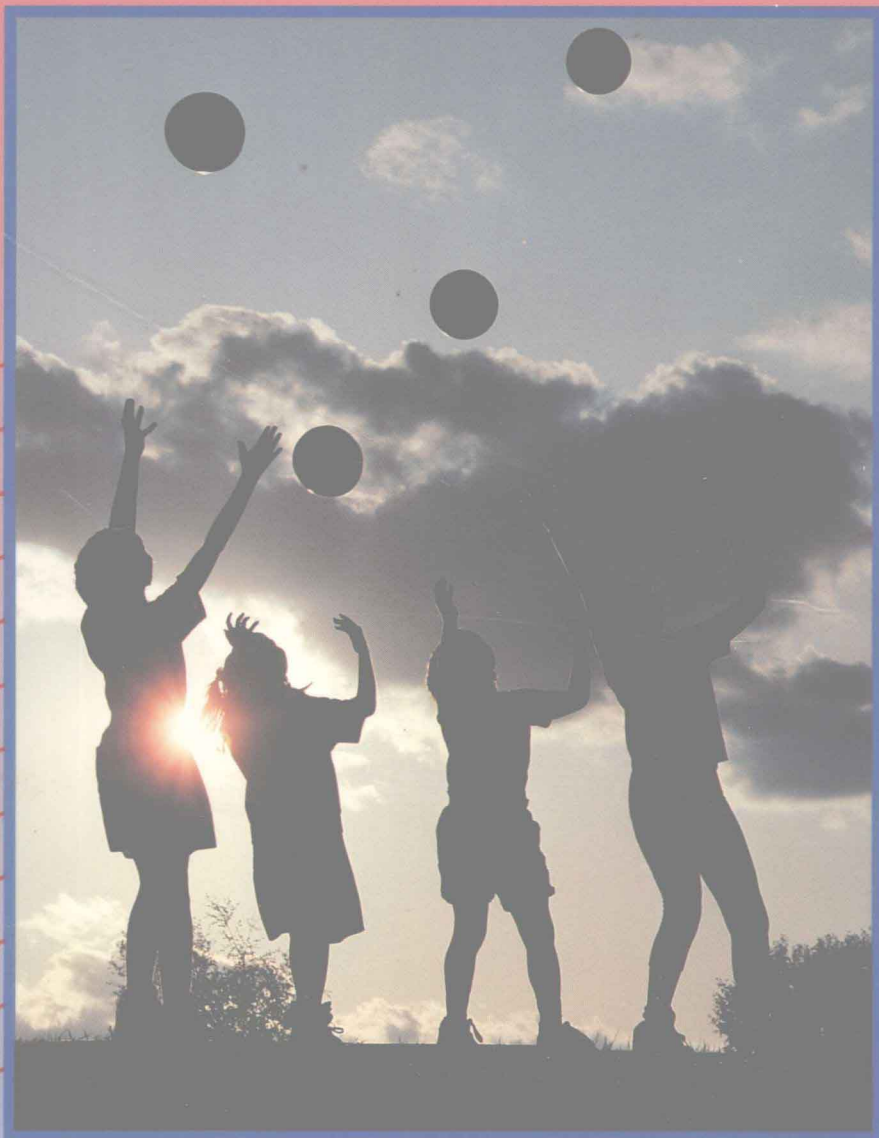


TEACHING CHILDREN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Becoming a Master Teacher



GEORGE GRAHAM

TEACHING CHILDREN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Becoming a Master Teacher

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For Nick and Tommy

Preface

Each spring I teach physical education at Margaret Beeks Elementary School in Blackburg, Virginia. I refer to it as “my spring teaching.” I don’t have to. I’m a professor at a university, and, unfortunately, there’s no incentive for me to teach at an elementary school. Why then do I do it?

There are several reasons. The first is that I genuinely enjoy teaching children’s physical education. There’s a feeling of satisfaction and warmth that one just doesn’t get from university students. Rarely, for example, do university students express genuine joy when I enter the room. “Hooray, Dr. Graham is here!” is a greeting that I have yet to receive from university students. It is one I receive from the children at Margaret Beeks—along with an occasional hug around the leg.

Another reason I spring teach is that it gives me a chance to try out new ideas—ones that I have read about in the research literature, observed at other elementary schools, or heard described at conferences.

Finally, my spring teaching keeps me in touch with children—and teaching. It’s easy to sit in a university office and dream up ideas that may or may not succeed with children. When I test them out each spring, however, I begin to sense which have potential and which are simply unrealistic.

In writing this book, I have tried to express the perspective of a teacher as opposed to that of a university professor. Much of the information is based on research completed in the last 20 years or so. I have applied it to teaching children’s physical education so that it will be of value to undergraduates preparing to teach and to those already teaching in the schools.

This book is unique in that it focuses totally on the teaching process—the skills and techniques that successful teachers use to make their classes more interesting and appropriate for children. Future teachers will find the book helpful because it describes and analyzes many of the teaching skills and techniques that experienced teachers use. Topics such as discipline, motivation, and effective

ways to plan will be of particular interest to the novice.

The experienced teacher, in contrast, will discover that some of the techniques they already use are named and described in the book. I hope that the veteran teacher will also be challenged to consider some new techniques for structuring classes, developing lessons, and adjusting tasks for individual children—ideas that will benefit them and the children they teach. We have learned a lot about teaching in the past 20 years, and the veteran teacher will find much of this information both useful and informative.

Because this book is intended for both experienced and beginning teachers, I have included many practical examples in the form of teaching scenarios and vignettes throughout the text. It is obvious that the teaching process (that is, what the teacher actually does) cannot be separated from the content to be taught. For this reason, many of the analyses and descriptions of the various teaching skills include examples of the content (activities or tasks) typically found in children’s physical education classes.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Teaching cannot be reduced to a simple formula. There are always decisions to be made—quickly and often. Learning to make these decisions can only be done “on one’s feet.” We can read about what teachers do, but until we ourselves are actually in the “eye of the hurricane,” it is difficult to grasp the complexity of choices confronting a teacher. In writing this book, I have attempted to explain the decision-making process by separating it into various chapters. Realistically, parts of every chapter in the book will be used in virtually every lesson that is taught. To help you integrate, I have included several features to encourage the type of thinking that we as teachers do during a lesson.

Chapter Introductions

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction designed to “set the stage.” This is helpful for connecting one chapter with another and also for understanding the teaching skills and techniques that will be discussed in that chapter.

Chapter Objectives

Each chapter introduction includes a series of objectives that highlight the key points in that chapter. Some books use the word *student* instead of *teacher*. I have used *teacher* instead of *student* because those who are interested in this book are, or will become, teachers.

Insights

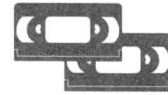
Throughout the book I have included informal insights or asides. These are based on experiences, my own or those of others, from teaching children in physical education settings. They are designed to provide the types of practical, interesting insights that are often not included in a book—but that help to personalize the book and make it “come alive.” A sample “insight” section follows:

MENTORING

I am often struck by the fact that teaching is neither terribly difficult nor mysterious when it is one with one (e.g., a mother and daughter, an older and a younger brother, grandparent and grandchild) tutoring. The tasks can easily be changed and accommodated to suit the needs and interests of that child. The problem in schools, however, is that teachers are responsible for many children, have limited resources, and work in confined spaces—an awesome task that, viewed in perspective, is done remarkably well.

Videotape Analysis

In recent years videotaping lessons of teachers has provided both researchers and practitioners with opportunities to carefully study and analyze the process of teaching. You are encouraged to videotape several lessons of your own, if possible, before beginning to read the book. Throughout the book, sections entitled “Videotape Analysis” will provide suggested ways you can analyze and reflect on your own teaching. These sections are marked with the following icon:



If this book is used as a text for a college course, the professor is urged to have the students in the class teach a 10- or 15-minute mini-lesson to their peers (or children if possible) before beginning to read the book. An analysis of various parts of these videotaped lessons will provide interesting and valuable insights to the students as they reflect on how they were taught and are challenged to compare those teaching approaches with ones described in the book.

For those who are unable to videotape their own teaching, a companion videotape is available with this book. This videotape includes four consolidated lessons of children’s physical education that will be helpful for making the book more practical.

Reflection Questions

Each chapter in the book concludes with a series of “Questions for Reflection.” Because teaching cannot be reduced to a precise formula, these questions are designed to help you think about the teaching process and the reasons why we teach the way we do. I hope that they will also lead you to question some of the ways physical education has been taught in the past—finding the good points and remodeling those practices that may be counterproductive for children.

One of the things we know about good teachers is that they have a sense of wonder about their teaching. They ponder such questions as “Did that work? How could it have been better? What would happen if . . . ? Why is that way better than another way? Are there other ways to do that in less time? How can I gain the interest of more children in what I am teaching?” I hope that the reflection questions at the end of each chapter will increase and deepen your sense of wonder about teaching.

Chapter Summary and References

Each chapter concludes with a summary or parting thought and a list of the references cited in that chapter.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

One of the challenges of writing a book on the process of teaching is figuring out how to describe a process that is intertwined, complex, and nonlinear. When we “break out” various teaching skills, we tend to oversimplify their use as they are removed from the dynamic context of a lesson. Realistically, however, one has no choice in a book. I hope that the Videotape Analyses and Questions for Reflection will restore a sense of context and complexity to the variety of skills that teachers use to create lessons both stimulating and beneficial to children. Furthermore, I have tried to arrange the chapters (after the introductory chapter) in chronological order, based on the points at which various teaching skills and techniques might be used in a lesson.

The introductory chapter places the book within the settings in which children’s physical education is actually taught. Discussions of the purpose, challenges, and rewards of children’s physical education are described in realistic settings. The chapter concludes by describing the type of knowledge possessed by successful teachers of children’s physical education and how it looks when translated into practice. The important message of the first chapter is that this book is about how to teach (the process); it is not a description of activities and games that teachers might use in teaching children.

Planning, the next chapter, is probably not a favorite subject—but it is a necessary one. It is placed at the beginning for obvious reasons. Ideas for planning and sequencing lessons and also for developing yearly plans that are sequential and developmentally appropriate are featured.

Discipline and off-task behavior are often primary concerns of teachers, so this chapter has also been placed early in the book. Chapter 3 describes how teachers minimize discipline problems by developing management routines (protocols) designed to prevent off-task behavior from the very first day of the school year.

Despite all of a good teacher’s intentions and preparations, some children will manage to be off-task. Chapter 4 describes how successful teachers deal with these problems.

A successful beginning to a lesson is often the prelude to a worthwhile class. Chapter 5

discusses this important aspect of teaching. Chapter 6 analyzes the ways teachers provide instruction and use demonstrations to help children better understand and retain important concepts.

A worthwhile topic for discussion among any group of teachers is “motivating children.” Chapter 7 suggests ways to do this and emphasizes intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation techniques.

One of the premises of this book is that good teachers recognize the differences in children—that one class of third graders is different from the next, and that within any third-grade class, there is a wide range of abilities and interests. This child-centered approach to teaching requires that a teacher be able to accurately observe and interpret the movement of children and then adapt the lessons accordingly. Chapter 8 presents techniques of observing and analyzing children as they move.

Questions such as “What is the best way to organize the content? When should I change from one task to another? and What do you do when the children need to continue working on a task, but they want to do something else?” are addressed in chapter 9.

Chapter 10 relates when and how teachers can provide useful feedback that is consistent with the focus of the lesson. Chapter 11 examines the teaching skills of asking questions and setting problems for children to solve, emphasizing the importance of cognitive understanding.

Chapter 12 focuses on the affective domain and suggests way teachers can help children feel good about themselves and about physical activity. The final chapter on teaching skills (chapter 13) provides a realistic perspective on assessing (testing) children in schools.

The book concludes with a chapter (chapter 14) on the importance of teachers’ continuing to learn and develop professionally to avoid becoming stagnant and “out of touch.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The book is finished! Now I have the pleasure of acknowledging the people who have contributed, knowingly or unknowingly, to it. It’s 8:00 a.m. and, as I have every morning throughout this project, I am sitting at the desk in my study. As I wait for the word processor to sort through its various files and

drives, I watch the chickadees and cardinals hover around the feeder in the big lilac tree outside. I am also enjoying reflecting on all of the people and events that have influenced both what I've said in this book and the way I've said it. Where to begin?

I am grateful to David Belka and Cam Kerst for their thorough and helpful review of the entire manuscript. I also appreciate Judy Rink's review of the content development chapter. And Marilyn Bray, John Pomeroy, and Ron Speck provided valuable insights and encouragement in the book's early development.

I especially want to thank the people who worked on the technical aspects of this book. Judy Patterson Wright, the book's developmental editor, was everything a "DE" should be—thorough, a good and critical listener, patient yet firm, careful yet willing to tolerate the whims of a writer. Linda Bump was vital to the conception of the project, even at early morning breakfasts at national meetings when we both were exhausted. The encouragement and support of Scott Wikgren, Rick Frey, and Rainer Martens have been immensely helpful—and have made the book that much more enjoyable to work on. I also want to thank the cartoonist, Dick Flood, and the cover photographer, Bob Veltri, for their highly professional work. Special thanks go to my cover models, Raj Casper, Jessica Culver, Chuckie Hoover, and Ivy Williams.

Since arriving in Blacksburg, Virginia, I have been fortunate to work at the nearby Margaret Beeks Elementary School. The teachers, the administration, and the staff have always been incredibly helpful and cooperative. When I have needed to be with children, to find a setting for my university students to practice teaching, or just to explore an idea, they have never failed to make it happen. They have made my job much easier—and have, I am certain, helped make me a better teacher and writer. Over the years I have learned a great deal from the children at Margaret Beeks, even though on many days I was supposed to be the teacher. Second grade teacher Linda Smith has been overwhelmingly supportive. And I am indebted to

physical education teacher Casey Jones for his support and also for his inspiration as a dedicated and successful teacher who truly cares about every child in his program.

It is also important to acknowledge the many teachers in many places who have allowed me to visit their classes, ask questions, teach their children, and generally poke around as I attempted to understand, and explain, this complicated process called teaching. I am also indebted to the students and colleagues who have challenged my thinking over the years, causing me to clarify both my ideas and the ways I explained them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the contributions of my wife, Judy. When asked, she played the role of critic and reviewer with aplomb and intelligence. More importantly, however, her enthusiasm for this project and her belief in me as a writer and as a person have made it immensely easier to switch on the word processor at 8 o'clock every morning.

To all of those I have named, and to those I haven't, thank you. I hope you are pleased with this work.

AN INVITATION TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Throughout the book I have attempted to use practical examples to illustrate the teaching skills and techniques that I have described. As I conclude the preface, I would like to invite you to share with me some of the ways you teach children so that I might include your methods in future editions of the book. As you read the book, please jot down examples of techniques that you use in your classes that might help illustrate a teaching skill or clarify an example. Please send your ideas to me at the following address: Division of Health and Physical Education, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061. Needless to say, I will be grateful, and so will the teachers who read future editions of the book.

George Graham

Before You Start to Read . . .

Throughout this book you will be asked to observe and analyze teachers of children's physical education. Obviously the teacher you are most interested in is yourself. You will benefit most from this book if you make several videotapes of your lessons prior to beginning the text but certainly before you begin reading chapter 3. If possible, I suggest you videotape several lessons—one with the youngest children you teach and another with an upper-grade class. I would also recommend that you videotape one of your favorite classes and one that you find more challenging to work with. The following guidelines will be helpful to you as you make the videotape:

1. Choose lessons to videotape in which you are actively teaching a new concept or skill as opposed to a lesson that depicts an activity that the children have already learned.
2. Set the videocamera in one corner of your teaching area so that you can see as many children as possible at all times. If someone else is "working" the camera, ask that person to move the

camera so that you are always in view but to keep the lens on a wide angle. Some teachers just set the camera in a corner and allow it to run for the entire lesson on a wide angle setting.

3. If possible, use a cordless microphone (not the one on the camera). This will allow you to clearly hear your individual interactions with the children.
4. Select content that is different for each lesson—not only game skills, or dance, for example.
5. If the camera has a date and time setting that can be included as part of the videotape, activate these features. This will allow you to locate various parts of the videotapes much more easily for future reference.

In the event that you are unable to videotape some of your own lessons, I have produced a videotape of several lessons for use in conjunction with this text. It is available from Human Kinetics Publishers and can be ordered by telephoning 1-800-747-4457.

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Chapter 1



Successful Teaching

"Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. Those who can't teach, teach physical education."

—WOODY ALLEN

Woody Allen is right! We do have teachers in our profession (obviously some of them taught Woody Allen) who can't (or don't) teach. As an unfortunate result, a number of adults in the United States recall physical education (P.E.) classes as painful, humiliating, and virtually worthless experiences.

Fortunately this is changing. Today we have a "new breed" of physical education teacher in the United States. They teach physical education in ways that cause the Woody Allens of the world to look forward to physical education with enthusiasm. These teachers care as much about the low-skilled, sensitive, unconfident child as they do about the aggressive, athletic child. And they have found ways to make their classes both pleasant and worthwhile for all children—the low- and the high-skilled, and all those in between.

The purpose of this book is to describe and analyze the techniques, behaviors, and approaches used by these successful teachers to develop and teach lessons that are developmentally appropriate—and that result in enjoyable and beneficial learning experiences for children.

After reading and understanding this chapter, the teacher will be able to

- explain why teaching children's physical education is characterized as a dynamic, constantly changing process;
- analyze both the obstacles and benefits of teaching children's physical education;
- explain the concept of *orchestration* as it relates to the selection and use of teaching skills;

- describe the distinction between content (what is taught) and the process of teaching (pedagogy); and
- delineate the major components of successful children's physical education teaching.

THE TEACHER, NOT ONLY THE CONTENT

When I think back on all of the teachers who taught me throughout my school years, several come immediately to mind—the good ones and the not so good. One of the teachers that pops into memory is my high school trigonometry teacher. I decided in elementary school that math was not one of my academic strengths. I struggled through required math courses from year to year—until I took a “trig” course in my senior year. I vividly remember the first day. The teacher informed us that our text would be a college-level trigonometry book. I thought, “I am in big trouble in this course.”

Surprisingly, this wasn't so. My trig teacher, even though the topic and the textbook were difficult for me, made the material very interesting, and I actually did quite well. I almost enjoyed it despite my negative attitude at the beginning of the class.

Obviously it wasn't the subject—trigonometry—that encouraged me to do better than I had expected. It was the teacher—the way he explained concepts, took time with us, never made us feel foolish, structured the content, answered questions with understandable examples, arranged for us to succeed in small steps, and did a plethora of other “small things” that, when totaled, were the earmarks of a highly effective teacher of trigonometry.

Fortunately, this book isn't about trigonometry. It's about teachers and the kinds of things they do (or don't do) that make learning attainable and enjoyable for students. Trigonometry, reading, or physical education can all be taught in ways that are exciting and educational. However, they can also be taught in ways that are boring, confusing, and distasteful. We are not just concerned with the content to be taught. We are also concerned with the teacher and all of the things she*

does that make our attempts to learn the material productive and stimulating—so that we learn and enjoy the process.

This may sound as if I am suggesting that the content—and a teacher's knowledge of the content—is unimportant. This simply isn't true. Good teachers know the subject thoroughly; this enables them to develop it in ways that are engaging and productive for children. My high school trigonometry teacher understood the subject well; that enabled him to develop lessons that were interesting, enjoyable, and productive.

The distinction between knowing what to teach (the content or curriculum) and knowing how to teach (the process or the performance of the teacher) is an artificial one. Content and process cannot be separated. They are interwoven. In studying and understanding teaching, nevertheless, this artificial distinction is a helpful one. The chapters that follow describe many of these teaching skills and techniques and provide practical examples of how successful teachers use them to create effective lessons and programs for children.

Because physical education is a unique subject in the schools, teachers use orchestrations of skills that are somewhat different from those that their colleagues in the classroom use. This book will delineate many of the teaching skills employed by successful children's physical education teachers and the ways they are used effectively in realistic teaching situations.

HOW IS CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL EDUCATION DIFFERENT?

Teaching any subject to a class of children is challenging. Teaching children's physical education is probably the most challenging job in an elementary school. There are a number of reasons why this is so.

*The English language offers no truly convenient way to refer to the third person singular without excluding one gender or the other. The contortion “he/she” is both awkward and hard to read. Since both men and women teach children's physical education, the decision was made to use female and male pronouns in alternate examples.

The children are moving rather than anchored in desks; a teacher may work with 5-year-olds one lesson and with 11-year-olds a few minutes later; the range of content to be taught covers the entire spectrum of physical activity; facilities and equipment are often less than ideal. No doubt you can add to this list.

In addition to these factors, there is also a frenetic pace—30 or more children involved simultaneously in activity. Larry Locke (1975), in his now classic description of a children's physical education lesson, captured the complexity and pace of teaching with a vibrance and accuracy that is hard to find in written descriptions. Because this book is about teaching children's physical education "in the real world," it seems appropriate to begin by setting the stage with his description of a 2-minute observation of a class of 34 fourth-grade children during a gymnastics unit:

Teacher is working one-on-one with a student who has an obvious neurological deficit. She wants him to sit on a beam and lift his feet from the floor. Her verbal behaviors fall into categories of reinforcement, instruction, feedback, and encouragement. She gives hands-on manual assistance. Nearby two boys perched on the uneven bars are keeping a group of girls off. Teacher visually monitors the situation but continues work on the beam. At the far end of the gym a large mat propped up so that students can roll down it from a table top, is slowly slipping nearer to the edge. Teacher visually mon-

itors this but continues work on the beam. Teacher answers three individual inquiries addressed by passing students but continues as before. She glances at a group now playing follow-the-leader over the horse (this is off-task behavior) but as she does a student enters and indicates he left his milk money the previous period. Teacher nods him to the nearby office to retrieve the money and leaves the beam to stand near the uneven bars. The boys climb down at once. Teacher calls to a student to secure the slipping mat. Notes that the intruder, milk money now in hand, has paused to interact with two girls in the class and, monitoring him, moves quickly to the horse to begin a series of provocative questions designed to reestablish task focus.

This 2-minute vignette suggests how complex teaching is—but that's only 120 seconds out of 17,000 the teacher spent that day actually working with children.

ANALOGIES OF TEACHING

Teaching is complex. Sometimes it seems as if you are "in the eye of a hurricane." Balls, children, and ideas are whirling everywhere with no apparent order—but all demand immediate attention.

Teaching has also been likened to a three-ring circus. The teacher is in the center ring—the circusmaster. From this central position the teacher simultaneously directs all three rings and attempts to maintain a



pace and variety that hold the interest of the audience.

A third teaching analogy is not related to a hurricane or a circus—it's that of a composer and conductor of a symphony. There are many ways to arrange and blend the different instruments in an orchestra: the strings, the brass, the woodwinds, the percussion instruments. Some extraordinary works of music are dominated by violins, violas, and cellos. Oboes, bassoons, and flutes may be featured in another piece. Marches and military music are dominated by brass and percussion instruments. The fascinating part of listening to and watching a symphony orchestra is observing the myriad ways the various pieces of the orchestra blend in harmony to form enjoyable, often memorable, works of music.

This is how I see successful children's physical education teachers. They are artists, able to orchestrate teaching skills and develop lessons that are both absorbing and beneficial to children of all ages and abilities.

As is true of music, there is no single way to organize and teach a lesson.

CHANGING AND DYNAMIC

There is no predetermined formula that one can follow precisely to become a successful teacher. Teaching is too unpredictable. One third-grade class is not identical to another. Children are different on Monday morning from the way they are on Friday afternoon. So are teachers! Our understanding of teaching has increased over the years, but knowing what skills, strategies, and tactics to use when and with whom is still an artistic decision that varies from class to class and from teacher to teacher.

True teaching, as distinguished from "rolling out the ball," is not like working on an assembly line—it's constantly changing and dynamic. Schon (1990) uses the phrase *indeterminate zone of practice* to describe the uncertainty and ambiguities faced by teachers. Some professions appear to be driven by rules: When this happens, do this; when that happens, do that. Although one may try to reduce teaching to a precise science or formula, there is always a substantial degree of artistry and judgment involved in every lesson we teach.

One isn't simply born an artist—or teacher. There are techniques to learn and concepts

to understand. A painter, for example, might learn painting techniques for use with watercolors, oils, and pastels. And there are concepts that need to be understood and expressed through the chosen medium: harmony of color and light, shading, combining colors to create various hues and tones, perspective, form, unity, and abstraction. The artist selects from among these skills to express desired meanings on a canvas.

Good teachers follow an approach similar to that of good artists. They acquire a range of skills and techniques, not necessarily at a university, which then allows them to develop and teach lessons that are meaningful and worthwhile for children. Whereas some of the skills are learned consciously, others seem to be acquired subconsciously. Regardless of how the skills are acquired, successful teachers possess a repertoire of abilities from which they select to consistently and intentionally provide children with developmentally appropriate experiences in physical activity.

Our scientific understanding of the skills and techniques used by expert teachers continues to grow (Brophy & Good, 1986; Rink, 1985; Siedentop, 1991; Silverman, 1991). We are learning more about what good teachers do (and don't do) with children. As with virtually any profession, however, knowing when and how to use this information requires an artistic decision.

DIFFICULT TO CAPTURE IN WORDS

Try to tell someone how to juggle—without demonstrating. It's hard to find the right words and phrases. We may be excellent jugglers ourselves, but words are often inadequate tools for helping someone else learn the skill. As with juggling, teaching children's physical education is a process that is easier to observe than to describe. Good teachers are artists with children—but they have a hard time relating what they do. We can recognize a good teacher when we see one, but it's much harder to tell why that teacher is so much better than another teacher.

One of the techniques used by good teachers is one that I am going to use in this book. I am going to break the complex teaching process into small parts with the hope of providing a more penetrating analysis and deeper

understanding. This is possible on paper—but not with 30 children on the playground or in the gym. Writing (and reading) about teaching is a luxury because it allows the reader to pause and reflect on the various aspects of teaching: how they're used, why they're used, and how they might be used differently in various settings. When we're teaching, we don't have the opportunity to say to a class every few seconds, "Freeze. I want to spend 3 minutes thinking about what I am going to do next as a teacher." In writing, however, the challenges of teaching—and how they are met by successful teachers—can be described and discussed at a more leisurely pace than the frenetic, urgent one described by Locke (1975).

THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Teaching any subject in American schools today is a challenge—even when viewed from the perspective of the written word that can be frozen in time. There are obstacles that all teachers face; there is also satisfaction when the job is done well.

The Obstacles

In a single day an elementary school physical education teacher typically works with 7 to 12 classes of children. The ages may range from 5 to 11, the physical abilities from poor to excellent, the needs and interests varying from children interested in sports and physical fitness to those who have already decided that physical activity is not for them. In addition, many teachers have jump rope programs before school, juggling clubs at lunch, and gymnastics programs after school. Some also coach. When an elementary school physical education teacher ends her day, she has typically interacted with several hundred children, several classroom teachers and parents, and one or more principals, secretaries, custodians, and cooks—and she wonders why she is so tired. That's a challenging day.

Needless to say, few teachers complete their days under ideal circumstances. During cold and rainy weather, some teachers' gyms become lunchrooms from 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., so P.E. is taught in halls, lobbies, classrooms, and on stages. Some classroom teachers insist on bringing their classes to P.E.

early and arriving late to pick them up; others view P.E. as a time to help individual children "catch up" on math or reading, often the children who enjoy physical education the most. Schedules are always a complex conundrum in elementary schools. The result is that a class of fifth graders may be followed by kindergartners, followed by second graders, and then another fifth-grade class. Field trips and visiting speakers often present surprises to the physical education teacher—especially when the principal and classroom teacher forget to notify the P.E. teacher, who discovers that his next class has just left on a bus to visit the entomology museum. Equipment budgets of \$200 for the year represent yet another challenge to the physical educator, who quickly learns the value of collecting soup labels and attending PTA meetings at budget time.

NO WONDER I'M TIRED

Interview a teacher (or keep a log if you are already teaching) and list all of the people interacted with during one typical teaching day. Try to calculate the number of minutes the teacher spent not interacting with anyone else during the day—the time that the teacher was alone—and had time to think or relax.

As virtually any elementary school physical education teacher will attest, these are real challenges. They weren't simply invented to catch the reader's attention. Obviously, however, there are also rewards. If there weren't, we wouldn't be able to find many teachers spending more than one or two years teaching in elementary schools.

The Benefits

Clearly the primary benefit of teaching is not the pay. I have yet to meet a physical education teacher with an expense account or company car. And summers, which appear on paper as two and a half months of "rest and recuperation," are often spent taking courses required for continued certification—or working a second job. What then are the benefits?

One of the most obvious benefits is simply the joy of being with children—the contagious giggles, the naive curiosity, the honesty that makes you sometimes wish you hadn't asked,