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Spicing Up Motor Skill Performance for All

Scott M Ronspies, *Eastern Illinois University*



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Spicing Up Motor Skill Performances—FOR ALL!

by Scott M. Ronspies & Michael J. Messerole

Motor skill assessment should be a vital part of any physical education curriculum. Getting students excited about practicing motor skills and assisting them in performing correctly should be goals of any professional working with students of all abilities and needs, including those with disabilities. If you are looking for a fun, challenging way to spice up motor skill assessment, help may be just a click away. The *PE Central Challenge* (PECC) provides opportunities for students of all levels to practice motor skills successfully and be rewarded for their efforts. In this article you learn about the background of PECC, ways to incorporate PECC into your program, awards and certificates students can earn, detailed descriptions of each of the six challenges, modifications for each challenge to assist students with special needs and abilities, and how the teacher can track student performances. For a more detailed description of the PECC, and how you can register your school for it—go to the website, www.pecentral.org/pecchallenge. Ready to have some fun and learn about an exciting idea to spice up your curriculum? If so, let's go!

The PE Central Challenge

The PECC is designed for fourth and fifth grade students to assist them in practicing a variety of motor skills, many of which are a part of our professional national standards (NASPE). One of the many highlights of the Challenge lies in its flexibility to be modified to meet needs and abilities of students at any grade or skill level, making it suitable to implement in any circumstance encountered. It is not a one-time test, but a series of opportunities for students to practice and master each of the six motor skills. The PECC is intended to encourage students of all abilities to practice and improve their skill levels, rather than a way to recognize only highly skilled students—the Challenge should be a positive experience for all.

Teachers should visit the website to find information about when to register their schools. This information can also be obtained when subscribing to the free PE Central newsletter at (www.pecentral.org/newsletter.html). Contacts are made to the instructor via e-mail indicating how to continue the Challenge, as well as how to order 30 medals online free of charge.

Incorporating the PECC into your program can be a fun and innovative process. It is a great way to work with administrators and other teachers to generate ideas to promote your curriculum. Several unique ideas are on the website, ranging from student posters and artwork, to a Challenge luncheon and student designed brochures. If your school sends home a newsletter, include a section about *your* Challenge, so parents can be aware of the innovative activities their children are doing in physical education. A sample parent letter, available on the website, can be modified to be sent home to parents explaining the PECC and asking if parents would like to volunteer to help. Pictures and photos are also a great way to get students excited about the Challenge, along with visual displays in the gym. Another idea is to ask school faculty and parents if they would like to volunteer in assisting with the Challenge. Remember, **you** have to promote yourself and your program. The more exposure your program receives, the more support you will have.



Balance Shuffle in action



Hula Hooping skill



Students at jump rope station

The Six Challenges

When introducing the skills and giving descriptions of each, use cues and tips provided on the website to assist students in completing the skills. This should promote more successes among the class and get students excited about the Challenge.

Balance Shuffle—The balance shuffle is a partner challenge sure to excite students and get their cognitive juices flowing. Two students stand on each end of an eight foot long 2" x 4" board placed on the gym floor. Each student travels to opposite ends of the board, then back to their original spots without any body part touching the floor. The board has marked lines 12 inches from each end. These lines are where students start and finish the challenge. If either partner has a body part touch the ground, the pair must start the challenge over.



Volley up skill



Partner Throw & Catch



Paddle Strike station

Hula Hooping—The hula hooping challenge is sure to get the hips in motion. This is a single student challenge in which the student must hula hoop for 20 seconds, with the hoop starting at the waist and remaining off the gym floor the entire time. Pre-teaching correct techniques of hula hooping can help students who have difficulty completing this challenge. A stopwatch is needed for the challenge, along with correct sizes of hula hoops.

Jump that Rope—Jump that rope gets the sweat glands going for sure! This is also a single student challenge in which the student must jump rope continuously (rope must remain in constant turning motion) for 90 seconds without a miss. Students can jump any style they prefer, as long as rules are followed. A stopwatch is needed for this skill.

Volley Up—Volley up is a challenge promoting hard work and teamwork in a very intense environment. This is a three-student challenge in which the group stands in a triangle to volley a volleyball, or similar piece of equipment. The challenge is to volley a ball 10 times in a row without the ball hitting the floor. Each person must contact (volley) the ball at least 2 times, but may not volley the ball twice in a row.

Partner Throw & Catch—The partner throw and catch tests throwing accuracy and correct mechanics of throwing and catching. This is a partner skill in which two students, from a distance of 25 feet, throw and catch a ball with their hands. Balls can include tennis balls, whiffle balls, or foam balls. Colored gym tape works well to mark off the distance. Both students must catch and throw from behind the line to complete the challenge. If a student falls over the line, the challenge must start over. Each student must perform 15 throws, and 15 catches, for a total of 30.

Paddle Strike—The paddle strike is sure to get students talking. This challenge tests one's inner strength and focus. This is a single student challenge in which the student must strike a ball with a handled paddle or racket for 60 seconds, while remaining in a 3-4 foot diameter space. A hula hoop or jump rope (in the shape of a circle) are ways to make the circle. The circle must remain stationary for the entire 60 seconds, or the challenge must be done again. If the ball does not continue bouncing off the paddle, or touches any part of the student's body, the challenge must be redone. The student may not move out of the stationary circle. Students are allowed to move inside the circle, as long as the circle does not move, and the student stays within the 3-4 foot diameter area. A stopwatch is needed for this challenge.

Adapting to Various Abilities and Needs

As most physical educators can relate, students come with all different types of abilities and needs. Finding curriculum ideas to meet all these issues, making sure all students feel comfortable and are able to participate can be difficult. The *PE Central Challenge* allows for adaptations in each of the six skills to meet various student needs. The website suggests several modifications that can be used to assist educators in making sure students of all abilities can find

success in the challenges. The authors encourage instructors to be creative in coming up with different ways to adapt the PECC to all students.

Several great ideas of ways skills might be adapted include—

Balance Shuffle

- Use bubble wrap for students who are visually impaired.
- Have students in wheelchairs keep both wheels between or on two lines on the gym floor.
- Use lines on the gym floor.
- Place two ropes on the floor, vary width of ropes.

Hula Hooping

- Hula hoop on an arm or leg for 20 seconds.
- Turn a scarf in the air for 20 seconds.
- With hoop on ground, have student in wheelchair wheel around hoop for 20 seconds.
- Increase or decrease time as needed.

Jump that Rope

- Have two people twirl rope, while another student pushes a student in a wheelchair through the rope for 90 seconds.
- For students who are visually impaired, have two students turn a rope with a bell attached. When the bell hits the floor, the student steps over the rope.
- Increase or decrease time as needed.
- Place rope on floor and jump over continuously.

Volley Up

- Self-volley 10 times in a wheelchair.

- Strike a ball at a target 10 times successfully.
- Use balloons or plastic balls.
- Use balls of various sizes.
- Increase or decrease volley number.
- For students who are visually impaired, catch a beeper ball 10 times volleyed to them.
- Bounce ball continuously for specific time.

Partner Throw & Catch

- Adjust distance between partners according to ability of student.
- Use Velcro™ chest vest and Velcro™ ball.
- Use foot launcher to launch ball 10 times.
- Use beeper ball for students who are visually impaired.
- Use balls of different sizes or colors.
- Use bounce passes.

Paddle Strike

- Strike whiffle ball off tee with bat 10 times.
- Kick a ball into a designated area 15 times.
- Self-throw a scarf 10 times.
- Increase or decrease time.
- Use different kinds of paddles or racquets.

Tracking Performance

Tracking student performance can be made easy by utilizing a tracking sheet which can be downloaded and printed from the website. This can also be used as a visual motivator to encourage


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The


Power

of YOUR


Muscles




The seat crank moves the seat forward and backward to set the proper leg extension.



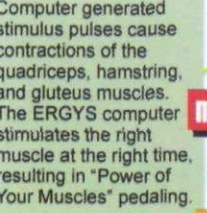
The Leg Restraints, which are secured around the thighs, center the knees and help to ensure the proper flexion and extension of the legs.




The position of the legs is relayed to the ERGYS computer via sensors that are mounted inside the ERGYS frame.



Computer generated stimulus pulses cause contractions of the quadriceps, hamstring, and gluteus muscles. The ERGYS computer stimulates the right muscle at the right time, resulting in "Power of Your Muscles" pedaling.



The feet are secured in padded boots, helping to ensure that the power generated by the big leg muscles is transferred into a smooth pedaling motion.



muscles pumping

blood flowing

legs moving

Imagine, 300 perfectly coordinated muscle contractions every minute. Imagine cycling smoothly and naturally at 50 RPM, flexing and extending your legs, all through the power of FES*-induced contractions of your leg muscles.

The ERGYS 2: the power to prevent muscle atrophy, relax muscle spasms, improve circulation, increase your range of motion, and more.†

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The ERGYS 2 for home and clinical use is a prescribed device for C- and T-level SCI. Affordable ERGYS 2 upgrades are available for the ERGYS 1.
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Monica L. Parson is Assistant Professor of Physical Education, Department of Health and Human Performance, Elon University, Campus Box 2525, Elon, NC 27244; (336) 278-5862; mparson@elon.edu. **Helen M. Binkley** is Associate Professor in the Athletic Training Education Program and a Director and Strength Specialist, Department of Human Performance and Wellness, Mesa State College, 1100 North Avenue, Grand Junction, CO 81501-3122; (970) 248-1985; hbinkley@mesastate.edu

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students to keep giving their best efforts. This sheet takes away guessing as to what skills each student has completed. Refer to tracking sheet periodically if students have questions as to what skills they still need to complete.

The Award System

Medals and awards can also be earned for participating in the PE Central Challenge. All students who participate in the Challenge receive participation certificates for their efforts. Students who complete all six challenges receive a gold medal and gold certificate; those completing five challenges receive a silver medal and silver certificate; and those who complete four challenges receive a bronze medal and bronze certificate. All certificates are free and can be printed from the website. Certificates are only downloaded from the website and are not mailed. Once you register your school, you are entitled to 30 free pins. Additional pins can be ordered from the website for \$1.00 per pin. If you have many students earning medals, you may choose to award only certificates if money and budget are issues. The website sends you an e-mail, usually in March, notifying when to place an order for gold, silver, and bronze medals. The medals are on a first come, first served basis, so watch your e-mail and get your order in quickly for your free pins. Pins are usually received by the middle to end of April. In 2004, the website offered 40,000 pins reserved by 1,350 teachers; act quickly when you get the special website via e-mail to order. Check the website to see if medals will be offered for upcoming PE Central Challenges.

Conclusion

From information provided in this article, instructors are encouraged to implement the PECC into their physical education curriculum. Not only can the Challenge be modified to meet needs of all students, including those with disabilities, but it also promotes other important qualities such as hard work, cooperation, teamwork, social and cognitive skills, and pride in one's effort.

Another bonus of the Challenge is students can assist others in completing skills, even though they may have already passed certain ones themselves. For example, if a student has already completed throwing and catching, he/she may help someone else complete the skill as a peer tutor.

The PECC is a great way to get students excited about practicing motor skills and staying physically active. For more detailed information about the Challenge and descriptions of the skills, please go to www.pecentral.org/pecchallenge. Most readers will agree the Challenge is a way to *spice up* motor skill performances and assessments while getting students motivated to stay active.

NOTE—Material in this article was used with permission of PE Central (www.pecentral.org), the premier website for physical educators.



Scott Ronspies has been teaching K-8 Physical Education at All Saints Catholic School in Omaha, NE for eight years. His areas of interest include motor skill development and childhood obesity. **Michael J. Messerole** is an assistant professor in the School of HPER at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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