

Hip-Hop Sport Education

by Shannon Pike

This article describes a teacher's account of a hip-hop, middle-school dance unit based on a Sport Education model (Siedentop, 1994). I begin with a brief description of Sport Education. Then I discuss the unit and the students' responses to the unit.

Sport Education provides experiences that reflect more authentic sport experiences than is typical in physical education (Siedentop, 1994). In this model, students learn the skills needed to play a sport and how to organize their sport experiences. The Sport Education model allows students to participate at a developmentally appropriate level by playing small-sided, modified games. This means that court sizes are smaller, nets are higher or lower, rules are modified, and equipment is changed for better performance. The modifications are done while preserving the essence of the sport.

There are six features that characterize the Sport Education model. The first feature is long seasons. Units are typically 20 lessons or longer. Seasons include both practice and competition, and end with a culminating event. The second feature is affiliation. Students are members of teams and stay with the team throughout the season. The third feature of the model is formal competition. Sport seasons are defined by formal competition that is interspersed with practice sessions and occurs in different formats: dual meets, round robins, and league schedules (Siedentop, 1994). The schedule is usually posted prior to the season so that teams can prepare for the different teams on their schedule. The culminating event is the fourth feature. In Sport Education, a culminating competition is designed like post-season play to determine a championship team. The culminating competition gives students something to work toward. The fifth feature of Sport Education is keeping records, such as batting averages, shots on goal, steals, and spikes. Records give feedback to the teams and help them set goals. The sixth feature is festivity. Sports are festive in nature. For example, the Olympic Games, World Series, Super Bowl, and collegiate football games all include festivities that enrich the sport atmosphere. Festivities add an important social element to students' physical education experience (Siedentop, 1994). Together the six features form the cornerstone of Sport Education.

In the Sport Education model, each student is assigned a role within his or her team including coaches, captains,

publicists, judges, and council members. All students share in the responsibilities of organizing and managing their Sport Education experiences. For example, if you are a coach, you are responsible for organizing practices and giving feedback. Students begin to learn to be responsible by working on their roles throughout the season.

I decided to apply the Sport Education model to a dance unit. I selected hip-hop dance because it is a dance form that is familiar to and valued by many middle-school students.

I started the unit by grouping the class into three teams. The students selected dance team names and then designed a poster that symbolized their names and represented a logo painted on a dance studio door. The poster added authenticity to the Sport Education unit. The students then voted on which student would

be given each role responsibility for their team. I suggested the following criteria for each role position. A

coach should be someone who is responsible, assertive, and have knowledge about dance.

A captain should be someone who gets along with the coach, who can motivate team members, and who is responsible. A publicist should be someone who speaks well in front of a crowd and who is creative. A judge should be someone who is responsible, honest, and fair. A dance council member should be

someone who is honest and creative. After I gave the criteria for roles, the students voted within their teams.

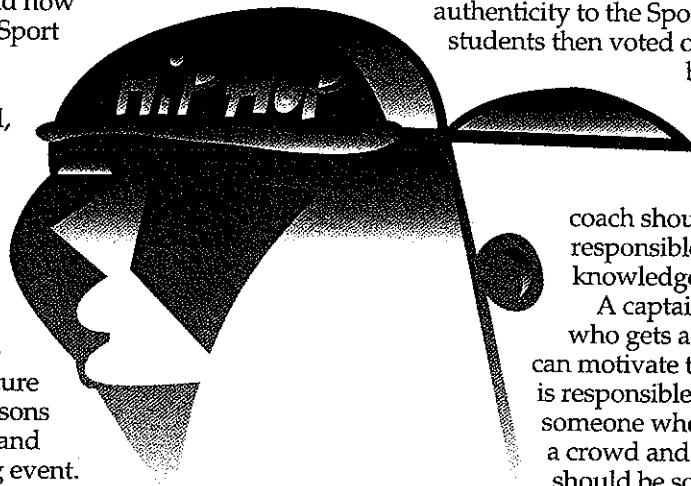
Basic Skills and Combinations

Sport Education units begin with instruction by the teacher on basic skills and combinations. I taught basic skills and combinations over five consecutive lessons. I started the hip-hop unit by first letting the students listen to hip-hop dance music. Hip-hop dance is fast, sharp movements combined with skills.

I also taught short combinations. Teaching combinations allowed the students to understand how to combine different movements together. I selected several different hip-hop movements and tricks for each combination.

Formations and Transitions

After teaching skills and short combinations, I taught formations and transitions. To teach formations, I handed each team a piece of paper with several different formations



illustrated. I then called a formation, and each coach put his/her team in the formation. By the end of the unit students created their own formations.

Transitions are the movements from one formation to the next. The goal is for each person to travel the shortest distance possible and to have the fewest number of individuals move. For example, you can move two lines to one line just by having the back row step up to the front. Transitions were also taught using small combinations. Every combination had at least two formations and one transition.

Choreography

After the students learned several different combinations, formations, and transitions, they started choreographing their own short dance. The students selected their music. The music had to be approved by me and contain no profanity, violence, or sexual language. I then helped the students improve their dance choreography and movement quality.

Helping Students Improve Their Dance Choreography

Getting Started

The beginning dancers had a hard time choreographing the first eight counts of their dance. They were not sure how to get started and stood helplessly.

I assisted the students first by asking different guiding questions. For example: What possible formations could you start in? Do you want to have a close formation or be farther apart? Do you want your heads up or down? Would you like to begin with fast, sharp movements or smooth, slow movements? I found that asking guiding questions worked well with most teams. It gave the students ideas and allowed them to think creatively on their own.

If the students were still "stuck" after trying to generate ideas, I assisted them by demonstrating some possible movements to use—for example, shake hips to the right two times, shake to the left two times, turn around, and kick high with the right leg. These examples of movement combinations helped the beginners create new ideas. Sometimes they would use the movements I gave them, but most of the time they would modify my movements or create their own movements that were similar to mine.

Transitions (Moving From One Formation to the Next)

A second problem the beginning dancers had was the transitions between formations. They had problems figuring out how to move simply and cleanly from one formation to another, having the fewest number of dancers change

positions. The beginners also had problems thinking through the transitions. They tended to move a formation wider or smaller as a transition, just changing the spacing, rather than individuals moving to create a new formation.

To assist students in designing transitions I guided them by asking questions first. For example, I asked what formation do you want to move to, two lines, three lines, one line, or a pinball? Once they identified the next formation, I would draw the current and subsequent formation on a piece of paper. For example, a group of nine students were in two lines and wanted to move to a pinball formation. Their initial plan was to change everyone's spot. That means the audience would see a lot of people moving. I explained that transitions should look simple and clean. I drew their first formation (two lines) and then the pinball formation beside it, writing each student's initials beside her formation spot in the two lines. I then showed them the simplest way to move to the pinball formation.

Drawing the formations on paper was beneficial. The students started to think through transitions on their own.

Developing a Variety of Visual Elements

The third problem the beginners had with choreography was that they had far too many symmetrical movements. If they did four movements to the right, they would repeat the same four movements to the left. They lacked a variety of visual elements. Visual elements are components of dance. These include having dancers at different levels and moving in ripples. An example of different levels in a three line formation would be the front row on their knees, second row on their feet bending at the knees, and the third row standing straight up. When the dancers perform the same arm movements, it is visually effective.

A ripple is like a stadium wave. To choreograph a ripple, you first have to select a dance movement—for example, right arm punches straight up on count one and straight down by your side on count two. Once dancers decide the movement, they decide which way the ripple should move (front to back or left to right). The next step is to split the formation (any formation will work) into three sections.

Students in the first section will punch on count 1 and down on count 2; second section will hold counts 1-2 and punch on count 3 and down on count 4; third section will hold counts 1-2-3-4, punch on count 5 and down on count 6. This creates a visual ripple.

To assist beginner dancers in adding a variety of contrasting elements, I observed their dance and asked them what visual elements they were missing. Once they identified what was missing, I helped them decide where the elements could be added. Dancers could keep the movements they choreographed but improve their dance by adding ripples and level changes. Once I assisted the students with ripples and levels, they started incorporating these elements on their own.

Sample Skills (aka "Tricks") in Hip-Hop Dance

1. Contract chest in and out while punching with right arm then left arm.
2. Shake hips to the right and left while shifting shoulders at the same time.
3. Straddle jump, touch toes, and land in a squat.
4. Hitch-kick then land in a squat.
5. Kneel on one knee, kick high, and hold foot with hands.
6. Split leap then land in a squat.

Helping Students Improve Movement Quality

Performing With a Full Range of Motion

One problem the students had with their movement quality was that they tended to perform movements without moving through the full range of motion. They only did half of the movement. For example, a group of students made up their hip-hop routine using the music and some movements from the MTV video *Bye, Bye, Bye* by NSYNC. In one part of their dance, they moved their right arms across their bodies and closed their hand in and out when the singers sang "bye, bye, bye."

Although the students moved their fingers a little, the audience would not notice the waving bye movement. I told them to really open up their hands and close them tight. Even though this is a small movement with only one body part, it still has to be performed through the fullest range of motion. I found students needed frequent reminding to perform movements fully.

I also used questioning and demonstrations to assist students in performing the full range of motion. For example, one team included a short dance combination that began with one arm going to the front straight out and back down. Most of the students were putting their arm out with a bent elbow. I demonstrated and asked them which looked better: the movement performed with a bent elbow or straight elbow. Students were able to see the difference and identify movements performed with a full range of motion. They had problems, however, feeling the difference between half and full range of motion. After they saw someone else do it, they could correct their own performance and, subsequently, they could more easily feel the difference.

Dance Expression

Dance is more than physical skills, it is also an art that represents feelings. The way you feel should be expressed through your body and through facial expressions. Expression was difficult for the beginning students. Some students were shy than others, and most students tended to look down at the ground when performing.

To assist students in developing expression, I reminded them to focus up. I suggested that they find a spot on the wall at eye level and look at that spot while dancing. Sometimes I called out students' names to remind them to look up. I smiled and encouraged them by cheering while they performed. This gave them confidence while dancing. I would cheer for each team while they performed. I found this to be very encouraging to the students. The more the students performed for each other, the better their expressions became.

Choreography Competition

The highlight of a Sport Education unit is the final competition. All three teams competed using the dance they choreographed. While one team was performing their dance, the other teams were carrying out their role responsibilities.

The dance council members announced the judges and their credentials before the team performed. The judges were at the table judging. They had score sheets for assessing synchronization, formations, transitions, and overall appeal. The publicists were taking pictures of the team dancing and getting ready to interview them after they performed. When the next team performed, the other two teams were dance council members, judges, and publicists. The coach and captain of the team motivated and encouraged all team members. Students received awards for the competition including first, second, and third places, most sportsmanship, most creative, and best individual dance performance.

The students loved the unit! They were excited about physical education every day, and they choreographed short combinations outside of physical education. When the unit was finished, the students wanted to get together and write a letter to the principal explaining why they wanted a dance program in their school. The students were motivated to work the whole hour and a half. They loved the competitions because it was a

chance for them to show off their hard work. Dance gave the students a sense of pride.

References

Siedentop, D. (1994). *Sport education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. *tepe*

Sample Hip-Hop Combinations

1. Start with head down and feet together, hold for counts 1-2-3, look up on count 4, step and punch to the right on counts 5-6, arms by side on count 7, and hold count 8.
2. Shake hips to the right on counts 1-2, and to the left on counts 3-4, high kick on counts 5-6, and squat on counts 7-8.
3. Contract chest and punch right arm on count 1, contract chest and punch left arm on count 2, jump with feet together on counts 3-4, straddle jump to a squat on counts 5-6-7-8.



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