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## VOCABULARY ON THE PLAYGROUND

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Can you recall those feelings you had when you first participated in double-dutch jumprope? As both ropes were being turned, they whipped through the air and made a loud crack each time they beat the ground with a quick, steady rhythm. You might even recall waiting anxiously, your apprehension increasing, before you summoned up enough courage to rush into the twirling blur of ropes. Or you might still clearly recollect those feelings of pride and exhilaration that you had the day on the playground when you were cheered and applauded by your classmates after you stretched to catch the ball that seemed uncatchable. It was the last out so your team won the game.

The first hand experiences shared on the playground provide teachers with numerous opportunities to expand their students' vocabularies. The action in different physical education activities, a description of that action, and the emotions that emerge during and after the activity can be used to generate vocabulary lessons that provide students with a level of awareness for the meaning of the word that isn't provided with dictionary definitions or descriptions by the teacher. The purpose of this article is to give a brief overview of the vocabulary instruction research, delineate vocabulary instructional guidelines based on the research, recommend procedures to follow when using physical education activities for teaching vocabulary, and suggest words that are logically associated with specific physical education activities.

### Vocabulary Research

Stahl's (1986) thorough review of research on vocabulary instruction to determine its effect on learning word meanings and on improving comprehension revealed that vocabulary

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instruction did have a positive effect on comprehension, particularly passages containing words that had been taught. Stahl surmised that the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction on improving comprehension of passages not containing the words taught might have been due to students' increased interest in learning new words. Vocabulary instruction also improved students' knowledge of word meanings. Not all vocabulary instruction was effective. Methods that gave only dictionary-type definitions for the target vocabulary, methods that gave only one or two exposures of meaningful information about each word, and methods that used only drill and practice with multiple repetitions of the same type of information about each new word did not help comprehension. Mezynski (1983) concluded that vocabulary instruction methods that provided a "breadth of knowledge" about each target word resulted in improved comprehension.

Stahl (1986) proposed that some words are more "definable" than others. With these more definable words, definitional approaches may be effectively used. However, there is general agreement that words representing one's feelings are usually more difficult for students to learn because of the difficulty in conveying a clear meaning; e.g., courage is defined in the dictionary as "the ability to face danger without fear." (Webster's II, 1984) This definition fails to capture the true essence of courage. As one experiences an act of courage and describes the feelings that emerge, it will be revealed that an element of fear was present and that courage involves being able to act even with the presence of fear and danger.

### Guidelines for Vocabulary Instruction

The following vocabulary instruction guidelines are based on vocabulary instruction research:

1. Group the words to be learned into semantic categories. Such groupings help students build relationships among the words.
  2. Provide a breadth of experiences with new words, such as first hand experiences, discussions, categorizing, dramatic presentations, games, predictions, writing.
  3. Give students an opportunity to manipulate words in a variety of ways in order to insure a clearer understanding of the words.
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4. Provide for systematic review of vocabulary.
5. Make word learning interesting and enjoyable.
6. Assess informally the vocabulary needs of students on a continuing basis.
7. Create frequent opportunities for students to use new vocabulary.

### Teaching Vocabulary with Physical Education Activities

Several procedures may be used when developing vocabulary using physical education activities. Two procedures are described in this article:

Procedure one. 1) Put the words to be learned on the board and either give the meaning of the new word (if you are sure students have no idea of the meaning) or ask students to predict the meaning of each new word. 2) Record the predictions on the board. 3) Inform students that on the playground as they participate in (name the activity) they will get a clearer understanding of the words, because they will be involved in the actions, view the actions and/or have feelings that the words represent. 4) Accompany students to the playground to engage in the planned activity. During participation, use the new vocabulary when opportunities arise. These words may be included as part of specific praise statements, e.g., "You are showing a lot of courage by going quickly into the double-dutch jump ropes," or "Joe, you certainly eluded the ball well in that game." 5) When the students return to the classroom, review the words and the predicted meanings. Ask if they want to change any of the meanings or add to any of the meanings. Elicit examples of their first-hand experiences with the vocabulary, e.g., "As you were jumping double-dutch, when did you move swiftly? What happened that caused you to feel exhilarated? Jeremiah, when did your agile movement prove most helpful in today's game?" 6) Elicit from students appropriate category groupings for the new vocabulary. 7) With successive physical education experiences including other activities, review the words in previous lessons by discussing how those words relate to the vocabulary included in the current lesson. Another method is to ask students to identify examples of when the action on the playground or players' feelings exemplified one of the previously learned vocabulary words.

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Procedure two. 1) First, take students to the playground to participate in a physical education activity. 2) After returning to the classroom, ask the students to think of words that are related to the (name of the activity). While recording these on the board in a word web, discuss the way they are related to the activity. For clarification of the meanings of some words, remind students of a specific event on the playground that could have generated a certain feeling, a movement that was made in a particular instance, or a description of an action that was used in a contest, e.g., "I noticed that some of you hesitated a few moments before you stepped quickly and competently into the turning ropes. You might have been reluctant at first because you were afraid you would get hit by one of the quick-moving ropes." When words to be learned are not identified by the students, suggest them and give examples of their use on the playground, e.g., "Some of you seemed apprehensive as we began square-dancing for the first time today; however, by the end of class you all seemed to be in a jovial mood." 3) Ask students to identify category groupings for the words in the word web. Discuss the reasons for placing the words in the particular groups that are suggested. Include the new words in the groups as well. 4) Review the new vocabulary with successive games and follow-up discussions. 5) Use a bulletin board display which may be entitled, "The Games We Play and the Words We Learn," to provide further exposure to the new words.

In order for the target words to become a part of the students' writing vocabulary, direct students to write a descriptive or imaginative account of their feelings and the action they were involved in while participating in the physical education activity. Encourage the use of the new vocabulary by giving extra points for each new word that is included. The discussion about the events of the physical education activity provide excellent prewriting activity for this assignment.

The procedures described for developing vocabulary by using students' physical education experiences follow many of the guidelines identified through research for effective vocabulary instruction. The semantic grouping of words into actions and the descriptions of actions and feelings helps students see the relationships among the words as well as

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the relationship to the physical education activity. Relationships among the words are also built by presenting a group of words, many of which are synonyms or antonyms, related to a particular game. As suggested by Mezynski (1983), students are given a "breadth of knowledge" about the target words; first hand experience with the game, discussion, prediction, categorizing, and writing. Certainly, vocabulary development is made interesting, enjoyable, memorable through the use of physical education activities.

#### Vocabulary for Physical Education Activities

Following the REFERENCES, we offer some examples of vocabulary that may be taught with the given physical education activities. Other words may be included with these games or additional physical education activities.

#### REFERENCES

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	Jump rope	Dodgeball	Square Dance	Softball	Relays	Tumbling	Newcombe Ball	Imaginative Dance	Track	Soccer
amaze	+					+	+			
amble			+		+					
anguish		+		+	+	+			+	+
annoyance		+		+	+		+			+
anticipate	+	+		+	+		+		+	+
anxious	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
assign			+		+				+	+
astonish	+	+		+		+		+	+	+
athletic	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
attempt	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
attend	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
avoid		+								+
aware	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
awkward			+			+		+		
balance						+		+	+	
bewilder	+	+								+
boldly	+	+		+		+		+	+	+
brave	+					+				+
cautiously	+	+				+		+		
cheerfully			+					+		
concede				+	+		+			+
consistently	+			+			+		+	+
contribute				+	+		+		+	+
cooperate			+	+	+		+		+	+
cope	+			+	+	+			+	
courage	+					+			+	+
courteous			+		+			+		
cover				+			+			+
dash				+	+				+	
defend				+			+		+	+
defensive				+			+		+	+
deprive				+			+		+	+
dispatch		+		+						+
dive				+		+				+
dodge	+	+					+			+
dominate				+	+		+		+	+
dynamic					+	+		+	+	
eagerly	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
embarrass	+		+	+				+		
endure	+	+			+				+	+
energetic	+		+			+		+		+

	Jump rope W	Dodgeball W	Square Dance W	Softball W	Relays W	Tumbling W	Newcombe Ball W	Imaginative Dance W	Track W	Soccer W
enthusiastic	+			+						+
escape	+	+		+						+
escort			+					+		+
exceptional		+				+			+	
excitedly		+			+			+		+
execute	+			+		+			+	+
exhaust	+	+						+	+	+
exert				+	+				+	+
explode					+				+	+
fake		+							+	+
fast	+			+	+		+	+	+	+
fatigued		+						+	+	+
fearful	+	+		+				+	+	+
fitness	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
forceful		+			+		+	+	+	+
formidable	+				+				+	+
frolic			+					+		+
frustration	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+
gaily			+					+		+
gently				+	+			+		+
gesture			+					+		+
graceful	+		+			+		+	+	+
gracious					+			+		+
gradually					+	+			+	+
grandly			+					+		+
grasp	+		+	+	+		+		+	+
halt	+	+	+					+		+
handoff	+				+				+	+
happily			+			+		+		+
helpless					+	+		+		+
heroic	+	+		+	+		+		+	+
holler		+	+		+				+	+
hurdle							+		+	+
impatient	+			+	+					+
impossible	+	+		+					+	+
inescapable		+							+	+
injure	+	+		+	+	+			+	+
intense					+				+	+
joyously	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
kindness		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
leapt		+			+	+		+	+	+



	Jump rope	Dodgeball	Square Dance	Softball	Relays	Tumbling	Neycombe Ball	Imaginative Dance	Track	Soccer
lively		+	+			+		+		
loft		+		+			+			+
loss				+	+		+		+	+
merrily			+			+		+		
momentum				+		+			+	+
nervously	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
oppose				+	+		+		+	+
overwhelm		+		+		+	+		+	+
overtake		+		+		+	+		+	+
painful		+		+	+	+			+	+
pant	+				+				+	+
participate	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
perfect	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
persistence	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
precarious		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
precise		+		+			+			+
pursue		+			+				+	+
rough		+								+
scamper		+		+	+			+		+
scramble		+				+				+
serve							+			
skillful	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
skip	+				+	+		+		
smoothly	+			+	+			+		
snatch				+	+			+	+	
sneak		+		+				+		+
softly						+		+		
spontaneously	+							+		
spring						+		+	+	
strut			+					+		
stumble	+				+			+		
swiftly		+			+				+	
swing	+		+	+				+		+
tricky		+					+			+
twist	+	+				+				