Journal of Kinesiology and Wellness
A Publication of the Western Society for Kinesiology and Wellness
Volume 2, 2013, 65-71
ISSN# 2332-4503

Western Society for Kinesiology and Wellness
G. Arthur Broten Young Scholar Papers

INSPIRING BLISS: AN INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL, ENCOURAGING INCREASED STUDENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BASED ON KINESTHETIC INSTRUCTION, FLOW, AND MASTERY MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE

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Abstract

In a world where electronic devices threaten to steal the imagination and fitness of our youth, the need for inviting, creative forms of physical activity (PA) is paramount. Children and adolescents in contemporary classrooms spend a great deal of time sitting – on average approximately five hours out of the typical six and an half hour school day (Salmon, Healy, & Hume, 2009). It also appears that material is presented primarily through visual and auditory means (Arrighi, & Young, 1987). Maeda and Murata (2004) established that schools are being held to a higher standard academically, causing teachers to feel increased pressure to improve students' academic performance. In response, many school districts are dramatically decreasing the time provided for PA. What can be done to counter this alarming trend?

In an effort to address some of the current challenges facing our profession, the author began constructing the "BLISS" instructional model (Believe, Listen, Imagine, Solidify, and Share). The intent of this article is to provide information on the foundational elements of this model and its potential for future use.

THE PROBLEM

Inactivity – Answering the Call

A recent report by the Institute of Medicine (2013) indicates that since the 2001 passage of No Child Left Behind, 44 % of school administrators report drastic cuts in time allotted to physical education, recess and the arts, in an effort to provide more time for math and reading. Though nationally recommended guidelines suggest 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous PA per day (CDC, 2013; NASPE, 2012), levels in physical education (PE) fall considerably short (Burgeson, Wechsler, Brener, Young, & Spain, 2000). The amount of PA potentially gained during PE courses alone is not

enough to meet national standards (Bryan, & Solmon, 2007; CDC, 2013; NASPE, 2004). Sadly, children and adolescents often do not choose to participate in after-school PA and have become accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle (Armstrong, Balding, Gentle, & Kirby, 1990).

Three of the five components in the Comprehensive School Health Physical Activity Program, describe the need for additional PA before and after school, during school, and in PE (CDC, 2013). Given the rising rate of obesity in our nation's youth (CDC, 2010), being physically active for a lifetime needs to be foremost in the hearts and minds of educators today. Therefore, equipping teachers with the skills necessary to accomplish this successfully is essential to realistic implementation.

Solutions: Kinesthetic instruction, Flow, and Mastery Motivational Climate

Strong evidence suggests that the use of kinesthetic instruction, built into other scholarly subject matter, can significantly improve student learning (Blaydes, 2000; Bruton, & Ong, 2010; NASPE, 2004). By capitalizing on this concept, classroom teachers, and physical educators can assist students in gaining much needed PA while teaching other academic content. Common Core Standards established in January of 2011 may provide the next frontier for integration of kinesthetic instructional methods (Cook, 2013). Research indicates that the active use of movement problems in school settings, can easily translate to a dynamic increase in: problem solving, critical thinking, creative capacity and innovative abilities in students (Bailey, & Pickard, 2010; Connolly, Quin, & Redding, 2011). This may help to satisfy academic priorities, amplify students' internal motivation, and potentially increase student PA levels.

Enjoying PA tends to encourage continued participation (Hagberg, Lindah, Nyberg, & Hellenius, 2009). Teachers' attitude and behavior plays a large role in defining our enjoyment (Carlson, 1994). Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of "Flow" is critical when examining ideal teacher/student enjoyment, their interaction, and reveals how creating an optimal experience contributes to a genuinely satisfying state of being. When someone is in a state of Flow, they usually experience a sense of complete involvement with life, heightened enjoyment, and dynamic creativity (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Steele Shernoff, 2003). The challenge for teachers is to learn how to control this experience and capitalize on opportunities to encounter enjoyment. Thus, educators can greatly increase the possibility of creating an optimal experience and contribute to an authentically satisfying state of being, positively impacting their lives and the lives of their students.

Evidence suggests that purposely arranging the instructional climate, thus sharpening students' perceptions of the presence of a "Mastery Motivational Climate" (MMC) can have significant impact on active engagement in PA (Solomon, 2006). The MMC instructional approach, based on Epstein's original model (1989), contends that people participate in achievement environments in order to express their abilities or competence (Ames, 1992a). Ames coined the acronym TARGET, describing six tenets: task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time. TARGET depicts a classroom that emphasizes personal improvement, student cooperation, "self-referenced comparisons", and effort. This setting can cultivate students' perceived competence, intent to be active and enjoyment of PA (Ntoumanis, 2001).

Practical Tools: "BLISS" is Born

In response to the need for increased PA, positive correlations with kinesthetic instruction and Flow, driven by the author's desire to share a love of movement, the "BLISS" (Believe, Listen, Imagine, Solidify, and Share) instructional model was born. Closely aligned with the TARGET framework, BLISS' areas of emphasis include intrinsic motivation outcomes such as: Flow, relatedness, perceived competence, and autonomy; as well as the promotion of kinesthetic instructional methodology. BLISS parallels the emphasis on personal improvement, student cooperation, "self-referenced comparisons", and effort (Boyce, 2009; Solomon, 2006). It intends to provide pre-service teachers (PSTs) with specific classroom management techniques, unique to movement settings. Foundationally, BLISS promotes internally initiated movement, connected teacher/student interaction, and authentic academic content integration (see Figure 1). TARGET encourages the adoption of strategies such as: students working hard, a desire for challenging tasks and being persistent (1988). BLISS resembles the TARGET ideal (difficult tasks, working hard, and persistence) but expands beyond this point, challenging PSTs to create a climate where students have the freedom to take risks, and allows them some control in the direction of their learning. The purpose of this instructional model is to educate PSTs on kinesthetic teaching methods, encourage enjoyment, broaden conceptualization of movement/dance, provide a more diverse curriculum and positively impact the PA levels in students.

Aligned with Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the BLISS model promotes the precept of active engagement, as a means of determining personal teaching success. This is reflected in the charge to PSTs to: use what they know, nurture academic interests, actively pursue enthusiastic teaching, develop instinct to "read" and adjust to students' needs, and draw attention to the inherent satisfaction of the learning experience, (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993).

In essence, BLISS can act as a roadmap for PSTs – helping them discover tangible ways to get students more active, find enhanced Flow, and discover a richer enjoyment of the classroom experience. The challenge to future teachers is this: "Purposely do what you love – intentionally love what you do!"

On a practical level, the BLISS model provides instruction capitalizing upon muscle memory presently contained within a student's repertoire. Beginning from a point of confidence and perceived competence, students are able to freely transition into the elements of the movement framework without concern of being as self-conscious as they might be otherwise. Individual interpretation is encouraged within the model design. Core principles are woven into engaging (often familiar) activities, but with a new twist, and academic application is constantly cultivated. BLISS intends to expand the definition of dance into being fun, relatable, exciting and realistic movement with the capacity of becoming a form of creative learning for students of all ages. Internal motivation is intentionally nurtured and creates a cyclical enjoyment relationship.

Bliss Model	Traditional Instruction
B –Believe and Be Open!	
1. Minimize impact of rules	1. Strict Rules
2. Individual starting point "use what you know"	2. Same/uniform starting point
3. Get out what you put in - choice	3. Structure dictates participation
L –Listen, Learn and Live!	
4. Nurture learning process	4. Teach content
5. Internal Motivation	5. External Motivation
6. No wrong answers	6. Defined, exact steps mimicked
7. Uses hook, contemporary application	7. No hook, strict adherence to form
8. Intended to increase student PA	8. PA dependant on form
I –Imagine the Implications!	
9. Focus = satisfaction of learning	9. Focus = acquisition of technical skills
10. Use of Images and Impressions	10. Copy what is seen
11. Working from the inside out	11. Working from the outside in
12. Intentional stress release built in	12. Stress release may or may not be possible
S – Solidify and be Secure!	
13. Instruction shifts to needs of learners	13. Instruction specific to form, feedback corrective
14. Student mastery = challenge increases	14. Student mastery = continue defined content
15. Collaboration encouraged a	15. Collaboration marginal
16. Musical healing potential/student need based	16. Music connected to form
S –Share with Students!	
17. Individual variation /interpretation	17. Uniform interpretation/specific skills
18. Uses broad variety of activities	18. Particular activities defined by form
19. Integration encouraged	19. Integration may rarely occur
20. Predisposed to lifetime activity promotion	20. Continuation later in narrow population

Figure 1. Model characteristics.

The Acronym: Believe, Listen, Imagine, Solidify, and Share

The following is a philosophic construct of BLISS, written in second person so that it has direct useful meaning and acts as a charge to PSTs.

B –Believe and Be Open! "You have the power to be open and CHOOSE to believe in the possibilities of new ideas!" Learners (teacher or student) are encouraged to: (a) examine the past (experiences, attitudes, competencies), (b) accept the present (be realistic with current circumstances, be open to change of ability and attitude, acknowledge that other perspectives are valuable), and (c) strive toward the future (actively pursue positive change, be willing and purposeful in acquiring skills, believe that you have the capacity to achieve great things!)

L –Listen, Learn and Live! "You have the opportunity to listen and learn – then live your beliefs and make a change!" Learners are encouraged to: Take personal responsibility to make a change and to make a difference in your own life as well as the life of others

I –Imagine the Implications! "You have the ability to imagine the implications and apply new ideas to your circumstances, inspiring others!" Learners are encouraged to make the content personal and make connections with abilities you already possess or experiences highly relatable to your individual emotional, physical and cognitive foundation

S – Solidify and be Secure! "You have the courage to solidify ideas – sense security in your ability to teach it and enjoy – Smile!" Learners are encouraged to use the material and concepts in personal or individually professional venues and to be willing to take the tools acquired in the classroom introduction of "Bliss" and actively relate the content to all areas of personal teaching and learning.

S –Share with Students! "You have the creativity to showcase your new tools and share the excitement with your students!" Learners are encouraged to: (a) maintain the connection of physical skill, knowledge, and character qualities to active tools represented in "BLISS," (b) integrate "BLISS" ideas to diverse life-skills in yourself and others beyond the introductory venue; (c) choose enjoyment in every area of your life and see what happens!; (d) ask yourself – is there a difference in my personal life satisfaction, in my relationship with others, in the ease of progressing through previously difficult situations?

CONCLUSIONS

To gain PSTs' acceptance of kinesthetic instruction methods and ignite a desire to legitimately use it for students' benefit, could have profound and lasting impact on tomorrow's

youth. It seems that kinesthetic instruction is on the threshold of becoming an important solution to our challenge of childhood obesity and student apathy (Armstrong, Balding, Gentle, & Kirby, 1990; Salmon, Healy, & Hume, et al., 2009). In a world where electronic devices threaten the imaginative development of our youth, creative PA can strive to revolutionize the classroom environment. Results from forthcoming BLISS research may be capable of encouraging elementary educators to teach using means other than merely auditory or visual. Physical educators might also expand their offerings and allow those who may not be interested in traditional "ball sports" to begin to enjoy moving more. In the light of laudable school goals aimed at academic excellence, kinesthetic instruction has huge potential to transform the classrooms of generations to come.

What Does this Article Add?

The application of BLISS adds to the body of knowledge exploring practical means of increasing physical activity levels in the students. It also provides inspiration for the future training of PSTs in a contemporary area of interest and necessity. Continued development of the BLISS instructional model and expansion into cross disciplinary content could be extremely valuable. As educators, we face increasing challenges to discover means of keeping children active and interested in healthy living for a lifetime. It is also important to continued growth of academic strength in our ever changing world. It appears that a strong emphasis on kinesthetic teaching methods and the provision of practical modeling for PSTs may positively influence the next generation of teachers. In the long run, this can have a lasting positive impact on children, establish healthy habits and change the course of current behavior in school and beyond.

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