

The Universality of Sports

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INTRODUCTION

The notion that sport and play are intimately interconnected or parallel is a universal idea. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* defines the word *play* as “to occupy oneself in amusements, sport, or other recreation...to take part in a game.” Indeed, the fact that some people get paid to play sports (i.e. Major League Baseball or NBA players), seems to many spectators that they are living a dream come true: being paid to play a game instead of “working.” Based on the premise that a seven, eight, or nine year old’s job is to go to school and learn, with one brief 20 minute recess per day, I surveyed three classes on my grade level and asked how many would like to extend recess and play games for most of the day. The response was almost unanimously “yes.”

In Bartlett Giammati’s book *Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games*, the noted academic sports authority argues that for the adult sport is an extension of the psychological drive for play. When adults participate in sports, even when it is vicariously by watching TV or attending a game, they are satisfying their deep-seated psychological need to play. When we view sports through Giammati’s lenses, it is not surprising to see that sports in America are widely popular and accessible in many forms such as baseball, football, basketball, softball, kickball, racquetball, and *futbol* (soccer).

The adult’s passion for sports has its origin in childhood. Giammati’s argument that sport is naturally entwined with play is evident when elementary teachers watch their students organize themselves into games such as freeze tag, kickball, and hide and seek.

Again, in support of Giammati’s thesis that sports is an extension of man’s or woman’s inner drive for play, the most common leisure activity for Americans is to actively or passively engage in sports. Not only are Americans playing or watching sports, but statistics show that people in other countries also have high participation and attendance rates. For example, a governmental study in Australia found that “during the 12 months ending April 1999, 7.0 million persons, or 47.1% of the Australian population aged 15 years and over, attended sporting matches or competitions” (abs.gov.au 2002).

From the premise that sports and play are innate, one can see across time and place that sports have always existed, from the Ancient Greek Olympics to Mayan ball games in Central America. In his essay “School Sports as Social Training: The Case of Athletics and the Crisis of World War I,” Timothy O’Hanlon points out that at the turn of the twentieth century, in the absence of a sporting league infrastructure to schedule and promote games, people organized themselves because they just wanted to play:

As was the case with college sports such as football, high school teams frequently came into existence as the result of student initiative. The story of varsity athletics involved not only the proliferation of new programs under the guidance of faculty and administration but also the attempt to wrest control from student administered teams. A 1907 study found that in more than one out of six cases surveyed (37 out of 192), school teams remained under student domination. (Wiggins, 194)

The ubiquity and universality of sports continue today.

SPORTS AS A CURRICULUM TOPIC

Innate and universal, sports can be a very real and positive activity that provides an alternative to many of the social ills that plague impoverished communities. Teaching sports or related topics outside of a physical education class at the elementary school may seem to be an anomaly. At a time when state and district assessment focuses on basic yet critical math and reading skills, industry leaders and administrators also tell teachers that students must learn to work in teams and become better problem solvers. Since teamwork and citizenry are not formally evaluated, these skills often take a back burner to that which is assessed.

It is the position of this curriculum unit that sports can be an excellent vehicle to teach the democratizing ethics of collaborating as a team. D. Stanley Eitzen, Professor Emeritus of sociology at Colorado State University, maintains that children's sports programs exist in America because of their ability to transmit values to children:

In the United States, sport, through the influence of coaches, parents, and peers, transmits certain values—success in competition, hard work, perseverance, discipline, teamwork, and obedience to authority--to participants and observers...The substance of athletics contains within itself--in its rules, procedures, training, and sentiments—a paradigm of adult expectations for youth. (Eitzen, 81)

SPORTS IS HEALTHY

Another justification of sports as a curriculum topic is that it promotes physical fitness. Houston has the third highest obesity rate among cities in the United States (*USA Today*). At the beginning of 2002, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention research discovered that there are 10 million obese children in the United States, with 800,000 of them residing in Texas. Type 2 diabetes, which is commonly associated with obesity, is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States (cdc.gov 2002). Moreover, “public health officials are becoming increasingly alarmed at the rate at which children around the world are developing Type 2 diabetes, formerly referred to as adult-onset diabetes” (methodisthealth.com 2002). With Type 2 diabetes costing the health care industry

roughly \$54 billion a year, coupled with the alarming obesity rates, medical costs are projected to be staggering. The physical health of society affects us all.

Undeniably, physical activity is an important part of controlling weight. The activity required of sports players is healthy:

It promotes coordination, stamina, strength, strong bones, joint flexibility, and heart and lung capacity. Exercise diminishes the ill effects of diseases such as diabetes. It reduces hypertension (high blood pressure), lowers bad cholesterol, and raises good cholesterol... Without exercise bones become brittle, muscles atrophy (including the heart muscle), the efficiency of blood circulation diminishes, plaque in the arteries builds up rapidly, and the aging process accelerates... The health benefits of exercise are the motive for requiring physical education and sports programs in schools, youth sports, community adult recreations, and corporation-sponsored sports teams. (Eitzen, 59)

The health benefits of sports far outweigh the costs of not instructing our children in sports.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN FINANCIALLY TRYING TIMES

Many school districts across the country are being forced to reduce expenditures. In addition to financially trying times, school districts are faced with the looming critical shortage of teachers. They have to increase salaries and provide bonuses to attract and retain employees. Without raising school taxes, the financial resources for school districts are fixed. Thus, eliminating or downsizing staff and programs become a reality.

Kindergarten and elementary physical education programs are targeted, leaving our youngsters under-trained in basic motor/movement skills, and consequently, less interested in (and therefore less likely to pursue and enjoy) physically active pastimes. (Sutton, 4)

Moreover, in an age of accountability by assessment, principals and teachers are being held accountable for standardized math and reading scores. For example, in the Houston Independent School District, principals sign three-year performance based contracts. Since standardized tests currently focus on math and reading skills, principals do not have an incentive to make physical education a priority. Yet it is essential that life-long fitness habits be taught at the earliest levels of our school system.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The school where I teach is located in southwest Houston, otherwise known as the “Ellis Island of Houston” or the “Gulfton Ghetto.” Sylvan Rodriguez Elementary opened in January 2002 as a relief school to serve 3.4 square miles of concentrated poverty in the

southwest district of the Houston Independent School District (HISD). The 1980s brought the greatest wave of immigration in Houston's history, with a significant number of immigrants being political refugees. In 1989, the population in the apartment complexes exploded and the surrounding area became the most densely populated in the city. Since the influx of immigration, there has been a high juvenile crime rate, which continues today (HISD, 2). The students of Rodriguez Elementary come from homes high in poverty and low in literacy. They have not had access to intergenerational education and the educational and social resources available to students in more affluent communities.

SPORTS AS A UNIFYING AGENT

Children of immigrant families in the Gulfton area are at the beginning of the American acculturation process. The neighborhood school represents the closest and most accessible part of "the system" in America. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in the Gulfton area have students who are culturally heterogeneous. They are from many different countries, each of which has its own formal and informal sports networks. Because of the universality of sports, it can be a unifying agent in an ESL class for those students who dress, behave, and often think in accord with different cultural frames of reference.

Learning about sports heroes who immigrated to America, such as Roberto Clemente, or who were once at the margins of society, such as Jackie Robinson, can help students familiarize themselves with their new country. Also, simply presenting the topic of sports in the classroom legitimizes and promotes awareness of sports so that any child may take one up as a pastime.

A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Personally, I never had the opportunity to play sports when I was growing up. I have always felt that I missed out on the socialization, camaraderie, and opportunity to excel that accompanies playing a sport. All of these are values that, as an educator, I feel are necessary for personal, academic, and professional success and growth. My overarching goal in presenting this material is two-fold. First, I want to expose students to sports in the hope that they might seek a sport for themselves, either now or in the future, and second, I want to make the topic of sports and athletes accessible to students. The best way I know to create a bridge between the student and sports is to provide a learning environment that allows students to create their own frame of reference and or build their own knowledge base that they can rely upon when they are away from school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER COLLABORATION

Research shows that teacher collaboration is directly linked to higher student achievement. Utilizing the school's physical education teacher can be an invaluable resource in terms of ideas and or simply reinforcing in the gym what is being taught in

the classroom. For example, the physical education coach at my school who referees baseball games in his spare time has agreed to teach the second grade classes how to play baseball. By teaching the mechanics and providing time for the children to practice, he supports and legitimizes sports as a curriculum topic.

HOW AND WHY SHOULD SPORTS BE TAUGHT

As mentioned above, sports are a powerful medium through which to build and shape minds. The potency of sports in America is exemplified in the electrifying debates over educational sports program objectives at the beginning of the twentieth century. A historical glance at sports at the turn of the twentieth century illuminates many issues about American society that continue to be relevant today.

Yesterday's topics of debate continue to be today's topics of debate. Ideological differences fall into two camps. On one side, educators and policy makers claimed that physical education "offered lessons in social discipline and cooperation no less valuable for citizens in an industrial society than for future soldiers" (Wiggins, 189). After the two world wars, physical education programs resembled the lock-step pattern of "do as I say" and "no thinking" drill programs found in the United States military establishment. Additionally, the idea of militarizing athletic programs dates back to 1916 with the passage of the Slater Bill by the New York State Legislature that proposed to "establish and oversee military training for a maximum of three hours per week in addition to the physical education provided by the Welsh Bill" (Wiggins, 198).

For the second camp, the central aim of sports programs was to create citizens who would become productive and contributing members in a democratic society. At the turn of the century, World War I was looming and many Americans were calling for the implementation of military drills in schools. Many, specifically in Massachusetts, found the idea of mandating military drill to "smack of despotism." Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard University, exemplified the controversy when he wrote: "I have heard a great deal of talk lately about the importance of a boy's acquiring the habit of implicit obedience...that is the worst habit a boy can acquire after he ceases to be an infant, because it implies the subjection of the boy's own will" (Wiggins, 199). In the same vein, the Wyoming Plan, as devised by Lieutenant Edgar Z. Steever of the National Guard, intended that sports be a vehicle for teaching the advantages of "a strong body and a clean mind, the value of self-control and decent restraints, civic duties and responsibilities" (Wiggins, 200).

The same debate over whether sports programs and physical education should foster civic mindedness or military preparedness continues today. Recently, the 2002 Texas Legislature passed a bill mandating that all Texas teachers are to implement at least 30 minutes of physical education a day. In light of the events of September 11, 2001 and the United States' current war in Afghanistan, there is a legitimate concern for the preparedness of the U.S. citizenry. Because of a situation that was similar in certain ways

to that of today, in 1916 the New York State Legislature passed the Welsh Bill which “prescribed mandatory physical training for all students above the age of eight...the law specified 20 minutes a day as a minimum and included private as well as public schools” (Wiggins, 198).

In a growing multicultural global setting, American CEOs are calling for creative workers who can collaborate with a variety of people in the work force. Sociologist Stanley Eitzen, in researching modern sports programs, speaks to the boot camp tactics ideologues and raises the question: “Are such behaviors appropriate in an educational setting that purports to train citizens for living in a democracy?” (Eitzen, 99). The answer is no. Sports and its heroes have promoted the values of a democracy.

The idea that democracy can be furthered through sports play is an old one that resounds today. Teachers are required to instruct students about the American Revolution. The American Revolution sought to overthrow the tyrannical hold of the English monarchy. In establishing a government, early leaders upheld the French Enlightenment ideals of democracy and mass education. In today’s American sports landscape, as was the case at the turn of the twentieth century, one continues to find “humanistic coaches who are democratic, open, and just,” though these are not the norm. For example, George Davis at St. Helena (California) High School implements a system of coaching to:

- (1) Increase confidence between players and coaches;
- (2) promote and teach cohesion;
- (3) teach responsibility, leadership, and decision making, thereby fostering maturity rather than immaturity and independence rather than dependence;
- (4) increase player motivation so that instead of being driven by fear, harassment, and physical abuse by the coach, the players would have to impress their peers;
- (5) free the coach to teach skills, techniques, and strategies; and
- (6) allow the players to experience the benefits of democracy.” (Eitzen, 101-102)

GENDER AND SPORTS

Traditionally, girls have not been actively involved in sports. Whenever students are asked, “Who is your favorite sports hero?” the replies are overwhelmingly male figures. In the interest of societal equity and of cultivating a healthy pluralistic outlook, teachers need to balance the male to female ratio of sports figures presented in the classroom. This is important because there are far more recognizable male sports figures than female athletes in the public eye. It is also important because sports programs for boys have traditionally received an overwhelming amount of funding. It used to be the norm in educational institutions to provide athletic opportunities only for males. For example, during the 1950s high schools had football teams for boys but no team sports for girls, whom they expected to participate instead in cheerleading or home economics-like clubs.

This history makes it important for educators to present to elementary students a social model that shows both genders as participating and achieving in sports. Prior to the federal government's passage of Title IX in 1972, the funding of male sports programs to female programs was very skewed to the benefit of programs for males. Congressional lawmakers sought to balance the gender playing field by mandating equal funding of male and female programs. Title IX stated that no person in the United States could be excluded from participation in sports, or be denied the benefits of sports, or be subjected to discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, on the basis of gender. Before Title IX, "women received no athletic scholarships, compared to about 50,000 for men" (Eitzen, 23).

Because of the patriarchal nature of American society, for many years many educators as well as the general public assumed that girls did not have the mental toughness for athletic competition. Not surprisingly, research demonstrates otherwise. Professor Eitzen summarizes sociologist Don Sabo's findings:

Compared to non-athletes, female athletes are more achievement-motivated, independent, poised, and inner-controlled. They have higher self-confidence, higher energy levels, better health, and a general well being. They have more positive attitudes toward life, more positive psychological well-being (in good spirits, satisfied with life, happy), and a more positive body image." (Eitzen, 60)

Obviously, females can benefit from sports participation.

Since the 1970s, barriers to participation in all types of sports have slowly diminished and female participation has increased across the board. Today, women receive about 35% of sports scholarships and men receive 65%. Although progress in achieving gender equity in sports has been slow and is still not complete, striving for equal representation continues to be essential. Thus, the teacher has an obligation to present sport in America as equally accessible to both girls and boys, even though the educational infrastructure still is biased in favor of boys. Administrators and teachers at the elementary level have a moral obligation to promote equity of opportunity in society. This is especially true for current educators who work in the typical under-resourced urban school where socio-economic inequity is blatant.

As mentioned above, it is the aim of this curriculum to promote sports participation because it has physical health benefits, it is a viable alternative to poor community street life, and it promotes positive team skills. In no way is it the position of this curriculum unit to advocate the participation of sports as a "way out poverty," which is a myth. Many students in inner-city schools take too much stock in becoming a professional sports player at the expense their studies. Numerous dissertations and scholarly research have clearly demonstrated that the chances of someone becoming rich and famous by playing professional sports are miniscule.

RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

At the elementary level teachers very often have self-contained classes. In self-contained classes, the teacher is responsible for teaching a set number of students in all the content areas, with the exception of ancillary classes such as technology, art, dance, physical education, and music. Some elementary schools departmentalize their content areas or team-teach so that one teacher is responsible for math and science while another teaches only language arts and social studies. Departmentalizing or team teaching in the lower grades is not nearly as common as it is in the intermediate or comprehensive high schools. Since it is the norm for the majority of elementary teachers to have self-contained classes, it is important for the teacher to see their students in different situations and from different perspectives. An excellent way to see a class in a completely different light is to extend the classroom to the playground and play organized games, such as basketball or kickball (an easier version of baseball).

Teachers who play games outside with their students, during recess for instance, will recognize differences and similarities in abilities on the field. Teachers ought to praise tasks that are done well and always encourage students to try again when they have an uncoordinated moment. When the teacher practices or plays any games with the students, he or she will notice that they are very keen to recognize their own abilities and as well as the abilities of their peers, whether those abilities are exceptionally coordinated or completely unsynchronized.

The competitive nature of many sports is conducive to divisiveness. Teachers or coaches at the primary levels ought not to rank students according to ability. This interjects a conflict-ridden classification that the students will enforce themselves. For example, when picking teams for kickball, team captains will tend not to choose classmates who cannot kick the ball far, even when the team captain and the poor kicker are good friends in the classroom. In second grade many students have never had the opportunity to kick a ball. This is especially true at my school where 99% of the students live in apartments with no yards. A teacher must be vigilant in implementing equity and requiring team members to be supportive of each other. Second graders tend not to see the invisible mental abilities that come into coordinating plays, which is often a skill that surpasses speed or physical power. Another positive ability that children tend not to notice in others or themselves is tenacity. Thus, through praise, teachers must encourage these skills on the field.

Additionally, in the elementary setting educators have a responsibility to teach organization and team cooperation when the children are playing on the field. If these objectives can be achieved in the heat of the moment while outside, it is much easier for the teacher to foster successful cooperative learning groups in the classroom. As is evident in the many different learning styles, students' abilities are as diverse as the cultures that make up our pluralistic salad bowl society. It is the responsibility of an educator to show and teach young minds how to celebrate diversity.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES

Since sports do not exist in a vacuum, introducing some autobiographical narratives will allow me to reflect an honest and real picture of American culture. Sports autobiographies allow us to better understand America's heterogeneous cultures, identities, and values. Many of great athlete autobiographies illuminate, for me, an America comprised of individuals who struggled within and outside of the sport. Each autobiography reveals an extraordinarily talented hero or figure who is marginalized and highly driven to succeed. There are many grade-level autobiographies and biographies in print to choose from.

Jackie Robinson

The autobiography of Jackie Robinson is an exemplum that provides a window of opportunity to introduce the first black man to play professional major league baseball. I intend to highlight that Robinson was an individual who embodied a cause much larger than himself. He is the epitome of an individual who acts upon his sense of community at the expense of his own ego. Robinson endured racial name-calling and death threats that ultimately affected his health and shortened his life. As an exemplum, he is a precursor to Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Roberto Clemente

An extraordinary baseball player, Roberto Clemente embodies the qualities necessary to overcome great odds and rise from his humble beginnings in Puerto Rico to become a legend, both on and off the playing field. Although he sometimes had a bad temper and initially did not understand his teammates' English language, he became a leader for his team and was selected as the Most Valuable Player in 1966 and 1971. He is also a role model because he contributed to charities and died in a plane crash while on a humanitarian mission to Nicaragua.

LESSON PLAN 1

Objective

Students will realize that we are all different and we are all the same.

The following plan is a suggestion of how teachers might dialogue diversity with their students.

Dialogue

Explain to the class that the purpose of the lesson is to help them imagine what it might be like to have "different abilities" than they do now. Write the word "ability" on the board and talk about what it means. Write the word "unique" on the board and talk about what it means. Everyone has different abilities or qualities that make them unique.

Comment on the fact that, even though everyone has different abilities, talents, and qualities, we are the same in one basic way.

Vocabulary

Ability, unique.

Create a web on the board for each word and add pupil responses. Explain that everyone has different abilities. Say that you want to find out how the students in the class are different. Have them raise their hands in response to questions such as these:

- Who knows the skip count by 3's?
- Who has messy handwriting?
- Who has really, really neat handwriting?
- Who can ride a bicycle?
- Who can roller skate?
- Who can roller-blade?
- Who is good at video games?
- Who runs at medium or slow speed?
- Who runs at a very fast speed?
- Who knows how to cook?
- Who knows how to take care of a younger brother or sister?

It is important that not every child answer in the affirmative to every question, so the exercise can demonstrate diversity. If all the students raise their hands for every question, it is best to include questions such as the following:

- Who has black hair?
- Who has blonde hair?
- Who has brown hair?
- Who wears glasses?
- Who is wearing shorts today?
- Who is wearing pants today?
- Who is wearing sneakers?

Now describe a scene on the playground and ask:

1. Have you ever played kickball [or other relevant game] and when it was your turn to kick, you planned to really kick it hard so it would go far...and when the ball was rolled to you, you tried to kick it, but you missed? You can act this out while you are talking to your class to make this dramatic.
2. Who likes it when the other kids say, "don't worry, try again, it's okay, you can do it?" Or, who likes it when they say, "Don't be so stupid, why did you do that?"

Emphasize the positive and the uniqueness. Remind the class that everyone is different and everyone is the same.

Differences

Ask: How many brothers or sisters do you have?

What are they interested in and/or good at?

What makes your brother(s) or sister(s) unique? (i.e. favorite toy or food)

Is there anything they are learning how to do?

LESSON PLAN 2

Language Arts

- Brainstorm collectively to list many different types of sports on the board.
- Assess prior knowledge about baseball players using KWL chart.
- Create sports baseball vocabulary wall.

Vocabulary

- Puerto Rico
- Montreal, Canada
- honor
- sportswriter
- leap
- javelin
- sugarcane

Homework

Vocabulary crossword puzzle

Activity

Distribute questions and read story.

Discussion Questions

- Where are Roberto Clemente and his family from?
- How do you think Roberto felt while he was in Canada?
- How do you think Roberto felt when he could not speak English or French?
- Why do the sports fans love Roberto?
- Do you think Roberto's father and mother made the right decision in making their son finish high school? What would you do if you were Roberto's mother or father?
- What are some of the ways Roberto helped people?
- Do you think it is a good idea to help others? If so, why?

Activity

Make the baseballs that Roberto made when he was a child.

Materials

String, golf balls, and tape.

“So he and his friends made their own balls. They wrapped string around old golf balls. Then they wrapped tape around the string.” (7)

LESSON PLAN 3**Objective**

To teach students the basics of playing baseball with the appropriate vocabulary and practice (Total Physical Response). *The physical education coach at my school will teach and provide students the opportunity to practice baseball.*

Playing the Game: How to Hit, Field, and Pitch

VOCABULARY / PRACTICE SCRIPT**Grip**

- Choose a bat that is fairly light and not too long.
- Grip the bat with both hands. Keep your hands together.
- A right-handed grip has the left hand closest to the knob. A left-handed grip has the right hand closest to the knob.

Stance

- Place both feet facing the plate and spread them a few inches apart.
- Slightly bend at the knees and lean toward the plate.
- Hold the bat cocked with the hands back and the shoulders parallel to the ground.

Swing

- Watch the ball and swing parallel to the ground.

Bunting

- Keep one hand on the handle of the bat. Slide the other hand up the bat on the side away from the incoming pitch.
- Do not swing, but let the ball hit the bat squarely.
- Drop the bat and run to first base if contact is made.

How to Catch a Fly Ball

- Judge the direction of the fly ball and use two hands to catch the ball, one hand in the glove and the other to keep the ball from dropping out of the glove.

How to Field Ground Balls

- Infielders crouch down into a catching position to handle ground balls. Keep the glove low and scoop up the balls like a shovel.
- Always be alert.

How to Throw

- Loosely hold the ball with your fingertips. Take the ball back behind and away from your head. Take a step forward and throw the ball overhead.

Pitching Motion

- Place your right (or left) foot on or against the rubber located on the center of the mound. With the ball above your head, shift your weight, lifting your front leg and leaning toward home plate as you throw the ball.

Practice

- Practice makes perfect. To practice hitting, ask someone to throw you some balls or hit off a tee. To practice pitching, throw tennis balls at a target on the side of your apartment complex or a cement wall. Practice your catching skill by throwing balls back and forth with a friend.

LESSON PLAN 4

Objective

Math: Interpreting graphs and charts

Major League Ballparks

Stadium	Year Opened	Outfield (ft.) Left	Outfield (ft.) Center	Outfield (ft.) Right
Dodger Stadium	1962	330	395	330
Bank One Ballpark	1998	328	402	335
Edison Field	1966	333	404	333
International Metrodome	1982	343	408	327
Busch Stadium	1966	330	402	330
Qualcomm Stadium	1967	327	405	327
SkyDome	1989	328	400	328
Jacobs Field	1994	325	405	325
Shea Stadium	1964	338	410	338
Yankee Stadium	1923	312	410	310
Fenway Park	1912	315	420	302
Oriole Park at Camden Yards	1992	333	400	318
Minute Maid Park	2000	315	435	326

Activity

Work in heterogeneous groups to answer questions below.

1. Which stadium has the deepest left field?
2. Which stadium has the deepest right field?
3. Which stadium has the deepest center field?
4. Use a calculator to determine which stadium has the longest total outfield distance.
5. Name the stadiums that have the same left and right field dimensions.
6. What is the oldest stadium on the chart?
7. What is the newest stadium on the chart?
8. Which stadium has a bigger playing field, Yankee Stadium or Shea Stadium?
9. Left-handed hitters usually hit home runs to right field. Which stadium would be best for left-handed power hitters?
10. Right-handed power hitters usually hit home runs to left field. Which two stadiums would be best for them?

Activity

Have students draw their own baseball field and label right field, left field, center field, first base, second base, third base, pitcher, catcher, and shortstop.

Technology Activity

Tour online many of the nation's ballparks past and present. Have students point out the similarities and differences between each ballpark.

LESSON PLAN 5**Baseball Around the World****Objective**

Students will realize that baseball is a global sport because it is played in many places around the world and those who play it come from many different countries.

Activity

1. Distribute a copy of a blank world map and paste it to a piece of construction paper. Label and color each continent a different color.
2. Cut out each country and paste it onto its respective continent.

Countries to cut into individual strips:

Canada	Japan	Korea	Taiwan
Cuba	Dominican Republic	Mexico	Colombia
Venezuela	Panama	Puerto Rico	Australia
Italy	South Africa	Netherlands	United States
Holland	Honduras	Costa Rica	Nicaragua
Guatemala	El Salvador		

Interpreting Your Map

(Close activity)

The _____ continent has the most countries that play baseball. The Antarctic continent has _____ countries that play baseball. Baseball is played on _____ continents and is played in _____ countries. The Dominican Republic and Cuba are countries that are surrounded by _____. The Caribbean body of water is located in the _____ Ocean.

LESSON PLAN 6

Objective

In a global environment, United States Major League Baseball players come from all over the world. The ubiquity of technology is truly global.

Activity

Research via the Internet using the Google Search engine to discover what the baseball players look like and write down one characteristic about them.

Player	Country of Origin	Something about the player
Bert Blyleven	Holland	
Jose Canseco	Cuba	
Rod Carew	Panama	
Roberto Clemente	Puerto Rico	
Davy Concepcion	Venezuela	
Hideki Irabu	Japan	
Ferguson Jenkins	Canada	
Pedro Martinez	Dominican Republic	
Tony Oliva	Cuba	
Chan Ho Park	South Korea	
Pedro Ramos	Cuba	
Craig Shipley	Australia	
Sammy Sosa	Dominican Republic	
Larry Walker	Canada	

LESSON PLAN 7

Objective

Students will comprehend historical and current female participation in baseball.

Activity

Practice singing the 1943-1954 All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Victory Song. Point out to students that females wrote this song. Emphasize the tenor of empowerment. Children love to sing.

Vocabulary

Alibi, chaperone, batter.

Victory Song

Batter up! Hear that call!

The time has come for one and all

To play ball. For we're the members of the All-American League,

We come from cities near and far.

We've got Canadians, Irishmen and Swedes,

We're all for one, we're one for all,

We're All-American.

Each girl stands, her head so proudly high,

Her motto Do Or Die.

She's not the one to use or need an alibi.

Our chaperones are not too soft,

They're not too tough,

Our managers are on the ball.

We've got a president who really knows his stuff,

We're all for one, we're one for all,

We're All-Americans!

Victory Song of the All-American Girls Baseball League

co-written by La Vonne "Pepper" Paire-Davis and Nalda "Bird" Phillips.

Technology Activity

Visit the All-American Girls Baseball Site (www.aagpbl.org) and tour the photograph section so that children may see the reality of girls playing professional baseball.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Teacher Resources

Eitzen, Stanley. *Fair and Foul*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

Professor Eitzen's book was valuable in helping me understand the duality of sports in America. His research mostly shows that, on the whole, sports programs in America do more social harm than good, especially with regards to violence, competitiveness, and exploitation. In documenting the negative impact of sports, the author illuminates these amazingly profound examples of how powerful sports can be as vehicle for educators to foster and achieve ideals such as leadership, fairness, and community mindedness. This book was instrumental in helping me create a framework for my understanding of sports as a learning or teaching tool. It's worth noting that the author believes that competitiveness in sports is worth reconsidering. Furthermore, Eitzen's illumination of the dark side of American sports today is reinforced in every American sports autobiography that I have read thus far.

Giammati, Bartlett. *Take Time for Paradise*. New York: Summit Books, 1989.

The author gives a great and convincing intellectual explanation of why baseball is America's favorite pastime. The author was a scholar who taught at Yale and Princeton. He served as president of Yale from 1978 to 1986. He then became the seventh commissioner of Major League Baseball and banned Pete Rose for life for betting on Major League games and associating with known gamblers.

Houston Independent School District. *Viaje al Futuro/Voyage to the Future Dual Language Grant*. Houston, Tex.: HISD, 2000.

This is a grant HISD wrote that was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to implement a dual language Spanish-English program at my elementary school.

Robinson, Jackie. *I Never Had It Made*. Hopewell, N.J.: The Ecco Press, 1972.

This book is an exemplum autobiography. Of particular interest is Robinson's testimony about the racial epithets and death threats he and his family received. Also interesting is the revelation that Branch Rickey's "noble experiment" was not altogether altruistic in that the Brooklyn Dodgers Club profited hugely, but that Jackie considers Rickey the person who inspired him the most. The forward by Professor Cornel West argues persuasively that Robinson's integration of baseball had more of an impact on American society than did the Civil Rights Movement.

Smith, Robert. *Baseball Thematic Unit*. California: Teacher Created Materials, 2001.

This thematic unit has many baseball related instructional ideas. As a thematic unit, the book integrates math, reading, social studies, and science. The lesson plans in this book are easy to implement. I have incorporated a few of the instructional ideas into my curriculum unit. Since this book is language based, it is ideal for ESL student language acquisition.

Sutton, Toby. *Phys Ed Grade 2: A Comprehensive Curriculum*. Michigan: Instructional Fair, 1998.

This curriculum series has a book for kindergarten through sixth grade; one book per grade level. It is activity oriented and easy to implement, with an emphasis on student success. This book provides lots of ideas for informal individual or team games and races.

Wiggins, David, ed. *Sport in America: From Wicked Amusement to National Obsession*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1995.

This is an eclectic collection of essays concerned with the changes and patterns of sport in America that spans 400 years. Wiggins' book shows the reader that sports is an inseparable part of American culture. The essay describing the beginnings of baseball is particularly fascinating in its description of the birthing climate of baseball. Another must read essay is the one that describes how American slaves exercised their drive for play.

Student Resources

Cayleff, Susan. *Babe Didrikson: The Greatest All-Sport Athlete of All Time*. Berkeley, Calif.: Conari Press, 2000.

A gold medal Olympian, Babe is one of the greatest, arguably the greatest, female athletes of all time, who as a Texas tomboy, polarized the press. In almost every sport she entered, Babe climbed to the top.

Gaines, Anne Graham. *Sports & Athletics (Female Firsts in Their Fields)*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1999.

This book demonstrates that women and sports are intimately intertwined.

Gottesman, Jane. *Game Face: What Does a Female Athlete Look Like?* New York: Random House, 2001.

This book is excellent for putting a female face onto American sports. The book shows many game faces women athletes have made during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Greene, Carol. *Roberto Clemente: A Rookie Biography*. New York: Children's Press, 1991.

This children's biography presents Roberto Clemente as an exemplum whose parents were plantation workers in Puerto Rico. This book is invaluable because in a very coherent way the author depicts Clemente as someone who plays for the love of the game and once he is successful gives back to the communities he lives in. There are books about other athletes in the series.

Holdsclaw, Chamique. *Chamique Holdsclaw: My Story*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2001.

It's not often that such a young player writes an autobiography. Many people call her the "Michael Jordan" of women's basketball.

Jordan, Delores. *Salt in His Shoes: Michael Jordan in Pursuit of a Dream*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

This is a children's biography tracing Michael Jordan's love of basketball as a child to his phenomenal success as an NBA player. The students in my class loved this book. Almost all of the students had some knowledge prior to reading the book.

Wellman, Sam. *Michelle Kwan (Female Skateing Legends)*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1998.

This a good book for highlighting Asian female achievement in sports.

Internet Resources

www.aagpbl.org

All-American Girls Baseball League (2002)

This site contains many photographs of past players and their biographies. There are numerous related links.

www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/b06660592430724fca2568b5007b8619/1f8fac9c2c7b1623ca2568a900139417!OpenDocument (2002)

This is Australia's government site. The statistical data are interesting and the site is easy to navigate.

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/press/archive/twinepid.htm (2002)

Centers for Disease Control

This government Internet site has plenty of activities for children. Also, this site is loaded with the results of a lot of research and does a great job of posting their statistics.

www.methodisthealth.com/news/diabetes/april2002/page2.htm

This community friendly online publication has a search engine that allows you to look for articles by keyword. The website also has links to other medical research facilities such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

www.ballparks.com (2002)

This site is great for taking your class on a virtual tour because it has pictures and dimensions of ballparks. Many young learners need help in understanding the size and scope of the USA. One way to travel virtually across the states is by visiting ballparks. The author also mentions his "Best of the Old," "Best of the Domes," "Best of the 1960s-70s Ballparks," and the "Best of All the Ballparks."