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Introduction

The Design of the Task Sheet The Purposes of Task Sheets/Task Cards As mentioned in the chapter on cognition, the purpose of the task sheets is to increase the efficiency of time-on-task and teacher–learner communication. The task sheet is the most useful aid for any of the four organizational formats in any style. (See “Organizational Options” in Chapter 11.) Although the purposes of the task sheet were presented in the chapter on cognition, the following reviews the goals: 1 To assist the learner in remembering the task; what to do and how to do it 2. To cut down on the number of repeated explanations by the teacher 3. To teach the learner to concentrate when listening to the explanation the first time 4. To teach the learner to follow specific written instructions and enhance independent and precise performance 5. To record the learner’s progress It is quite common to see learners in the gymnasium who do not know some details of the task to be performed. This high visibility factor is an advantage in physical education—one can see from a considerable distance whether a learner knows how to perform a task. Often, this lack of precise performance is not related to the physical capabilities, but rather to the learner’s inability to remember, for a variety of reasons, the details that were previously demonstrated or explained.

Use of Tools

Using a task sheet makes clear to learners that part of schooling is listening and observing. It is the learner's role to listen to the explanation and observe the demonstration. Then, during practice time, the task sheet becomes the source of information. This puts the focus on the learner, who becomes responsible for following up by using the information on the task sheet. In the gymnasium or the playing field, there is the question of physical distance. Task sheets make it possible for the teacher to direct learners without physically moving to widely scattered locations. When task sheets are used, however, the interaction between the teacher and learners can focus on the understanding of the task description, the learner's understanding of the specific parts. The teacher is able to refer to the task sheet and ask questions that lead the learner to understanding. This climate is psychologically effective, because it rapidly teaches learners about the assets of the Practice style—its contributions to their performance improvement and their responsibility for making the nine impact decisions.

Style-Specific Comments Observing the Practice style in operation has revealed several style-specific insights. Awareness of these issues can positively influence planning and implementation.

1. The theoretical structure of the Practice style calls for shifting nine decisions from the teacher to the learner; however, there are two decisions that need some commentary, particularly in physical education: (1) posture and (2) attire and appearance.

More Techniques

In all other classroom or laboratory subjects, posture is an accommodating feature of the learning situation. In physical education, however, posture is a part of the subject matter. The description of a task includes the posture to be attained and sustained during the performance; therefore, posture decision is not shifted during the practice for fixed tasks in physical education. The second

decision that may not be shifted to the learner concerns attire and appearance. This is often an institutional decision—the school authority makes the decision concerning uniforms. Other institutional decisions concern safety procedures for a particular sport (protective gear, safety gear) or what attire is appropriate for the rules and procedures of a given sport (particular uniforms for wrestling, judo, modern dance, or track and field). 2. If a considerable number of learners make the same error when performing the task and/or making the decisions (role error), then an adjustment decision by the teacher is needed. Stop the action of the class, call them around you, repeat the demonstration and explanation, and send the students back to continue. This technique of recalling the learners for group feedback has several advantages: a. It is time-efficient to give feedback simultaneously to all those who made the same error. b. The physical proximity of the teacher and class members can create a particular climate of ease, different from the climate created when the teacher broadcasts the feedback by shouting or using a P.A. system. c. During this time, learners can ask questions and the teacher can ascertain whether most or all learners understood the correction. d. It may reinforce those who have performed correctly. 3. Since Style B is designed for individual and private practice, communication among or between students must be kept to a minimum.

Lerner's Perspective

When a student talks to a peer, he or she interferes with the other person's decisions. This must not be perceived as the "no talking" style, but rather as a style that provides for private practice. 4. On the elementary school level, two phenomena may occur in the initial stages of the Practice style. First, individual learners often follow the teacher around to show what they have learned and to seek feedback. Second, learners will stop after one performance and then wait for the teacher to get to them for feedback. In both situations, the quickest and most neutral way to handle the learner's behavior is to review with the learner

the teacher's role. Reassure your learner that you will get to him or her, just as you will get to all other learners in the class. 5. Task selection must be appropriate for the behavior requests of this style. Because the learners are working individually and privately on a task while the teacher circulates among the class members, learners must have a degree of proficiency in the task. If the learners cannot sustain engagement in the task, if they constantly need assistance or their work is primarily incorrect, or if the teacher-learner ratio prohibits frequent individual contact—then the task selected is not conducive to this landmark Practice style. Unless learners can be relatively successful in the task, time-off-task increases, discipline problems develop, and the objectives of the experience are not met. (See Design Variations for additional comments.) 6. When learners' performance levels vary, the teacher can assign tasks to individuals or small groups according to ability. This adjustment in the assignment keeps the learners actively on-task. In Style B, the teacher makes this decision to accommodate differences in performance (Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, M, 1998, *Intrastask Variation*, p. 158). When teachers are preoccupied with other students and cannot circulate to offer feedback for extended time intervals, it is mandatory that the learners be independent enough in the task to maintain active time-on-task. 7. Another situation may call on the learner to select, for example, three out of five available tasks. The teacher has made the subject matter decision about the task design, but the learner makes the decision about which tasks to select for the present episode (Graham, et al., *Teaching by Invitation*, p. 158) 8. Avoid hovering behavior. At times teachers will observe learners for a sustained period of time and then walk away without saying anything. The learners must guess at the meaning of the teacher's actions. This interaction is ambiguous and doesn't enhance the task performance or the emotions. At other times, teachers will observe and stay for an extended period of time, offering continuous feedback. Be aware that constant scrutiny inhibits decision making and the essence of this behavior—individual practice. 9. At

times, learners finish before the allotted time (time parameters). This may occur in all styles except the Command style. This interval time (also referred to as transition time) must be planned for because this interval invites learners to engage in decisions that may not be appropriate for the episode. A choice of two or three interval activities could always be available—during a certain number of lessons, weeks, or the entire semester—for those who finish their tasks early.

10. A useful aid in style B (and in other styles) is the wall chart. A wall chart can serve as a reminder of the series of tasks to be performed, the tasks to be practiced in each station, or the decisions in the style. These charts, the task sheets, and transparencies serve as sources of information for the learners about the tasks and their own role in decision making. The wall chart relieves the teacher of being the only source, allowing time to provide feedback. 11. By identifying the specific roles of the teacher and the learner, and by making a decision analysis of various programs, procedures, strategies, and models of teaching, this makes it possible for teachers to include those proposals in the Spectrum. For example, “Mastery Learning” is an excellent example of style B in operation—the teacher makes decisions about feedback and the necessary adjustment of the tasks for various learners. The intent of this section is to bring attention to the often subtle actions that can cause an episode to go astray. It is frustrating to experience mishaps when implementing episodes; however, the slightest adjustments often can lead to significant improvement. Mishaps occur because decisions (in the task, with the logistics, by the teacher or learner) are not made appropriately. The key is to reflect on the events and identify the decision(s) that caused the learning experience to go off course. The Developmental Channels Design Variations The influence of the Developmental Channels on task design in style B is powerful. Few teaching–learning behaviors can match the number of variations that the Practice style offers for emphasizing different attributes and combinations of attributes along the Developmental Channels. The nine decisions in the Practice style relate

principally to the physical domain—where (location), when (time), speed (pace and rhythm), posture, attire, etc. The learners make these decisions to accommodate their individual practice of the task. These decisions are the first steps in the process toward independence; therefore, the landmark style is an individual practice. However, as with all landmark styles, design variations that emphasize various attributes and Developmental Channels are possible. Teaching by Invitation is a design variation of the Practice style with emphasis on the emotional Developmental Channel. This idea offers learners a choice between two (or more) tasks to practice. You may want to continue dribbling in self-space, or you may want to begin dribbling and walking in general space. You may want to continue striking a ball with your paddle, or you may want to try striking a shuttlecock. (Graham, et al., 1998, p. 158). Making a choice feels good emotionally. The assumption here is that if learners select the task they want to practice, they will be more cognitively engaged. The underlying decisions of this variation conform to the Practice style—the teacher identifies the tasks from which the learners will choose, the teacher sets the logistics, and gives the feedback. The learners decide which of the tasks to practice. The intratask variation approach (Graham, et al., 1998) matches the decision distribution of the Practice style with emphasis on the emotional and cognitive channels by having the teacher make individual adjustments in task assignments. The teacher, in private one-on-one interactions, “makes the task easier or harder to better match the skill level” for an individual child. “Todd, why don’t you try striking a balloon instead of a ball?” (Graham, et al., 1998, p. 158). This variation on the Practice style supports the fact that the teacher is aware of different children’s needs and that one task standard is not always appropriate for all students. This task adjustment for some students can increase successful time-on-task and avoid unnecessary emotional frustrations. The underlying decision distribution between the teacher and the learners conforms to the Practice style. In any episode, if learners cannot perform the task,

adjustments need to be made. Active teaching (Siedentop, 1991), interactive teaching (Rink, 1993), and mastery learning, to name just a few, are examples of approaches whose decision distributions conform to the Practice style while emphasizing a particular learning focus. Episodes in cooperative learning (groups working together) are frequent experiences in the gymnasium/classroom. Which decisions and teaching style are they more akin to? Although the intent of this arrangement promotes social and cognitive cooperative interaction, the reality is that the decisions shifted in most cooperative learning experiences represent only the nine decisions of the Practice style. Although the learners are given license to interact, decisions that develop social skills are not shifted. If interaction occurs, it is generally the learner who knows how to do the task telling or showing the others how to do it. In this case the learner who knows is acting as the surrogate teacher—the one who gives others the feedback (Polvi and Telama, 2000). The label “cooperative learning” does not carry a fixed decision structure; therefore, the decisions within the group situations must be determined before learning conclusions can be made. In some groups the specific tasks for each learner actually separate the learners; therefore, rather than cooperative interaction, a parallel learning experience occurs. Although the decisions of group situations are more akin to a canopy under the Practice style, these arrangements do not lead to the primary objectives of the landmark Practice style—that of being trusted to work independently and responsibly. The Practice style is perhaps the most pervasive in the classroom because of the unlimited variations that can be incorporated into this decision structure. The Practice style is a teacher–learner relationship that invites the learner to participate in the responsibilities and the independence offered by shifting nine decisions.

Conclusion

The Purposes of Task Sheets/Task Cards As mentioned in the chapter on cognition, the purpose of the task sheets is to increase the efficiency of time-on-task and teacher–learner communication. The task sheet is the most useful aid for any of the four organizational formats in any style. (See “Organizational Options” in Chapter 11.) Although the purposes of the task sheet were presented in the chapter on cognition, the following reviews the goals: 1 To assist the learner in remembering the task; what to do and how to do it 2. To cut down on the number of repeated explanations by the teacher 3. To teach the learner to concentrate when listening to the explanation the first time 4. To teach the learner to follow specific written instructions and enhance independent and precise performance 5. To record the learner’s progress.