

Programs with Purpose and Audience Appeal

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As a physical education teacher, I am constantly looking for ways to advocate for my profession. One way that I can do this is by looking for opportunities throughout the year to highlight my program. If there is an event, school program, meeting, or particular unit of study by a class, I make it a point to find out how I can showcase my students and curriculum in a variety of physical education activities. Many times it is appropriate for only the students to perform. But, it can also be very fun, and rewarding, to involve the audience in activities.

Listed below are occasions I might have to highlight physical education activities in my school or community:

1. *Pioneer/Kansas Day* – Try country line dances, square dance or scatter square dance, or routines with ropes or hoops. (“Woody’s Roundup” from the “Toy Story” CD is a good rope twirling song.) Calf roping and pioneer games like hopscotch, button pulls, and marbles are also fun for both students and parents.

2. *Dad’s Day, Mom’s Day, or Grandparent’s Day* - Use any kind of equipment that shows off the skills of children so viewers can see what your students are learning in PE. The use of a foreign language or sign language can also be impressive. Dance routines can be very fun. You might choose music or dances from the era of the audience. One year for Grandparent’s Day, I put together a compilation of many songs and dances, divided the children into different dance groups, and did one dance immediately after the other, with each dance lasting about 1-2 minutes. Dances included: Swing, Charleston, Cotton Eyed Joe, Soft Shoe, Twist, Box Step, Polka, Swim, and a disco line dance. This program was very well received.

I often use songs that tug at the heart strings of the audience. Songs like “How Sweet It Is to Be Loved by You,” “Let Them Be Little,” “Part of the Heart of the Sky,” “Only You,” or “Heal the World” have an emotional impact on viewers and tend to be remembered for many years.

3. *Thanksgiving Program* – Traditionally, our early childhood students sing the song “Any Turkey Can Tango,” from the Cat Paws CD of the same name. They also do the movements that are mentioned in the song. Each year our community eagerly awaits this dance. Square dancing to “Turkey in the Straw” can also add fun to a program.

4. *Physical Education Sharing Day* – This is a fabulous opportunity to involve parents or guests. Choose activities that students can do with parents and be relatively successful. If the event is during the day, keep in mind that people could be coming from work and may not be dressed appropriately. Dance (including scatter square dance or circle dances), lummi sticks, parachute, scarf juggling, and simple ball skills are examples of some possible activities. It is also nice to plan a special activity that students can “perform” for their guests. Wow the audience with something showy or impressive.

5. *Music Programs* – Keep in mind that this is the music department’s time to shine, but offer to add movement to songs. You might choreograph a dance to fit a song or theme, use a pre-arranged dance, or just create actions to go along with the words of a song. Simple equipment can also be added. Examples include scarves, lummi sticks, wands, Dynabands, golf tubes, hula hoops, or anything else that will set the tone for the music or help with rhythm and beat. Often, the music teacher will have an instrument, piece of equipment, or costume that he/she would like worked into the routine. Working with the music teacher shows your “team” attitude.

6. *PTO or School Board meetings* – This is a great opportunity to thank individuals for funds received for your program (I try to use the equipment they bought), or to ask for additional funds. If these groups recognize the importance of your work and see how much fun the children are having, they are more likely to approve future funds. It is also your chance to emphasize the skills of students so that members of these organizations can personally view the benefits of physical activity. Space may be limited, so choose activities that are a little more “under control,” yet visually appealing.

7. *Jump Rope for Heart or Hoops for Heart* – Parents, teachers, administrators, and special guests often attend these events. What a great time to show off jump rope or ball skills and to invite others to participate. If a routine to music can be performed, it can be very impressive.

8. *Classroom academic units* – Some teachers complete an academic unit with a special program. Offer to include a dance or game that might accompany their unit of study. Examples might include The Old West (square dance), Read Across America (Green Eggs and Ham dance), China (Chinese Fan or Dragon Dance), Mexico (Hat Dance, Regular or Siamese Macarena) or Patriotic (red, white, and blue streamers).

9. *May Day festivities* - Have a Medieval Faire with songs, games and dances from the time period. (Check with your music teacher for simple songs.) Invite parents to help wrap the Maypole. Make a May basket to deliver later and discuss this old fashioned practice with children. Many of today’s youth are unfamiliar with May baskets, but some parents will remember it from their own youth.

10. *Halftime entertainment* – If your local middle school or high school allows various groups to perform at the halftime of athletic events, schedule a special routine to entertain the crowd.

11. *Community events* – On occasion, there are community health fairs, fitness awareness days, special civic activities, or promotions at charity events. Keep a repertoire of routines or activities that your students can perform on short notice. If the opportunity presents itself, volunteer your students as entertainment or as young educators at these special events.

12. *End of year activities* – My division of the school ends the year with an outdoor Hawaiian theme Popsicle party that includes dancing the Twist, Limbo, Swim, and Hula. Many parents attend this event because it occurs right before dismissal. I invite parents to dance with their children. In addition, the children sing and sign the song “Good Friends,” from an older Cat Paws CD entitled, “Go Fish.”