

# **Creating a Quality Physical Education Program.**

## **The RECIPE to my success.**

In the beginning of my career, although I was energetic, engaging and really trying hard to be what I thought was a good educator, in retrospect, I believe I was at fault for allowing the poor student behavior, the lack of participation and overall student success because I lacked the experience and knowledge necessary to be an adequate physical education teacher. In fact, I initially blamed EVERYTHING that did not go as planned on my students. I felt it was their fault and they were the problem. In time though, as I gained experience, perspective and developed my pedagogy, I realized that rarely was it ever the students fault. I was the one to blame. Therefore, I am not basing the information that I am sharing with you off any case studies or any type of research and statistics that I have studied and read. I am sharing my opinions for you to consider based solely on the 24+ years of first hand accounts of teaching thousands of hours of elementary physical education classes to thousands of students and from conducting workshops with teachers all over the nation.

There are many excellent physical education tools that we are exposed to throughout our education and career that inspire, motivate, captivate and/or drive us to becoming who we are as physical educators. These ideas, methodologies, strategies and trends that we've been exposed to along the way have contributed to our passion and/or discontent in molding our own teaching philosophy and pedagogy. This evolving philosophy often dictates how we prepare and deliver the content to our students.

As a life-long learner, I find myself constantly investigating articles, journals, social media, text books and anything that pertains to my craft with the intent to become the best physical education teacher that I can possibly be for my students. I have learned that there are many powerful tools to deliver the vast amounts of physical education content. Determining what is the best content and the best way to deliver the content has often times left me feeling inadequate, especially after viewing so many great ideas on social media and presentations at PE workshops and conferences. There are SO MANY great teaching styles. Which style is the best? Should I be incorporating more technology or am I using too much? Do I use local, state, or SHAPE standards? What types of assessments are best and when should I use them? What should a great curriculum include? How much content and how much time should I focus on games, fitness, motor skills, cooperatives, and academic integration learning?

I've struggled most of my career with what I think the ideal physical education program should look like and came to the realization that college professors and physical educators alike must avoid the "one size fits all" teaching approach. After years of soul searching, I realized that it would be wise if I identified the "Negotiables" and "Non-negotiables" in creating a quality Physical Education experience for **my** students.

After all, there is no cookie-cutter plan on how to deliver content because no one school, facility, gym space, class size, budget, schedule or teacher is exactly alike. There are also so many powerful tools available to deliver our content, whether through teacher led, student led, station-based, or via games/activities or by using technology and teaching skills via PowerPoint, projection, or Smartboards. Assessment using Plickers, QR codes, rubrics, diagnostic, formative or summative evaluations. Using local, state or SHAPE America standards to identify, clarify and cover health and physical education content. I believe these tools can be identified as the "**negotiables**" in our field. It is then up to each individual teacher to determine which tools and methods to implement and are best suited for his or her program, passion and philosophy in order to achieve the non-negotiables.

There are three **non-negotiables** that I've identified as crucial components essential in what I believe will help create a healthy, thriving physical education program.

1. Since being "physical" is the ONE thing that sets us apart from all other disciplines, we must use our physical education platform to love and nurture our student's wellness. Naci and Ioannidis (2015) stated that "*wellness includes choices and activities aimed at achieving physical vitality, mental readiness, social satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, and personal fulfillment*" <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2330497>. This statement identifies, in a nutshell, everything I believe we are about. I believe a quality movement-based, physical education program provides the ideal avenue to strengthen our students' self worth and self-esteem, while building their physical and social skills through movement.
2. Secondly, it is essential that the physical education experience be **fun** and engaging.
3. Third, physical educators can help promote the pursuit of lifetime movement if we can create a variety of choice driven physical education experiences.

To accomplish my non-negotiables, I started using strategies and implementing games that:

- I. Maximize participation and opportunities for success through the game.

- Implementing activities that have students waiting in lines and given few opportunities to practice skills is outdated. I focused my efforts on implementing games where multiple opportunities to practice skills in a fun, non-threatening environment would be my new norm.

## II. Maximize motor skill learning and performance through the game.

- A lightbulb came on one day, many years into my teaching, while implementing stations for Grades 3-5. A “red flag” moment where I finally realized it wasn’t the student’s fault for their lack of motivation and poor behavior, but the lack of preparation, age-appropriate engagement and challenge on my part. They were not having fun, there was nothing at stake to hold students accountable to want to strive for success, and students started figuring out how to make it fun, which typically led to off-task behaviors causing them to get into trouble. I decided it was my responsibility to figure out how to reinforce skills practice through fun, age-appropriate games. Games and activities where they wanted to be successful because there was something to strive for and at stake. Games where students would actually hold other students accountable for off task behavior or for not trying to improve or be successful.

## III. Maximize exercise and fitness through the game.

- I chose to incorporate running laps and performing exercises into fun, movement-based games where the running and/or exercise were an underlying goal of mine, but not the major focus of the students. The in-school running program I implemented earlier in my career is now offered as an after school extracurricular activity for those students choosing to be on a running team.
- It is amazing how tweaking my thought process led to a phenomenal increase in participation during and after school. *Note: and for some crazy reason it seemed like my physical education became asthma-free by the next school year.* Hmmm?

## IV. Maximize cooperative learning through the game.

- I did not realize that when I signed up to be a teacher, that I was also going to become a guidance counselor. The tattling, the cheating, the selfishness, poor communication and teamwork were going to put me in an early grave! I embraced this dilemma and started being intentional in creating and implementing games that placed MAJOR emphasis on

teamwork and communication and if you did not learn this skillset then you were going to continually fail and not be successful in class.

V. Maximize academic integration through the game.

- I soon realized, after having success with motor skill learning, fitness, and cooperatives through fun, gaming experiences that I could have the same success implementing academics through games. Sure enough, integrating academics into fun-based movement activities helped reinforce the learning of outside subject matter.

VI. Maximize positive behavior outcomes through the game.

- During my early years of teaching, my inexperience often times caused me to mislabel classes as being “bad” and blaming them for the reason why the activity was not successful. To avoid this trap, I now perform a self-check on my curriculum and game choices by considering the following concepts:
  - 1) Do I avoid monotony by frequently changing the lessons and games? My experience was that bored students often led to behavior problems.
  - 2) Do I over use or play great games too often? I experienced that students were more likely to sit out for cheating or disregarding the rules when they knew I would play that particular game multiple times during the year.
  - 3) If I perceive a game is not fun or age appropriate, do I teach it anyway because it is easy and that is what I have always done or do I remove the game or create a way to make it fun and/or age appropriate?

I love teaching the F.I.T.T. Principal and its relevance in leading a physically active life. I also use this principal to help govern my approach in addressing the idea of creating a choice driven environment.

- Getting students to choose to exercise “FREQUENTLY” is important, but students and adults for that matter typically are not going to do anything frequently unless they can equate what they are doing to a **fun**, enjoyable experience. I am afraid that in my early years of teaching, my students did not consider my PE program meaningful and enjoyable because they did not associate the movement and exercise experience I was offering as being fun. I was contributing to the negative perceptions that they and society has towards physical education.

- I felt that if I am going to encourage students to pursue lifetime fitness then I must expose them to as many different, fun “**TYPES**” of skills, games, activities, sports, etc. as possible. In turn, students would then be able to figure out what they like and “frequently” put the “time” in to pursuing the fitness activities they enjoy.

Only when I addressed and implemented the previous strategies to accomplish my first two non-negotiables could I then truly create a choice-driven environment.

I establish from day one that students always have the choice to participate or sit out. Why, because in the near future, being physically active or not will be their choice anyways. In my state, middle school PE is not a requirement and students are only required to take one semester of PE in high school.

Now there is a “catch” if a student ever chooses to sit out. If I have thoroughly addressed the first two non-negotiables in my program then I will rarely have anyone make the choice of sitting out or not participating. **HOWEVER**, if they do make this choice then I will follow the typical protocol by taking away the standard points and documenting their poor choice for my records. **AND**, I’ll have them sign my “Miss a Day of PE” clipboard (see example). Signing this page means that the student can sit out of today’s activity and although I may be disappointed in his or her choice, I will not be mad at them. As they are signing the page, I typically have to remind them of what it means, so I take the opportunity to remind them **and the class** that the consequence will be that I get to choose one upcoming lesson/game where they must sit out. Almost ALWAYS the child changes his or her mind and decides to participate that day once the protocol is understood. *Note: knowing your students is key here because this strategy does not apply to students who never have issues and obviously have something going on with them that day, whether they do not feel well or have some type of injury.*

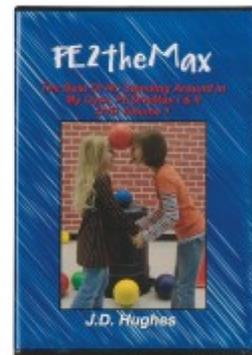
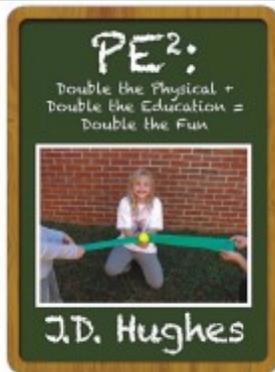
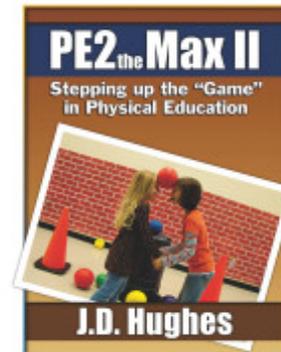
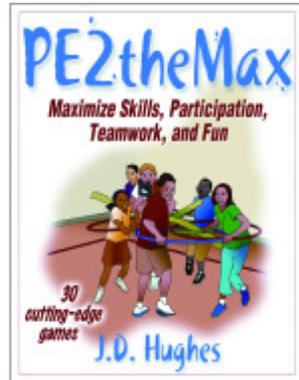
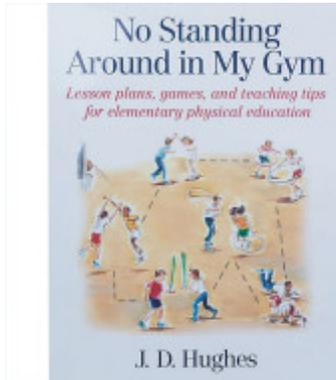
In my experience, the reason a child does not want to participate is often times out of my control. For example, the student sees the game being played and has struggled in the past working well in small groups or in teamwork or communication-based games and therefore chooses not to play to avoid those situations.

I will be honest; if they stick with their “guns” and choose not to participate then I am going to be strategic and really drive home a point. On the day when “THE GAME” of my choosing arrives, I will go about business as usual and just before beginning the game, I will pause and walk over to my clipboard and announce to that student that I am going to choose today’s game for them to sit out. There is usually an overwhelming response from the class of “Oh No”, driving home my point that you should always try your best even if you do not enjoy the

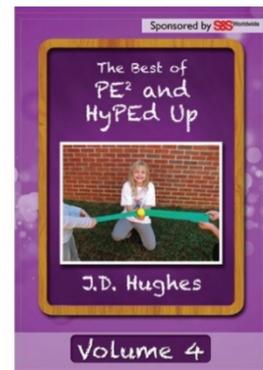
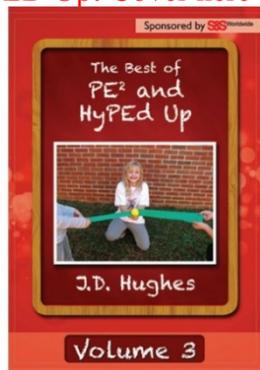
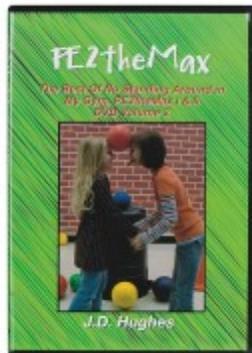
activity or end up struggling with others. **Bottom line:** not every game implemented will be everyone's favorite. The life lesson here is to try it and give your best, understanding the game will be played once or twice a year.

### Example of "Miss a Day of PE" on my clipboard

<b>I'm choosing to miss a full day of P.E.</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Reason for choosing not to participate</b>



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Please check out my other books and DVDs by requesting an order form at [pe2themax@bellsouth.net](mailto:pe2themax@bellsouth.net) or checking out my website [www.pe2themax.com](http://www.pe2themax.com).

# About the Author

J.D. Hughes is author of *No Standing Around in My Gym: Creative Lesson Plans, Games, and Teaching Tips for Elementary Physical Education* (2002), *PE2theMax: Maximize Skills, Participation, Teamwork and Fun* (2005), *PE2theMax II: Stepping up the "Game" in Physical Education* (2008), *The Best of No Standing Around in My Gym, PE2theMax Volumes 1 & 2 DVDs* (2009), *PE<sup>2</sup>: Double the Physical + Double the Education = Double the Fun* (2011) and *The Best of PE<sup>2</sup> and HyPEd Up Volumes 3 & 4 DVDs* (2013). *HyPEd Up: Taking Physical Education Games to the Next Level* (2017).

He has received numerous awards throughout his teaching career including the 2005 and 2015 GA Elementary PE Teacher of the Year and SHAPE Southern District Elementary PE Teacher of the Year and an honorable mention in USA Today's 2003 All-USA Teacher Team program (he was the only PE teacher to be honored so that year). J.D. is on the advisory board review team for S&S Discount Sports and the Best Practices and 3-5 Lesson Plans area of P.E. Central. J.D. has taught elementary physical education in Douglas County since 1995. His previous experiences and superior program proved invaluable experience in setting up exemplary programs at various new schools. J.D. provides a challenging yet developmentally appropriate physical learning environment striving for motor skill development, physical fitness and cognitive awareness as recognized by SHAPE standards. J.D.'s ideas will provide a look at 21<sup>st</sup> century physical education, which includes a view of fun-packed games and activities that he has developed or modified to engage and motivate students. He implements movement education lessons that promote communication, cooperation and personal responsibility, and activities that encourage brainstorming and critical thinking. He goes beyond the call of duty by working with students and families to promote physical fitness before school through the FITT Club and after school through the Roadrunner's Club. He promotes a healthy lifestyle by serving as a positive role model and talking to students and parents, also serving as a cooperating teacher and mentor for local colleges. He is among the first PE teachers to become a National Board Certified Teacher (2001) and he holds a Master's and Education Specialist's degree. J.D. also provides staff development to local school districts, conducts conference presentations and workshops all over the nation. He is passionate,

constantly researching and sharing new ideas, while striving to improve his teaching strategies and strengthen the physical education profession.

J.D. enjoys spending time with his wife, Beth, and daughters, Janie and Josie, as well as serving the Lord, cycling, and travel. J.D. invites you to contact him via e-mail at [pe2themax@bellsouth.net](mailto:pe2themax@bellsouth.net), cell phone at 770.778.4514 or follow him on Twitter [@pe2themax](https://twitter.com/pe2themax) or visit his website [www.pe2themax.com](http://www.pe2themax.com). He welcomes any questions or comments you might have about HyPEd Up II, including purchasing additional copies or conducting a workshop in your school district or state conference.