

Teaching Styles, Progression and Variety in Athletics Lessons

Recent research into physical education teaching styles (Curtner-Smith, Todorovich, McCaughtry, & Lacon, 2001) has found that contrary to the child centred philosophy of the physical education National Curriculum there is still a predominance of direct teaching styles in athletics lessons. The opportunity for pupils to plan and evaluate is therefore limited. A lack of progression and variety from year to year is also problematic, as it inhibits pupils' learning and can lead to motivational difficulties due to the repetitive nature of the lessons. The traditional normative testing approach to athletics lessons further compounds this problem if the same lessons are delivered every year without allowing time for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of athletics principles and to learn, consolidate and improve their techniques. The purpose of this article is therefore to suggest ideas for a more varied and progressive approach to the teaching of athletics in line with Morgan's (2000a & b, 2001a, b & c) athletics challenges and Mosston & Ashworth's (1986) continuum of teaching styles. In order to exemplify the variety of teaching styles and strategies possible within athletics lessons and the progression in knowledge, understanding and technique that should be evident from Year 7 to Year 11 one event will be focused upon and different approaches and teaching styles identified. The event chosen is the long jump but the ideas have also been developed for all the other athletics events (Morgan, 2001c). It is important to note that the ideas presented should ideally be implemented in a short block of 2 or 3 lessons per event in each unit rather than trying to cover every thing in one lesson. This would allow time for consolidation and improvement in the activities and may require teachers to select certain events each year, which in its self would result in more variety in the athletics curriculum and promote a greater depth of learning.

A recent research study into the effects of different athletics teaching styles on pupils' learning (Morgan, 2002) revealed that the teaching styles featured in this article resulted in significantly higher pupil rated and teacher rated learning when compared with the traditional command/practice style. It is therefore suggested that implementing the different teaching styles and resources exemplified in this article will result in improved learning and lead to more varied, progressive and enjoyable athletics lessons in Key stages 3 & 4.

Year 7 - Athletics Challenges:

Long Jump 1

Equipment: Cones, tape measure (optional)

- Place a cone down as a starting mark
- Get a partner to mark where your heels land with a cone and perform the following jumps from a **standing start**:
 - two feet to two feet
 - one to same
 - one to other
 - one to two
- Measure your best distances with a tape or in your own feet
- Record your best distances and work out the best jump for distance from a standing start

Athletics Challenges

Long Jump 2

Equipment: Cones, tape measure (optional)

- Place a cone down as a starting mark
- Get a partner to mark where your heels land with a cone and perform the following jumps from a **2/3 stride run up**:
 - two feet to two feet
 - one to same
 - one to other
 - one to two
- Measure your best distances with a tape or in your own feet
- Record your best distances and work out the best jump for distance from a standing start

Athletics Challenges

Long Jump 3

Equipment: Two cones, tape measure (optional)

- Place a cone down as a starting mark
- Perform three consecutive two footed jumps for distance
- Get someone to mark the overall distance with a cone
- Have further attempts to beat your marker
- Measure your best distance with a tape measure or in your feet and record it for a future target to beat

Athletics Challenges

Long Jump 4

Equipment: Two cones

- Set up two cones 5/10 metres apart
- Perform the least number of hops on each leg over the distance
- Perform three repetitions on each leg
- Try and reduce the number of hops
- Record your least number for each leg and the distance covered
- Repeat the process for 'bounds' or big strides on alternate legs

Athletics Challenges

Long Jump 5

Equipment: Two cones

- Place a cone down as a starting mark
- From a standing start run between 9 and 13 fast and powerful strides
- Get your partner to mark where your last stride lands with a cone
- Repeat this three times trying to land on the same spot each time in a position ready to jump
- Measure the distance in your own feet or natural walking strides and record it

Athletics Challenges

Long Jump 6

Equipment: Tape measure, rake and brush, sand pit

- Work out your run up on the run way using between 9 and 13 strides
- Perform a running long jump into the pit
- Get someone to measure the jump
- Have a number of attempts

Record your best distance

Year 8 – Event Introduction and Technical Checklist:

Evaluate your own or someone else's long jumping technique and if it is incorrect, make suggestions for improvement

TECHNIQUE	YES	NO	SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVEMENT
Use of a checkmark for accuracy at the beginning of the approach			
Good speed and sprinting form - high knee lift & good leg drive on the approach			
A relaxed sprinting action on the approach			
An upright body position on takeoff			
The takeoff foot placed ahead of the hips			
Good height at takeoff			
The non takeoff leg and both arms driven upwards at takeoff			
An extension of the leading leg to assume a stride position in the air			
Both legs extended forwards for landing			
A good landing without falling backwards in the sand			

Year 9 – Guided Discovery:

Compare your distances for the different jumps below and work out the most important aspects of technique.

TYPE OF JUMP	DISTANCE / COMMENT
Standing Jump	
Short Approach (3-5 strides)	
Full Approach (11-13 strides)	
Height focus on takeoff	
Speed focus on takeoff	
Stride jump technique in flight	
Attempted hang technique in flight	
Focus on double leg shoot on landing	
Most important aspects	

Year 10 – Reciprocal:

Observe another member of the class long jumping and use the following points to try and improve his/her technique

APPROACH

- The approach started by stepping onto the takeoff foot
- Checkmarks used to develop consistency
- Good sprinting form - high knee lift & good leg drive
- Relaxed sprinting - not straining for extra speed at the board

TAKEOFF

- The hips sinking naturally in preparation for takeoff
- Upright posture at takeoff
- The takeoff foot placed well ahead of the hips
- Good height at takeoff
- Upwards drive from the non takeoff leg and both arms at takeoff

FLIGHT

- Forward rotation in flight reduced by use of the hang or hitch kick technique:

Hang

- The lead leg extended and driven backwards to join the trailing leg
- Both arms circling downwards, backwards and then forward in a clockwise direction
- The hips pushed forwards to produce the hang in the air



Hitch Kick

- The leading leg extended so that a stride position is assumed in the air
- The lead leg pulled back and then both legs extended forwards for landing
- The arms rotate clockwise to balance the action of the legs



LANDING

- Both legs pushed forwards into a double leg shoot
- The feet pushed out ahead of the body
- The arms reaching forwards in flight and then backwards on landing
- No falling backwards on landing

Year 11 – Technical Analysis:

Observe another member of the group performing a long jump. Using your knowledge & the key points listed below analyse your partner's technique identifying strengths and points for improvement

ASPECT OF TECHNIQUE	STRENGTHS & POINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT
Approach (checkmarks, starting foot, sprint technique, optimum speed, relaxation/tension)	
Takeoff phase (angle, height, takeoff leg drive, use of free leg & arms, body posture, focus)	
Height in the air (takeoff angle, leg drive, use of free limbs)	
In flight technique (stride, hang, hitch kick)	
Leg shoot & final landing position (leg shoot, body position)	
Most Important Aspects to focus upon for improvement	

References

Curtner-Smith, M., Todorovich, J., McCaughtry, N., & Lacon, S. (2001), 'Urban teachers' use of productive and reproductive teaching styles within the confines of the National Curriculum for Physical Education', *European Physical Education Review*, Vol. 7 (2): 177-190

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The Athletics Challenges Resource pack was published in 2001 and revised and reprinted in 2002. The pack contains the following for each event: laminated challenge cards; technical analysis checklist sheets; laminated reciprocal teaching cards; guided discovery sheets; and A Level technical analysis sheets (all photocopyable). For further details contact Cathy Grove, UWIC Press, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff, CF23 6XD Tel: 029 2041 6515 or e:mail cgrove@uwic.ac.uk