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The OAHPERD Journal is published three times a year (Fall, Winter, and Spring) by the Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. The purpose of the Journal is to provide a current and constant avenue of communication among members of the Association on all professional topics, association business, and news of statewide interest. Correspondence should be mailed to the Journal Editor or to a member of the Editorial Review Board.
### OAHPERD 2015-2016

#### Board and Council

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past President</strong></td>
<td>Jan Drummond, TU</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jan-drummond@utulsa.edu">Jan-drummond@utulsa.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>President</strong></td>
<td>Susan McLemore, UCO</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Smclemore4@uco.edu">Smclemore4@uco.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>President-Elect</strong></td>
<td>Terry Shannon, ORU</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tshannon@oru.edu">tshannon@oru.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong> Board</td>
<td>Tim Baghurst, OSU</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong> Board</td>
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<td>Dana Chambers, Schools for Healthy Lifestyles</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation</strong> Board</td>
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<td>Holly Vanderrohe, Yukon Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adapted</strong></td>
<td>Trish Hughes, OSU</td>
<td>Christina Gould, <a href="mailto:gouldch@tulsaschools.org">gouldch@tulsaschools.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athletics</strong></td>
<td>Dianna Potts, Broken Arrow Schools</td>
<td>Tony Domeck, Oral Roberts University</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>College</strong></td>
<td>Todd Farmer, Langston</td>
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<td><strong>Dance</strong></td>
<td>Suzanne Cyrus, Jenks PS</td>
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<td><strong>Elementary PE</strong></td>
<td>Stephanie McCrary, Broken Arrow Schools</td>
<td>Miguel Blanco, OKCP</td>
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<td><strong>Secondary PE</strong></td>
<td>Beth Moakley- OKCP</td>
<td>Julie Dolf, Western Village Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise Science</strong></td>
<td>Jason West, U. of Tulsa</td>
<td>Kay Daigle, SE OSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Bill Cash</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Billc@health.ok.gov">Billc@health.ok.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin Fink, OSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Kevin.fink@okstate.edu">Kevin.fink@okstate.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Representative</td>
<td>Mary Nix, UCO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump Rope For Heart Coordinators</td>
<td>Susan Lalman; Morrison PS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:susanlalman@morrisonps.com">susanlalman@morrisonps.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suzanne Cyrus, Jenks PS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:suzanne.cyrus@jenksps.org">suzanne.cyrus@jenksps.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>SW Coordinator</td>
<td>Stephanie Koper,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weatherford Schools</td>
<td><a href="mailto:skoper@wpsok.org">skoper@wpsok.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Coordinator</td>
<td>Jillian McCarty, ECU</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K,ccartu@ecpl/edi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Coordinators</td>
<td>Glenna Mears, OKCPS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grmears405@cox.net">grmears405@cox.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dawn Chernicky</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dwchernicky@okcps.org">dwchernicky@okcps.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE Coordinator</td>
<td>Brett Mercer, Sapulpa</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bmercer@sapulpaps.org">bmercer@sapulpaps.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibits Manager</td>
<td>Stephanie McCrary,</td>
<td>Mary Nix</td>
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<td>Broken Arrow Schools</td>
<td>UCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:smccrary@baschools.org">smccrary@baschools.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mnix2@uco.edu">Mnix2@uco.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necrologist</td>
<td>Nicki Keele</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nickiokie@yahoo.com">nickiokie@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Editor</td>
<td>Kay Daigle, SE</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kdaigle@se.edu">kdaigle@se.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Director</td>
<td>Stephanie Canada-Phillips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:scanadaphillips@uco.edu">scanadaphillips@uco.edu</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director /</td>
<td>Donna Cobb, UCO</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dcobb@uco.edu">dcobb@uco.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention Manager</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LMAS Coordinator</td>
<td>Stephanie Canada-Phillips</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:scanadaphillips@uco.edu">scanadaphillips@uco.edu</a></td>
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Message from the President

Spring is almost here and so is the SHAPE America National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota from April 4-9th. I will be attending the convention and representing Oklahoma in the delegate assembly. I am looking forward to it and hope to bring you updates when I return.

Our OAHPERD board and council met in February and started plans for our state convention in October. Please plan to attend and also consider putting in a proposal for a presentation. Many of you have such great ideas and things you are doing and we would love to see them. Maybe two or more of you could go in together and show us different perspectives of the same thing. The board and council are also taking nominations for many of the awards and scholarships we announce at the convention. Please take time to nominate someone you think is a great teacher, leader, or student.

Some big news that hope everyone is working on is our OAHPERD Logo Contest. Submission are due anytime between now and April 11th. The winner of the logo contest receives a gift certificate from Best Buy, an OAHPERD T-Shirt with the logo and their registration for the OAHPERD Convention in October. I know we have lots of creative people out there, so get cracking!! The big reveal will be at the October Convention.

In other news I know that the economy and the current budget cuts to schools, state and government agencies has everyone wondering what the future will hold and that is why as educators and leaders we need to stick together and find solutions for the future. We all know that the ones who suffer are the students. Many of you go above and beyond are always working to fill the gaps. Belonging to OAHPERD and networking solutions with your peers can be helpful. So as the year continues please send ideas to your OAHPERD board and council and plan on attending the October convention. Together we can RING the BELL by advocating for our professions, educating legislators and administrators about what we do, and celebrate the successes.

Keep in touch - Advocate, Educate, and Celebrate - Ring That Bell

Yours Truly,

Susan McLemore
Editor’s Message

We are adding a new section to our journal that focuses on best practices and ideas in the fields of health, physical education, recreation, and dance. Our hope is that practitioners will send in their ideas in the form of a short article for publication. It's a great way to get a publication line on your vita while sharing ideas and best practices with others in our field. This is also the time of the year when we need to recognize the contributions of individuals who make a difference. The nomination form for the board and council members is posted and the descriptions for our various awards and scholarships are available. Please consider nominating someone or even yourself. “Ring the Bell”!

Fall Journal
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts, July 1st
Deadline for all other items, August 1st

Winter Journal
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts, October 1st
Deadline for all other items, November 1st

Spring Journal
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts, February 1st
Deadline for all other items, March 1st
Our SHAPE America Southern District Convention was February 10 – 13th. I enjoyed representing Oklahoma at this event. I was able to attend three workshops pertaining to jump rope. Two of these workshops were hands-on learning with the Apex Skip-It Jump Rope team and coach, Tommy Hager of North Carolina. They had an hour of single and partner tricks and an hour presentation on long and double dutch jump roping. I learned two simple tips that have helped my students entering and exiting the double dutch ropes. First, turner watches the rope closest to the jumper and says “Ready, Set, Go” as the closest rope comes and hits the ground. Then to exit, the jumper watches the arm of the spinner on the side he wishes to exit and when the arm goes up, he then exits.

I also attended Jump Rope For Heart Success Stories and Ideas conducted by the leading JRFH coordinator in the Southeast, Robin Kish. She shared several ways she raised money for the American Heart Association. She also had a running tally board of the top online fundraiser weekly.

For her event she would get a local college to send athletes and jump with the kids. She also invited public figures to attend the event. During the event she had students come to the microphone and share “I am jumping for...”

She felt this added to the importance of the event and meaning to the students. She also talked about encouraging students to make videos to send out letting people know they are fundraising for Jump Rope For Heart. She shared some cute ones the students had made at home with their families. She then encouraged students to make thank you videos as well after the event.

Would you like to win a $100 Gift Card? Please send 4-6 photos of your Jump Rope For Heart Event and share your favorite event or unit idea. You could also add a quote from a child.

You are then entered! We would like to gather all the wonderful ideas of JRFH coordinators to share at our State Convention luncheon. The drawing will be May 1, 2016 and you will be notified by email.

Please send the above information to susanlalman@morrisonps.com to enter.

-Susan Lalman
Nominations for 2016-2017 Slate of Officers-Elect...

Nominations for 2016-2017 Slate of Officers-Elect... If you are searching for a way to have a voice in our profession, please seriously consider a leadership role in the Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance!!

The OAHPERD Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for Elect-Positions for the 2016-2017 year. As a member of OAHPERD, you have the privilege of suggesting nominations.

The names of the nominees should be sent to the Chair of the Nominating Committee (Jan-Drummond@utulsa.edu).

The Committee will entertain names and prepare a slate of candidates for each office from those nominated. In the event two or more nominees seek the same position of Board or Council-Elect, the Committee will select one nominee for the ballot.

The qualifications of each candidate should meet the following criteria:

1. Current membership in SHAPE-America (formerly AAHPERD) is required for Board positions (President-Elect and Vice-President-Elect) and recommended of candidates for Council-Elect positions.

2. Membership in OAHPERD (or other state AAHPERD associations) is required for at least three years for President-Elect and Vice-President-Elect nominees and at least one year for Council-Elect nominees.

3. Nominees should have a background, experience, and primary interest in their respective areas of OAHPERD.

Please note, if you make a nomination, please seek the approval of the person you are nominating – you may also self-nominate!! For each nomination, please include the name, email address, and phone number of the nominee(s). The Chair of the Nominating Committee will contact the nominees requesting further information.
College-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

Dance-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

Elementary PE-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

Secondary PE-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

Exercise Science-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

Research-Elect: Name:
Email:
Phone:

The Nominating Committee thanks you for your consideration of this very important process!!
To meet your needs as a professional in OAHPERD, great leadership is imperative!!
The following Vice-President-Elect (Board) positions are open for nominations:

**General VP-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

**Health VP-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

**Physical Education VP-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

**Recreation VP-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

The following Council-Elect positions are open for nominations:

**Adapted-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

**Athletics-Elect:**
- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:
SAVE THE DATE!
Southern District/Louisiana AHPERD
January 10-13, 2017
Baton Rouge, Louisiana—Crowne Plaza

Come enjoy pre-conference workshops, General Session speaker, over 100 activity and lecture sessions and “Louisiana Night”!

Stay tuned for program proposal information and conference updates at:
http://www.shapeamerica.org/about/districts/southern

Laissez les bon temps rouler!
(Let the good times roll!)
Health Educator of the Year

This award will be given to a health educator in each of the following school levels:
Health Education Professional of the Year Award - School (K-12)
Health Education Professional of the Year Award - College/University

The purpose of this award is to encourage and recognize outstanding teaching and professional involvement by educators/professionals in the area of Health Education.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Has major responsibility for teaching, programming, or administering effective health education programs.

2. Has at least five years experience in the category where they are applying.

3. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing the values and desired outcomes of health education.

4. Utilizes various teaching strategies and incorporates innovative learning experiences based on developmental social and psychological needs of students and/or clients.

5. Shows interest in and sensitivity to the needs of students, clients and fellow professionals.

6. Assumes responsibility for his/her professional growth and evidences professional commitment through membership and involvement in local, state and national health organizations.

7. Currently a member of OAHPERD, AAHPERD, AAHE, and must attend the SDAAHPERD convention.

Please send the following information:

Name:

Place of Employment:

Address:

Phone #:

E-mail:
Betty Abercrombie Scholar Award

Call for Nominations

The Betty Abercrombie Scholar Award is designed to (1) promote and stimulate scholarly productivity among professionals representing health, physical education, recreation, leisure, dance and sport, and (2) recognize scholars who have made and continue to make noteworthy contributions to the scholarly enterprise.

The following criteria are used by the selection committee.

The individual selected:

1. Must be a member of AAHPERD and OAHPERD.

2. Should have achieved a commendable record evidenced by creative productivity to enhance the profession of health, physical education, recreation and dance.

3. Shall be currently involved in the scholarship of promoting the fields of health, physical education, recreation and dance through various meaningful contribution such as:
   a. Articles in refereed journals.
   b. Scholarly contributions to books.
   c. Scholarly presentations to professional meetings.
   d. Acquisition of grants.
   e. Officer of professional organization.
   f. Major projects.
   g. Professional development.
   h. Development of curricular and instructional activities.
   i. Contributions to the profession including research.

4. Must be willing to assume responsibilities so designated for a period of one year to include:
   a. Making a presentation at the annual OAHPERD Convention the following year.
   b. Serving as chair of the selection committee for the following year.
The Virginia Peters Higher Education Award

Criteria

The applicant/nominee must be an educator who:

1. Prepares Oklahoma public and private physical education teachers.
2. Oversees, directs and/or advises student teachers in the field of physical Education.
3. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing personal health and fitness enjoyment of activity, and sensitivity to the physical and emotional needs of all students.
4. Utilizes various teaching methodologies and plans innovative learning experiences.
5. Is a current OAHPERD member, regularly attends and/or presents at state conventions/workshops.
6. Is a current member of AAHPERD and NASPE and has attended and/or presented at Southern District AAHPERD and/or National Conventions.
7. Nominees shall attach documentation for each of the criteria. Additionally, a letter of recommendation from a department chair or dean should be attached.
Recreation Professional of the Year

For the purposes of this award, a Recreation Professional is defined as a person who has major responsibility for teaching recreation pre-professional/professionals of conducting recreation programming and/or administration in an educational, public, or private recreation setting.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing the values and desired outcomes of recreation.

2. Demonstrates enthusiasm for the recreation profession and his/her role in it.

3. Shows interest in, and sensitivity to the needs of students, clients, and fellow professionals.

4. Utilizes various methodologies and implements creative, innovative, safe and effective courses/recreation programs based on:
   a. The developmental, social, and psychological needs of students and clients.
   b. The philosophies, purposes, needs and resources of the sponsoring institution.

5. Assumes responsibility for his/her professional growth and evidences professional commitment through membership and involvement in local, state, and national recreation organizations.

6. Is a current member of AAHPERD and must attend the Southern District Convention.

Please send the following information:

Name:

Place of Employment:

Address:

Phone #:

E-mail:
Elementary “Physical Education” Teacher of the Year

For the purpose of this award, a Physical Educator is defined for the purposes of this award as a person who has major responsibility for teaching physical education in grades designated (PK-5) for each award.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Has taught a minimum of six years at the school level designated by the award.
2. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing the personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, sportsmanship, and sensitivity to the needs of his/her students.
3. Utilizes various teaching methodologies and plans innovative learning experiences.
4. Conducts a balanced and sequential curriculum.
5. Evidences professional commitment through membership and involvement in local, state, and national physical education organizations.
6. If selected, and wishes to be moved on to the district and national competition, is a current member of AAHPERD and NASPE and must attend the AAHPERD District and possibly the National Convention.

Please send the following information:

Name:

Place of Employment:

Address:

Phone #:

E-mail:
Middle School “Physical Education” Teacher of the Year

For the purpose of this award, a Physical Educator is defined for the purposes of this award as a person who has major responsibility for teaching physical education in grades designated (6-8) for each award.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Has taught a minimum of six years at the school level designated by the award.

2. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing the personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, sportsmanship, and sensitivity to the needs of his/her students.

3. Utilizes various teaching methodologies and plans innovative learning experiences.

4. Conducts a balanced and sequential curriculum.

5. Evidences professional commitment through membership and involvement in local, state, and national physical education organizations.

6. If selected, and wishes to be moved on to the district and national competition, is a current member of AAHPERD and NASPE and must attend the AAHPERD District and possibly the National Convention.

Please send the following information:

Name:

Place of Employment:

Address:

Phone #:

E-mail:
Secondary “Physical Education” Teacher of the Year

For the purpose of this award, a Physical Educator is defined for the purposes of this award as a person who has major responsibility for teaching physical education in grades designated (9-12) for each award.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Has taught a minimum of six years at the school level designated by the award. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing the personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, sportsmanship, and sensitivity to the needs of his/her students.

2. Utilizes various teaching methodologies and plans innovative learning experiences.

3. Conducts a balanced and sequential curriculum.

4. Evidences professional commitment through membership and involvement in local, state, and national physical education organizations.

5. If selected, and wishes to be moved on to the district and national competition, is a current member of AAHPERD and NASPE and must attend the AAHPERD District and possibly the National Convention.

Please send the following information:

Name:

Place of Employment:

Address:

Phone #:

E-mail
Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year

The Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance is seeking nominees for the annual Adapted Teacher of the Year award.

For the purposes of this award, an adapted physical educator is defined as a person assigned at least 50% of his/her teaching responsibility:

1. In providing direct and/or consultative services to individuals with disabilities ages birth to adult.
   or
2. In providing appropriate instruction, support, and modifications to individuals with disabilities ages birth to adult.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Conducts an appropriate physical education program as reflected in the students’ IEP and generally accepted standards of practice for APE.
2. Utilizes various teaching methodologies and plans innovative learning experiences to meet the needs of all students.
3. Serves as a positive role model epitomizing personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, and sensitivity to the physical and emotional needs of all students.
4. Participates in professional development opportunities.
5. Is a current OAHPERD member.

Self-nominations are welcomed and encouraged.

Please send the following information to:

Name:
Place of Employment:
Address:
Phone #:
E-mail:
OAHPERD Honor Award

Any member may submit names for consideration for an Honor Award. Resume supporting the nomination should be included.

The candidate must be someone who:

1. Must have served a minimum of ten (10) years in Oklahoma.
2. Must be a member of the National Association in their special field of interest.
3. Must be a member of OAHPERD for five (5) years preceding the award.
4. Must demonstrate ethical professional practices.
5. Must show prominence in some of the following:
   a. Excellence in teaching.
   b. Outstanding administrative achievement.
   c. Contribution to research and professional publications.
   d. Leadership in state, district, and national professional associations.
   e. Meritorious service within the profession.
Helen Corrubia Undergraduate Scholarship Award

The candidate must:

1. Be of Junior or Senior level standing planning to graduate in May.
2. Be a current member of OAHPERD.
3. Have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale
4. Be a resident of Oklahoma

Application Checklist

1. All required information is included.
2. Academic Progress:
   a. Institution; Degree Program; Major; Academic Advisor; Faculty Endorsement; Hours Required for Degree; Hours completed (College only); Expected Graduation Date; Cumulative Grade Point Average at Certifying Institution; Academic Honors; Awards; Intramural or Varsity Sports; Active Professional Memberships; Offices Held; Other Organizations; Offices Held; Scholarships; Related Work Experience.
   b. Application is signed by a faculty advisor or department head or a letter of endorsement is included as an attachment verifying GPA.
3. Application is accompanied by the following:
   a. Transcript w/ letter of endorsement or official transcript with university seal.
Karen J. Dowd Undergraduate Scholarship Award

The candidate must:

1. Have completed a minimum of 60 hours of college credit.
2. Be a current member of OAHPERD.
3. Have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.
4. Be a resident of Oklahoma.

Application Checklist

1. All required information is included.
2. Academic Progress:
   a. Institution; Degree Program; Major; Academic Advisor; Faculty Endorsement; Hours Required for Degree; Hours completed (College only); Expected Graduation Date; Cumulative Grade Point Average at Certifying Institution; Academic Honors; Awards; Intramural or Varsity Sports; Active Professional Memberships; Offices Held; Other Organizations; Offices Held; Scholarships; Related Work Experience.
   b. Application is signed (if mailed) by a faculty advisor or department head or accompanied by a letter of endorsement including a statement verifying the GPA is correct.
3. Application is accompanied by the following:
   a. Official transcript (with letter of endorsement or if mailed official university seal) (All courses, Grades and GPA must be readable)
   b. Present vitae or resume
   c. Paper (minimum of 500 words) reflecting the applicant’s personal and professional philosophy.
Valerie Colvin Graduate Scholarship Award Chair

The candidate must:

1. Be a Master's degree candidate.
2. Have completed a minimum of 15 hours.
3. Have a minimum GPA of 3.5 in an Oklahoma institution. (Based on 4.0 maximum.)
4. Be a current member of OAHPERD.

Application Checklist

1. Form is completed by computer or in ink and signed by:
   a. Student.
   b. Faculty advisor or department/area chair letter of endorsement.

2. Form is completed and accompanied by:
   a. Academic Progress: Institution; Degree Program; Major; Academic Advisor; Faculty Endorsement; Hours Required for Degree; Hours completed (College only); Expected Graduation Date; Cumulative Grade Point Average at Certifying Institution; Academic Honors; Awards; Intramural or Varsity Sports; Active Professional Memberships; Offices Held; Other Organizations; Offices Held; Scholarships; Related Work Experience.
   b. Transcript with faculty endorsement or university seal and all grades with GPA shown. (Must include all undergraduate work and graduate work.) (When scanned, courses, grades and GPA must be readable.)
   c. Current vitae or resume.
   d. Description of Future Plans and Goals. (150 words or less.)
Emma W. Plunkett Undergraduate Scholarship Award Chair

The candidate must:

1. Be of Junior or Senior level standing planning to graduate in May.
2. Be a current member of OAHPERD.
3. Have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.
4. Be a resident of Oklahoma.

Application Checklist

1. All required information is included.
   a. Academic Progress:
   b. Institution; Degree Program; Major; Academic Advisor; Faculty Endorsement; Hours Required for Degree; Hours completed (College only); Expected Graduation Date; Cumulative Grade Point Average at Certifying Institution; Academic Honors; Awards; Intramural or Varsity Sports; Active Professional Memberships; Offices Held; Other Organizations; Offices Held; Scholarships; Related Work Experience.

2. Application is signed by a faculty advisor or department head or a letter of endorsement is included as an attachment verifying GPA.

3. Application is accompanied by the following:
   a. Transcript with a letter of endorsement or official transcript with university seal.
OAHPERD Journal Peer-Review Guidelines for Authors

Manuscripts involving practical applications for the HPERD readership are priority. Manuscripts that are informational and that involve scholarly research are also encouraged, but must address practical application.

You may also submit manuscript materials pertaining to OAHPERD news, statewide news, national news and other items which are not peer-reviewed. The author guidelines in this document apply only to peer-reviewed manuscripts.

Submission Deadlines:

Spring Journal (mid-April):
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts February 1st, all other items March 1st

Fall Journal (mid-September):
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts July 1st, all other items August 1st.

Winter Journal (mid-December):
Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts October 1st, all other items November 1st.

Basis for Acceptance of a Manuscript for Publication:

1. Significance to the HPERD profession.

2. Accuracy of the material.

3. Originality of material.

4. Clarity of material.

5. Validity of material.

6. Compliance with OAHPERD guidelines for submission.
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Preparation of the Manuscript:

1. Manuscripts must be submitted using Microsoft Office Word
2. Preferred length of manuscripts submitted, including tables, graphs, references, etc., is 5-12 double-spaced, typed pages using 12 point font. Longer manuscripts will be returned to the author without review. Shorter manuscripts of interest to the readership are appropriate to submit and will be reviewed.
3. Manuscripts should be written in third person.
4. American Psychological Association (APA) format should be used throughout the manuscript.
5. Keep direct quotations, especially lengthy ones, to a minimum. (See APA style for formatting.)
6. Insert line numbering in the manuscript as it is helpful in communicating location if there are questions or corrections to be made. (Microsoft Word = File, Page.)

Submitting the Manuscript:

1. E-mail manuscript and author(s) information in separate files as attachments to the OAHPERD journal editor, Dr. Kay Daigle (kdaigle@se.edu). There should be no identifying information in the manuscript itself, as they are blind reviewed. In the e-mail include a statement indicating the manuscript has not been submitted (simultaneously) or published elsewhere.
2. There should be no identifying information in the manuscript itself, as they are blind reviewed. In the e-mail include a statement indicating the manuscript has not been submitted (simultaneously) or published elsewhere.
3. Include all original (not resized) photos, artwork, and illustrations.
4. Photos, artwork, tables, illustrations, and other additions to text should be captioned and placed in the document file where they should be located in the published article. They may also be sent on a separate page or in a separate file as long as it is clear where they should be placed. (In some cases they may need to be moved due to publication considerations.)
OAHPERD Journal Peer-Review Guidelines for Authors

Review of the Manuscript:

1. OAHPERD’s journal advisory board is made up of five members appointed by the journal editor, with the journal editor serving as chair.

2. Each manuscript submitted for peer review will be sent by the editor to advisory board members. Each manuscript will be reviewed by at least three advisory board members.

3. If the editor determines that the manuscript topic falls outside the expertise of board members, an outside reviewer from the field may be solicited.

4. All peer reviews will be blind. The editor will not send the authors’ names or personal information with the manuscript to the journal advisory board.

5. The journal advisory board may provide corrections with regard to grammar or spelling without notifying the author as long as it does not change the meaning of the content. However, the lead author will be notified and asked to make corrections, if the errors are numerous or there are significant revisions required in order for the manuscript to be published. If the manuscript is considered of great or vital interest to the readership and the changes/corrections needed are not deemed to be overwhelming, members of the journal advisory board are encouraged to assist the authors in developing the manuscript. The lead author will be notified regarding status of their manuscript.

6. If a manuscript is selected for the journal, it will be published in the earliest available issue. (Manuscripts may be pushed to a later journal due to space and printing constraints. The lead author will be notified.)

7. If a manuscript is found to be partially or completely plagiarized: 1) it will not be published, 2) the author(s) will receive a formal letter, 3) the author(s) place of employment will receive a copy of the letter, and 4) the authors will be ineligible for OAHPERD publication for a minimum of 3 years.

8. Authors should contact the journal editor (Kay Daigle) with concerns or questions regarding issues dealing with the manuscript they have submitted. Members of the journal advisory board should not be contacted regarding manuscript submission.
The Fear of Falling Behind in Youth Sports

Tyler Beckman
Assistant Director for Sports Performance
Oral Roberts University
Tulsa, OK

Bradford Strand, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Science
North Dakota State University
Fargo, ND

Abstract

Many parents fear that their child or children will not be successful in sports if they do not begin early participation and in some cases, early specialization. In addition to parental pressure on children to participate, there is a youth sport industry that encourages young athletes to purchase the essential equipment for participation in specific sports. This financial investment along with early participation, and often a “win at all cost”, places extreme pressure on children to succeed at sports at an early age. This paper offers suggestions for children to participate in sports at an age-appropriate level.
Introduction

The youth sport industry is growing at an exponential rate (Woods, 2016); however, there are 2.6 million fewer children playing certain youth sports (basketball, soccer, baseball, football, and softball) alone in the past five years (Lee, 2015). Many parents are fearful that their children will not be successful in sports if they are not specializing and competing at an early age (Koba, 2014). As such, parents are feeling pressure to enroll their children at a young age into a sport they believe fits the needs of their children (Benson & Strand, 2014). This forced enrollment and sport specialization can cause a myriad of future problems for children (Brenner, 2007).

Not only is there parental pressure on children to participate, but there is also a lucrative youth sport industry that encourages young athletes to purchase the necessary equipment for participation in specific sports. Noticing all of the sport related equipment available for young athletes can easily give one the impression that everyone is participating in sports and if they are not, they need to buy the gear and get their children involved.

Parents are spending thousands of dollars on youth sports (Koba, 2014). When making significant monetary investments towards sport participation, parents are banking on the hope that their child becomes the next Jordan Spieth or Jason Day. “Spending on sports has grown so high - up to 10.5 percent of gross income - that it is hurting family harmony. A family bringing in $50,000 a year could be spending $5,500” (Sullivan, 2015, p.1). If parents were to put that same money towards a savings account for college, that one individual would have saved $33,000 in six years, enough to cover a complete college education at some state universities (Trends in Higher Education, n.d.)

This financial investment places pressure on children to succeed at sports (Farrey, 2008). The “win at all cost” mentality does not help either. Some parents do not even care about youth development in sport and just want a chance at money. Koba (2014) wrote, “It’s not just about learning teamwork but about money” (p.1). The money being referenced is college scholarship money. This pressure can certainly cause psychological problems in the future, especially if the child hates the sport (Merkel, 2013). There needs to be a better way for children to participate in a diverse sport experience without being forced into a sport with a fear of falling behind. This paper offers suggestions of a better way for children to participate in sports at an age-appropriate level.

Creating Longevity for Young Athletes

Parents and coaches must be educated on the importance of children learning the fundamental skills of sports, rather than just competing and pushing children so hard they burnout and quit before 12 years of age (Johnson, 2012). If young athletes burnout and quit before age 12, they are unlikely to have a positive outlook on the benefits of participating in sports (Baker, 2003). The goals of most youth sport programs (e.g., American Youth Football, n.d.; Satellite Beach Soccer Club, n.d.; Woodbury Athletic Association, n.d.) are to help children have fun, learn valuable life lessons, as well as physically develop in an appropriate manner.

There should be no fear of falling behind or being left behind teammates and peers in youth sport programs. Every child develops at his or her own rate and has plenty of time to develop and grow before he or she needs to worry about early specialization. In fact, specialization does not need to occur for children to reach the elite level. Jayanthi, Pinkham, Dugas, Patrick and Labella (2012) found that many world class athletes were likely to start competing at a later age, participated in a variety of sports, and were selected for a sport federation program at an older age.
To facilitate appropriate training and development, parents should encourage their children to participate in a variety of different sports. Many benefits result from playing a variety of sports that include, but are not limited to, “longer playing careers, enhanced peer relationships as college athletes, increased physical capacity and motor skill base, less sport-specific training in adolescence to reach elite status, increased ability to transfer motor and psychological skills to other sports, and increased motivation, confidence, and self-direction” (Sagas, 2013, p. 2). If parents choose to push their children to specialize in one sport at an early age, the negative consequences from early specialization may outweigh the positives they had desired. These negative consequences can include early dropout, increased chance of injury, social isolation, burnout, lack of enjoyment, limited motor skills, and even shortened careers (Brenner, 2007; Sagas, 2013). These negative experiences can certainly adversely affect a child’s future in sport or physical activity. It is hoped that children have a positive experience and learn lifelong lessons from competing in sport (Kosel & Strand, 2015; Miller & Strand, 2015); however, if youngsters drop out of sport before they reach middle school, it is impossible for them to learn the valuable lessons associated with sport participation.

According to the World Health Organization, forty-two million children under the age of five were considered overweight or obese in 2013 (World Health Organization, 2015). These numbers are alarming. However, playing a sport can keep children active and fight the obesity epidemic. With the increased chance of having a negative experience with specialization, young children may stop performing physical activity all together; not a positive trend, especially with childhood obesity on the rise.

Take the Time for Appropriate Development

This can be alluring for parents because it gives them hope that their child can achieve stardom with enough practice and thus, the promoting of early specialization. Some parents are pushing their child or children to specialize early in hopes to attain 10,000 hours (Witte, Kiewra, Kasson, & Perry, 2015) as it has been speculated that if a person performs at least 10,000 hours of deliberate practice on a skill, they are more likely to become an expert in that given skill (Gladwell, 2008). Research on the 10,000-hour rule, however, has failed to find a definite relationship between the rule and attaining expert status in sports (Macnamara, Hambrick, & Oswald, 2014). In fact, for some specific sports, individuals have achieved expert or elite status with 4,000 hours (Baker, Cote, & Abernethy, 2003). Further, a recent study (Sage, 2013) on high-performance Australian athletes reported that 28 percent of senior national athletes reached elite playing status within just four years of beginning their sport and that 69 percent of novice athletes developed into senior elite athletes in an average of 7.5 years.

There is sufficient evidence to support parents to consider waiting until their child or children are 10 or 11 years old before they start participating in organized or structured sports rather than beginning at age 5 or 6. Delaying entry into organized competitive sport also allows children to develop proper motor patterns that set them up for a healthy and successful sports experience (Callender, 2010; Goncalves, Rama, & Figueriredo, 2012). In addition, parents save money instead of spending it on youth camps where a child might not be developing properly at such a young age (Hyman, 2012). Starting organized sports at a later age can also reduce the pressure children may experience from parents who are living vicariously through their children (Gould, Wilson, Tuffy, & Lochbaum, 1993; Scanlan, & Lewthwaite, 1984).
It is important that parents recognize that their children are not miniature adults and need the appropriate time to develop physically, emotionally, and socially before transitioning into one sport on a year-round basis (Purcell, 2005). The benefit that parents envision from beginning early and focusing on one sport, is that their child may have a better chance at a scholarship or becoming a professional athlete (Farrey, 2008). This is highly unlikely however as less than 0.2% of high school athletes will achieve elite status in adulthood (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015).

It has been suggested that there may be an optimal development period for acquiring a complex skill, similar to that of learning a new language (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaert, 2008). This might be great for a skill like music, but it does not always apply the same way for sport skill development (Macnamara, Hambrick, Oswald, 2014). Sport participation occurs in a chaotic always-changing environment that is much different than trying to learn a new language or music skill in a fixed setting.

Parents and their young athletes are better served delaying early sport specialization and instead experience a variety of sports, known as sport diversification (Wojtys, 2013). A study with Division I female intercollegiate athlete noted that “83 percent of the athletes indicated playing more than one competitive sport as a youth” (Sagas, 2013, p.3). Therefore, a large majority of these college players participated in multiple sports prior to reaching the Division I level. Even Olympians and current athletes at elite levels attribute playing multiple sports to their development to play at that high of a level (American Medical Society for Sport Medicine, 2013).

**Positive Youth Development (Life Skills)**

While there are programs that try to create strictly professional athletes and only emphasize the importance of winning, it is important that programs establish proper ways for children to develop appropriately. Programs should utilize different methods for children to learn valuable lessons and skills that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Involvement in sport can have several positive outcomes in children’s cognitive, psychological, and physical development if there is an emphasis on those elements as well as how to transfer those skills to real-life settings (Turnnidge, Cote, & Hancock, 2014).

There are two different designs that have been utilized to help promote positive development in youth sports. One design is the implicit approach, which emphasizes the importance of developing sport specific development outcomes, rather than the transfer of skills. The second approach is the explicit approach, which states that sport programs should deliberately teach youth about the transfer of personal skills (Turnnidge et al., 2014). Even with these two different designs, it is important that coaches teach young athletes personal life skills. They can do this directly by telling them about it, or they can take advantage of teachable moments that naturally occur during practice or events.

**Summary**

Parents are pushing their children in youth sport with the hope that this push will lead them to become youth sport and high school champions, scholarship collegiate athletes, and eventually professional paid athletes. Children, however, just want to understand the sport, be accepted by their peers, and have fun while they are playing the sport. There are certainly many lessons and skills that children learn while playing sport, but if a child does not ultimately enjoy what is happening, he or she is likely to drop out and not receive the benefits that sport participation provides (Turnnidge et al., 2014).

To foster long-term enjoyment and lifetime participation of sport and physical activity,
parents must ensure that their children have diverse and healthy sport experiences in which children learn and develop sport skill fundamentals while minimizing the risk of injury. As detailed in this paper, research suggests that there is no need to start children in organized and structured sport programs at the age of five and then have them pick one sport to specialize in for the rest of their lives. Parents must remember that children develop at different rates and there is no need to force them into one sport in hopes of getting a college scholarship, which is highly unlikely as college scholarships are scarce and not many college athletes continue to play professional sports. To the contrary, parents should focus on their children gaining life skills from sports. Parents should trust that their child or children are trying their best and getting the most they can from their sport experience so that the children do not feel pressured and can enjoy and learn from their sport experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tyler Beckman
Tyler is the Assistant Director of Sports Performance at Oral Roberts University. He is in charge of implementing strength and conditioning programs for women’s basketball and for men’s and women’s soccer. He earned his bachelor’s degree in physical education, exercise science and wellness from the University of North Dakota and is currently working on his master’s degree at North Dakota State University.

Brad Strand, PhD
Dr. Strand is a professor in the Department of Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences at North Dakota State University. He is past president of SHAPE America (formerly AAHPERD).
References


