Asquith, A. (1989). Teaching games for understanding. In A. Williams (Ed.), Issues in physical education for the primary years (pp. 76-90). London: The Falmer Press.

By Jelena Burgess

> "Games through understanding or games making is... an attempt at individualized learning and through the cooperative elements and socializing factors aims at putting the child at the centre of the educational process." (p.84)

Issue/focus

The main issue Alan Asquith contends with is the belief that the current school of thought in the physical education setting may not provide students with the skills necessary to succeed in a class game format. Alan explains that the current general consensus among PE professionals is a teacher centered frame, which includes a warm-up, a skills/ drills portion, and finally the class concludes with an opportunity for the children to apply their skills in a game. He counters this belief with his own, which includes a student centered model where the children are largely 'left alone' to "explore" and "discover" what works best in a game situation.

Reasoning

Mr. Asquith supports his argument by explaining how his student centered model promotes problem solving skills both socially and cognitively. He points out that often the learning of skills in a closed, predictable environment may not easily transfer to a game setting. It is the process of decision making which Alan attempts to teach in his classes, which ,he hopes, will give the children a better understanding of such concepts as "why rules are important, and what purpose they serve" (p.81), and how to recognize which patterns in games which are successful, and which are not.

Although Alan acknowledges it is very difficult to create an environment with games which does not support a win/lose situation, he believes that the student centered, discovery model encourages students to use the score of the game as a personal success measure, instead of comparing themselves to other children or other teams. This in turn, encourages the students to invent even more ideas about how the game could be played because their self confidence is boosted whenever improvement is demonstrated, and students quickly discover that new ideas must be tested in order to improve the game.

Assumptions

There are two main assumptions that Alan makes which could prove detrimental to the model. Firstly, he assumes that there is only one teacher in the class. Although Alan generally discusses elementary settings where this is typically true, he also indicates that this model should be used in a secondary setting, where often classes are not so simply organized. Secondly, the author discusses how authentic assessments can be made during game play. However, he does not acknowledge that some schools, school districts, and even provinces, have regulated testing, which (although the regulated tests may be less meaningful to the teacher/student goals) students taught strictly under Alan's discovery model may not fair well in.

Conclusion.

After reading this article I learned that Mr. Asquith's student centered model could be a very valuable tool. Although the author indicates the model should be used throughout the term, I believe that it could be just as effective if used to demonstrate key concepts which the teacher wishes to highlight.

Significant Information

I thought that this table from page 88 was very useful in helping me understand the two ends of the Phys Ed belief spectrum;

Broad Based Curriculum	Narrow Games Curriculum
Games Making	Games Coaching
Non-Competitive	Centers of Excellence
Danger: We may rob the child of his/her *heritage.*	Danger: We may rob the child of his/her *childhood.*

An unrelated but very valuable point was that this student centered model caters to the student's personal strengths. In a PE Setting I am always looking for ways to customize my lessons to the learners as individuals, preventing both student frustration and boredom.

Personal Comments

I found this article relatively easy to read, the author explained most of the terminology he used and provided numerous classroom examples to support and explain his argument. Although I have always been a believer in the student centered model, I think that this article could be used to persuade other PE teachers to at least experiment with Alan Asquith's particular discovery model.