Tee it Up!: Implementing a TPSR system in a high school golf unit

By Nikki Busch and Barry Lavay

What educator wouldn’t like to teach a class where students consistently demonstrate personal and social behavior that respects self, the wellbeing of others and the learning environment? This quest to create a class environment where students are responsible for and display appropriate personal and social responsible behavior is a common theme in many educational settings. The desire for students to acquire affective skills is so great that teaching appropriate student behavior in physical education is identified as one of the six National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 2004). For example, the importance of teaching affective skills is stressed by Heidorn and Welch (2010), who suggested that physical education teachers “should intentionally devote time in the curriculum to teaching affective goals such as teamwork, cooperation, and respect for self and others.” The authors continue by stating “teachers should hold students responsible for tasks related to the affective domain” (p.16).

Implementing Hellison’s “Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility” (TPSR) system can help students take responsibility for their own behavior by helping students understand what it means to demonstrate appropriate behavior at various levels of responsibility. The levels range from zero through five and include: 0) irresponsibility, 1) respect, 2) participation, 3) self-direction, 4) caring, and 5) transferring of all skills to other places and situations. The TPSR system is very versatile as it can be developed for age appropriateness at all grade levels and can be modified and used with all types of physical education activities (Hellison, 2011).

Rink, Hall, & Williams, (2010) believed that successful performance of physical activity requires not only motor skills for game/sport play but also the “personal and social skills needed for performing those skills while interacting with others.” The authors maintained that Hellison’s TPSR is helpful in teaching students to become more aware and to take responsibility for their own behavior and the wellbeing of others by “defining for them just exactly what is responsible behavior.” For example, the TPSR level system was successfully implemented in elementary physical education class by asking students to describe what behaviors need to occur at each level during the task of selecting equipment (Masser, 1990). Lavay, Alexander, & Lawrence (2008) also achieved student success by implementing Hellison’s TPSR levels as part of a tri-fold display board. The tri-fold board system serves as a visual and portable class management system for both physical education and adapted physical education teachers who typically do not have the traditional use of classroom walls. In addition to verbal reminders from the teacher, the tri-fold board provides students with additional opportunities to learn the expected behaviors by supplying a consistent posted visual display of each responsible behavior.

The purpose of this article is to provide an example of how the TPSR leveling system was implemented in a high school physical education golf unit by using golf scoring terminology that corresponds to the various level systems of behavior. The participating classes were three 10th – 12th grade physical education classes with an average of 41 students per class. The design of a golf unit required careful planning because of the large number of participants and increased safety awareness that is required while first learning to play golf. Additional planning considerations for the golf unit included the student’s ability to demonstrate self-control, follow instructions the first time, be self-motivated to participate, work independently, resist peer pressure, and demonstrate concern for the safety of others. This article will provide the reader with information for successful implementation of the TPSR system including: the completed Tee it Up! scorecard, the strategies for motivating positive student behavior, and a reflection of the benefits and challenges of implementing a TPSR system in a high school golf unit.

Implementation of the TPSR System

In preparation for teaching a high school golf unit, the first author designed a golf-themed TPSR level system called “Tee it Up!”
that combined golf scoring terminology with Hellison’s (2011) TPSR levels of student behavior (See Figure 1). The first two days of the golf unit included a golf orientation and introduction to the TPSR leveling system. Both days of the orientation were held indoors to minimize any outside distractions and provide students with an overview of the golf unit and an introduction to the TPSR “Tee it Up!” program. On the first day, students were introduced to a few pieces of golf equipment such as clubs and balls, along with an oversized book with large color photos of the most famous golf greens in the world. The instructor and class then discussed the purpose for playing golf and defined the basic scoring terms.

In the sport of golf there are 18 holes that make up a round and the object of the game is to hit the ball from the beginning of the hole (tee box) into the cup using the least number of shots. Par is a predetermined number of strokes needed for a golfer to complete each hole, and is considered the average score. One shot above par is called a bogey, one shot below par is called a birdie, two shots below par is an eagle and one shot to the cup is a hole-in-one. For example, if a hole is determined to be a par four, a bogey would mean it took five strokes to complete the hole, three strokes would be a birdie, and two strokes would be an eagle.

During the second day of the golf orientation, the concept of the TPSR leveling system was introduced. Each student was provided a handout of the “Tee it Up!” leveling system (Figure 1) and a larger visual of the handout was displayed on a whiteboard. The lowest level (irresponsible) was identified as a bogey and characterized the student who did not participate, was verbally abusive, and did not take responsibility for his/her own behavior. The respect level called par described those students who properly used and collected equipment (safety), maintained self-control, followed instructions, and did not interfere with learning. The term birdie was used to describe the self-direction and participation level for students who worked independently without direct supervision, set their own goals, were persistent, actively participated in all class activities, and resisted peer pressure. The caring level termed eagle described students who displayed concern for others, showed respect to opposing points of view, and were willing to assume a leadership role. The highest level occurred outside the gym when all behaviors from the various levels were applied in other areas of a student’s life. For example, the golf term used to describe this level was the hole-in-one, the best shot a golfer can hope to make. The instructor explained to the class how understanding the TPSR would allow them to better understand the specific expectations of the unit and help them achieve success and maximize their learning potential. The golf themed TPSR challenged all students in the golf unit to raise their level of responsibility to the pinnacle of golf by achieving the coveted hole-in-one.

After each level with descriptions were discussed, students began to formulate specific questions for each level that allowed them to better determine their level of daily behavior. First, the instructor provided students with an example of specific questions that related to the level of irresponsible behaviors (bogey) such as, “How did you participate in a responsible manner today?” and “How did you take responsibility for your actions?” Students were then instructed to get in groups of three or four students and brainstorm other questions or ideas that would fit each of the specific levels. Each group was required to generate at least one question for each of the levels. The groups were given approximately five minutes to complete the task and then volunteers from each group shared a question they developed from each level. The questions were written on a whiteboard and each student copied the questions onto their own handout.

The students, with teacher assistance, were able to come up with many examples to help determine their behavior level. The respect level (par) included the question: “What did you do to follow directions today?” The level of self-direction and participation (birdie) question was: “How did you demonstrate the ability to work independently without supervision?” The level of caring (eagle) asked: “What did you do today to help someone else in the group?” Questions relating to the outside-of-the-gym level (hole-in-one) included: “How have you applied these levels in other areas of your life?”

The golf orientation session concluded by announcing how each student would use their TPSR handout to determine at what behavior level they performed each day during the golf unit. The students then recorded their level of performance on a scorecard similar to what is used in golf. Figure 2 provides an example of a student’s completed scorecard. There were 18 total days of golf and each day of activity represented one hole on the student’s behavior scorecard. At the start of each class the students were told what the numerical par score would be for that day. At the end of each class all student’s used the TPSR level system to determine their level of behavior and recorded the number and golf term associated with their behavior level. For example, if the instructor announced the behavior par score for the day was a five and a student determined their behavior was a four, the student would record both the number four and the word “birdie” indicating the student’s behavior was one shot better than the par score of five.

Motivating Responsible Behavior
In addition, the instructor used the Premack principle with a contingency point system to help reinforce positive behaviors and motivate students to perform at the highest level (Lavay, French, & Henderson, 2006). Students who spent 12-15 days
at the eagle and/or hole-in-one level earned the opportunity to hit actual golf balls on the last day of the unit, as opposed to the regularly used soft restricted flight golf balls. Students who spent eight-11 days at the eagle and/or hole-in-one level earned a choice of clubs for the last week of activity, and students who performed at the birdie level for 13-15 days chose their favorite activity on the first two Fridays following class. In addition, the instructor selected approximately 10 students per day who shared and justified their level of performance with the instructor at the end of class. Students were allowed to verbally communicate the level of their performance or fist tap the instructor’s hand when the correct achieved behavior level was announced.

Another strategy used to promote responsible behavior was to incorporate “awareness talks” (Hellison, 2011) during warm-up stretches or other periods of down time. For example, the instructor stated “Please be helpful to one another as we have a lot to cover in class today.” Direct questioning with student reflection was also used and proved effective to review golf skill techniques and remind students to be active learners. For example students were asked, “What is one goal you have with regards to your golf swing?” Group reflection was a quick way to go through a responsibility level checklist to determine each student’s present level of performance. During class closure students were asked a series of questions such as: “Did you help someone during class today?” The students could respond with thumbs up for “yes,” a thumb sideways indicating “a little,” or thumbs down meaning “no” and they need more work in this area.

**Program Reflection**

Overall, the development of the golf-themed TPSR level system helped the instructor create a well-defined set of behavior expectations for students. Implementation of “Tee it Up!” helped foster a class environment conducive to learning by maximizing student activity time, decreasing potential safety hazards, increasing positive behaviors, and reducing the occurrence of negative behaviors. The use of a TPSR system can be especially useful for those physical education activity units with a higher safety risk potential such as swimming, golf, and archery as behavior expectations are clearly identified. Moreover, taking a proactive approach allowed the instructor more class time to interact with students as a facilitator and not be the “behavior police.” Most importantly, the students benefited by getting more individualized golf skill instruction and the instructor enjoyed being able to spend more time teaching and less time redirecting negative behavior.

In summary, the benefits of implementing a TPSR leveling system include: student’s awareness of behavior expectations, requiring students to become more responsible for their own behavior, promoting a positive learning environment, and increasing student’s positive behaviors while reducing the frequency of negative behaviors. One challenge to using this approach is the initial amount of teacher preplanning time needed to develop the unit and the amount of instructional time required to introduce and implement the TPSR system. However, once the system is in place it can be easily modified and fine tuned for other instructional units and activities throughout the school year. Most importantly, the positives greatly outweigh the additional planning and both students and teacher will reap the benefits associated with implementing a TPSR leveling system in their physical education program.

**References**


### TEE IT UP! SCORECARD

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### SCORING OPTIONS

**HOLE IN ONE (Outside of Class)**
- Application of behavior levels to other areas of life.

**EAGLE (Caring)**
- "I got your back" concern for others.
- Respectful to opposing points of view.
- Willing to assume leadership roles (such as peer tutor).

**BIRDIE (Self - Direction & Participation)**
- Working independently without direct supervision.
- Sets own goals and is persistent.
- Actively participates in all class activities.
- Resists peer pressure by doing what is right.

**PAR (Respect)**
- Properly uses & collects equipment (safety).
- Maintains self - control.
- Follows instructions.
- Does not interfere.

**BOGEY (Irresponsible)**
- Non-participation.
- Verbally abusive.
- Does not take responsibility for own behavior (makes excuses).

### SCORING TOTALS

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<th>Hole in one</th>
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<th>Birdie</th>
<th>Par</th>
<th>Bogey</th>
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**Legend**

- Par = Even (average score)
- Birdie = 1 shot below par.
- Eagle = 2 shots below par.
- Hole in one = 1 shot ball to hole.
- Bogey = 1 shot over par.
- LOW score wins in golf!