PHYSICAL EDUCATION DECATHLON

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTERS OF ARTS

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BY

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The Decathlon program was created to give upper elementary students a competitive program that incorporates many skills that are taught in elementary physical education class. There are ten events that include running, jumping, throwing, controlled tennis hits, cup stacking, jump roping, and bowling. The ten events are spread out throughout the entire school year. The students receive points based upon their performance in each event. At the end of the year, boys and girls who have the highest total number of points receive awards. After each event is completed, the top ten boys and top ten girls scores are posted in the gym.

Events are spread out throughout the year with one event scheduled for each month, during physical education class. This program is a great way to assess students on locomotor and manipulative skills, while keeping students excited about class. At the end of the year, photos of the top finishers can be shared throughout the school and community (photos submitted to a local newspaper). Before an event takes place, students will have practiced similar events, or the skills used in the event during physical education class. They are shown strategies for these skills and events, and are given information on how to be successful during the event. Every student in the selected grade level participates in the decathlon during his/her regular physical education class time.

The decathlon has been implemented with fourth and fifth grade students at a Midwest elementary school. The fifth grade students exhibited higher motivation for event engagement than fourth graders throughout the year and seem to be more excited about keeping up with the standing and upcoming events. Some strategies for effective implementation of this physical education event are forwarded.
At the beginning of the year, students are shown the medals, ribbons, and trophies that will be awarded at the end of the year. Some students are motivated by these awards and maintain effort and participation in the program to try and win the awards. Also, previewing the upcoming events is a good way to keep the motivation level up. The principal can announce the top performers on the school announcements. Students enjoy recognition for achievement and although recognition is an external motivator, other students may be intrigued and curious when they see a variety of their peers (not just the physically competent) experiencing success in different physical activities. There are a number of the events which students do not have to be athletically gifted to experience success. For instance, cup stacking and bowling are two events that do not measure jumping or running skills, but instead measure hand eye coordination and rolling accuracy. Bowling is an event in which a high percentage of students have practiced outside of school. The Decathlon is a program that a teacher can implement and cater to all skill levels and challenge all skill levels during practice and competition.

The decathlon program not only is exciting for students, but it also covers all six of Indiana’s state standards ("Indiana academic standards-physical," October).

Standard One states that students demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities. Students work on Standard One when they work on running, jumping, throwing, and other locomotor and manipulative skills.

Standard Two states that students demonstrate an understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities. Students work on Standard Two when they learn movement concepts
such as momentum, how to get strength from their legs when they jump, and strategies for moving through the obstacle course.

Standard Three states that students participate regularly in physical activity. Standard Three is shown when students learn to constructively critique classmates on the skills used in the decathlon events. They practice the events and are critiqued by a classmate. This feedback helps students refine their movements and skills.

Standard Four states that students achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness. Students work on standard Four when they practice for some of the events. Students practice for the PACER test quite a few times throughout the year, which works on their cardiovascular endurance.

Standard Five states that students exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings. Standard Five is shown when students are able to follow the rules of the event. Also, it is shown when students cheer for and encourage one another during an event.

Finally, Standard Six states that students value physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction. Standard Six is shown when students perform activities that are new to them. Also, when students are able to talk about events in which they have success as well as events in which they struggle, they can engage in critical thinking skills for improving performance in an event.

Looking at the NASPE Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2009), the decathlon program covers multiple areas. Section 1.1.1. states how the teacher develops a learning environment focused on participation and learning, with support from the teacher. Each of the
decathlon events teaches important concepts and vocabulary words. Section 1.2.1 highlights teachers promoting exercise outside of school. During the program, the students are encouraged to practice these skills at home and shown ways to modify events using household equipment.

Section 1.3.2. is about selecting activities to match the ability level of students. The ten events are chosen and modified over time to be age appropriate for upper elementary students. The events are set up so that all students will be successful, just at different levels. This last part aligns with section 1.5.1., which states that all children are challenged at an appropriate level. Section 1.7.1. reinforces that students should understand competition. The decathlon program does keep points of students from each event. However, only the top ten scores are posted, so students who may have poor performance would not have their points posted. Students are welcome at any time to ask the teacher his or her score. Also, after each event, the student is verbally told his or her score for that event. This aligns with 1.7.3, which states that children are guided to understand that some students do not prefer competition, and that is acceptable.

Section 1.7.2. focuses on promoting competition against a criterion score or against a previous personal best. Before each event, students are told the school record for the event, as well as the average score that students get on this event. Item 2.5.1. describes how class time should be maximized so students are not waiting in line. Decathlon events are set up so students are being active right up until it is his or her turn to perform for a score. This goes along with 2.5.2., because students are getting plenty of practice with the event as well as other skills during class time. Item 2.8.1 highlights students participating with high levels of success and understanding that making mistakes is okay. Students are
given multiple opportunities for most events so if a mistake is made during the first trial, another trial is given for students to try and improve his/her score. Section 2.10.1 is about how technology is included. The top ten boys and top ten girls have their names on the physical education portion of the school website during the year. All student scores are kept and charted on the computer.

Item 3.1.2. states how the teacher focuses on developing motor skills and applying them to a variety of settings. Multiple events are based on using motor skills in one way or another. Section 4.1.1. is about using assessments. Each decathlon event is an assessment. The teacher can use observation as well as recording scores to monitor progress. In addition, the teacher can monitor students during practice. When testing, item 4.4.1. emphasizes the importance of creating non-threatening situations. Each event is set up so as few students see the participant as possible. Other students are participating in other stations or activities while students are being tested. Sections 4.4.2. and 4.5.1. are about results of the events. Students are encouraged not to compare with other students, and instead compare to his or her personal best during practice. Results of each event are not shared with the class. One optional idea is to read the top three performers names from each class after the event ends. Section 4.7.1. is about student achievement data to evaluate program effectiveness. This is important because the teacher can look at the results to determine if more or less time needs to be spent on certain skills.

Another benefit of the decathlon is that a skilled student is more likely to be active throughout his or her lifetime. Ennis (2011) says that time spent in physical education increasing skill competence in ballistic motor skills, such as kicking, throwing, and especially distance jumping, leads to greater physical fitness and neuromotor development
that may be related to voluntary participation in physical activity both in and outside of school. Ennis emphasizes that around the age of seven, children shift from the learning and practicing motor skills to a period when they implement those skills into games. Children who continue to become more skillful during middle childhood have more options to participate and be successful in physical activity as adults. The decathlon gives students a good variety of activities and experiences that they might not have in a traditional physical education program.

The decathlon gives students of all skill levels a challenge. Since students are not competing on teams, they can focus on self-mastery and avoid letting their team down. According to Bernstein, Phillips, and Silverman (2011), students feel that when team games are used for skill practice, that students do not have enough time to improve their skill level. The decathlon still gives students a feel of competition because the students are scored on their performance, however the practice of the events beforehand is key to the success of the decathlon. The decathlon is set up so students are successful at each event, just at different levels. In addition, students are not put on display in front of the entire class when being tested. This helps with lowering anxiety, especially for lower skilled students.

Almost one third of the decathlon events involve jumping. Jumping is an integral part of motor development. In fact, Ennis (2011) says that individuals who are skilled in jumping might participate in activities that promote not only leg strength, but also other aspects of fitness.
In this next section, the ten events are described in detail. Also, there is a section in each event discussing ways to get students better prepared for each event prior to the day the event will be administered.

**Vertical Jump**

For the vertical jump, students are shown the difference between jumping for distance and jumping for height. The arms and legs are critical in jumping for height. Students are shown how to swing arms back and then up, as well as how to bend then explode up with their legs. To practice, students pick a spot on the wall to practice. They stand with their side toward the wall simulating the assessment protocol for this event. This makes a great event to have students analyze one another. Have a partner watch as his/her partner jumps, and then analyze his/her partner’s form.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will get three attempts to do a standing vertical jump. There is a vertical jump board on the wall that measures the vertical jump. Each spring is one inch apart. Students will stand flat-footed and reach straight up with one hand and touch one of the springs. The teacher either mentally notes that height or writes it down. Next, the student jumps as high as he or she can and touches the spring at that height. The teacher either mentally notes that height or writes that number down and takes the difference between the two numbers; that number is the vertical jump height. Using the springs on the board helps in that it allows the teacher to accurately note the height a student can reach or jump. The student gets two more chances and the best score is recorded. The second and third times, the student does not need to stand and reach up prior to jumping. The same student jumps three times in a row before another student goes. The student will stop and gather him/herself before jumping the second and third
times. The teacher will demonstrate how to swing arms back and then forward while bending and then straightening legs to explode up. This is a great station activity. This event can be used to teach students about momentum and muscular strength.

**Standing long jump**

The main skill in the standing long jump is momentum. Students are shown how to swing arms backward and then forward. Also, students are taught how to bend and then straighten legs during the pre jump. Students are given plenty of time to practice these skills. One way students can practice is to place a jump rope in front of them and jump over it using their arms and legs to get momentum. If they are successful in getting over the rope, they move it a little further away.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will get three attempts to do a standing long jump. Use a mat, which is already marked for the long jump. Students will perform the three jumps consecutively. The teacher should be positioned next to the mat so he or she can see where the student lands. The student’s score will be the distance from the starting line to the spot where the hand or foot lands, which is closest to the starting line. Encourage students to try and stick the landing with both feet instead of falling backwards and touching a hand on the ground, which would lead to a lower score. Students should not move after landing until the teacher gives them the signal after getting the measurement. The students should go back to the start and jump again to complete his or her second and third attempts. The same student jumps three consecutive times before another student jumps. The teacher will record the best score of the three attempts. Before beginning the event, remind students how to get momentum by swinging arms backward then forward while bending
and then straightening legs to explode forward. This is a great station activity. This event can be used to teach students about momentum and muscular strength.

**Vertical Jump and Long Jump practice:**

The teacher will demonstrate both the vertical jump and long jump to students. Teach students about muscular strength and how these events work on that if done properly and consistently. Also, teach students about momentum, and how swinging the arms help get the momentum going forward or up. When demonstrating both jumps, stress the importance of getting power from the arms by throwing them back and then forward. Get power from the legs by bending and then straightening them as the jump begins. A great way to have students practice is to use stations. The stations that are recommended are:

1. **Vertical jump board:** Students will use the vertical jump board that is placed upon the wall. At this station, ensure that students use the proper technique with their arms and legs. Show students how to reach up and touch the board flat footed to get their standing height. Then have them practice jumping and touching as high as they can. Have students rotate after they jump. The previous jumper stands away from the board and tells the next jumper what his or her score is by looking at the highest point touched on the board.

2. **Long jump mat:** Students will use the long jump mat to test their jumping ability. Place one end against the wall, and a mat or other object against the other end so the mat does not slide when students jump. Show students where to put their feet at the starting line and what a good landing looks like. Students should try and land with both feet at the same time. Challenge students to try and beat their best score. To encourage
responsibility, have the previous jumper stay and be the scorer for the next jumper. This teaches students how to score the distance.

3. Long jump using a jump rope: Students take a jump rope and lay it out on the court. The student stands on a line on the court and attempts to jump over the stretched out rope a couple feet away. If the student successfully jumps over the rope and lands on two feet, the rope is moved a few inches further. This continues and the student attempts to jump further and further each time. If the attempt is not successful, the rope is not moved further.

4. Jump rope: This station is used to work on muscular strength and endurance. Students practice regular jump roping using any tricks or skills that have been taught.

**Rope Jumping**

For the rope-jumping event, students need to be shown how to jump for speed. Many students are familiar with jumping in order to practice tricks, or to consistently jump at a slower speed. However, the highest scores for the Decathlon event come from using the speed rope. Before doing this event, students need plenty of practice using the speed ropes. Another good idea is to have students practice jumping for thirty seconds, trying to get as many jumps as possible. Students who have not practiced prior to the test struggle compared to students who feel more comfortable with the process. Competing for thirty seconds can make some students anxious. Let students know that if they get the rope caught on their foot or other jumping error, to stop, gather themselves before continuing for the remainder of the time. Remind students that they will have a second trial if they so desire.
**Testing Procedure:** Students are given thirty seconds to complete as many jumps as they can. Any form of jumping is allowed. The teacher may use a clicker to record the jumps instead of counting in his or her head. This method is also nice because it allows the teacher to keep observing the rest of the class while counting for the jumper and not lose count. The student is given two opportunities to complete the test. This way, if a student get the rope caught on his or her foot and struggles for a few seconds, a second chance is provided. After students in a small group (four to six) have finished, offer the opportunity to a student who wishes to go a second time. Students will get the better score of the two trials. This makes a great station activity. Offer students the opportunity to use a speed rope or a regular beaded rope. Students should have practiced using both ropes and shown how to use a single bounce to increase speed. This event can be used to teach students about rhythm and muscular endurance.

**Rope Jumping practice:**

The teacher will demonstrate how to jump rope for speed. Students will learn the difference between jumping to do tricks and jumping for speed. Show the differences in the speed rope and the beaded rope. Show students how to increase speed by doing a single bounce and flipping the wrist instead of making big arm circles. The stations that are used are:

1. Single rope practice: Students are given the choice of a beaded or speed rope. They jump using any tricks and skills that we have learned. This helps students get acclimated to the speed rope or they are able to practice with both kinds.
2. Long rope practice: Students use the long jump rope where two people are turning and one person runs in and jumps and then exits. This is a skill which all students need practice with. It helps with coordination and reflexes.

3. Jump bands: Students use jump bands to practice pre-made jumping patterns such as in-in-out-out. It works on rhythm and coordination.

4. Speed practice: At this station, students try and jump as fast as they can. They can use the speed or beaded rope. The teacher will use a timer and have students go for 30 seconds so they get used to jumping continuously for thirty seconds.

**Agility Run**

The agility run event will require students to use their agility and speed. Students will need practice on the exact course prior to being timed. However, prior to the day of the event, students will benefit from other agility based training such as stepping through tires and learning how to pick their knees up as they move through. They also benefit from instructive and corrective feedback provided during obstacle course participation. Fourth and fifth grade students are capable of taking suggestions from a teacher and implementing them. For example, some students jump really high over the mat hurdles, which uses valuable time. Another example is showing students how to stay tight to the cones when using zig-zag movements. Provide opportunities for students to practice individual sections of the obstacle course during a station before event participation.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will move through an obstacle course while being timed. The students will run through twice and they will get the faster of the two trials. A penalty of three seconds is given for skipping obstacles as well as not fixing an obstacle that is knocked over before continuing. On the day of the event, students will get three minutes to
move through the obstacle course as a warm-up. For the Decathlon event, the student will move through the course, beginning when the teacher says “go”. The trial ends when the student crosses the finish line. The course consists of stepping through tires, going over folded mats, which act as hurdles, zig-zag movements around cones, moving under half hula hoops, and jumping over rope hurdles. In order to manage time effectiveness in assessment, the teacher may start another student using a second stopwatch. Once everyone in the group has gone through the course one time, a second trial is given for each student in the group. This event can be used to teach students about agility and speed. This activity works great for assessment of half the class at one time. The other half of the class can be divided into other activity stations specific to the teaching unit or practicing for other Decathlon program events.

**Agility run practice:**

The teacher walks through the agility course and shows students each section of the course. The students are given tips and strategies to get the fastest possible time. Discuss aspects of agility and quickness and how they relate to this agility course and other sports and activities. Divide students up into multiple groups.

1. Tire practice: Students work on stepping through the tires. Show students how to get their knees up to avoid tripping on the tires.
2. Cone practice: Show students how to zig zag through the orange cones. Discuss strategies to avoid adding extra time, such as staying low and staying close to each cone instead of going wide around each cone.
3. Half hula hoops: Show students how to bend low and run under the half hula hoops. Students do not need to be on their hands and knees, but will have to bend low to avoid hitting the hoops.

4. Over the mat and over the hurdle: Students work on jumping over the single folded mat and then jumping over the rope hurdle. Instruct students to jump just high enough to clear the hurdles while not jumping too high and using valuable time. Encourage students to run hard all the way through the finish line.

**Speed Stacking**

The Speed Stacking station falls at the end of the Speed Stacks unit. Students learn the 3-6-3, 6-6, and 1-10-1 stacks. They learn about ambidexterity, hand eye coordination, and reaction time. Students benefit greatly from practice with the cups. It is easier in class to have students practice on the floor with the cups. However, the event is administered with cups on a folding table. Therefore, ensure students have had time to practice with the cups on a table. Make sure students are shown tricks and techniques to get the fastest possible time. Some students struggle to use their non-dominant hand. Practice using the 3-3-3 or 3-6-3 is one of the best ways to help students with their non-dominant hand. Other activities throughout the year such as dribbling basketballs or using a tennis racket with the non-dominant hand will help students feel more comfortable with this and help to improve his/her score with this event. Once students are comfortable with the process, racing other students really seems to improve their overall time and confidence in the event. However, provide students with adequate opportunities to perform against students of similar skill level.
**Testing Procedure:** Students will perform a 3-6-3 stack using Speed Stacks. These are stackable cups, which can help students improve their hand eye coordination and reflexes. Speed Stacking units typically include a variety of different stacks and sequences. At the conclusion of that unit, students will complete this decathlon event. The cups are placed on a folding table, so the student can stand and stack. The teacher can use a stopwatch to time the student, or a Speed Stack timer can be used. The student is given two attempts to record their fastest time. If a fumble occurs, the student should still finish out the trial. If using a timer, students begin with their hands on the timer, and when the green light appears, the student begins the 3-6-3 sequence. When finished, the student taps the timer to stop the time. If not using a timer, students begin with their hands on the table to begin and to end the trial. This works very well as a station. This event is used to teach hand eye coordination, ambidexterity, and reflexes.

**Speed Stacking practice:**

There are many different relay races and games to play with speed stacks. One option is to set up stations where students are using hand eye coordination. Students do quite a few days of cup stacking before they do the decathlon event. Show students tips and strategies for stacking. Lots of practice time is the best way to improve speed. However, students should practice the right way, using two hands and using good form.

1. **Cup stacking practice:** Students will use timers to complete the 3-6-3 like they would do in the decathlon event. Students place their hands on the timer to start and stop. If no timers are available, then start and end with hands on the table. Encourage students to try and beat their best score each time.
2. Rackets and balls: Have students use tennis rackets and a bouncy ball to dribble and hit the ball up in the air. Also, students can work with a partner to hit back and forth like tennis.

3. Cup stacking practice: Students will work on the other cup stacking activities that they learned such as the 3-3-3 and the 1-10-1.

4. Run Down: Students will play a game of “pickle” or “run down” such as in baseball or softball. There are cones set up approximately 25 feet away from one another. There is a passer standing in front of the cones. The passers throw the ball back and forth while runners try to run from one set of cones to the other without being tagged by the passer who is holding the ball. If a passer tags a runner, the two players trade places. This works on hand eye coordination as well as fitness.

Bowling

The bowling event comes at the end of the bowling unit. Typically, students work on bowling for three to four class periods. Students are taught bowling terms such as foul, strike, spare, split, and pocket. Students are also taught proper lane approach and the three and five step bowling approaches. The skill component which students struggle with the most is getting their approach down so that they do not commit a foul. Students have two options when deciding how far away to stand for an approach. First, a student can start at the foul line and take three or five steps backwards to get the proper distance. A student can choose to do this for every roll. The second option is to do it the first time, and find a mark on the floor to know where to start each time. Students really benefit from teacher feedback on their form, both on the approach and release. Ensuring that students
know the procedures of the event will help with the management of the event. Practicing the procedures before the event is the best way to get the routines down.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will roll 10 rolls from a distance of 30 feet. The total number of pins knocked over in the 10 rolls are added to determine a participant’s score for the event. Each player on the lane will use the same score sheet. A player bowls one roll and then move to the end of the lane and help set up the pins. After the pins are set, the players stands on top of the mats off to the side of the pins (position 1). The next player rolls and position one helps set up the pins. Position one moves over to position number two, where he or she records the score for the next bowler before taking the ball back to the next bowler (see Diagram 8). Depending on class size and number of lanes available, there can be anywhere between four and six bowlers per lane. A mat is set up between lanes to prevent the ball from rolling into other lanes. Mats are set up behind the pins for two workers at the end of the lane to stand up on and to prevent the ball from hitting the wall. Students who are waiting in line must be waiting behind a cone, which is placed 10 feet behind the foul line. This event works on rolling accuracy and is a lifetime sport.

**Bowling practice:**

One option is to use stations and have one of the stations be bowling. This way, students are not waiting too long to bowl. As mentioned earlier, talk about all the important terms and definitions in bowling. Demonstrate to students the correct form as well as certain situations that happens bowling such as a split and how the ball sometimes curves as it is being rolled. If stations are used, any other stations such as cup stacking, 4-square, tetherball, knockout, could be used along with the bowling station.
A game to work on accuracy usually works well. This can be done in an individual station or as a group. One drill is to have a lane of students bowl with only the head pin set up to start with. If it gets knocked down, add a second pin. If both get knocked down, add a third and so on until all ten pins get knocked down. If all pins that are set up do not get knocked down, then an additional pin does not get added. Each student only rolls one time before rotating. The point of the drill is for students to work together to get a strike. This is a very fast paced activity that promotes teamwork.

Another game which students enjoy is to keep track of which lane gets the most strikes during a class period. Getting free bowling coupons to a local bowling alley work well to increase excitement. Also, a trophy can be awarded to the class with the most total strikes in a class period. Have students bowl following the same procedures and rotation system. Keep track of the strikes that the class gets in a 20 minute time period. This can be done with 4th or 5th grade students. The class in that grade level that gets the most strikes gets their teacher’s name on the trophy. The trophy can be used each year and keep the winning class name on it year after year.

**PACER Run**

The PACER run is a cardiovascular event, which works on pacing and endurance. Students need to practice the event at least one time before the test is administered. Teach students about endurance and how to set a good pace. Discuss what will happen if a student starts out too fast. Make sure students are given practice time to see what their pace needs to be, prior to the testing day. This is a great activity to talk about speed versus endurance. Again, the procedure of what to do when a student completes his/her event trial and what the non-running group should be doing, should be talked about and
practiced prior to the testing day. This is important for class management and student engagement.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will complete the 20-meter PACER run. The number of laps completed in alignment with the pacing “beep” is the students’ score. Half of the class will participate in one trial. Depending on the size of the gymnasium, the non-running students could be doing a small activity or working on a worksheet. The worksheet could be a fitness related crossword puzzle or have fitness related questions for students to work alone or together to complete. When the first group is almost completed, the second group should be engaged in stretching and warming up their muscles. The PACER test assesses cardiovascular endurance and stamina using a paced audio prompt protocol. On each buzzer prompt, students run a distance of 20 meters which equals one lap. The student must reach the opposite line before the next buzzer prompt. An audio voice prompt announces the lap number that has just been completed. The students do get a warning if they do not complete the lap before the buzzer. The second time a student fails to complete the lap, the student’s PACER test is complete and the teacher records the number of completed laps. Once a student either fails to complete a lap for a second time, or the student voluntarily withdraws from the PACER trial, he/she will walk around the outside of the court as a cool down until all competitors finish. This event works on cardiovascular endurance and pacing. This makes a great place to talk to students about the difference between speed and endurance and what would happen during the event if a student ran as fast as he/she could versus running for as long as he/she could.
PACER Run practice:

When teaching about pacing and endurance, give examples of how running as fast as possible will not allow students to continue as long as someone who slows down when running. Ask students if they have seen a marathon. People who are running go at a slower pace. This event is not a race. Students are rewarded for running for a longer distance, not a faster speed. One good way to practice without eliminating student is to do a game called “keep going”. This game has students run from one end to the other and then walk back up the sidelines to the beginning and do it again. This gets students jogging at their own pace and includes some rest time when walking back to the beginning. An option which students like is to add a few taggers in the middle who try and tag the runners. If they tag someone, the person they tag becomes the new tagger. This game can go on for a few minutes, and students don’t think of it as running for a long time because it includes some walking.

In addition to games like these, students need to practice the PACER test before the event takes place. One thing that helps with the PACER test is to track the scores of students over time. This is motivating for some students to see how well they do. If students are practicing the test, have other students who are not testing walk around the outside of the court while the first group is running. During the actual test, have the second group work on a fitness related crossword puzzle or activity sheet. Students could also keep the tally sheet of their peers’ completed PACER laps.
50 Yard Dash

The fifty-yard dash is the only event in the decathlon that tests speed alone.

Students need to be shown how to get off the line quickly, and how to use their arms to pump as they are running. The teacher should demonstrate how to start in a good position with legs bent and toes pointing toward the finish line. Talk about the importance of running all the way through the finish line.

**Testing Procedure:** Students will complete a 50-yard run. Each student will be given two opportunities to complete the run, and the faster of the two attempts will be recorded. Before the event, students will learn about how to get a good start when the signal is given to start. Students learn about momentum as well from this event. Ideally, an outdoor space is needed to complete the event. Two cones are placed a few feet apart to provide a starting line, and two cones are placed fifty yards away to show the finish line. The teacher needs to place him or herself at the finish line to get an accurate recording. To give the start signal, the teacher raises his or her hand in the air, and lowers it. When the hand begins to lower, the timer begins. Encourage students to run all the way through the finish line. Students who are not running need to be lined up behind the starting line. The event will move rapidly, so the next student in line needs to be prepared when it is his or her turn. A management strategy is to predetermine student order. This makes documenting the times faster and easier. Have two lines of students ready to run in order to maximize time and effectiveness.

Divide the class up into two groups for testing. There should be a running group and a group doing a skill or activity nearby. After the running group is finished, the two
groups switch places. This gets more kids active at once. If a student happens to start early, he/she is stopped immediately and another trial is begun. The teacher can hold the stopwatch in one hand and lower the other hand to start the next runner.

50 yard dash practice:

Unlike the PACER test, this event is a race. If indoor space limits how much room is available, try and practice outdoors at least one time before the test. Inside, students can work on their form and starting position. The start of the dash is where most students lose the most of their time. Students need practice on their starts. This could be done at a station. For example, students could race a shorter distance than 50 yards. One student could be the starter for the race and then be a runner during the next one. The stations that are included with the race could be any stations the teacher desires. The running race station will take up quite a bit of space, so the other stations need to be limited space activities. For example, cup stacking, jump rope, stationary bikes, or tetherball are all good options.

Accuracy Throw

This activity could be done at any point throughout the year. Students will be working on accuracy as well as trunk rotation, stepping with opposition, and a follow through. Students can practice throwing balls at a target on the wall.

Testing Procedure: Students get 10 chances to throw a softball-sized ball into a net from a distance of 30 feet. The net that is used is approximately three feet wide by three feet high. Students must use an overhand throwing motion. After all 10 balls have been thrown, students, who are in groups of four to six, will help collect all 10 balls and place them in a bucket for the next thrower. Place folded mats around the net, so the balls that do not
make it into the net have a place to roll and collect in front of the mats instead of rolling back to the thrower (see Diagram 4). This activity makes a great station. To count, a ball must completely enter and stay in the net. If two nets are available, two throwers can go simultaneously, making the event move faster. The key is to have students in that group of four to six, who are not throwing, ready to pick up the balls when all 10 have been thrown. For time efficiency, only allow one trial for students to complete the 10-ball accuracy throw. This event works on throwing accuracy, and works on the throwing motion cues of stepping with opposition, trunk rotation, and a follow through.

**Accuracy throw practice:**

Encourage students to find a speed to throw the ball that allows for greater accuracy. Some students do better lobbing the ball, whereas some do better throwing the ball hard. Encourage students to step with opposition, rotate the hips, and follow through. As mentioned, if two nets are available, this helps with getting students through the event. The same is true for practice. Stations used for practice of this event are:

1. **Accuracy throw practice:** Set up two nets and have students complete five throws into the net from the distance of 30 feet. Have each person in the group help pick up the balls and return them to the bucket for the next thrower.

2. **Wall target practice:** Have students throw toward the wall targets. Provide several 3x3 feet taped off targets on the wall for student practice. Have students throw from progressively further distances as they master accuracy at a close distance. Another option is to place cones or poly spots approximately 10 feet away from a starting area. If students are able to throw the ball and hit the target, move a target cones or spots further away. If
the target is missed, move a step closer. Have students see how far away they can get before if is time to rotate. Set up a maximum distance of 30 feet.

The final two stations can be any station the teacher desires. They can be hand eye coordination stations, rolling, throwing, or tossing stations, or a fitness station.

**Controlled Tennis Hits**

This activity is completed after students have had plenty of practice with using rackets. One way for students to practice is to provide them to plenty of hand eye coordination practice using the rackets and balls. Some solid practice drills include but are not limited to, dribbling the balls with a racket like a basketball, hitting them up in the air, hitting then flipping the racket over, and hitting then switching hands with the racket.

Enable students to engage in this 30-second racket challenge prior to the event day. Some students get anxious during assessment or performance events, so prior practice is helpful. This makes a great station activity when testing.

**Testing Procedure:** Students get thirty seconds to volley a ball off of a tennis racket as many times as they can. The ball must clearly come up and off of the racket, but no certain height must be achieved. If the ball touches the ground, there is not a penalty, however it does not count toward the score. The student can elect to have a second try after the rest of the group has finished. The racket used is a plastic long handled tennis racket. The ball used is a soft foam softball sized ball, which is a high bounce ball. The student is told to stay facing the teacher the entire trial so the teacher is able to see to keep count. The teacher can use a clicker instead of remembering the number in his or her head. The students are given a second chance if they so desire. This activity works with reaction time, reflexes, and hand eye coordination.
**Controlled tennis hits practice:**

For this lesson, have students work on stations that will help with hand-eye coordination. This test measures how many hits a student can make in 30 seconds. Here are some stations that can help with this.

1. Racket practice: Just like the decathlon test, students hit the softball sized foam ball in the air using the racket as many times as they can. The teacher can be at that station to tell students to start and stop. This helps relieve some anxiety when it comes to the actual event and gives them good practice time.

2. Tennis with a partner: Students will hit the ball back and forth with a partner like in tennis. The ball should bounce after each hit. The ball could even bounce multiple times, depending on the skill levels of the students in each group.

3. Cup stacking: This station has students practicing their hand eye coordination using cup stacking. Students can race or practice individually.

4. Run Down: Students will play a game of “pickle” or “run down” such as in baseball or softball. This works on hand eye coordination as well as fitness.

(See Speed Stacking section for more detailed description of these activities)

**Conclusion:**

The decathlon program can be integrated into a yearly elementary physical education program. At the beginning of the year, basic locomotor and non-locomotor movements are reviewed. The long jump and vertical jump fit in nicely here because students have reviewed jumping and have discussed momentum.
Early in the year, jump roping skills and tricks are taught and practiced. The jump rope event fits in nicely after this unit. Students have practiced with the beaded and speed ropes, and have the knowledge of how to jump for speed.

The agility run event can work in nicely at any place during the year. The best time may be when momentum and agility are being discussed or when students need to work off plenty of energy. The obstacle course is a great way for students to get plenty of exercise in a short amount of time.

The cup stacking event works well at the conclusion of the speed stacking unit. Typically this unit is done at a mid-point in the school year. Students have the knowledge of cup stacking, and the results are better because they have had plenty of practice.

The bowling event works well at the conclusion of the bowling unit. By then, students know the terms and skills associated with bowling, and the event flows nicely. Using the same rules and procedures in both the bowling unit and the bowling decathlon event makes both practice and the event run smoothly.

The PACER test also can be worked in almost anytime during the year. Students need to have practiced it a few times before being tested because students perform better when they are familiar with the PACER running protocol. Endurance and the skill of pacing need to have been taught as well.

The 50-yard dash can be incorporated when discussing running, or track events. The weather needs to be warm enough to go outside, so for that reason, the event is limited to the beginning or the end of the year. If the gymnasium is full size or if the school has a safe running place that measures 50 yards in length, then the event could be held indoors at any point during the year.
The accuracy throw is another event that can be worked in most of the year. Students need practice doing this event before being tested, but that can be done on a day when stations are being done. This event could work after discussion proper form for throwing or tossing.

Finally, the controlled racket hits event fits in nicely in the curriculum anytime that hand eye coordination is practiced. Students can benefit from hand eye coordination practice all throughout the year. After adequate practice, perhaps at mid-year, is a good time to do this event.

The decathlon program is a great way to keep students excited about physical education while at the same time evaluating students on basic locomotor and manipulative skills. The program meets all the state standards for fifth grade physical education. In addition, the decathlon meets multiple areas of appropriate practices from NASPE. By practicing the skills used in the decathlon events, students will improve skills such as hand eye coordination, muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, fitness, speed, agility, ambidexterity, and accuracy. Not only will students get exposure to skills and events which they may not usually practice, but they get familiar with important vocabulary words and important sport concepts from each event. Everyone involved can have a fun and educational time participating in the decathlon.
Jump Rope Testing Stations

**Grade:**  3-5

**Purpose:** Stations that students can handle while teacher tests decathlon jump rope. Each student gets 30 seconds to jump as many times as they can. The teacher will do the counting for each student using a clicker counter. If a student desires, he or she may go a second time, and the best of the two scores is reported.

**Equipment:** Jump ropes, duel boards/ropes, Tetherball poles, long ropes, cups, mats, timers, 2 folding tables.

**Formation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duel x3</th>
<th>Long Jump rope x2</th>
<th>Tetherball x2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cupstacking 3-6-3, 6-6, 1-10-1</td>
<td>Jump Rope Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Jump Rope Decathlon Test
2. Tetherball- 2 poles
3. Long jump ropes- 2 ropes
4. Duel- 3 board and ropes
5. Cupstacking- timers for practice, or can race one another. Use on tables
Standing Long Jump/Vertical Jump Testing
Stations

Grades: 3 - 5

Equipment: Long jump mat, vertical jump board, cups, mats, timers, 2 folding tables, 1 bean bag, 6 tennis balls, 2 basketballs, 3 jump ropes

Formation:

1. Long jump/vertical jump
2. Cupstacking - Racing other students or individual practice
3. Bocceball - using a bean bag and numbered tennis balls
4. 3 person jump rope - regular size jump rope
5. Knockout - using 2 basketballs. When out, students jump rope until a new game starts.
50 Yard Dash Test

Grades: 3 - 5

Equipment: Stopwatch and a class roster for recording times, clipboard, pencil, 8 basketballs

Activity: Time each student in the 50 yard dash.

1. Half the class will be lined up ready to run. When one student finishes, the teacher raises his or her hand and then lowers it, which starts the next runner. When all students in line have gone twice, then rotate stations.

2. Students who are not running will be using the three baskets on the blacktop to shoot baskets. They will switch and become runners when the first group is finished.
Accuracy Throw Test

Grades: 3-5

Equipment: 2 gator balls, 4 cones, 8 mats, 2 nets, 20 softballs, 2 buckets, 2 tetherball poles, 2 bowling balls, 20 pins

Formation:

Decathlon Throw for Accuracy:
The student is given 10 softballs and is asked to throw from a distance of 25 feet into a net which measures 36” by 36”. The student must use an overhand throwing motion.

1. Accuracy test- If available, use two nets. Please mats around the nets so balls do not roll all over the court. Ten throws are given, and the ball must stay inside the net to count.

2. Run down- Like in baseball/softball. Two throwers, and the rest are runners who try to get down and back between cones, similar to running bases.

3. Bowling- Two bowling lanes

4. Tetherball- Two tetherball games
Agility Run Test

Grades: 3 - 5

Equipment: Show in diagram

Agility Run:

Start to finish of the course is 129 feet. The students are simply asked to run the course for their fastest time. Give the students 2 time trials and record their fastest time. Penalty seconds can be given for mistakes on the course, like missing a tire, etc.

If room, divide students into two groups. The group not running can be doing a small station or two on the other side of the court. The stations need to be small because of a lack of room.
Cup Stacking Stations

Grade: 3-5

Purpose: Stations that students can handle while teacher tests decathlon cup stacking. Each student gets two chances to do a 3-6-3 stack. The faster of the two attempts will be recorded. Use timers if available. If no timers are available, the teacher can use a stopwatch. Two students can go at the same time.

Equipment: Jump ropes, duel boards/ropes, Tetherball poles, long ropes, cups, mats, timers, 2 folding tables.

Formation:

1. Cup stacking testing
2. Bocce ball- use a beanbag and numbered tennis balls
3. Tetherball- Use two poles
4. Long jump rope
5. Rundown/Pickle
PACER Test

Grade: 3-5

Purpose: Stations that students can handle while teacher tests decathlon cup stacking. Each student gets two chances to do a 3-6-3 stack. The faster of the two attempts will be recorded. Use timers if available. If no timers are available, the teacher can use a stopwatch. Two students can go at the same time.

Equipment: PACER test CD

Formation:

1. Half the class will be on an endline. Following the directions of the PACER test, students will be running down and back. When out, they will walk around the outside of the court until the rest of the group is finished.

2. The half of the class not running will be sitting against the wall stretching and preparing to run.
Bowling Test

Grades: 3 - 5

Equipment: 50 pins, 5 score sheets, 5 pencils, mats, 5 bowling balls, floor tape

1. Students are divided up into 5 lanes. Two workers and three bowlers. The bowling distance is 30 feet. Use floor tape as the foul line. Bowler set up pins, and becomes worker 1, worker 1 sets up pins and becomes worker 2. Worker 2 writes down score, and then takes ball to next roller. Workers must be on top of mats before bowling.
**30 Second Racket Testing**

**Grade:** 3-5

**Purpose:** Students get two attempts to bounce a bouncy ball on a racket as many times as they can in thirty seconds. If a ball hits the ground, the score does not start over. After all members of a group goes once, a second attempt may be made if desired.

**Equipment:** Long jumprope, 2 basketballs, cups, 6 rackets, 6 bouncy tennis balls, 3 duel games

**Formation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knockout</th>
<th>Long Jumprope</th>
<th>Racket Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cupstacking</td>
<td>Duel x3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Cupstacking- practice or race using 3-6-3, 6-6, 1-10-1
2. Racket testing
3. Duel- 3 sets of boards/ropes
4. Long jump rope
5. Knockout
References


