

How a Small School is Hitting Physical Activity Targets

The tiny town of Easton, WA (pop. 478 in 2010) is located at the base of the beautiful Cascade Mountains — a perfect location for outdoor pursuits and a variety of lifetime physical and recreational activities. A school as small as Easton School — which currently has an enrollment shy of 90 students — could easily be overlooked. However, its students have become nationally renowned for their skills in a unique activity: archery.

Archery was introduced at Easton School 25 years ago as part of the outdoor physical education program. As the school's K-12 physical education teacher, longtime AAHPERD member Cece Badda has helped to take the archery program to the next level. When Pat Patterson, a retired military and community member, saw the Easton kids shooting, he insisted that they were good enough to shoot competitively and convinced

Cece to institute the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) so they could compete at state and national competitions.

In 2006, Easton School sent its first archery competitors to the NASP state competition. Ironically, the championship took place on the same day as the school's prom, so most of the students who competed left before receiving their results. Amazingly, the school got top honors! Cece ended up taking home the traveling trophy (which is given to the winning school to keep for a year), as well as several awards for individual placements.

The very next year, nine high school students qualified to go to nationals. Unfortunately the school's budget was too limited to send all nine students to Kentucky (where the NASP program originated and national competitions take place), so the school was considering only sending the top two shooters

in order to save money. The small Easton community, which had by then developed a great sense of pride in the extraordinary and unexpected accomplishment of their students, helped with fundraising in order to make it possible for all nine students to compete at nationals. So began a remarkable partnership between the school and the community, which has helped the archery program to thrive at a level no one could have foreseen.

Easton School brought home the traveling trophy from the state tournament five years in a row. In 2009 the students attended their very first NASP world tournament in Disney World, FL. They returned to World for three years, competing alongside students from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Nigeria, Botswana and Mongolia. In 2007, around 2,000 students competed at the state level, and in 2012 the Guinness World Record for largest indoor archery tournament was broken when 7,804 students competed. "I remember the exact number because we had four students competing at State that year, so we were the four that brought the number to 7,804," Cece said. By 2013, that record had already been broken, with more than 9,000 participants.

Recently, the top archers from Easton were invited to teach archery skills to college students at Central Washington University. They have also taught at Washington AHPERD conferences, and have done presentations for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. In this way, the school has had the opportunity to give back to the community, bringing the school-community partnership full circle. This is a perfect example of why the community-

involvement component of a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP) recommended by *Let's Move! Active Schools* (www.letsmoveschools.org) is so important, and it illustrates what a huge impact community support can have on the success of a physical education program.



Easton archers shoot the 2013 Blue Face Indoor Tournament in Kennewick, WA.

How does archery fit into the curriculum?

The PE curriculum is comprehensive, in that it includes all the traditional sports and activities. NASP archery is highlighted in a minimum two-week unit each year, and is also practiced by the students before and/or after school (another important component of a CSPAP). We also make sure to teach archery toward state and national standards. —Badda

Who participates?

All children in 5th-12th participate in archery as part of the PE curriculum. I taught 22 male and 21 female students in archery in the 2012-13 school year, and 34 of them went to the NASP state championship. We have even made accommodations for students with special needs to be able to participate. Last school year, I came up with equipment adaptations for a student with cerebral palsy. It took a lot of research, and I even contacted Olympic coaches about adaptations. It is not common to see kids with special needs competing in Washington state NASP competitions, but the NASP program willingly encourages students with special needs to participate and okayed the adaptations for my archer so she could compete at State. —Badda

What are the benefits of including archery in a PE program?

Since it is an individual sport, archery helps students to develop focus and concentration. The nature of the sport requires that students develop responsibility, honesty and respect for others. They learn to control their anxiety before and to self-evaluate their skills after each arrow. They develop social skills and sportsmanship, by helping other archers. The kids in this program are also expected to have good attendance and be academically sound. Most recently they have had the opportunity of developing public-speaking and teaching skills, when they attend university events or conferences. Some students even received a \$500 scholarship from the Remington Outdoor Foundation in 2010. Archery is also a great lifelong activity; many students have gone on to compete at higher levels, coach and hunt. —Badda

How could other schools start an archery program?

1. Start with plenty of research to gather knowledge about and training in the sport.
2. Consider the costs of equipment and maintenance.
3. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Seek out willing parents, and reach out to the community.

Cece Badda is the 2013 Northwest District AAHPERD Teacher of the Year and President-Elect of WAHPERD. She can be reached at baddacc@easton.wednet.edu and would be happy to answer questions about her archery program.

About the National Archery in the Schools Program

- NASP is in 47 states and the District of Columbia (except for RI, VT and DE)
- 10,373 schools were enrolled as of June 30, 2012 (21% growth in the past three years)
- 2,055,000 million students participated in the past school year (bigger than Little League Baseball and lacrosse)
- Visit www.nasparchery.com for information about the program, equipment and NASP state representatives.

