



Growing Youth Ultimate Through PE Classes

By Catherine Greenwald

Leagues and other organized Ultimate competition may be quickly growing, but many Americans are getting their first exposure to Ultimate in primary and secondary school PE classes.

This experience fuels the growth of Ultimate because very often competitive high school teams or intramural programs are born in these classes. Or, if competitive Ultimate opportunities aren't available at the high school level, youth who enjoyed playing Ultimate in PE will seek it out once they get to college campuses.

Individual players, teams, or even leagues can do a lot to accelerate the growth of Ultimate through outreach to local schools, where it is a popular option because of its low cost and great appeal to students.

Several needs the Ultimate community can help meet through outreach are:

1. General information about the game

Often PE teachers have heard about Ultimate, but are unclear on the rules or even a rough idea of how to play. Providing these schools with materials like the “Ten Simple Rules” could be invaluable in getting them started.

2. Technical assistance on basic skills

Most PE teachers have never played Ultimate, and are usually not skilled enough to be able to teach more than perhaps a simple backhand. However, thanks to their background and training, these teachers tend to be very quick learners and are able to relate various aspects of Ultimate to other, more familiar sports. They often just need some initial guidance to make them more comfortable with teaching Ultimate skills.

3. Suggestions for making an Ultimate unit work Simply learning to throw and playing Ultimate as we know it is not a viable option for many if not most classes. Teachers often have to

work with constraints such as large class sizes, limited space, and the need to work indoors due to weather. They are looking for ideas for alternative games like relays, Hot Box, or even something like Goaltimate. Hands-on help, not only teaching skills but running several separate 4 v 4 games instead of a 13 v 13 free-for-all (which often occurs in PE Ultimate classes) will ensure a better quality experience for students and teachers.

4. Education as to the wider world of Ultimate competition

Many teachers are surprised and impressed to find out that Ultimate is played competitively at over 400 colleges and universities. Awareness of this fact can stimulate their interest in providing a high-quality unit, or possibly even encourage them to help get a team started at their school.

5. Providing competition-quality discs

School PE classes very often play with discs of absolutely appalling quality—hard, brittle, rough or poorly designed discs can really turn kids off! Simply introducing them to the benefits of using an official disc can be very helpful, and if you can arrange for a donation of several discs to a school or at least help them to obtain discs at cost, you've done a lot to ensure that Ultimate will get played at that school.

The question is who is going to provide this outreach and assistance to local schools? It could be an individual who wants to give back to the sport, a parent who wants to make sure his or her children get a chance to play in school, a team committed to community service, or part of a league's outreach to local schools. The commitment of a league to this education effort is probably the most important and effective means of outreach, mainly because of the numbers of people that can get involved, as well as the possibility of money being available to spend on instructors and materials. For example, the Boston Ultimate Disc Alliance (BUDA) has set aside a portion of the money it collects from running several recreational leagues to pay a Youth Educator to run clinics at schools in Eastern Massachusetts. BUDA's commitment to youth education has helped to fuel the continued growth of its high school league, which now numbers over 60 teams.

Approaches an interested individual, team or league can use to get in touch with PE teachers include:

Working with classes at individual schools

The easiest and simplest way to start would be to simply get in touch with teachers at a school where there is some connection. For example, when my children were in middle school I called up their PE teachers and offered my services. Although my own kids were mortified to have me in there, the teachers were grateful for the assistance.

Working with teachers at individual schools

When it came to the local high school, instead of working with classes directly, I came in one day during time set aside for teacher training and taught the teachers how to throw, played some Hot Box with them, and handed out copies of *Ten Simple Rules*. This gave them enough skills and information to be able to run the Ultimate units on their own.

Working with teachers on a district-wide basis Many school districts run teacher training

days before the start of the school year—if you or your group can manage to get on the schedule for an Ultimate clinic during this training, you can hit a lot of teachers (and, therefore, students) in a short period of time. A typical clinic might include an explanation of the game (either by explanation or by showing the DVD, *Ultimate 101-Laying out the Game*), demonstrations of throwing, pivoting and marking techniques, and a short demonstration of an actual game.

Outreach to teachers on a state-wide basis

Once a year, usually in the fall, the state or regional affiliates of the AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Dance) hold their annual conventions. PE teachers from all over the state (or a sub-region if the state is very large) attend these conferences to get new ideas to take back to their schools. Your involvement could be to man a booth where you can hand out information and answer questions, and/or to stage an Ultimate demonstration. Depending on the state, USA Ultimate may be able to provide materials and support for your participation in the conference. If you are interested, you should go online (preferably in the spring) to check regarding the date of the conference and if it would be possible to be included. There may be a charge to host a booth or stage a demonstration, but you may be able to get that waived if you can convince them that you are not selling any products (many exhibitors are there to sell products and/or services).

Contact PE teachers-in-training Your local college or university, if it has a physical education major, may be interested in experienced instructors for Ultimate units. Who knows, you could possibly get paid to teach an Ultimate class!

Regardless of the scale of your involvement, USA Ultimate can provide you with materials that can help present Ultimate to your audience.