

# Land Paddling:

## MAKING FITNESS FUN



By Robyn Bretzing and David Barney

Years ago, if a person was to walk off the street and stick their head into the equipment room of a secondary physical education closet, they would probably have found basketballs, volleyballs, footballs, soccer balls, rackets and many other types of sports equipment. In recent years, the closet looks very different, and physical education has become more than just sports. The trend in secondary physical education is to move toward fitness units, which promote and improve students' current fitness levels and give students the tools they need to stay fit beyond graduation. Activities such as yoga, Zumba, CrossFit and kickboxing are becoming common in physical education programs. One fitness unit that is growing in popularity throughout the country is land paddling. Land paddling is an activity requiring students to ride a long skateboard with a specifically made pole to propel themselves. Land paddling is similar to the stand-up paddle boarding that is commonly seen in beach areas. Its revolutionary design allows for better balance and control on the long board while giving riders an upper-body and core workout. This new fitness activity is becoming popular not only with physical education programs, but also with many sport teams due to its core training benefits.

## Equipment for Land Paddling

Land paddling consists of a specialized long board and land paddle. The size of the long board can range from 43 inches to 59 inches in length and 14 inches wide. Due to their size, long boards are more stable than standard skateboards because of the longer wheelbase and wider foot placement. The length of the land paddle can range from 4 feet to 6 feet. Many of the newer paddles are adjustable for all different heights of students.

Besides the long board and paddle, the safety equipment includes a helmet, elbow pads, kneepads and a requirement for students to wear shoes. The cost of the long board and paddle can run from \$210 to \$275 (Kahuna Creations, n.d.), but many of the companies give educators a discount on the equipment as low as \$180. Because of the price of each long board and paddle, it may take a couple of years to have enough long boards and paddles for every student. One way to raise the money is to seek out help from the parent-teacher association. Another suggestion is to check with the school, the school district, and state agencies and inquire how to obtain additional financial assistance. Another option is to write a grant to seek additional money. There are a number of grants available for educators; it is only a matter of investing some time to look for, research, write and submit the grant proposal.

## Teaching the Basics of Land Paddling

After students are fitted with the proper safety equipment, they are ready to be taught the basics of riding a long board with the aid of a paddle (Kahuna Creations, 2013 <http://kahunacreations.com>).

### 1. Determining riding style

Have the students stand on the ground with their feet shoulder-width apart, facing away from a partner. Have the partner lightly push the student forward, causing them to take a step. The foot the student steps forward with is considered their lead or regular foot and will be the front foot on the long board. The second foot to step on the long board is the goofy foot. It needs to be stressed that the students need to be comfortable with whatever foot they decide to have as their lead foot.

### 2. Getting on the long board

This sounds easier than it actually is. Have the students stand next to the long board, while holding their paddle on

the opposite side of the board for support. The paddle provides balance and support while the students mount the board. If the student is nervous about mounting the long board, have a partner place their feet around the front wheels so the board does not roll. This lends stability to the long board and makes it easier to begin riding.

### 3. Measuring proper height of the paddle

As mentioned previously, the paddles are adjustable, thereby allowing students of different heights to use them. As the student stands on the long board holding the paddle upright, make sure the paddle comes up to the area between their chin and forehead. Using this method of measuring the paddle height will allow the student to obtain full use of the paddle.

### 4. Getting off the long board

When the long board comes to a stop, students will use their paddle to maintain balance and step off the side of the long board, one foot at a time. Students must be taught not to jump off the long board while in motion to ensure safety.

### 5. Proper stance on the long board

Before the students start to push off and ride the long board, a proper stance on the long board needs to be emphasized. Have students stand with their feet shoulder-width apart, while placing their lead foot just behind the front wheels on the long board. If students are standing toward the end of the long board, there is a greater chance of losing control. As soon as the lead foot is properly secured on the long board, the trail foot follows on the board. As mentioned earlier, feet should remain shoulder-width apart. This also applies when both feet are on the board. It is important that the students learn to keep their knees relaxed and their core strong.

### 6. Holding the paddle

Have the students hold the T-grip handle with the hand that is on the same side of the body as the lead foot. The proper technique is to place the hand on top of the T-grip with the fingers facing toward the body. The elbows are slightly bent. The other hand is 12 inches to 14 inches below the top hand.

### 7. Front-side paddling

Because the paddle is in front of the long board, students need to be reminded to be careful not to have the paddle collide with the wheels. Teachers can give students the following teaching cue when showing the proper stroke: "Pull back, then push." Have the student reach the paddle out in front of the board and "pull" against the ground to generate forward motion, and then transition to a "push" to complete the stroke.

### 8. Braking technique

The paddle also allows students to control their speed. Applying force to the paddle and dragging it behind them allows students to slow down. Once at a complete stop, the students can then dismount safely. This takes a lot of upper-body

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strength and core control, which enable the students to improve core strength and personal fitness.

### 9. Toe-side turn

Toe-side turns are similar to turns done on a typical skateboard. Applying pressure with the toes forces the truck to rotate, which allows the board to turn. Toe-side turns are more difficult to execute for beginners because of the shift in weight and overall balance. Most beginning riders will struggle with this turn until they understand the proper shift in balance between their hips and shoulders.

### 10. Heel-side turn

A heel-side turn consists of turning in the direction of where the heels are pointing. The students need to shift their weight into their heels and turn their head to see where they are going. The heel-side turn is the easiest turn to perform for beginners due to the more natural shift in balance. Once students learn both the toe-side and heel-side turns, they will be able to turn left or right.

### 11. Back-side paddling

A back-side paddle is paddling on the side of the long board where the heels are pointing. To perform a back-side paddle, the students must change hands on the paddle, while placing the opposite hand on the T-grip. The students need to rotate their shoulders and engage the core to find the proper balance when back-side paddling. They must learn to go through the proper biomechanical principles of paddling before they become proficient at land paddling. It is important to have the students switch hands when they transition from front-side to back-side paddling and vice-versa.

### 12. Skills check review

After students have been taught the proper biomechanical principles for land paddling, they should be given the opportunity to assess their understanding of these principles. This assessment can be easily done by either the teacher conducting the assessment or the students working with a partner (see Figure 1; Mosston & Ashworth, 1994). The following are the points to be assessed:

1. Demonstrate getting on the long board properly.
2. Demonstrate measuring the proper height of the paddle.
3. Demonstrate getting off the long board properly.
4. Demonstrate proper stance.
5. Demonstrate how to hold the paddle properly.
6. Demonstrate a proper front-side paddle stroke.
7. Demonstrate proper slowing down technique.
8. Demonstrate a proper toe-side turn.
9. Demonstrate a proper heel-side turn.
10. Demonstrate a proper back-side paddle stroke.

## Land Paddling and the National Standards

As secondary physical educators implement land paddling in their curriculum, they need to make sure that the activities meet the National Standards (SHAPE America – The Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014), resulting in a physically literate student. The following explanation of how land paddling aligns with the National Standards demonstrates to school administrators, classroom teachers and parents that land paddling is a viable curriculum unit and not just a “fun” activity. There is real value for students who participate in land paddling.

	YES	WORKING ON IT Suggestions for Student
1. Getting on the long board		
2. Proper height of paddle		
3. Getting off the long board		
4. Proper stance on the long board		
5. Holding the paddle		
6. Front-side paddling		
7. Braking technique		
8. Toe-side turn		
9. Heel-side turn		
10. Back-side paddling		

Figure 1. Skill assessment rubric for land paddling



**Standard 1: The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.**

Students must learn toe-side and heel-side turns to successfully maneuver the long board. Balance and coordination are major factors for success due to the overall body movements required to maneuver the long board. Students must learn to shift the body's center of gravity to compensate for sharp turns and navigate around obstacles. Skills necessary for success include agility, balance, coordination, reaction time and power. Through successful coordination of these skills, students will develop smooth paddling techniques and be able to transition from various surfaces and obstacles.

**Standard 2: The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.**

Students will need a basic understanding of the pull-to-push transition for the proper stroke technique. The application of concepts such as reaction time, coordination and power will determine the success of the students' ability to ride on various surfaces, navigate through obstacles, and have smooth transitions from front-side or back-side strokes. Once general land-paddling skills are acquired, students may increase the intensity of the workout by paddling up slight inclines. Paddling uphill will require the student to put more force into each paddle and will maximize the pull-to-push transition. Principles of specificity and overload can be demonstrated through land paddling. Various intensity levels of land paddling can be acquired through an assortment of hill inclines and patterns. Land paddling can be an alternative workout for core, lower-body and upper-body strength and endurance goals.

**Standard 3: The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.**

Land paddling will help the students achieve health-enhancing fitness goals such as core strength, muscular strength and cardiovascular endurance. Land paddling's unique stroke pattern, coupled with the mandatory balance technique, allows the students to have a full-body workout. Through the workout, the students can set, reach and maintain adequate fitness measures, which in turn may help with physical performance and injury prevention.

**Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.**

Land paddling is a contemporary way of improving personal fitness, maintaining an active lifestyle, and socializing through exercise. Students learn to adhere to land-paddling guidelines yet are able to maintain a fun and engaging workout with others.

**Standard 5: The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.**

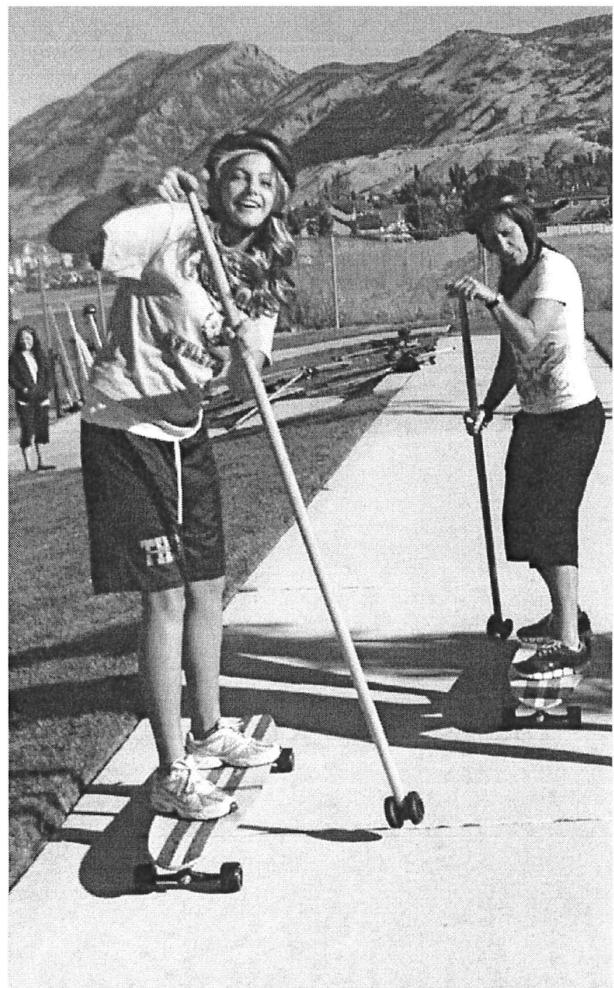
Land paddling can be enjoyed individually or with a group of friends. It allows students to socialize and work on fitness goals as they participate in the activity. Students have the opportunity to work individually on new moves and then share those moves with friends.

## Unit and Lesson Plans for Land Paddling

Figure 2 is an example of a land-paddling unit and lesson plan that can be implemented in secondary physical education classes.

## Benefits of Land Paddling

Companies that sell land-paddling equipment promote their product to give students a cardio and core workout that strengthens the shoulders, back, abdomen, arms and legs. At this point, there is not much research to back up these claims, but as more sport and physical education programs utilize this activity, coaches and teachers are seeing improvements in students' strength and balance. These types of benefits are what secondary physical educators are looking for each and every



### Unit Plan

*Unit:* Land paddling      *No. of days:* 5 (block schedule)      *Facilities needed:* Track, school parking lot, trail near school, gym  
*Name:* Bretzing/Shirley      *Class size:* 35  
*Grade level:* High School      *Skill level:* Beginning      *Equipment needed:* 35 land paddles, 35 helmets, 40 pedometers  
*Media or other equipment:* Projector, computer  
*Skills/concepts to be taught:* Health benefits of physical activity, common physical activity injuries, health issues related to physical activity, land-paddling techniques      *Preassessment:* During flex time the previous week, students are allowed to work with the teacher on individual instruction if needed.

Unit Objectives and Assessment	Objectives	Assessment	Content Standards
Skill	Students will demonstrate proficiency in land paddling by completing an assignment card each day.	Activity card	Standard 1
Knowledge	Students will demonstrate the knowledge and basic understanding of land paddling by taking a written test on correct form and safety.	Test	Standard 2
Dispositions	Students will demonstrate knowledge of assessing their effort in each class.	Disposition assignment	Standard 4

Day	Content	Learning Activities	Assessment
Day 1	<i>Fitness:</i> Walk/jog <i>Lesson:</i> Introduction to land paddling <i>Activity:</i> Land paddle activity	<i>Warm-up:</i> Walk around the perimeter of the gym and then jog around the perimeter of the gym. Class then follows a stretching leader. <i>Lesson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone in the class chooses a partner and one partner gets a land paddle and helmet.</li> <li>Everyone picks up a land paddle safety sheet and review card.</li> <li>The teacher goes out to the track and demonstrates how to land paddle and reviews safety.</li> <li>Each partner takes a turn practicing around the track.</li> <li>One partner then takes the land paddle to the soccer field track and land paddles.</li> <li>Entire class goes over the land paddle review card.</li> <li>Return to the gym and do the PowerPoint for Chapter 1 of the study guide. Students record answers on their paper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land paddle review card</li> <li>Pedometers</li> </ul>
Day 2	<i>Fitness:</i> Walk/jog <i>Lesson:</i> Land paddle activity	<i>Warm-up:</i> Walk around the perimeter of the gym and then jog around the perimeter of the gym. Class then follows a stretching leader. <i>Lesson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land paddle a lap and jog a lap. Keep track of the number of laps completed.</li> <li>Return to the gym and do the PowerPoint for Chapters 2 and 3 in the study guide. Students record answers on their paper.</li> <li>At the end of the period, everyone fills out their respective side of the activity card, which includes: heart rate, exertion score, calories burned and number of laps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity card</li> <li>Pedometers</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Land-paddling unit and lesson plans (continued)

Day	Content	Learning Activities	Assessment
Day 3	<i>Fitness:</i> Walk/jog <i>Lesson:</i> Practice previous day's skills	<i>Warm-up:</i> Walk around the perimeter of the gym and then jog around the perimeter of the gym. Class then follows a stretching leader. <i>Lesson:</i> Same as previous day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity card</li> <li>• Pedometers</li> </ul>
Day 4	<i>Fitness:</i> Walk/jog <i>Lessons:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Designated Course Ride</li> <li>• Written test and paddling</li> </ul>	<i>Warm-up:</i> Walk around the perimeter of the gym and then jog around the perimeter of the gym. Class then follows a stretching leader. <i>Lesson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up questions around the perimeter of the soccer field track. The students have to jog to each question and record the answer on their answer sheet. When they are finished, they turn in the test and then begin paddling. At the end of class, students return to the gym and go over the answers to the test.</li> <li>• Everyone fills out their activity card.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity card</li> <li>• Pedometers</li> <li>• Written test</li> </ul>
Day 5	<i>Fitness:</i> Walk/jog around the perimeter of the gym <i>Lesson:</i> Group competition	<i>Warm-up:</i> Walk around the perimeter of the gym and then jog around the perimeter of the gym. Class then follows a stretching leader. <i>Lesson:</i> Students are divided into groups of three. One student will bike, one will jog, and one will paddle. After 10 minutes, they record their lap total and rotate activities within their group. Once they have each completed all three activities, they add their total lap scores to determine the winner of the competition! Winners get extra credit on their written test.	Great Race recording card

Figure 2. (Continued)

day. At the same time, land paddling is the type of activity that interests students and gets them participating in a fun fitness activity. The authors have overheard students express excitement when participating in land paddling. They have heard students say, "This is awesome"; "This is better than having to run"; and "I like this [physical education] class so much more than past [physical education] classes."

Another benefit of land paddling is the appeal of the activity for students who do not enjoy typical physical education activities (e.g., basketball, softball, volleyball and other team sports). Even those students who are comfortable participating in traditional team sports are just as successful participating in land paddling. The benefits of land paddling do not only affect the student, but the quality of instruction taking place within physical education programs.

## Conclusion

This activity offers students a new and exciting way to be physically active. The movements and skills used in land

paddling provide fitness training and skills that can be used throughout a person's life. By introducing land paddling to secondary students, physical educators are exposing them to another lifetime activity that will promote health and wellness beyond graduation.

## References

- Mosston, M., & Ashworth, S. (1994). *Teaching physical education* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Society of Health and Physical Educators. (2014). *National standards & grade-level outcomes for K-12 physical education*. Reston, VA: Author.

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