



## Unlock Research Research for Physical Educators

Research Journal of the Month  
DECEMBER 2003

### AVANTE Online.

The research periodical of the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (CAHPERD).

This is how CAHPERD describes the publication at hand:

AVANTE Online is a bilingual (French and English) research periodical designed to communicate and stimulate critical thought on issues pertaining to the fields of health, physical activity, sport, physical education, recreation, leisure, dance, and active living. AVANTE is published three times per year (winter, summer, fall) and is available as part of CAHPERD's membership package or by individual subscription.

Despite the fact that there has been some discussion within CAHPERD of discontinuing the print edition, AVANTE continues to be available in both print and electronic formats. For the present review, however, I have made exclusive use of the Internet version. Thus, the December Journal of the Month represents the first on-line publication to be reviewed at Unlockresearch. For economy, numeration for Volume and Number (issue) has been indicated here as X/X.

Instead of beginning with the usual specification of technical details concerning the publication, it makes sense to start by answering what are likely to be the two most pressing questions for most readers: (1) if my primary interests lie in the general area of physical education (as distinct from the other topical areas noted above), will I find valuable material in AVANTE, and (2) given the electronic nature of the journal and (for non-Canadian nationals) its organic relationship to a professional organization other than my own, is the required investment of subscription fee (and valuable time) justified by what I will find?

As explained below, my respective answers to those two questions are: (1) "absolutely yes," and (2) "possibly, although, whenever possible, it always is better to urge your local library to subscribe (currently at \$135 US) than tithe for an individual subscription (currently at \$83 US)." The case for AVANTE's value to physical educators can be made by considering a sampling of reports and articles from recent issues.

- 9/2 Eastern Canadian and Hawaiian pre-service elementary generalist teachers' past experiences in elementary physical education and considerations for teacher education. With a clunky title like that you might be excused if your expectations were low – but you would be wrong. In a survey of pre-service elementary classroom teachers the investigators found that the participants' most vivid memories of their own elementary school PE experiences were (1) having to take fitness tests, and (2) the presence or absence of a PE specialist. That might explain a lot about how classroom teachers sometimes teach PE – even after receiving the benefit of the (typical) single preparatory course in that subject.
- 8/1 How do student teachers characterize their cooperating teachers? Ho Hum, haven't we read enough about that? Perhaps you have, but I was struck by the clear emphasis and high priority that PE student teachers gave to cooperating teachers' function as a source of personal/emotional support. Yes, pedagogical advice and feedback from an experienced practitioner are vital. It is equally clear, however, that while beginning teachers may find those supervisory functions essential – they also regard them as quite insufficient.

- 8/1 Physical education teachers' and students' views of injustice in the gymnasium. In a delicious twist on the usual approach, the investigators presented participating teachers with descriptions of students' perceptions of unjust situations they had experienced in PE. The reactions of teachers provide fascinating (and sometimes chilling) evidence of just how disparate the two locations of perception can be – and what problematic consequences can flow from that fact.
- 8/2 Computers and reform in physical and health education. I too am inclined to say: "Enough already about technology in PE," but once again I would have been too quick to judge. In this federally funded initiative in pre-service training of PE (and health) teachers, technical skills in computer application were first learned and then applied in the form of student-designed units in a secondary school. The most fascinating outcome can be found in the participants' answer to the following evaluation question: "If I gave you a blank cheque to purchase whatever you wanted to make the use of technology in PE a success, on what would you spend the money?" I think it is a resounding affirmation of Canadian teacher education that almost all of the students responded with a single word "time." That is: time to think, time to plan, sufficient time to teach, and time to evaluate and rethink. By my standards, a pretty sophisticated response indeed.

I rest my case. The coverage of AVANTE is not as tightly focused as that of The Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, nor as technical and heavy-duty as the research reports in the Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport. It lies in a useful middle ground where pragmatic issues are raised and thoughtful questions can be addressed by systematic inquiry – and AVANTE authors seem to do so with a flair that is more creative than simply pedantic. Now, however, we must consider the second question posed above – the nature of the site itself, the realities of use, and the potential return on investment.

In the description that follows all proportions are approximate. One-third of the articles in AVANTE are in French, and the remaining two-thirds in English. Topical coverage across the first nine volumes appears to be distributed as: one-half to sport and coaching, and one quarter each to (a) physical education (both as a school subject and as a field for teacher preparation) and (b) other areas (health, leisure, and so on). The source of content is predominantly Canadian, with a scattering from other countries. In addition to the traditional research reports (the dominant format), research reviews, research notes (short reports), and book reviews (a book review editor has recently been appointed), as well as essays, position papers, and other non-research features are included. Special issues devoted to conference papers or special thematic topics have appeared irregularly (at least one each year has recently been promised).

The journal is peer-reviewed (both guest reviewers and Editorial Board members serve that function), and, nominally at least, AVANTE constitutes the public voice of the Council of University Professors and Researchers (CUPR), the academic arm of CAHPERD. Details concerning subscription to AVANTE may be obtained at:

<http://www.cahperd.ca/>

The journal is indexed in The Physical Education Index (Cambridge Scientific Abstracts) for Volume 8 and (I assume) onward. Although CAHPERD material gives the title as "AVANTE Online," that designation will not work with all retrieval systems and the solo, "AVANTE" may be required (case, of course, is irrelevant).

Editors appear to have employed standards for writing and organization that have been both consistent and entirely adequate for a journal of this type. For the half dozen reports I read in full, the absolute quality of research design and method was somewhat variable, but certainly met reasonable expectations.

The main pages for the site are organized in a straightforward manner and present no immediate difficulty for navigation. AVANTE is divided into two sections: (1) an "Article and Abstract Index" (open for free use) that can be accessed from the AVANTE main page, and (2) the journal's retrieval site which requires entry of a password (assigned upon subscription). Downloads of material from the site utilize Adobe Acrobat (individual provisions are made for PC and Macintosh users) and, if required, the reader program can be obtained directly from the site.

There are some less felicitous aspects of AVANTE Online, however, and you will wish to consider them when thinking about a subscription. I have made the following analysis as simple as possible, but please don't feel badly if it requires several readings to catch the full meaning.

For non-subscribers, what is available online through use of the Article and Abstract Index are: (1) the title of all items from 1/1 (1995) to the current issue, and (2) English language abstracts for all articles (irrespective of the original language) published prior to 6/1 (2000). What non-subscribers do *not* have available are: (1) full text for any AVANTE articles, or abstracts for any article published subsequent to 6/1 (2000). Because of several anomalies in site content, the volume and issue numbers given here are approximations.

For subscribers, what is available online are: (1) both full text and abstracts (abstracts are presented in both languages) published from 6/1 to the current issue, and (2) by consulting the Article and Abstract Index, all titles and abstracts (abstracts here are in English only) for items published prior to 6/1 (2000). What subscribers do *not* have available are the full text articles that appeared prior to 6/1.

All of which sounds complex enough, but, unhappily, there are more limitations to consider. If you are not a Francophone you will not be able to read any of the articles appearing in French. While I think that is an unfortunate limitation, it is one I can understand for reasons of economy -- and can respect as an expression of Canada's cultural and linguistic diversity.

What I do not understand, however, is the further fact that if you are not a Francophone you will be unable to examine a complete listing of all the titles for articles appearing in AVANTE. The reason is that throughout the entire publication sequence the articles published in French have only French titles -- *as do all of their abstracts*. This is true even of those abstracts appearing in English. Moreover, it will be true for both subscribers and non-subscribers. In short, it is impossible for a monolingual English speaker to survey (at least by title) a substantial portion of the journal's contents. To top it all off, directions for use of the site often are neither clear nor entirely accurate.

My guess is that this untidy situation may be a reflection of status as an orphan among CAPHERD's publications -- particularly so now that the print edition has been subject to question for reasons of fiscal exigency. Where does all of that leave us? In the end, you will have to decide for yourself, but I do feel obliged to offer an opinion.

I think this is a small (and experimental) journal that is worthy of your support; that clearly needs additional support; and that would return significant professional dividends to any physical educator who antes up the price of admission. If only ten individuals and five institutional libraries entered new subscriptions, it might make a difference for the journal's future. At the least, subscribing would give you the right to demand some vigorous housekeeping (by the Editor and Webmaster) to improve the functional qualities of the site.

This article was printed from Unlock Research - <http://www.unlockresearch.com>.  
© 2003- 2004 , Lawrence F. Locke. All rights reserved.