Allen W. Burton, PhD, a professor in the School of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota (U Of M), died at approximately noon on Thursday, September 6, 2001, at the age of 47, from an angry “atypical” form of cancer that left the medical professionals baffled.

Dr. Allen W. Burton was destined to be a leader in his profession as colleagues thought he was only at the beginning of his scholarly career. Known as a prolific researcher in the areas of assessment, motor development, motor learning, and developmental/adapted physical education (DAPE), he was the author of numerous articles and presentations as well as an editor for many research journals. He, along with Daryl E. Miller, authored the textbook Movement Skills Assessment that I use in my DAPE assessment class at Bemidji State University.

Allen was a husband, father, friend, and colleague to many. A man who loved the sport of basketball, he could be found at the U of M field house during his lunch hour tearing up the court. He would try to get me to play basketball, but I just couldn’t see myself on the court; then again I couldn’t get him on the judo mat either. He was someone whose opinions and knowledge I respected, someone I could count on to answer questions in many subject areas. He had confidence in my ability to teach DAPE at the university level and would often encourage me when I would vent my feelings of frustration. He would tell me, “some college or university will finally realize that you are a capable instructor who just happens to be blind.” Knowing that I was trying to find a full-time teaching position at a

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college or university, Allen was always ready, willing, and able to write me a letter of recommendation or talk to someone if he or I thought it would help me to gain a position.

Allen was instrumental in getting me one of my first teaching positions at the U of M when no other university wanted to hire a blind development/adapted physical education instructor. Whenever the U of M needed someone to teach a DAPE course, he would say, “Dr. Jim Mastro will teach it.” As a result, we were office mates for a little over 10 years, during which I don’t remember him saying a bad word about anyone. He offered to help me in setting up my classes when the Minnesota Board of Teaching decided to change all the teaching licenses to competency-based education.

When I told him that Bemidji State University had hired me and that he would have to find someone else to teach the DAPE classes at the UM he was almost as pleased as I was. He was there for me to bounce ideas off of for program changes at Bemidji State. He would tell me with honesty what sounded good and what he thought wouldn’t work.

Dr. Burton was very well liked by his students and colleagues, giving them the time they needed even though his schedule was often extremely busy. I always had the impression he was smiling and seemed to be in a cheerful mood. He was full of an enthusiasm that rubbed off on everyone around him.

Allen Burton was a friend I could count on for advice and knowledge, whose influence has been critical in helping me achieve many of my professional goals. I will miss him dearly.

James Mastro

As a friend and colleague of Allen Burton, I want to share some thoughts about this man whom I have valued and respected. I have had the opportunity to know Allen since his move to Minnesota to become a professor at the University of Minnesota in the mid eighties. I had contact with Allen in a variety of ways over the years. I am a former teacher and coordinator of Developmental Adapted Physical Education, Special Education Consultant, and currently Director of Special Education. As a practitioner, member, and former chair of Minnesota’s State DAPE Leadership Committee, I was immediately in contact with Allen. Over the years that followed, I came to know Allen through his work and our work together. Allen arrived on the scene in 1983 eager to contribute to the exciting and ongoing developments in the field of physical education. A well organized and coordinated group of leaders were doing wonderful things for students with disabilities, and Allen immediately joined in. Allen recognized the importance of relationships and networking. His “where can I help attitude” was welcomed by everyone. He began to establish a connection with educators across the state. He filled a void that had existed between our state leadership structure and the University of Minnesota. Allen contributed in many ways to the quality of services to children with disabilities through his work with their teachers.

As I came to know Allen better, I was impressed with his sincere desire to understand the training needs of teachers. He spent time listening to teachers describe the challenges of meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities. He visited teachers in their schools to see the work they were doing in order to reinforce them, learn about the practical challenges they face, and to learn from them. Allen spent time designing and redesigning coursework for graduate and
in-service needs of teachers. Allen went beyond philosophy and theory to impact professional practice day to day.

During these years, I had the added opportunity to share ideas and a vision with Allen about a project that we would share. The project culminated in the publication of *Movement Skill Assessment*. This book is a testament to Allen’s commitment and vision as well as his skills as a researcher and writer. Allen liked to think out of the box, and this book provides a way for others to think more globally about assessment, past, present, future. Allen worked hard on this project because he believed it was a needed contribution to the field.

My thoughts of Allen are filled with memories of a man with an easygoing nonassuming style poised to serve and willing to do what it takes to make a difference in the lives of others.

*Daryl E. Miller*

I had the gift of working elbow to elbow in adapted physical education with Allen Burton these past years. His diagnosis of cancer came just two weeks after I arrived here at UMN, and we taught through all his treatments and the ups and downs.

As you know, Allen was a very spiritual man and, despite his disease and all the pain he endured, he continued to give to the students and to our field. This summer, as he moved quickly down the hall to his office, he said, “I want to be helpful as long as I can.” Not even the most grim news kept him from living this day in and day out.

*Carol A. Leitschuh*

Allen’s textbook, *Movement Skill Assessment* was a major contribution to the literature. The book was unique in the sense that it drew information not only from the field of adapted physical activity, but from other professions such as Occupational and Physical Therapy. His work with Walter Davis regarding the ecological task analysis helped professionals more closely examine the various constraints on the movement behaviors of learners and design assessment practices from a top down approach. For many professionals, this was a new direction in the assessment and programming of movement. Most importantly, Allen’s textbook and his writings challenged us to more closely examine and question many assessment practices that over the years we had taken for granted. For example, we administered such standardized assessment instruments as the BOT.

Allen was one of those rare individuals who was able to provide quality teaching, scholarship, and service. However, as good a professional as he was, he was a better person. I remember our last conversation when we were discussing his keynote presentations on assessment at the 30th National Conference on Physical Activity for the Exceptional Individual. He was excited to be attending the conference and coming back to Southern California where he had grown up. I was struck by the fact that he remained so positive throughout our conversation even though he was battling cancer. I left the conversation questioning if I could handle the same situation with such dignity. The adapted physical activity community is going to miss a great professional and a good friend.

*Barry Lavay*