

## Teaching Physical Education

### Questions for reflection:

1. Think back to your experiences in physical education classes. Recall the things that your teachers may have done that were probably unpleasant or even harmful to the poorly skilled or unfit children in your classes. Why do you think the teachers weren't sensitive to these children?
2. Reflect on your own teaching. Do you tend to favor any certain group of children – high- or low-skilled? Attractive or unattractive children? Boys or girls? What do you do, as you teach, to be sensitive to your tendency to favor a certain group?
3. As physical education teachers we tend to have many friends who are also highly skilled. Think about your friends and acquaintances who have been turned off to physical activity. Do you know why this is so? Why do they find it so hard to exercise regularly? Can any of these feelings be traced back to their experiences in physical education classes?
4. When testing in physical education, it is difficult to make the testing a very private affair. Describe some of the ways that teachers might test in physical education to help ensure the relative privacy of the test. Do you think children can test one another? Why or why not?
5. Children and adults do not have the same feelings or ability to understand. Recall several examples of these differences and explain the implications for teaching physical education.

### BUILDING POSITIVE FEELINGS

- feelings about one's self
- feelings about others
- feelings of joy
- feelings of satisfaction
- feelings of pleasure
- feelings of self-accomplishment

The list could continue. All of these feelings fall into the category of the affective domain: how children feel about themselves and about physical activity. There's a lot we don't know or understand about feelings. We do know, however, that participation in physical activity has the potential to create powerful and lasting impressions – both painful and joyous.

Question: What would you say is the main goal of physical educators?

## TEACHER ACTION

Teachers have developed a number of ways to help every child, not just the highly skilled, to enjoy physical activity.

### 1. Mistakes-OK-Here Zone

One of the ways to help children feel good about themselves is to assist them to realize that learning inevitably involves mistakes. Teachers can do this by declaring the playground or gym a “mistakes-OK-here zone“. It is expected that everyone, including the teacher, will make mistakes from time to time.

### 2. Provide alternatives

When children are asked to play in a game that singles them out, any feelings of inadequacy and incompetence are reinforced. Caring teachers create environments in which children are not embarrassed in front of the class.

### 3. Audiotaping

Another technique that a teacher can use is to audiotape a class. When you listen to the tape after the lesson, try to hear what you communicate to the children. For example:

- Do you sound supportive? Encouraging? Understanding?
- Do you sound too demanding or critical?
- Do you communicate a tone of warmth and caring to the children?

**Question:** Talk to your partner. Which of the methods above do you consider effective? Are there any activities that you think should be avoided in the class not to embarrass any of the children?

(Adapted from: Graham G. *Teaching Children Physical Education*. Human Kinetics.)

## EXCUSES

The thought of exercise doesn't make everyone jump with joy. A PE teacher decided to keep track of all excuses for one class as she was encouraging students to climb a rope. The most interesting response was: “I can't climb the rope because my mom uses too much fabric softener when she washes my pants!“

What would you say to children with the following excuses?

"It's not cool."

"None of my friends or family do it."

"It's a boy thing."

"It's sore/uncomfortable/sweaty."

"I don't want muscles."

"I'm overweight/skinny/disabled."

"I don't like joining in/teams."

"I'd rather play with the computer/watch TV/talk to my mates."