

## Chapter 2

### Creating a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

#### *Probing questions*

1. What might we mean by the phrase “Physical Education is for everyBODY”?
2. Do you think girls get a “fair go” in physical education?
3. Do you think a Westernized bias exists in physical education that supports activities that may be difficult for some children to fully participate in due to religious convictions?
4. What are some of the potential safety barriers that teachers face during physical education?



**For most poodles, the emotional scars never heal.**

The joys of engaging in physical activity should not be limited to those with exceptional hand-eye coordination and excellent physical fitness. Nor should those children who belong to the dominant ethnic group or just boys only experience enjoyment. Discrimination in all forms of education is prohibited under federal law yet it is still present in many forms within physical education. Part of the predicament can be attributed to the attitudes of the students themselves, many of who insist on acting out physical, gender, racial and religious stereotypes. However, even the most well intentioned teachers of physical education can be reinforcing this type of discrimination by their use of certain teaching behaviors and delivery of the curriculum.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine issues relating to the presentation of a safe and inclusive physical education. While in customary educational terminology, “inclusion” refers specifically to children with special needs, in this chapter we expand the concept to include children who face barriers due to gender, body composition, language differences, cultural experiences, and cognitive, physical or psychological disabilities. As a result, we aim to provide you with some strategies so that you can

provide a physical education for EVERY - BODY – fat ones, colored ones, brittle ones, and ones about whom we know little due to their culture.

### **The notion of inclusion**

Inclusion is not merely a placement or setting. **Inclusion** is a state of being that enables all students to successfully participate, develop skills, and have a sense of belonging in a class. An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school community. This definition should also be the model for inclusive physical education.

To be included in physical education means being able to engage in the activities without being isolated from the group setting. The term isolation here is critical. Many children feel they do not belong in physical education due to their experiences in the subject. Some are ridiculed because of their lack of skill; others are excluded because of their perceived physical limitations. The precursor to this isolation is not always deliberate intent by teachers and students, but unfortunately in some cases it is.

### **Scenarios of isolation**

The following scenarios describe five students who could easily be in one of your future classes. Consider how each of these children might perceive the importance of physical activity and physical education into their life projects. Determine also, those critical features that might lead to feelings of segregation or isolation.

#### *Naweeda and Hadiq*

Naweeda's family is from Bangladesh, and lives in a neighborhood in which there are a number of other Muslim families. Naweeda's school requires that students change clothes for their physical education lessons into shorts and a t-shirt. She mostly wears a shalwar under her shorts, but on occasions, not wanting to receive more giggling from her classmates, chooses to wear only the shorts. A family friend who lives near the school has informed Naweeda's parents that she has seen her in public wearing shorts. This causes further tension within Naweeda's household since her brother Hadiq has been skipping swimming lessons. It is Ramadan, and during this time he has struggled to swim by keeping his head totally out of the water. Getting water in one's mouth during daytime hours is against the fast.

#### *Henry*

Henry is a large and significantly overweight boy who has particular difficulty in any activity that requires speed or agility. In addition, Henry is quite low skilled, something compounded by his lack of mobility, but exacerbated by a significant lack of confidence. No one ever wants Henry on their team, and he always the one left without a partner when students are asked to pair up. During the most recent series of lessons on softball, some boys in Henry's class were overheard by their teacher making quite audible and deliberate references to Henry as "the slug."

*Foyzur*

Foyzur and his family have fled his native Ivory Coast due to the continued political unrest. While he is quite good at soccer, Foyzur has no experience whatsoever with this new form of football his class is learning. Further, being able to speak only French, and having no Francophone classmates, Foyzur is struggling to learn many of the skills of the sport.

*Mandy*

Mandy is a chronic asthmatic who must carry her inhaler with her at all times. She enjoys some activities, but struggles with those in which there is significant exertion. The current series of lessons sees her class practicing relay races, and her teacher has designed a series of stations that all involve vigorous running.

*Alex*

Alex has been in her wheelchair since a swimming pool accident in early childhood left her paralyzed below the waist. Alex enjoys being active, and plays often with her brother and sister at home. During physical education at school however, Alex is mostly asked if she would like to be the scorekeeper or umpire. Sometimes she is given a chance to bat during individual practice sessions, but she is never included on a team during a game.

**The 4 S's**

It is clear that there are significant obstructions in place that prevent the students described in the scenarios above from achieving fully in physical education. However, we ask whether what we might call “problems” (e.g., religious restrictions, lack of mobility) were actually those of the children, but of others within the physical education setting? Might it well be that we have to examine our own notions of a positive physical education experience and make organized efforts to understand students’ needs and respond to them accordingly.

Reeves and Stein (1999) provide us with a positive way of conceptualizing a physical education setting in which students should feel comfortable and confident in their participation. These 4 S's are “safe,” “success,” “satisfying,” and “skill appropriate.”

By *safe*, the authors refer to the conduct of activity in which the student is protected from danger. A significant portion of this chapter deals with all issues of physical safety. We would also like to add the notion of psychological or emotional safety as part of this first S. Students should feel they will be free from embarrassment or ridicule in their pursuit of physical activity.

By *success*, we mean that students are able to attain a level of proficiency at a level that is appropriate for them. For some, this might mean being able to dribble concurrently with two basketballs; for others, it might mean being able to control a ball in a stationary position with repeated bouncing and catching.

By *satisfying*, we mean that children find their participation in physical activity challenging and motivating. They need to have feelings of a sense of accomplishment. Good teachers adapt the curriculum, task, and/or environment so that *all* students can experience this satisfaction.

By *skill appropriate*, we mean that the instructional context is designed after a variety of individual characteristics such as developmental status, fitness and skill levels, body size, and age have been considered.

### **Applying the 4 S's to children**

Reeves and Stein (1999) write of Dustin, Sarah, Nelda, and Lance, who all are 8-year-old children in one inclusive classroom.

Dustin, a child with mental retardation, has difficulty skipping with peers during a game of tag. Sarah spends more time chasing the 8-inch playground ball than bouncing it. Nelda, a child with cerebral palsy, does a log roll on a diagonal. Lance has the rhythm with his feet, but has difficulty bringing the short jump rope over his head”

Reeves and Stein present two sets of possible responses that you could make as a teacher.

*Response 1.* You shout to Dustin, “You need to skip like everyone else!” You inform Sarah, “Watch the ball!” You tell Nelda, “Log roll in a straight path!” You inform Lance, to “try harder!”

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*Response 2.*

Since Dustin gallops very well, you go over to Dustin and quietly challenge him, “Show me how you gallop.” Now Dustin successfully gallops while his peers skip. You quietly hand Sarah a 14-inch playground ball to bounce with both hands. Now Sarah beams with delight as she bounces the ball to the rhythm of music. You encourage Nelda to log roll with her belly button on the mountain climbing rope that is laid in a vertical line down the center of the mat. Now Nelda log rolls right down the center of the mat. Since Lance has difficulty turning the rope, you instruct him to jump rope with the long jump rope.

The implications for presenting these children with a positive experience in physical education should be quite clear as one compares these two response options. The first half of Chapter 2 will examine strategies we can adopt so that students of the like of those in our initial scenarios can successfully participate and be accepted in a supportive and caring (emotionally safe) physical education. The second half will provide details of how to achieve this in a safe physical environment.

## Including ethnically diverse populations – understanding the importance of religion and cultural values

American schools include a complex mixture of cultures, races, languages, and religions. More than 15% of school-age students speak a language other than English in their home environment, and over 3 million children are classified as limited English proficient. Indeed, over 40% of all public school students are of non-white ancestry. While education policy has moved from assimilation to integration to multicultural education to anti-racism, we still need to be vigilant to prevent racism in schools either at a personal level or in an educational context (e.g. ethnocentric curriculum, policy and practices).

A useful beginning point is for us to acknowledge what we do and don't know (or believe) about the beliefs and values of the minority children we teach and those children's perceptions of our practices. Clearly, making assumptions or stereotyping individuals within a specific culture is unethical and leads to prejudice and bias (Banks, 1994). We encourage you to interact with your school's principal, the school board, and community social or religious organizations in order to access information concerning ethnic groups within the community and your school. As Torrey and Ashy (1997) note, examining the five aspects of a group's culture (i.e. dress and environmental decor, diet, communication, family structure, roles, and relationships, as well as values, beliefs, and ethics), coupled with an introspection and self appraisal of one's own culture, personal experiences, and personal history will assist you in developing positive attitudes toward cultural diversity.

It is not enough, however, for us to simply examine our own limitations. To be truly inclusive, we must make sincere and specific efforts to desist racism by students and use instructional strategies that serve to facilitate positive interactions and build acceptance and trust between students. Torrey and Ashy (1997) provide a number of useful approaches. These include:

- Using open communication styles and active listening
- Speaking about differences rather than deficiencies
- Respecting individuality rather than sameness
- Encouraging communication and socialization among peers in both native and dominant languages
- Modeling positive attitudes

We also need to evaluate how we see any accommodations we might make with regard to religious or cultural beliefs. In some cases, teachers may believe that giving way to religious beliefs, although anti-racist, is a form of positive discrimination that could be seen as grossly unfair to and by other pupils.

## Including the Overweight and Low Fit Child

A large percentage (~30%) of American children score poorly in two key aspects of health-related fitness. These are body composition and cardiovascular endurance. Because of these conditions, these children often have low energy levels, poor flexibility, minimal strength and limited endurance. This discourages them from being active. Consequently, the more sedentary they become, the worse their fitness becomes, and so the pattern spirals.

These factors can significantly affect overweight children's social interactions with their active peers. Failure at sport further alienates students from activity, either due to feelings of inadequacy, or worse, negative comments and from those who are more skilled. The stories of Ben in the children's novel "Fat, four-eyed and useless" (Hill, 1997), tell us of his avoidance of Athol and the other rugby players, as well as his frustrations of having nothing to do during school lunchtimes except for sport. Clearly, Ben does not find his physical activity settings as inviting and inclusive.

### **Instructional strategies for overweight children.**

There are a number of considerations when accommodating overweight children in the activity setting. First, you should avoid activities where the student is required to *lift* or *pull* their body, but give them lots of opportunities to hang, climb and crawl with some support. Second, you should allow students to work at their own rate during in aerobic work. Do not require that they keep to the designated speed of the music. Finally, for children who are overfat but not overweight, include some resistance training where they start at low levels. We don't want these students to lose weight since they are weaker and fatigue quicker already, but we do want them to gain strength.

Modification of intensity is the key for all situations regarding overweight children. Shortening distances and using intermittent bouts of activity rather than continuous activity is the solution if we are to provide these children with opportunities to be successful. Recall, there is a pernicious cycle of inactivity and lack of skill development that combine to alienate these children from achieving many of the health benefits of participation in physical activity. We must be particularly aware of the social climate in which these children engage in physical education to strongly discourage any attempts by students in our classes to further undermine their confidence.

## Including Girls

Title IX, a federal law prohibiting gender discrimination in education, was enacted in 1972 in an effort to provide more equitable opportunities for boys and girls in academics, athletics, and physical education. However, as Hutchinson (1995, p. 43) comments, "unfortunately, the outcomes of Title IX are far fewer than anticipated in sport and physical education. Gender inequities continue to thrive in many physical education programs throughout the nation."

Humberstone (1990) stresses that physical education curricula and experiences must be implemented in ways that suggest equitable messages about sport and physical activity for girls and boys. She notes that gender stereotyping (intentional or not) in physical education continues to perpetuate the stereotypical polarities of masculinity and femininity in sport.

### **Instructional Strategies for Gender Fairness**

Teaching behaviors, class management, and instructional strategies are essential elements for gender-fair pedagogy. Hutchinson (1995) presents a number of examples of gender-fair pedagogy that can be incorporated into physical education. These include content integration and prejudice reduction.

Content integration with respect to gender fairness occurs when teachers purposefully recognize the contributions of women in physical education and sport. These include mentioning Olympian and world champions during various units, such as Mia Hamm during classes where students are practicing soccer skills or Dot Richardson during softball activities.

Prejudice reduction occurs when you make “efforts to help students develop positive attitudes about different groups” (Banks, 1994, p. 5). To do so will require you to include activities that confront students’ beliefs and attitudes, and include ample discussion and time for processing. As Hutchinson (1995) notes, this is where your commitment, consistency, and persistence are essential in facilitating this process for students.

As with students’ inter-racial relationships, establishing rules for class conduct will help reduce chauvinism by providing students with structure for interacting. Establishing rules ahead of time will help eliminate “put-downs” and other negative relations.

Table 2-1 provides some general guidelines for your own teaching behaviors that should promote equal participation by both girls and boys during physical education.

### **Table 2-1. Teaching Strategies for Promoting Gender Equity**

- Provide opportunities for both male and female students to assume leadership roles;
- Encourage and respect the interests and abilities of both genders;
- Ensure that responsibilities are shared equally by male and female students; expecting all students to be equally active participants;
- Create a class atmosphere that helps students develop consideration for, understanding of, and respect for each other.
- Use the same tone of voice and language when interacting with students.
- Provide young girls with more activities that stress large muscle activities, and ensure young boys are able to practice those activities that focus on refining small muscles.
- Provide activities that require a cooperative focus in small mixed gender groups

- Introduce alternatives to the sports that suit only the very strong and muscular body types and carry high risk of injury.

## Including Students with Disabilities

Federal laws (PL 94-142, PL 101-476, PL 105-17) mandates that physical education be provided to students with disabilities and defines physical education as the development of: (i) physical and motor skills, (ii) fundamental motor skills and patterns (throwing, catching, walking, running, etc), and (iii) skills in aquatics, dance, and individual and group games and sports (including intramural and lifetime sports).

Consistent with these laws is the notion of **instruction in a least restrictive environment (LRE)**. This refers to adapting or modifying the physical education curriculum and/or instruction to address the individualized abilities of each child. These adaptations are made to ensure that each student will experience success in a safe environment. Placement is outlined in the IEP and may include one or more of the following options:

1. The general physical education setting;
2. The general physical education setting with a teaching assistant or peers;
3. A separate class setting with peers;
4. A separate class setting with assistants; and
5. A one-to-one setting between students and instructor.

The inclusion of children with disabilities has been found to have significant benefits for both those children as well as those without disabilities (see Box 2-1).

### Box 2-1. Benefits for Children with and without Disabilities

#### Benefits for Children with Disabilities

- More stimulating environments
- Role models who facilitate communication, social, and adaptive behaviors
- Improved competence in IEP objectives
- Opportunities to make new friends and share new experiences
- Greater acceptance by peers
- Membership in a class and in the school

#### Benefits for Children without Disabilities

- More accepting of individual differences
- More comfortable with students w/ disabilities
- Become more helpful in general
- Acquire leadership skills
- Improved self-esteem

The disabilities that can affect children's participation in physical education are not just those associated with movement limitations. There is a broad spectrum of

disabilities including those related to cognitive development, physical limitations, and psychological disorders (see Table 2-2)

**Table 2-2. Potential Childhood Disabilities or Special Needs**

**Autistic Spectrum Disorders**

- Asperger's Syndrome
- Pervasive Development Disorder
- Sensory Integration Dysfunction

**Blind & Visually Impaired**

- Braille
- Guide Dogs

**Brain Injuries**

- Acquired Brain Injury
- Concussion
- Traumatic Brain Injury

**Cognitive Disabilities**

- Down Syndrome
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Fragile X Syndrome
- Mental Retardation

**Communication Disorders**

- Aphasia
- Semantic-Pragmatic Disorder
- Spasmodic Dysphonia
- Stuttering

**Deaf & Hearing Impaired**

- Hearing Dogs
- Sign Language

**Diseases & Conditions**

- Asthma
- Cleft Lip & Palate
- Diabetes

**Learning Disabilities**

- Attention Deficit Disorder

- Central Auditory Processing Disorder
- Dyscalculia - Dyslexia - Dysgraphia
- Dyspraxia - Apraxia
- Hyperlexia

**Mental Health**

- Anxiety
- Attachment Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
  
- Personality Disorder
- Schizophrenia

**Musculoskeletal Disorders**

- Amputees
- Arthritis
- Craniosynostosis
- Dwarfism
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Scoliosis
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Spinal Muscular Atrophy

**Neurological Disorders**

- Cerebral Palsy
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Epilepsy
- Hydrocephalus
- Myopathies
- Rett Syndrome
- Spina Bifida
- Tourette Syndrome
- Tuberous Sclerosis

While it is impossible for us to be completely knowledgeable about each of these disabilities, there is help at hand. The Internet Resources for Special Children web site (<http://www.irsc.org>) is dedicated to communicating information relating to the needs of children with disabilities on a global basis. The web site includes a wealth of information on specific disabilities, laws, adapted equipment and technologies, recreation and sports, and schooling.

Nonetheless, there are some general accommodations that you can make to assist children in achieving a successful and fulfilling experience in the movement setting. As a general rule, appropriate adjustments include modifying equipment, reducing decision-making complexity, eliminating time restrictions, and providing alternate scoring options. Table 2-3 provides some of these accommodations particularly as they relate to games playing.

**Table 2-3. Possible Game Modifications to Integrate Students With Special Needs**

*Modify activities to equalize competition.*

- allow a student to kick or hit a stationary ball where it might otherwise be pitched
- in volleyball allow them to catch the ball and throw it and/or allow the ball to bounce
- allow certain length of time to get to base or the goal that is commensurate with the student student's abilities
- where indoor and outdoor venues are used concurrently, attempt to schedule the games in the gymnasium or on another smooth surface so it is easier for them to get around (i.e. avoid a grassy field)
- involved the disabled student in the decision making concerning rule modifications

*Decrease distances*

- move bases closer together
- allow students to be closer to the target/goal/net
- in volleyball or badminton allow them to serve from midcourt

*Provide more chances to score*

- three foul shots instead of two; four strikes instead of three; ten arrows instead of six etc

*Analyze positions according to the abilities of handicapped students*

- allow them to be goalie, pitcher, or other position, which entails limited mobility
- a student with a heart problem may be goalie in soccer, or a pitcher in softball
- a one-leg amputee may be a pitcher or first baseman

*Provide adapted equipment that makes performance easier such as:*

- larger bat,
- larger, lighter and/or softer ball
- larger, flat bases, goals, baskets etc.
- larger racquet (face & shaft)

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## **Physical Safety for All Students**

Physical Education places students in a variety of high-risk settings where injuries may occur. Indeed, 70% of boys' and 65% of girls' accidents in schools occur in Physical Education and sport related programs. It is important then, that children's school experiences in physical activity are conducted in a safe and supportive environment. Schools and teachers that create safe and supportive environments will not only protect students from injury, but will encourage their lifelong participation in regular activity.

Physical education safety, however, is the responsibility of the *entire* community. Young people come to school with attitudes about safety that they have learned at home and in the community. Every safety conscious action taken by parents and community members sends a message to young people and makes it easier to implement physical education safety guidelines at school. Nonetheless, we have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment. Moreover, we are liable if we do not.

## **Liability**

**Liability** is the responsibility or obligation to do a particular thing that may be enforced by court action. We may be liable for (i) ignorance of the law, (ii) ignoring the law, (iii) failing to warn, or (iv) failing to act.

A special area of liability that you need to attend to relating to physical education is product liability. Product liability cases are those where equipment is involved in an injury. As a result, it is important that we (i) purchase quality equipment, (ii) check and test it before children use it the first time, (iii) keep the purchase records, (iv) keep the equipment in good condition, and (v) follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Tort and negligence

A **tort** is a legal wrong resulting in direct or indirect injury to another. We have a legal duty to teach children without injuring them or harming them and to have our students behave so that they don't harm others.

The most common form of tort is that of **negligence**. Negligence is essentially the failure to exercise reasonable care. As a teacher, you are acting “in loco parentis” and consequently you have a legal duty. In its most legal definition, negligence is “the omission to do something which a reasonable person, guided by those ordinary considerations which ordinarily regulate human affairs, would do, or the doing of something which a reasonable person would not do.”

### Proving negligence

Four factors of negligence must be proven for a case to exist. First, since we must be conform to a standard of behavior that avoids subjecting a person to reasonable risk or injury, if there was a *failure to foresee a potential danger*, then there is a case for negligence. Second, *a breach of duty must be shown*. Third, *that breach of legal duty must be the proximate cause of injury* to the victim, and fourth, *that injury did occur*. In essence, if there is no injury, then despite the failure of the teacher to observe the first three components, there is little case for a legal claim of negligence. Nonetheless, school administrators are within their right to take action against teachers who show a breach of duty.

### Areas of negligence

There are three general areas of negligence that apply to physical education. These are (i) negligence concerning instruction (particularly relating to the poor selection of activities), (ii) negligence concerning equipment and facilities (particularly the use of faulty equipment and the conduct of activity in hazardous conditions), and (iii) negligence concerning supervision. Indeed, 80% of all court cases concerning sport injuries deal with some dimension of supervision.

## Safety Guiding Principles

To help you navigate the areas of safety that apply to physical education, we have grouped the broad principles that apply to most activities and sports into five categories.

- facility safety
- equipment safety
- instruction
- supervision
- clothing and footwear

### Facility Safety

It is important to regularly inspect facilities for damage or hazards, and to deal with all problems as soon as they are identified. You should also ensure that the perimeter of the working area is free of obstacles, and in the case of indoor activity areas, that it is clear of stored equipment and furniture. When a gym or activity room does have

immovable obstacles such as doors or protruding drinking fountains, you should modify the rules of play so that there is no opportunity for these to become obstructions. Likewise, when a gym or activity room is of a non-standard size, you will also need to modify the rules of play as needed for maximum safety. In all cases, however, you should never use walls and stages in gyms and activity rooms for turning points or finish lines. Instead, designate a line or pylon in advance of the wall as the finishing line or turning point.

The playing area itself also needs to be considered. These surfaces should be clean, free of all obstacles and should provide good traction. Where there are uneven surfaces or even holes in an outdoor setting, you should make every effort to avoid using these areas. In cases where this is unavoidable, you should first, clearly mark these areas, and second, make students aware of them. This may involve doing a “walk through” of the playing area with students to point out the rough areas.

### **Equipment Safety**

The first rule of equipment safety is as follows: “inspect, maintain, repair, replace.” You should regularly inspect equipment for structural faults or breakages, and you should record your results and keep these on file. The most common faults include parts becoming loose (such as handles), as well as cracks and splinters. Where a piece of equipment is found to be defective, you have two options. First, if the defect is fixable, you should note the fault in writing and then repair it. If the equipment is beyond repair, you should remove it from use.

#### *Access to and Storage of Equipment*

Children should be allowed access and use of equipment only when they are supervised and/or with teacher permission. Concomitantly, you should ensure that all equipment is safely stored after each lesson. In both these situations, children should be taught appropriate ways of carrying and moving equipment.

#### *Appropriate use of Equipment*

You should ensure that equipment you select for various activities is appropriate for the students and is used for its intended purpose. In addition, you should organize the equipment so that unsafe situations are prevented. For example, if you are using batting stations, these should be placed so that the balls from one station are not being directed to an area where other children are fielding. More specific details regarding this concern are presented later in this chapter under the heading “Safety Considerations for Specific Movement Categories.”

#### *Wearing of Safety Equipment*

During many physical activities, there is the potential for contact between children and objects (such as bats, balls or sticks), or between children and other children (e.g. basketball or other sports played in a small space such as tag games). In many of these cases, children should be provided with the appropriate safety equipment, and also be instructed about its use. For example, helmets should be worn for all high-speed ice activities, as well as in batting and fielding games. Helmets do significantly reduce the

potential for injury. Protective eyewear should be worn for wall-based racquet sports and downhill skiing.

It is also important to ensure that all personal equipment fits properly and is appropriate for the skill level of the individual student. Children should be encouraged to report all equipment problems.

### **Safety in Instruction**

Safety in instruction lies in the selection, planning and conduct of activities. You should assess all activities for potential risk, and determine what is foreseeable. Indeed, the first question that should be asked in planning a lesson is whether the activity is suitable to the students' physical age, and mental and physical condition. Prior to participation, you should check for student understanding of the safety factors and potential risk. Instructions should be clear and worded so that they do not lead to a dangerous situation. You should also ensure that ESL students clearly understand instructions.

A key element in safety lies particularly in teaching the skills for specific activities in *appropriate progression*. Upcoming activities should be based upon skills that have been previously taught. A student should never be required to perform a skill beyond his or her capabilities. If a student displays hesitation verbally or non-verbally, you should discuss the motivation for doubt with the student. If you believe that a potential hesitancy concerning the skill could put the student at risk, the student should be directed toward a more basic skill.

#### *Promote Safety by Modifying the Rules*

Modifying the rules of various activities to suit the age, strength, experience and abilities of students is a key aspect in promoting safety. While the modification of rules can help make activities safer, you should also make your students aware of the rules of specific activities or games before play begins and enforce these rules during play.

While rules are often modified to promote learning and safety, equipment too may also be modified. It is important to give specific instruction about how to use and handle equipment appropriately.

#### *Behavior Protocols that Enhance Safety*

In addition to the planning of various activities, you should also establish routines, rules of acceptable behavior and duties of students at the beginning of the year and reinforce them throughout the year. Establish daily routines for such things as appropriate dress, movement patterns to activity areas, class meeting locations, and entry to and exit from the activity area. In particular, early in the year, you should establish a "stop" signal that is used to tell students that they must stop play immediately, freeze where they are and pay attention. In addition to the development of class rules, you should also reprimand students for unsafe play or unacceptable behavior whenever it occurs.

Students should also be taught appropriate behavior for when an accident occurs. In essence, the rule should be “stand back, do not move the injured person, and get a responsible adult immediately.” In addition, you should teach students the location of the fire alarms, the fire exits and alternate routes from the gymnasium or activity area.

### Supervision

As noted earlier, most of the court cases concerning sport injuries deal with some dimension of supervision. While appropriate supervision will depend upon the risk level of the activity, the participants’ skill level, and the participants’ age and maturity, it is nevertheless essential that in the delivery of physical education, you are first *present at all times*, and second, that you *actively monitor students*.

When students are in the upper grades of high school, three levels of supervision are possible (see Table 2-4). For the purpose of situations in which you will find yourselves, however, we recommend a constant active supervision pattern. In essence, active supervision means actively engaging yourself in the supervision of students by locating yourself strategically so that the majority of students are in view. Chapter 8 lists more details and specific strategies for active supervision.

**Table 2-4. Levels of Supervision**

Type of supervision	Definition	Example
Constant visual supervision	The teacher is physically present, watching the activity in question.	High Jump - The teacher is at the high jump area and is observing the activity constantly.
On-site supervision	The teacher is present but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity.	Relay Passing - Students are practicing on the track and can be seen by the teacher who is with the high jumpers.
In the area supervision	Teacher could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium.	Distance Running - Students are running around the school grounds and may be out of sight of the teacher at times.

### Clothing and Footwear

All children should wear clothing and footwear that is appropriate for the sport, the weather, and their age and skill level. While many elementary school programs do not require their children to change their clothes, appropriate footwear is essential. We define **appropriate footwear** as having a rubber sole and being secure. That is, shoes without backs that can slip off are inappropriate, while sandals that have a rubber sole and remain secure are suitable. In all cases, children should remove all jewelry before participating in physical education activities. Equally, children should not chew gum when participating.

Children should wear sun protection for summer and winter outdoor activities. Sun protection should be appropriate for the sport and the weather and can include sunscreen, protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses. In winter, children should wear layered clothing for winter outdoor activities, and have a hat and gloves available (on body or in pocket or fanny pack).

Certain activities will require that long hair be tied up or pinned back when there is a danger that it might become entangled in equipment. A second case for tying or pinning back long hair is when it could obscure vision.

## **Responding to Accidents and Injuries**

There is the potential for injury in all physical activities. Therefore, it is important to have an emergency action plan. The key to any emergency action plan is getting professional care to the student as quickly as possible. It is thereby a good idea for all schools to have an accident response plan that describes the actions to be taken when an injury or accident occurs. Having such a plan and practicing it regularly will reduce confusion if there is an injury or accident and help ensure that the injured person gets help quickly. Table 2-5 lists the key elements in such an emergency action plan.

### **Table 2-5. Emergency Action Plan**

*Know the following information:*

1. Location and means of access to a first aid kit.
2. Location of a telephone.
3. Telephone number of ambulance and hospital.
4. Directions and best access routes to hospital.
5. Location of vehicles on the school site that could be used to transport students to hospital.

*When an injury occurs:*

1. Take control and assess the situation.
2. Remember the basic first aid rule: Do not move the injured student. If student cannot start a movement by himself/herself, do not move the body part for him/her.
3. Tell bystanders to leave the injured student alone.
4. Leave the student's equipment in place.
5. Evaluate the injury. Once you have assessed the severity of the injury, decide whether further assistance is required.
6. If an ambulance is not needed, decide how to remove the injured student from the playing surface.
7. If an ambulance is required:
  - a. Request assistance from another person (teacher/administrator/parent)
  - b. Have the second person call an ambulance and give the following information:
    - i. State that it is a medical emergency
    - ii. State what the emergency is

- iii. Give the exact location and the name of the closest cross streets
    - c. Give the telephone number from which you are calling.
    - d. After the other person has called the ambulance, he/she should report back to the person in charge, confirm the call and give the estimated time that the ambulance will arrive
    - e. Have someone go to the entrance and wait for the ambulance.
8. Once the ambulance has been called, observe the injured person carefully for any change in condition, and try to reassure the injured student until professional help arrives.
9. Do not move the injured person unnecessarily.
10. Do not give the injured person food or drink.
11. Stay calm. Keep an even tone in your voice.
12. When ambulance attendants arrive, tell them what happened, how it happened and what you have done. If possible, inform the ambulance attendants about any medical problems or past injuries that the injured person may have experienced.
13. Accompany the injured person to the hospital to help reassure him or her and to give the relevant medical history and injury circumstances to the physician.
14. If the injured person is a student, contact the parents/guardians as soon as possible after injury.
15. Complete an accident report and file it with appropriate school board official and school administrator.

From: <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/physed/safe/>

## Safety Considerations for Specific Movement Categories

Each movement category has specific risk elements for which you should plan. Tables 2-6 through 2-10 list the specific safety considerations for these activities.<sup>1</sup>

### Table 2-6. Safety Practices for Gymnastics

#### *Instruction*

- Become familiar with the proper teaching progressions and safety requirements, particularly for the acrobatic and artistic components.
- Exercise caution when using large equipment and takeoff devices, particularly when students are required to work at a height or assume inverted positions.
- Ensure that progressions are within the ability and confidence of each student and you, the teacher.
- Ensure that traffic patterns move around the equipment to avoid collisions.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “A Risk-Management Guide for Teachers”. Included with permission from PE – BC, Glenn Young, President. [www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/PEPSA/bestpractices.html](http://www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/PEPSA/bestpractices.html)

- Ensure that warm-ups are specific to the activity.
- Give the students specific instructions about how to use and handle equipment appropriately. Do this before students engage in an activity.
- Have students approach equipment by running away from a wall.
- Provide clear instruction as to terminology, expectations, and emergency responses.
- Use students as spotters only if they have the strength, ability, confidence, and competence to help balance the weight of fellow students. You, the teacher, must still provide supervision.

#### *Management*

- Rely on your professional judgment to assess whether an activity should occur or not.
- Have students wear clothes that will not inhibit movement (shorts and t-shirts, or sweats). Do not allow students to wear jewelry (rings watches, earrings, necklaces). Have students with long hair tie it back.

#### *Equipment*

- Place mats appropriately, to ensure safe participation.
- Adjust equipment so that settings are age, height, and weight appropriate.
- Ensure that equipment is securely locked when it is not in use.
- Ensure that the equipment is in good repair and regularly checked and maintained by a knowledgeable person.
- Ensure that the equipment is used for its intended purpose.
- Locate equipment to allow fall room (buffer zone)-keep it away from other equipment and walls.
- Set up equipment in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines.

### **Table 2-7. Safety Practices for Dance**

#### *Management*

- Have students dress appropriately for the activity.
- Choose props and costumes with safety in mind.

#### *Instruction*

- Ensure that cool-down routines include low-intensity general movement as well as specific static stretching.
- Ensure that warm-up routines include static stretching and strengthening of the specific muscle groups.
- Teach the concept of space awareness to avoid collisions.

#### *Equipment*

- Consider that bright lights and flashes can distract dancers.
- Ensure that extension cords and sound systems are clear of the activity area.
- Ensure that props and costumes are appropriate and safe and do not inhibit movement.
- When a stage is the activity area, create a clearly marked buffer zone that prevents students from dancing too close to the edge.

**Table 2-8. Safety Practices for Track and Field Athletics***Runs*

- Emphasize that students use caution when wearing spikes.
- Ensure that running surfaces are even and clear of debris. When uneven surfaces cannot be avoided, emphasize caution.
- Use movement patterns that avoid collisions.

*Jumps*

- Ensure that if more than one modular mat is used, they are fastened to each other.
- Ensure that modular landing mats (pits) have additional safety mats surrounding them.
- Ensure that the approach runway is even and clear of debris.
- Ensure that the landing area is of appropriate size, clear of debris, of adequate softness, and in the appropriate area.
- Ensure that the take-off board is the adequate distance from the pit.

*Throws*

- Ensure that a systematic protocol is established to begin throwing, to end throwing, and to achieve safe and organized implement retrieval. The protocol should take into consideration the direction, location, and spacing of the activity.
- Ensure that all throws are in one direction only.
- Ensure that implements used are clean, dry, in good repair, and suited to the age, size, maturity, and ability of the students.
- Have students waiting to participate maintain a safe distance behind the throwers.

**Table 2-9. Safety Practices for Target Activities**

- Ensure that students use appropriate protective equipment: e.g., finger, wrist, and arm guards.
- Ensure that students use properly fitted equipment.
- Ensure that the equipment is properly set up, loaded, strung, and utilized as intended.
- Establish a systematic protocol for starting and ending the activity, and retrieving implements.
- Explain in clear, concise terms the safety rules of the specific activity-archery range protocol, golf club swing stations, etc. Provide the explanation before students engage in the activity.
- Have students wear appropriate attire and footwear for the specific activity.
- Properly locate the activity so that it does not pose a hazard to passersby and/or spectators.
- Provide adequate spacing so that the activity-archery, golf, etc.-may be performed safely.

### Table 2-10. Safety Practices for Games

- Use appropriate personal safety equipment for the activity, such as batter's helmet and catcher's mask. Ensure too, that safety equipment is properly fitted and used.
- Ensure that buffer zones exist between playing areas, or that students are aware of the restricted space.
- Ensure that eye protection is worn as required.
- Use proper setup procedures for equipment and nets.
- Ensure that the activity surface is safe and appropriate (e.g., clear, clean, and level).
- Establish a systematic protocol for the beginning, for the ending, and for the retrieving of implements.

### Being Aware of your Students' Medical Histories

All schools will have a medical register, which is a list of children with medical problems. You should also keep a current medical information form on file for each student. Further, these forms (or at least the essential information for students who are at-risk) should be carried with you to physical activity settings. With specific concern to physical education are the conditions such as heart disorders, asthma, epilepsy, diabetes and severe allergies (e.g. bee stings). Table 2-11 provides a sample medical information form that could be used when collecting this important information.

#### Table 2-11. Medical Information Form.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please indicate if your child has been subject to any of the following and provide pertinent details: epilepsy, diabetes, orthopedic problems, heart disorders, asthma, allergies:

\_\_\_\_\_

Head or back conditions or injuries (in the past two years):

\_\_\_\_\_

Arthritis or rheumatism; chronic nosebleeds; dizziness; fainting; headaches; dislocated shoulder; hernia; swollen, hyper-mobile or painful joints; trick or lock knee:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What medication(s) should your child have on hand during sports activities?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please note that medicine is dispensed in accordance with board of education policy. Contact the school principal for more information.

3. Does your child wear a medic alert bracelet, neck chain or carry a medic alert card?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please specify what is written on it:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please describe any other relevant medical conditions that will limit your child's full participation in physical activities.

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## **Final Words**

We want physical education to be a subject that all children will enjoy, and we want their experiences to be such that there is continuing motivation to be active. To achieve these goals requires a multitude of events to take place simultaneously, a few of these being quality instruction, developmentally appropriate content, and adequate resources for all children to participate. Nonetheless, even if all these factors are in place, we can quickly hijack any continued motivation if children find themselves in setting in which they do not feel safe – either emotionally or physically. Students that are subjected to racist, sexist, and other derogatory comments or actions by their classmates will soon learn that physical education is not a place for them. We must actively work to achieve a class climate that supports ALL bodies in their pursuit of skillful movement.

.....

Over to you..... 

1. What has been your experience with exclusion and isolation in physical education? Are we blowing this problem of discrimination and alienation out of proportion?
2. Which of the areas of inclusion discussed in this chapter do you feel you have the most limited knowledge? How confident are you that you would know where to find resources that would help you become more current about a particular issue?
3. Discuss the following statement among your classmates.  
 "You are in danger of being accused of being *sexist* if you accept a cultural tradition that accepts male domination and do not operate policies of equality of opportunity, and of being *racist* if you do not accept cultural tradition and go for equal opportunities."

Portfolio Tasks 

1. Re-write the scenarios about the five children described early in this chapter so that they reflect a physical education setting in which they would feel supported and included.
2. Interview three classroom or specialist physical education teachers in a school near you in order to determine (i) what diversity challenges they face, and (ii) what strategies they incorporate to provide these children with a positive experience.
3. Write a safety scenario in which everything is *faulty*. In doing this, consider the common areas of negligence described in this chapter. Also consider those areas listed in promoting safety to help develop your story. Try not to be ridiculous, but don't hold back either. Then exchange your scenario with a partner and re-write each other's so that the situation is made safe.

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## Glossary

- Liability:** The responsibility or obligation to do a particular thing that may be enforced by court action
- Tort:** A legal wrong resulting in direct or indirect injury to another.
- Negligence:** The omission to do something that a reasonable person, guided by those ordinary considerations that ordinarily regulate human affairs, would do, or the doing of something which a reasonable person would not do.
- Inclusion:** A state of being that enables all students to successfully participate, develop skills, and have a sense of belonging in the class.
- Appropriate footwear:** Footwear that has rubber soles and will not come off during activity.

**Instruction in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** Refers to adapting or modifying the physical education curriculum and/or instruction to address the individualized abilities of each child.