Standard VI
Diversity and Inclusion

Accomplished teachers create inclusive and productive learning environments that are safe, fair, and equitable for all students. They promote healthy social interactions within their schools and communities by teaching students to embrace their uniqueness and respect the diversity of others.

Accomplished physical education teachers understand that we all have diverse characteristics. To create classrooms that are safe, fair, and equitable for everyone, teachers respect their students as individuals. Physical educators maintain the inclusive quality of their learning environments through a thoughtful process of reflection on the personal and social dynamic within the classroom. Teachers understand that the demographics of their school and local communities are dynamic, and they appreciate the diversity of students entering their classrooms. Teachers are sensitive to the unique physical, cognitive, and emotional characteristics of their students. They consider factors such as ethnic heritage, religious background, body image, sexual orientation, family configuration, socioeconomic status, ability level, and primary language when reflecting on how to improve their teaching practices and nurture their students. Accomplished teachers create welcoming, interactive classroom environments in which their students feel comfortable to learn and grow. They establish high expectations for all students, integrating instructional content and pedagogical strategies to meet the diverse learning needs within their classrooms. By thoughtfully incorporating inclusive, multicultural lessons, accomplished teachers plan and implement varied and challenging curricula that benefit all their students.

Creating Positive, Productive Classroom Environments

Through a careful consideration of their attitudes and experiences, accomplished teachers recognize the biases, or perceived sets of assumptions, that they hold. Physical educators address these biases vigilantly to improve their teaching practices and support student learning. They educate themselves by collaborating with colleagues, families, therapists, administrators, and relevant school personnel to learn how they can provide a supportive and productive learning environment for all students. For example, a teacher might collaborate with other educators to help acquire resources for families that are economically disadvantaged due to homelessness or migrant employment. Eager to ensure that all students have equal access to learning experiences, teachers seek professional development to augment the instruction of their students further. For example, in a school with an increased number of students for whom English is a new language, a physical educator may seek the assistance of a language learning specialist to create an effective learning environment. Physical education teachers collaborate with specialists and consult community resources as needed to address questions and gain useful information that will help them enrich the educational experience of all students.

To design meaningful learning experiences that challenge students individually, accomplished physical educators modify and adapt their teaching practices, classroom resources,
and activities innovatively. For example, a teacher may have a student with a sensory impairment learn new skills through a repetitive closed skill station in a quiet, darker, or smaller environment that does not over stimulate the nervous system. An educator may also position a student with attention deficit disorder toward the front of the class and use visual prompts such as picture symbols, storyboards, video demonstrations, or assistive technology to maximize student attention and support successful learning. As appropriate, accomplished teachers structure environments utilizing instructional strategies and prompts that best meet the individual needs of their students.

Accomplished physical education teachers foster safe learning environments that acknowledge the perspectives of individuals as well as those of groups. Teachers achieve a balanced dynamic by consistently promoting lesson objectives that value respect, empathy, and responsibility. They explicitly model responsive, considerate behaviors and attitudes within the classroom. When physical educators realize that students are being bullied because of individual differences such as socioeconomic status or sexual orientation, they address the behavior immediately and develop activities that increase peer empathy. Teachers are cognizant of student biases that affect the learning environment, and they take immediate steps to ensure that every student remains successfully engaged in classroom activities.

Accomplished teachers show their students how to recognize bias in themselves, their peers, and their communities. Using terminology that is current and culturally appropriate, physical educators teach their students the importance of avoiding language that denigrates people based on ethnic heritage, religious background, body image, sexual orientation, family configuration, socioeconomic status, ability level, or primary language. Physical education teachers engage students in dialogues and activities to analyze and actively dispel stereotypes. They serve as advocates for change, striving to eradicate bias through ongoing lesson objectives that focus on celebrating the similarities and differences between students.

**Integrating Inclusive and Multicultural Activities Meaningfully**

Accomplished physical education teachers hold themselves and their students accountable for promoting supportive classroom climates that foster individual success and growth. Teachers understand that students enter the classroom with diverse attitudes, prior experiences, and differing abilities. Physical educators gather information about their students from a variety of sources so they can tailor lessons that engage the entire class. They structure yearly plans that carefully address diverse needs and interests while promoting active, healthy lifestyles. For example, an accomplished teacher may use live interactive video to communicate with a class from South America and co-teach a session on the popular Brazilian game of peteca. Alternatively, a physical educator may celebrate diversity by incorporating key words and phrases from different languages within lessons or by creating a dynamic multilingual word wall that grows and changes throughout the year. Accomplished teachers incorporate inclusive and multicultural activities meaningfully within their curricula.
Accomplished physical educators vary their teaching style based on the activity as well as the differing cognitive, affective, and physical abilities and limitations inherent among their students. For example, an educator may employ a reciprocal teaching strategy to pair students based on their skill level; in this instance, novice students might benefit from imitating and adopting the proper form modeled by their more skilled partners, while advanced students might hone their understanding of skill concepts by analyzing and evaluating the performance of their less skillful peers. In this situation, both groups would improve their skill levels while learning the value of cooperation and mutual respect. Accomplished physical educators adjust their teaching practice and strategies as needed to ensure that all students experience challenge and success.

Conclusion

Accomplished teachers embrace the diverse qualities and characteristics of their students, recognizing that the high expectations they have for students must be individualized based on their needs and experiences. Physical educators design instruction in which multicultural and inclusive lessons are integrated seamlessly throughout the year to create a challenging, engaging learning environment. Their knowledge of students’ legal rights and protections, as delineated within pertinent laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), informs their practice by supporting their implementation of appropriate curricula. In every aspect of their preparation and instruction, accomplished physical education teachers demonstrate care and diligence for their students. They ensure that their students receive a quality physical education that builds their sense of self-confidence and prepares them for a lifetime of healthy social interaction.