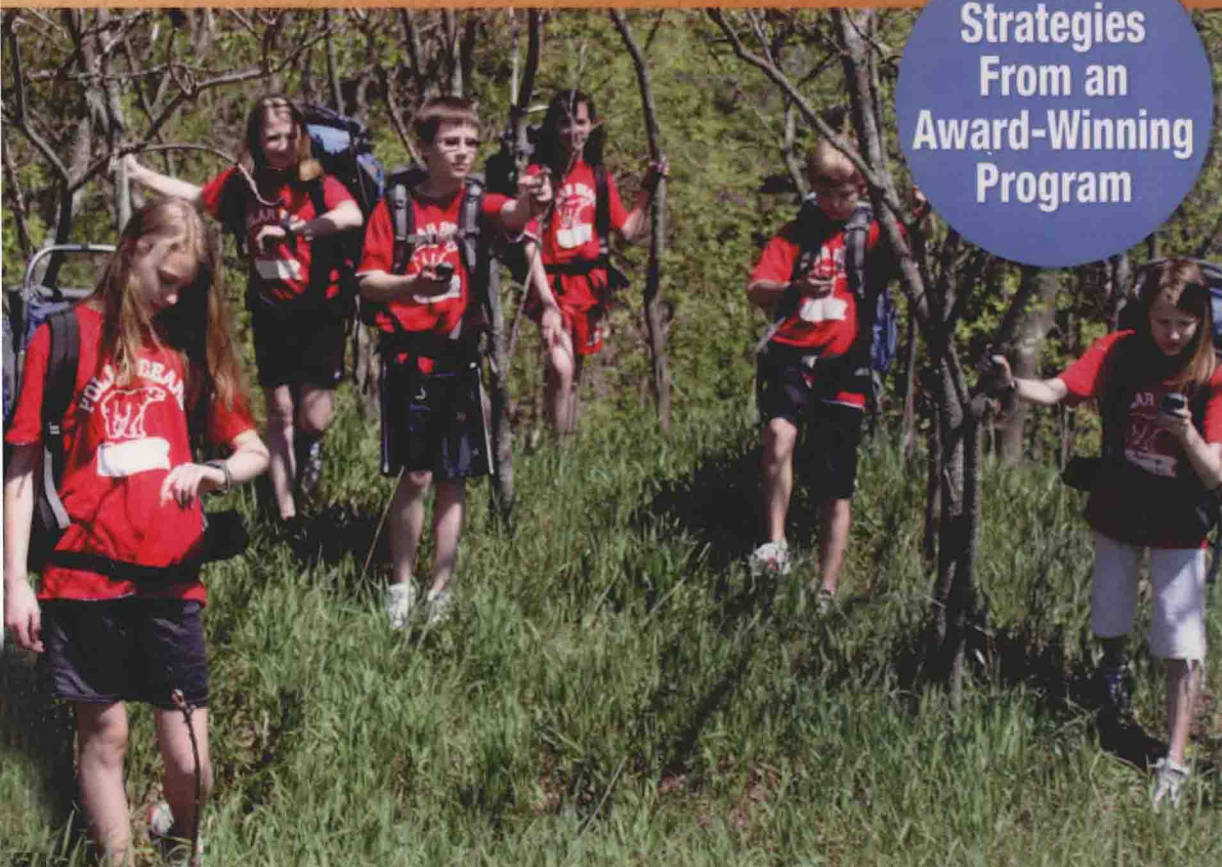


TEACHING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES in Middle School PE

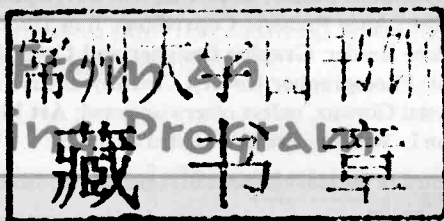
Strategies
From an
Award-Winning
Program



Crystal Gorwitz

Teaching Healthy Lifestyles in Middle School PE

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Award-Winning Program



Crystal Gorwitz

NASPE National Middle School Physical Education
Teacher of the Year, 2004

NASPE STARS School Award Winner, 2005 and 2008



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Preface

What if I told you that your teaching can make a positive difference for your students today and every day for the rest of their lives? You probably already believe this, or you would never have gone into teaching in the first place! But any of us can get worn down by the grind of our daily work, by job requirements that seem to have little to do with our students' needs, by the perceived lack of success and advancement of our students. Unfortunately, many of us eventually find ourselves discouraged, wondering whether our efforts are really helping the kids we care for, searching in vain for the passion that once inspired our work.

But I'm here to assure you that with small steps, big changes can happen in your program! Your vision for your students is the key that will help you forge a PATH to their success! I will share with you how I have built a middle school physical education program in which students learn what choices they need to make in order to live a healthy lifestyle and are empowered to make those choices. (The principles can be applied to other K-12 levels as well.) The program's quality has been recognized in the following ways:

- In 2001, our district (Hortonville School District, Hortonville, Wisconsin) was awarded a Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant in the amount of \$233,604. (You can go to www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html to read more about this program.) PEP grants are awarded to schools and organizations that seek to initiate, expand, or enhance physical education programs for K-12 students. Grant recipients must implement programs that help students make progress toward meeting state standards. The Hortonville physical education teachers (elementary, middle school, and high school) teamed up to identify weaknesses in our program and write a proposal for addressing those weaknesses. Our proposal earned us a grant from this very competitive program to fund our vision! (More on how we went about this process in chapter 1.)
- Twice (in 2005 and 2008) our school has been selected as a NASPE STARS school. "Through the STARS self-study and review process, NASPE identifies and honors physical education programs that model the essential elements for high-quality physical education and provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students. STARS schools exemplify excellence in teaching students the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed

for motor development to achieve movement competency and health-related fitness and promote lifelong physical activity” (www.aahperd.org/naspe/awards/recognitionPrograms/STARS/about.cfm).

- In 2004 I had the honor of being named NASPE National Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Although this is an individual award, I never could have achieved it without years of collaboration and cooperation with countless colleagues!

Why has Hortonville received this kind of recognition? You could chalk it up to dedicated teachers, supportive administrators, maybe a little luck. . . . But more than anything, the recognition has come from *results*! Kids in our district enjoy physical education, and they learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices—not just in the gym, or in the school, but in every aspect of their lives. Quite simply, what we are doing helps kids succeed. And what we do is something you can do!

It all starts with your vision. If you can take the first step of thinking hard about what you want to see in your program and outlining specific goals related to the desired outcomes, you have embarked on a PATH to success!

The PATH is more than the way to a high-quality physical education program. It’s a strategy for positive and successful teaching.

- **P** represents **planning**. No one can get to a destination without some kind of map; in the same way, you need to know where you want to go and figure out the best way to get there. Think of planning as mapping out your PATH to your goals.
- **A** represents **activity**. Simply *moving* is a key to a healthy lifestyle! I will show you how you can reduce standing-around time in your gym and get students active in measurable ways.
- **T** represents **technology**. We have so many devices available today that offer exciting opportunities for enhancing our curricula and improving our teaching. From GPS devices to mobile apps, I’ll show you some of the countless ways you can use technology to get kids interested in their health and bring life to your gym.
- **H** represents **harmony**. Two heads are better than one, and a whole team can accomplish so much more than one individual. I have been privileged to have many people involved in bringing a vision to life—colleagues, administrators, volunteers, parents, community members. You will see how reaching out to others can enhance your program and extend its success far beyond the gym walls!

Throughout this book, you’ll get tips and strategies related to PATH that are based on my experience in building an award-winning program. Each chapter begins with “Approach the PATH,” which describes how each of the four elements (planning, activity, technology, and harmony) applies to the

chapter's topic. And each chapter closes with questions that challenge you to apply the four elements to the chapter's topic as you consider how you will implement related changes in your program. Throughout each chapter, "Ideas That Work" sidebars highlight tried-and-true tips for applying PATH to your own teaching. Finally, chapter 1 discusses how you can use PATH as a guide in building a program that makes a difference.

The rest of the book covers a sampling of topics that are common to physical education programs. Chapter 2 shows how you can design authentic assessments that give you meaningful information about your students' health. Armed with this information, you are equipped to set goals for their achievement and measure their progress.

Getting students moving in ways that interest them is key to bringing about lasting positive changes in their health. In chapter 3, I share three sample unit plans that demonstrate how lifestyle activities—in this case, snowshoeing, backpacking, and disc golf—can be integrated into your curriculum.

To make healthy lifestyle choices, students need to know what *healthy* means. I have incorporated fitness education into my daily curriculum by creating warm-ups that emphasize various fitness components (such as flexibility and muscular strength). Chapter 4 offers a sampling of these fitness warm-ups.

Heart rate monitors and pedometers have become a big part of my program, so much so that I've devoted an entire chapter (5) to describing how I use them! (If you don't currently have heart rate monitors and pedometers, and you fear you don't have funds to purchase them, don't worry—we even discuss ways you can get funding.)

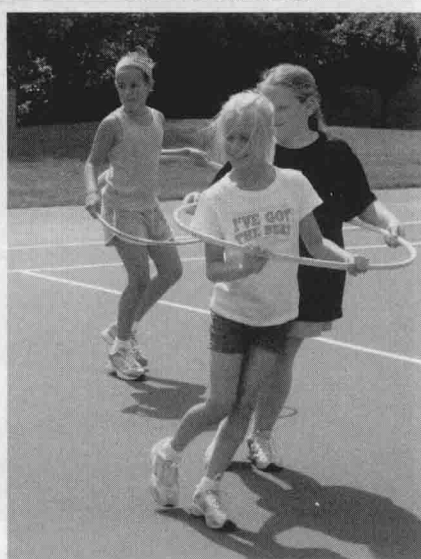
At Hortonville, we're concerned about adults' health, not just kids'. I've extended some of the principles of teaching healthy lifestyles to staff wellness programs, and I share in chapter 6 how the programs work.

Finally, in chapter 7, I describe ways I've incorporated the teaching of healthy lifestyles that go beyond the gym. After-school programs and summer programming help you ensure that the lessons you're teaching will be implemented outside the school walls.

As physical educators, it is up to us to lead the way in making healthy lifestyles an important part of our school curriculum. A healthy future for our students should be our common goal. We have proved that healthy change is possible, and you can be part of the healthy lifestyle revolution!

Acknowledgments

I have been blessed to have so many supportive people in my life! First of all, Marshal, Michael, Jennie, and my mom, Sally. Second, I have had the privilege of teaching with two of the best physical educators in the country—Marcia Schmidt (Hortonville High School) and Cheryl Richardson (formerly of Hortonville Elementary School and now with NASPE). My school district has also been very supportive of teaching quality physical education, and my principal, John Brattlund, and associate principal, Janice Zuege, have always supported my vision! I have also been an active member in my state physical education association, WHPE, and its networking and learning opportunities have helped me along the PATH to success!



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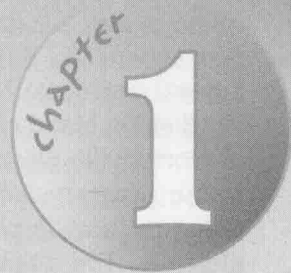
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chapter 1

Getting Started

It's all about the PATH!

What is your vision for your physical education program? Close your eyes and imagine for a few minutes what you think teaching high-quality physical education would look like. What do you see? An exciting curriculum that your students respond to? A physical education class where everyone participates and everyone can succeed? A group of students who are getting healthier and more active?

Teaching high-quality physical education starts with your vision. Your vision for your program reflects what you are passionate about, and this passion motivates you to do all the hard work necessary for making positive changes. Defining your vision is necessary for outlining the goals that you want to accomplish; and then with realistic goals in mind, you can begin to make a plan to achieve them. One of the most important goals that you should be striving for is providing instruction that will help your students to lead healthy lifestyles. A healthy future for our students is one of the most important goals all physical educators should emphasize.

I had a vision for my middle school physical education program and was fortunate to work with two other teachers who shared that vision and fought for it every step of the way. Nothing worth achieving is easy. It takes hard work to mold a program into something you are proud of—and it is worth every minute you spend working on it. In this chapter you will read my part of an amazing story about how teachers can work together to achieve anything. Grab your vision and let's get started!

My Journey

Several years ago I began working with the two other physical educators in my district, Marcia Schmidt of Hortonville High School and Cheryl Richardson of Hortonville Elementary School, to identify improvements we could make in our program. We all thought that there was so much more we could be doing to provide physical education that helped our students live healthier lifestyles. The three of us embarked on a study of our program that resulted in several findings.

We discovered that our curriculum was not aligned with the state or national standards for physical education. It was clear to us that if we wanted to present a curriculum that represented high-quality physical education, it was imperative that we incorporate attention to these standards in our teaching. The national standards (NASPE 2004) show us specific ways of measuring what constitutes a physically educated student:

Standard 1: Demonstrates competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.

Standard 2: Demonstrates understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.

Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity.

Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.

Standard 5: Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.

Standard 6: Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

So we decided that physical education standards would be our guide in writing a high-quality curriculum. We were also dissatisfied with the emphasis in our program on teaching team sports. In analyzing our curriculum, we found that we were teaching basketball and volleyball for 12 years! Now, there's certainly nothing wrong with teaching team sports, and in fact these sports should be part of a solid physical education program. But we were concerned that overemphasis on team sports tended to exclude the majority of students from the benefits that physical education has to offer, since it is mostly the more athletic students who enjoy and benefit from these units rather than the less-skilled students who might not be cut out for athletics but still can and should benefit from physical activity. Further, we believed we were missing an opportunity to expose students to activities they could and would do not only in PE class, but outside of class and well into their adult lives, such as golf, tennis, in-line skating, and backpacking.

Because our vision was to help students live healthy lifestyles, we agreed that it was important to provide information to our students about the components

of a healthy lifestyle. We thought that our program's emphasis should be on providing our students with not only the skills but also the knowledge that they needed in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. Addressing the components of fitness in our curriculum became a goal, along with assessments that could give us meaningful information about what students were learning.

Finally, we resolved to increase the use of technology and good old-fashioned activity in our program. We set a goal for students to be engaged in moderate to vigorous activity at least 50 percent of our class time. Further, we believed that the use of heart rate monitors and pedometers offered exciting possibilities for both incorporating technology and increasing activity. These tools also presented another means of authentic assessment that would tell us whether our students were truly getting healthier.

In 2001, we found out about a grant called the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant. As described in the preface, this program makes grants available to schools and organizations that seek to improve the health of K-12 students. We realized that this was a fantastic opportunity to get much-needed financial help to make the big changes we dreamed of.

The first step in writing a proposal was to agree on our vision and goal. Since we had gone through the self-evaluation process, we knew what the weaknesses were and how we wanted to fix them. That process was driven by our desire to bring high-quality physical education to our school district. Teaching high-quality physical education has many components. It includes the national physical education standards, lifetime activities, knowledge of the components required for leading a healthy lifestyle, authentic assessment, technology that can be used in authentically assessing students (such



Cheryl Richardson (left) and Marcia Schmidt (right) worked tirelessly with me to see our vision become reality!

as pedometers and heart rate monitors), and lessons that engage students in moderate to vigorous activity for at least 50 percent of class time.

In writing our proposal, we outlined the specific problems we wanted to address in our program, then suggested the solutions we wanted to implement with the help of the grant:

- Implement a curriculum that incorporated the national and state physical education standards.
- Improve assessment techniques.
- Increase community involvement and interest in our program.

We spent six weeks together writing the grant with help from Tricia Sarvella, my friend and neighbor. In the fall of 2001 we received word that we had won the PEP grant! Here is the announcement of the grant, which describes what we were seeking to do:

After a critical evaluation conducted by the physical education program in the Hortonville School District, several profound weaknesses were identified in their physical education curriculum. One particular weakness is that their current instruction is not aligned with the national and state physical education standards. Other identified areas of weakness include the lack of knowledge of fitness concepts and overall physical fitness, substandard methods of assessment, and inadequate community involvement in the physical education department. *Fitness Education: The Shape of Things to Come*, the project proposed by the Hortonville physical education department, is fundamentally different from the stereotypical “roll out the ball and play” classes of decades past that featured little meaningful instruction. *The goal of the project is to improve the overall physical fitness and development of the students in the Hortonville School District by (a) implementing a curriculum that incorporates state and national standards; (b) improving assessment techniques; and (c) increasing community interest and involvement in their physical education program.*

Winning the PEP grant has changed our program in so many important ways. It provided time for our K-12 physical education teaching staff to rewrite our entire physical education curriculum. Our curriculum now has a K-12 scope and sequence, addresses the national physical education teaching standards, teaches the five components of fitness, includes technology (pedometers and heart rate monitors), and emphasizes lifetime activities and teaching of healthy lifestyles. The inclusion of lifetime activities such as snowshoeing and disc golf not only has provided class time for our students to participate in these activities but also has resulted in something unexpected and very positive: Several students have gone home after an enjoyable day of snowshoeing

and asked their parents to purchase snowshoes for their families—and their parents did purchase the equipment!

The grant has provided funding for purchasing the needed equipment so that our students do not have to wait in line to use it. The result of having enough equipment for each of our students to use is an emphasis on being moderately to vigorously active for at least 50 percent of class time. The grant also has provided us funds for purchasing a variety of lifetime activity equipment that can be used at various grade levels. Because of the grant funding, our emphasis now is on lifetime activity and not only team sports as in the past. Our students also are using heart rate monitors and pedometers. The heart rate monitors provide the students with instant feedback on exercising in a target heart rate zone, and the pedometers inform students whether they are achieving their step goals. The results of using this technology are also the awareness of the importance of being lifetime movers and not couch potatoes! The students in our classes know the importance of taking at least 10,000 steps a day, and they know they should be exercising at least 60 minutes every day. Our teaching staff is also using the technology to authentically assess students on their fitness levels—not grading them on whether they are wearing the correct T-shirt and shorts to class!

The grant not only has influenced the physical education teaching staff in our school district but also has provided a model for other school districts in our state. The fact that Cheryl, Marcia, and I wrote the PEP grant by ourselves provided the inspiration to other programs in our state (that is, if we could do it, anyone else could). This is not a put-down to the three of us but a statement that if you have a vision and work hard, you can achieve anything.

Your PATH

You don't have to win a grant to make positive changes in your program. It's true that resources are always needed, but changes don't start with resources; they start with vision, and they continue with hard work. And vision and hard work are free! It's so important not to get discouraged by the potential obstacles. Instead, start with a vision you can believe in, and make a realistic plan for bringing about the changes you want to see. And starting small is OK!

At the beginning of this chapter I asked you to close your eyes and envision the type of physical education program you want to teach. Has your vision changed now that you have read about the PEP grant and my school? If yes, what does your vision look like now? Write down your vision for including concepts of a healthy lifestyle in your classes. And then write down one or two goals you can accomplish right now to teach healthy lifestyles in your classes. Is there a lesson that you already teach and that you can adapt so that it includes a concept of healthy lifestyles? Writing down your goals and looking at one of your current lessons can provide you with a model to use in including concepts of healthy lifestyles in other lessons that you teach.

In addition to focusing on the importance of vision, following the PATH will help you improve the health of your students. As explained in the preface, PATH stands for four strategies that have helped me to emphasize healthy lifestyles in my physical education program: planning, activity, technology, and harmony. Throughout this book, PATH serves as a way of thinking about and highlighting teaching approaches that are proven to work.

Planning

I have found that it is vital to give time and attention to planning ways to achieve my program goals. Change doesn't just happen, and good teaching doesn't just happen! You must constantly assess the learning that is taking place in your students so you can know whether what you are doing is working. When you know what your students are learning (and what they are not learning), you can adjust your curriculum or other aspects of your teaching to see if you get better results. Throughout this book, you'll discover ways that planning can help you.

Activity

For some students, their physical education class is the only time of the day they get any meaningful activity. I have found that maximizing the time that students spend moving in my gym is one way to improve their health. Not only do they accumulate steps and work their bodies, but they also become part of a culture where activity and movement are valued and practiced. This gives them the skill and confidence to carry the lessons they are learning in physical education outside the gym walls. I'll show you tips for keeping kids moving as much as possible while in your physical education class.

Technology

There is no denying the appeal of gadgets and devices to students. Mobile phones, personal computers, televisions—it's hard to keep a kid away from a screen. Normally we think of these devices as the enemy of an active life—but there's no reason why we can't turn them into an asset that promotes activity and makes pursuing a healthy lifestyle easier and more fun. The possibilities are endless: Use GPS units to make a heart-healthy hike more fun. Offer pedometers to help students set goals and monitor their progress. Create a physical education website full of information and resources for your students and their families. As you read this book, you'll see many more ways to creatively incorporate the use of technology in your classes to get kids engaged and help you assess learning.

Harmony

Harmony describes a teaching approach that emphasizes cooperation with teachers and other adults, integrated learning, and the extension of learning

beyond the school environment. The emphasis on healthy lifestyles in my school district has definitely been a team effort—not only among the physical education teachers but also among the classroom teachers, administration, parents, and community. It was really important for us to include our community when writing the PEP grant. Not only did we want our students to learn the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, but we also wanted our students to bring that information into the community. So throughout this book, when I talk about harmony, I'm talking about the ways you can extend your curriculum beyond your classroom. For example, you could work with a science teacher in offering collaborative lessons on how the cardiorespiratory system works or in identifying types of leaves on a nature hike. You could ask parents about the activities their families enjoy, and plan a unit on one or more of the activities mentioned. Or you could offer activities for your students to do after school or throughout the summer. The possibilities are endless!

Summary

You can have a vision of what high-quality physical education should look like and develop your program so that you achieve those goals. We tell our students, "If you dream it, you can achieve it!" As physical educators, we need to take those words and apply them to our vision of teaching healthy lifestyles. You don't have to win a grant to achieve the goal of including healthy lifestyle education in your physical education program. What you *do* need is a vision to inspire your students to lead a healthy lifestyle. With your vision in mind, you can start on the PATH to teaching your students the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Now let's get started!

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