

Suggested Job Interview Questions for Prospective Physical Education Teachers

Physical education is an academic subject and, as such, demands the same education rigor as other core subjects. Physical education provides students with a planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Physical education should be taught by a state-licensed or state-certified teacher who is endorsed by the state to teach physical education.

Hiring qualified teachers to provide instruction in every subject, including physical education, is a critical responsibility for school administrators. To help them fulfill that responsibility, SHAPE America has developed some guiding questions designed to identify highly qualified physical education teachers within a pool of candidates. As with other subjects, a physical education professional should have the following qualifications:

- A bachelor's degree or higher.
- Full state certification, as defined by the state.
- Demonstrated competency and endorsement to teach physical education, as defined by the state.

The suggested interview questions below will provide some basic information regarding current trends in physical education that a potential hire should be well-versed in. Prior to interviews, you might want to download and read the guidance document [The Essential Components of Physical Education](#) to review the latest definition of this critical education subject.

1. What is physical education?

Key Concepts: Physical education is an academic subject that demands the same education rigor as other core subjects. Physical education provides students with a planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence.

There are four essential components of physical education: policy and environment, curriculum, appropriate instruction and student assessment. For a detailed explanation, download [The Essential Components of Physical Education](#).

2. Please explain the difference among physical education, physical activity and exercise.

Key Concepts: Physical education provides students with a planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. During physical education, students practice the knowledge and skills they learn through physical activity, which is defined as any bodily movement that results in energy expenditure. Students also engage in exercise — any physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive — for the purpose of improving or maintaining one or more components of physical fitness. During a physical education class, students should be engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 50 percent of class time.

3. What is a physically literate individual?

Key Concepts: The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

To pursue a lifetime of healthful physical activity, a physically literate individual:

- Has learned the skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities.
- Knows the implications and the benefits of involvement in various types of physical activities.
- Participates regularly in physical activity.
- Is physically fit.
- Values physical activity and its contributions to a healthful lifestyle.

4. What kinds of outcomes show that students are physically literate?

Key Concepts: Competence in manipulative locomotor and nonlocomotor skills; involvement in life activities and various movement forms (sport, dance, gymnastics, aquatics); knowledge of how to perform, improve and apply skills; understanding of the importance of attaining and maintaining personal physical fitness for optimal health; use of safe practices during physical activity and exercise; value of health-enhancing regular physical activity; experiences in a variety of physical activity options; mindfulness of healthy lifestyle decisions; enjoyment.

5. What are the appropriate practices or best practices in physical education?

Key Concepts: Appropriate instructional practices are those that recognize students' development and ever-changing movement abilities, as well as their individual differences. Physical educators use a student-centered approach that determines where students' current skills are at, in anticipation of developing lessons that address their developmental needs. Teachers must plan and implement differentiated instruction that maximizes the potential for each student to develop in all domains in a safe, motivating environment.

A teacher candidate might talk about selection of movement concepts and motor skills; cognitive development; affective development; fitness; fitness assessment; maximum participation; time-on-task; variety of movement forms; management of competition, and spiraling skill development across grade levels.

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For information about appropriate instructional practices in physical education K-12, download SHAPE America's [Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines, K-12: A Side-by-Side Comparison](#).

6. Physical education teachers have the unique challenge of serving all students in a school. What are some ways that you plan to document the student learning that occurs in your physical education classroom?

Key Concepts: The teacher candidate should discuss the importance of creating daily, written, standards-based physical education lesson plans that identify the student learning objectives, congruent learning activities that actively engage students in practice of the skill, and an aligned method for assessing student learning/mastery of the skill. The teacher candidate should expound about how he or she plans to gather evidence of student achievement using a variety of assessment tools and tracking mechanisms so that student data can be shared with parents and school administration.

Pre-assessments can include formal pretests, teacher observations and/or data from the previous year. Formative assessments that are ongoing can include checks for understanding, exit slips, worksheets, performance checklists and quizzes. Summative assessments can include written tests, skills tests, fitness plans, activity logs, videotaped execution and end-of instruction evaluations. Discussion of the above may indicate that the teacher candidate appropriately incorporates assessment as part of the instructional routine.

7. How do you ensure the safety and well-being of all students in a physical education class?

Key Concepts: The teacher candidate should explain how he or she will plan and direct all learning activities and create an inclusive environment that promotes the safety and engagement of all students. The teacher candidate might talk about standards-based lesson plans that include student protocols; physical maturation and skill development levels (size and strength); pertinent student medical information; continuous supervision in all activity areas and in the locker room; appropriate clothing and shoes; safety aspects of physical activities is an integral part of instruction: emergency first-aid procedures; maintenance of all equipment and facilities.

8. How will you accommodate students with a variety of developmental levels and specific learning needs?

Key Concepts: Physical education develops the physically literate individual through deliberate practice of well-designed learning tasks that allow for skill acquisition in an instructional climate focused on mastery for all students. Appropriate instruction in physical education takes into account the diverse developmental levels that students in all grade levels will exhibit. A physical educator is responsible for addressing many unique needs, and providing a customized education experience that meets the needs of each student.

The expected standard for student-centered physical education instruction involves a wide variety of approaches that allow teachers to organize and deliver the content to students in the most effective manner possible. The teacher candidate should talk about how all students do not necessarily practice the same skill in the same way, and how differentiated instruction and individual feedback nurtures a variety of skill levels with varying stations, equipment and activities. It is important to extend and adapt tasks to student needs. Ongoing formative assessment will support dynamic and varied decisions all along the instruction continuum.

9. What is your understanding of the National Standards for K-12 Physical Education, developed by SHAPE America, or of our state's standards for physical education?

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- Values physical activity and its contributions to a healthful lifestyle.

National standards provide school districts and schools with guidance and direction for clarifying the common general outcomes expected in physical education programs. National and state physical education standards address: motor skill competency; varied movement forms; understanding of movement and fitness; a physically active lifestyle; health-enhancing level of physical fitness; responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings; respect for differences; and opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction.

Standards-based instruction aligns the learning activities in which students engage with the identified student objectives and outcomes for learning that are rooted in the identified state or national standard being addressed in the lesson. Aligning assessment with the intended student outcome also ensures that students have learned the intended skill and can apply it to appropriate physical activity situations.

View the [National Standards for K-12 Physical Education](#) and the accompanying [Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education](#). Download your state physical education standards at: <http://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/statestandards.cfm>

10. Why is it important to have a written physical education curriculum?

Key Concepts: The physical education curriculum is the written, clearly articulated plan for how standards and education outcomes will be attained in a school district or school. A well-designed, standards-based physical education curriculum has many parts and provides the

framework for the identified knowledge milestones aligned with the learning activities in the curriculum and protocols for how learning will be measured.

The written physical education curriculum identifies the content to be taught at all grade levels from kindergarten through grade 12. It includes the national and/or state physical education standards, learning objectives for students to meet, and units and lessons that teachers are to implement. Within the units and lessons, student learning objectives guide activities that are related directly to the identified objectives, defining instructional practices that maximize physical activity during lessons and keep students moderately to vigorously physically active for at least 50 percent of class time.

Assignments and projects given to students are included in a curriculum, along with a listing of books and materials related to learning activities. Tests, assessments and any other methods used to evaluate student learning and performance are included and related directly to the identified learning objectives of each lesson. A scope and sequence document is another resource included in the curriculum. The scope is the clearly defined set of learning objectives from grades K-12, across the continuum. The sequence is the order in which these learning objectives are taught. Together, the scope and sequence clearly articulate the spiraling skill development expected of students, building on prior learning and incorporating increasingly complex skill development and use.

The curriculum includes strategies for differentiation of instruction and modification for students of all ability levels. Every physical education class presents a multitude of student needs, and plans for differentiation of instruction are essential for ensuring effective teaching.

The physical education curriculum serves the purpose of standardizing the curriculum in a school district across schools and ensuring equitable education for all students. It also results in improved teacher quality and increased consistency in instruction.

11. What strategies would you use to engage students who are resistant to participating in physical education?

Key Concepts: Students resist participating in physical education classes for many different reasons that have nothing to do with the subject itself. Strategies for making the activities as relevant as possible for students can include:

- Introducing activities in which kids can engage outside of school;
- Teaching students how to self-correct during skill development;
- Teaching peer-coaching strategies for sharing appropriate feedback and encouragement;
- Teaching the purpose of a technique or activity so that students can understand why performance specifics are important;
- Helping students build self-efficacy by developing strong skills;
- Teaching students how skills transfer across sport or physical activity applications;

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- Allowing students to partner with friends and set their own goals for personal fitness empowers them to connect to learning;
- Grading students on what students learn and accomplish.

It is inappropriate to grade students on dressing in gym clothes, perceived attitude or perceived effort, since these are intangible and subjective factors that are not clearly measurable.

12. What are your plans for professional involvement and personal professional development?

Key Concepts: A teacher candidate might talk about participating in national SHAPE America professional-development opportunities to remain engaged in professional enrichment, or membership and participation in the state SHAPE America affiliate. Both organizations provide opportunities for direct professional development, and SHAPE America provides members with the opportunity to participate in a rich online professional-learning network for physical educators, as well as in online learning opportunities. Social media groups also offer a chance to network with other educators and learn about trends in the physical education profession.

13. How do you think physical education contributes to the total curriculum?

Key Concepts: Physical education is an academic subject and should provide the same education rigor as other core subjects. In early grades, the concepts and skills taught in physical education are exactly the same as those taught in other core subjects and include vocabulary that is applied through movement using location words (up/down), relationship language (near/far), direction (forward, backward), and effort (strong/light). Concepts taught in core subjects appear in physical education application (science: transfer of energy/math: angles in dynamic applications), and physical education language is also existent in other subject areas. Physical education allows students to understand the natural transfers of academic concepts from the classroom into dynamic applications in the movement setting. This enables students to understand that all learning that takes place in school will apply anywhere outside of school.

14. Describe what a typical physical education class period would look like in your gymnasium classroom from the time students enter until the time they line up to return to class.

Key Concepts: The candidate should offer one or several of these:

- An instant activity, which is a movement activity in which students engage immediately upon entering the gym. This can be a fitness activity, or it can extend learning from the previous lesson or provide practice of the skills currently being developed in lessons.
- Description of the student learning objectives and the skill/lesson focus for the day, and how they relate to the identified grade-level benchmark or outcome and physical education standard.
- Possible description of an aligned formative or summative assessment, as appropriate, and how that might be conducted.
- Closure activity for the day and what that might include.
- Ensuring maximum participation in class and describing their own teaching behaviors and movement around the classroom during this time, describing how they might assess

student learning or providing feedback to students.

15. Securing buy-in from your principal, classroom teachers and parents is critical for continued and expanded school-wide support for physical education. Please share your 1-minute elevator pitch on how you plan to promote physical education at your school site.

Key Concepts: The teacher should share plans for creating a culture of physical activity and wellness at the school, and should propose a concrete strategy for messaging, developing a support system and customizing the program to reflect the school's culture.

16. Describe your experiences using technology in physical education.

Key Concepts: The teacher might describe:

- Experiences using a computer to write and archive all lesson planning, assessment and student data collection;
- Use of fitness assessment and reporting programs;
- Use of hand-held devices or tablet technology for instructional documentation and organization of data;
- Use of heart rate monitors, pedometers, accelerometers and other physical activity tracking technology;
- Mobile applications for iPhone, iPad and Android devices that track assessment and student portfolios, support teacher organization, or physical fitness training; and
- School-specific grading programs.

Teachers also should be experienced using instructional technology such as smart phones, iPads, smart boards, projection devices and clickers. A teacher's access to these technologies will determine how much experience they have using these tools.

17. The current national model for physical education and physical activity in a school is a comprehensive school physical activity program. Can you explain what this is?

Key Concepts: A comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach by which school districts and schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the nationally recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. A CSPAP reflects strong coordination and synergy across all of the components: physical education as the foundation; physical activity before, during and after school; staff involvement; and family and community engagement. A CSPAP also engages the entire school community in creating a culture of physical activity and wellness at the school. The goals of a CSPAP are to:

- Provide a variety of school-based physical activities to enable all students to participate in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.
- Provide coordination among the CSPAP components to maximize understanding, application and practice of the knowledge and skills learned in physical education.

To learn about a comprehensive school physical activity program, download [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools](#).

18. As the key professional for physical education and physical activity at the school, describe your role as in creating a CSPAP at our school.

Key Concepts: Efforts to maximize physical activity opportunities in schools should be coordinated, well planned, and executed and evaluated thoughtfully, creating a culture of physical activity throughout the school environment that reaches into the community. A school CSPAP team will develop a comprehensive physical activity plan that includes all of the components and reflects the social, emotional and cultural needs of students, their families and the broader community.

The physical educator is ideally positioned to address issues of physical inactivity during the school day, as he or she understands the school environment, parents, community, correlates of physical activity and the characteristics and needs of the school culture. From that perspective, the physical education teacher is ideally situated to lead the development and implementation of the CSPAP, with strong support from other staff, volunteers and teachers. It is important that a physical educator envisions herself or himself as the logical champion to lead this effort at a school. During the interview process, identify whether the candidate sees herself or himself as the leader who will be the champion for physical activity at your school, and is willing to make that commitment.

19. Do you have any additional information you would like to share with us?

Key Concepts: This would be the ideal time for a qualified candidate to share a professional portfolio. For the physical education candidate, a professional portfolio could include:

- Teaching philosophy;
- Resume;
- Samples of the following:
 - Lesson plans;
 - Student assessments;
 - Unit of study, with lesson plans and assessments;
 - Teacher evaluations;
 - Letters home;
 - Instructional handouts;
 - Student work;
 - Special events (e.g., field day, back-to-school night); and
 - CSPAP organization or plan.
- Awards or honors.

Additional Significant Questions

- What is your goal for your physical education program? Describe some strategies you will implement to attain this goal.
- Explain how you can cross-integrate physical education with other core academic subjects.

- Describe the components of your lesson plans and how each segment helps students meet the identified student outcomes in a lesson.
- Explain how you address individualizing instruction for students with special needs in an inclusive classroom.
- How can you inspire and motivate your students to be physically active for life?
- How do you handle conflict with parents? (For example, a child receives a low grade in PE and the parents don't agree.)
- How do you manage challenging students?
- How will you collaborate with classroom teachers to promote physical activity?
- What will you do if your students are not meeting physical education benchmarks?
- How do you stay current with the research and trends in physical education and physical activity?
- Describe your classroom management style.
- Share some strategies that you use when managing discipline issues.
- Describe the importance of physical education in a child's education experience.
- How will you communicate with parents?
- Community partnerships are an integral part of a physical education program. How will you engage the community to support your physical education program?
- Define diversity and discuss the implications it has on classroom instruction.
- Classroom management is a vital component of an effective learning environment. Describe the techniques that you use to create a purposeful classroom that engages students.
- How will you assess your teaching?
- Which domain of a physical education program (cognitive, affective or psychomotor) do you think is most important and why?

Please share this resource with other school administrators and principals, as well as with the supervisor or chair of your physical education department. We hope this resource will help you identify promising faculty members for your physical education program.

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to lead healthy, physically active lives. As the nation's largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals, SHAPE America works with its 50 state affiliates and national partners to support initiatives such as the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, *Let's Move!* Active Schools and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs.

Since its founding in 1885, the organization has defined excellence in physical education, and our resources provide the leadership, professional development and advocacy that support health and physical educators at every level, from preschool to university graduate programs. For more information, visit www.shapeamerica.org.