As early as ancient civilization, the fundamental purpose of physical education (PE) has been to promote physical activity and healthy behaviors. In the present day, another essential learning component of PE is for students to demonstrate personal and social responsibility. A focus on personal and social responsibility connects to two of the SHAPE America National Standards for K–12 Physical Education, which state that students should exhibit behavior that respects self and others (Standard 4) and recognize the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction (Standard 5; SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014).
It has been suggested that incorporating discussion and reflection into PE is essential for providing youth with the skills they need to foster lifelong movement behaviors (Hellison, 2011). This concept assists in building youth investment in their own health by fostering empowerment, leadership and autonomy in PE class. This article further describes the importance of integrating personal and social responsibility with movement in PE and offers strategies to promote reflection and discussion to ensure that children are being provided with an empowering and holistic learning experience.

**Integrating Reflection and Discussion with Personal and Social Responsibility**

Physical education is a unique setting in which children can demonstrate personal and social responsibility through peer interaction and movement. In particular, the teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR) pedagogical model (Hellison, 2011) offers five levels for cultivating personal and social responsibility: a) Respect the rights and feelings of others, b) participate and put forth effort, c) be self-directed, and d) display caring by being sensitive and responsive to others’ needs. The ultimate goal of the model is to develop the skills within each level and create the potential to transfer lessons learned in PE to other settings including the classroom, recess time and home life (Hellison, 2011). For further information about the TPSR model, please visit http://www.tpsr-alliance.org.

Personal reflection and discussion are fundamental concepts that provide students with opportunities to have a voice in their learning (Hellison, 2011). Rather than viewing PE content as specific to sport and movement, reflection and discussion allow students to connect responsible behaviors with physical performance. Through select debriefing strategies, students are given the opportunity to acknowledge the responsibility being practiced and discussed in the PE context, which in turn increases the relevance of the material and the likelihood that students will make positive choices outside of PE. For example, prompting students to provide examples of the TPSR levels in the gym as well as in outside settings (e.g., community sports, recess time) enhances transfer potential. Additionally, giving students the opportunity to assess their own PE behaviors and the performance of their teacher and peers can develop useful personal and social skills, such as taking ownership of their health and fitness or committing to being a positive example for others.

**Recommendations for Promoting Reflection and Discussion**

With the understanding that teaching personal and social responsibility and promoting reflection are essential components of PE, multiple strategies can be utilized to enhance engagement in physical activity.

**Strategy 1: Large-group discussions**

In a large group, teachers can facilitate discussions that include highlighting examples of specific students demonstrating responsible behaviors during the lesson or encouraging students to share self-evaluations or peer evaluations. One way students can share their reflections simultaneously is through the thumb method, by holding their thumb up to indicate that they consistently showed the TPSR level of the day, holding their thumb to the side to indicate they performed the level at times, or holding their thumb down to indicate they did not perform the level well. Teachers can also utilize “position stands,” where they call out a behavior observed during the lesson and ask students to stand up if they demonstrated that behavior (e.g., “Stand up if you were focused while shooting the basketball”). The thumb method and position stands can integrate physical activity as well (e.g., “Stand up if you were able to show the three skill cues of shooting a basketball”). Connections can be made regarding the role of responsibility in a student’s successful activity performance. Large-group reflections are ideal for students to gain perspective on and expand upon peers’ ideas.

**Strategy 2: Partner activities**

While large-group discussions allow ideas to be shared with everyone, some students are allotted fewer opportunities to express themselves and may be intimidated to speak out. Working with partners provides ample opportunity for voice in a quick and comfortable setting. With high levels of activity time being an integral focus of PE, physical educators can simultaneously integrate reflection with movement through partner-based activities. To make efficient use of class time, warm-up activities such as stretching can be performed while the PE teacher introduces the responsibility lesson for the day (e.g., effort, respect) and then asks students to think individually and share with a partner what the skill looks like, sounds like, etc. After the partners have been given time to discuss with each other, they may be invited to share their thoughts with the full group following the educational structure of think-pair-share (Lyman, 1987). Teachers could also instruct students to participate in a warm-up jog with a partner and discuss a specific goal for demonstrating responsible behavior during class time.

**Strategy 3: Journaling**

Not all reflection strategies must be paired with activity; physical educators can also utilize journaling (Hellison, 2011). Prompts such as, “Today in class I showed effort by . . .” or, “Record your exercise for this week and one life lesson you learned” may encourage the student to write about their performance, understanding of PE competencies, or use of life skills. In-class journaling can be brief (one to three sentences) so as not to take away from activity time. If a deeper reflection is desired, PE teachers could explore providing it as a homework assignment or pairing it with a writing assignment for a classroom teacher. Physical education is in a unique position to advocate for the value of personal and social responsibility in the greater school context (Jacobs & Wright, 2014). Teachers are encouraged to explore the potential for partnering with classroom or specialty teachers (e.g., counselors, behavioral support staff) to further these lessons. Utilizing the help of other teachers allows for
robust reflection without encroaching on the already-limited face-to-face time physical educators have with their students. Furthermore, relevance of the life-skill content is enhanced when students are receiving consistent messages across other subject areas (Jacobs & Wright, 2014).

**Strategy 4: Drawings and photography**

Another concept that can be employed, particularly with younger students, is drawings (Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011). They may be provided with a prompt, such as, “Draw yourself showing effort during physical education.” Mature students who have developed an understanding of the levels and are able to see their relevance outside of PE could be given a homework assignment to take “selfies” performing personal and social responsibility outside of class. Directions could state: “Provide a picture of yourself showing ‘caring for others’ in the following three settings: a classroom, your home and your community” or, “Film yourself leading games at home or school that encourage moderate-to-vigorous exercise.” In class, students could share their media with classmates to demonstrate application of knowledge in multiple settings. This concept, referred to as photovoice (Lykes, 2001; Treadwell & Taylor, 2017), helps students to reflect on their own performance, contribute to their peers’ experiences, and adopt healthy movement behaviors.

**Conclusion**

Utilizing reflection and discussion strategies in PE can enhance students’ personal and social responsibility and fulfill the requirements of the National Standards. To give students a voice in their learning, PE teachers can consider implementing strategies such as large-group discussions, partner activities, journaling and art projects. With these tools, teachers can effectively and efficiently devote class time to helping students reflect on a deeper level to connect movement to personal and social skills. As a result, physical educators can ensure high-quality learning, while simultaneously achieving the social and health-related goals of PE.

**References**


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