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Advice for New Teachers



Natalie Page

So, you have prepared yourself for this moment. It's your first day of school and you are no longer the student. You are the teacher! Yes, YOU are the teacher.

Hi, my name is Natalie Page and I am a 2005 graduate of CSU Chico's Physical Education Teacher Education program. Immediately after receiving my physical education credential I was off to teaching that very same year. To this day, my first day is still so clear and I can vividly recall the feelings that I was experiencing. So many thoughts and concerns occupied my mind. Although I had confidence and I didn't doubt my education, I was worried about my lack of knowledge of my new place of employment (the staff, students, procedures, and culture). This was a sink or swim moment. At times throughout the school year I felt as though I was sinking, but at other moments I felt like I had my head above water. Reflecting upon my experiences throughout my first year, I wished that someone would have given me some helpful hints and tips. So here are mine for first year Physical Education teachers:

School

- Introduce yourself to secretarial staff and be NICE to them. They run the school!
- Who are the custodians on campus? They can be your best friend when you need help cleaning up or are doing outside activities.
- Find out what facilities you have access to and their schedules. For example, do you share your space with the drama department, ASB, choir, or daily lunch?
- Take inventory of your equipment so you know what you are working with.
- Find out what your budget is. If your money doesn't roll over to the next year, spend it on needed equipment because your budget may not be the same next year.
- If you can, resist the opportunity of coaching your first year so you can become comfortable with your teaching.
- Attend staff meetings but get to know your colleagues. Be careful, though, not to fall into crowds with negative energy. Be aware of the positive teachers on campus and collaborate with them.
- Attend school functions when possible (games, plays, or even sit out in the lunch area to get a feel of the school culture). Your students may never have a parent or family member attend any of their school functions and they will be so appreciative of your attendance. Once you have built that rapport, students will work harder for you because they know YOU care!

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Physical Education Department & Teaching

- Know the discipline policies and standard procedures at your school.
- Get a feel for your colleagues and ask them questions. Are they interested in teaching quality physical education? What are their teaching styles? What are their protocols?
- Remember you don't have to team teach.
- Attend IEP's & 504's to get to know your students better.
- Are there translators at your school if needed?
- Make phone calls home and remember to recognize good students as well.
- Know EVERY student's name, IT'S IMPORTANT. I have over 240 students every year, and if I can do it, so can you!
- Give students and parents your school information (phone number and e-mail address). Remember your students are your clients and you need to be available.
- Your students will know that you are new, exude confidence but don't pretend that you know everything.
- Don't forget to build professional personal relationships with your students. You might be the only stable adult figure in their lives. Having a professional personal relationship with your students may also change the outcome of decisions that they make (good or bad).
- Be flexible and adaptable.
- Know that every lesson you teach could be a success or a flop. If a lesson flops, make changes and try again. Remember there is no such thing as a perfect teacher or lesson.
- Don't give your keys to students or teacher assistants, you may not get them all back.

Personal Notes

- Buy quality clothing and shoes (you will be in the elements every day).
- Take care of yourself physically. You are now a role model for your students to be "active for life." Students get a kick out of seeing you active in your community, at your local gym, or even in class.
- Explore physical activities in the school's community so you can make informed recommendations to your students and parents.
- If you became a physical educator only to coach athletics, stay a coach, you don't need to be teacher.
- Lastly, know that what you teach and say can either make a positive or negative impact on students attitudes toward physical activity. If you're not excited, they won't be.

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