10 Tips for Becoming a More Effective Health and Physical Educator
Introduction

As a health and physical educator, you help students build a strong foundation of health, wellness and character that will serve them for a lifetime.

In this critical role, always strive to become a more effective teacher. Build a strong health and physical education program that empowers all students to lead healthy and active lives.

The results will be worth it. The following tips can help you get started.
Plan with the end in mind.

Plan your units backwards, thinking about what national standards, grade-level outcomes and performance indicators you want your students to accomplish by the end of the unit and/or school year. By planning with the end in mind, you can design your lessons and units so every task, assessment and activity is leading toward the overall goal. This will also ensure that each activity and lesson progresses in a sequential order to enhance learning.

Learn more about SHAPE America’s National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes for K–12 Physical Education and the National Health Education Standards: [shapeamerica.org/standards](http://shapeamerica.org/standards).
Take time to get to know your students.

Use every opportunity — within lessons and throughout the school day — to build rapport with your students. Find out about their favorite foods, teams and activities, and share a little about yourself, including how you maintain a healthy lifestyle. Throughout the year, show your support by attending extracurricular activities such as school dances, athletic events, plays and musical performances. When students feel you care about them, they are more likely to participate in class and stay motivated.
Deliver instruction in a way that meets the needs of all learners.

Be prepared to address the different learning styles and developmental levels of your students, some of whom may have visual impairments, mobility limitations or other disabilities. With differentiated instruction, you can modify the content, learning activities, outcomes and environment to meet the needs of every student in your class.

Visit the SHAPE America Webinar Library for tips, ideas and examples of differentiated instruction: shapeamerica.org/webinars.
Reteach routines and expectations.

Throughout the year, it may be necessary to remind students of your expectations and classroom routines. This is especially important during those times of year when students may lose focus, such as right before winter break. As needed, review locker room transitions, remind students how they should enter the gym or classroom, and reteach any specific routines they may be having issues with. These “reminders” will decrease behavior problems and allow you to optimize class time with your students. You may have to reteach the entire class or just a few individual students.
Implement performance-based assessments.

To measure students’ acquisition of functional knowledge and skill performance, use performance-based assessments with rubrics. Be sure to share the rubrics with students in advance so they know the expectations and can set goals for improvement. Also, use a variety of formative and summative assessments so students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. Once you’ve analyzed the assessment data, provide feedback to students and parents. You can also use that information to demonstrate the effectiveness of your program to your principal and other stakeholders.

Use SHAPE America’s Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Physical Education and Appropriate Practice in School Health Education to create your assessment plan: shapeamerica.org/standards/guidelines.
Never stop learning.

It’s vital for health and physical education teachers to stay up to date with national standards and guidelines, the latest research, and best practices in the classroom. Open yourself to innovative ideas by reading professional journals such as SHAPE America’s *Strategies*, *American Journal of Health Education*, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, and *JOPERD*, and by seeking out professional development opportunities. Make time in your schedule to participate in webinars or workshops, listen to podcasts, and attend national, district or state conferences.

Incorporate SHAPE America’s resources into your professional development plan: shapeamerica.org/prodev.
Reflect often.

Conduct a self-evaluation after each lesson/unit and make notes of what worked and what didn’t. Were the materials or equipment sufficient for the activity? Did some students need clearer instructions? Use your notes to make immediate adjustments to current lessons and plan future instruction as well. In addition to reflecting on individual units, also take time to evaluate your overall program to be sure it follows SHAPE America’s Essential Components of Physical Education and/or Appropriate Practices in School-Based Health Education.

Find tools and resources that can help you identify areas of improvement: shapeamerica.org.
Get involved in local or district committees.

Participating with the PTA or advisory committees allows you to get a pulse of key issues in the school or local community, and gives you the chance to raise awareness of health and physical education programs. By increasing your visibility on school and district committees, you can keep health and physical education programs at the forefront whenever key issues are addressed.

When you are ready to get involved beyond your local area, SHAPE America has opportunities for you to communicate with colleagues around the world, mentor the next generation, or work alongside a team of authors and editors on highly-esteemed publications. Find out more: shapeamerica.org/getinvolved.
Engage family and community members.

Provide opportunities for family and community members to support your health and physical education program, whether that’s in the classroom, at home, or in the community. Send parents weekly or monthly updates about what students are learning, offer opportunities to observe your classes, and provide activities that families can do together to support learning and promote a healthy lifestyle. Hosting a family health and fitness event is an effective way to showcase your program to the school community and local decision makers. Increased engagement will lead to increased support for your program and a greater understanding of its impact on the health and well-being of all students.

Find guidance and resources on family and community engagement: shapeamerica.org/cspap.
Advocate for your program.

Now that school health and physical education have been identified as part of a student’s “well-rounded education” in the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it is critical for you to be the voice for health and physical education. Educate administrators, parents and teachers about the importance of aligning the curriculum to national standards and the positive impact that health and physical education can have on student success. This is your chance to increase awareness of your program’s value as an essential component of students’ overall education experience, as well as the foundation for lifelong healthy living.

Visit SHAPE America’s Legislative Action Center for guidance documents, position statements, fact sheets and more: shapeamerica.org/advocacy.
BONUS TIP: Join SHAPE America.

Membership in SHAPE America connects you to a network of thousands of health and physical educators — professionals like you who are committed to teaching the skills and healthy habits that foster a student’s ability, confidence and desire to be physically active for life.

As a member, you’ll receive numerous benefits, including discounts on books and professional development, a subscription to your choice of award-winning journals, and free access to webinars, monthly activity calendars and our exclusive online community.

MEMBERSHIP GIVES YOU MUCH MORE.

The personal connections you make through SHAPE America will help you in your classroom and your career. Whether you’re new to the profession or have years of experience under your belt, you’ll become a more effective teacher as a result of your membership.

Join or renew online: shapeamerica.org/membership.

About SHAPE America

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is the nation’s largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals. The organization sets the standard for health and physical education in the U.S and is a founding partner of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, Let’s Move! Active Schools and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs.