

Article By **Charles Silberman**. Email Charles at charles.silberman@pgcps.org to ask additional questions. Published on PE Central: 9/16/12.

Dear Charles,

I am a former classroom teacher of seven years, and I switched to teach PE. I am struggling to adapt to the change, especially the movement of the students with no desks or chairs. I'm also at two schools, so I have to learn two sets of students and work side-by-side with two PE teachers. I want to share my ideas, but the PE teacher seems set in her ways. Can you offer some tips or suggestions to help me adjust?

Ms. C

Dear Ms. C,

First, thank you for choosing to join our profession. I hope you will find it as enriching as you imagined and see just how important what we do is and why! Coming from the classroom, you already have a good amount of experience to draw from that will help you with the adjustment. I would imagine the hardest part of the adjustment is the lack of the desks and chairs that create an immediate structure to work from.

I started in the classroom teaching health at an elementary school. I was also in graduate school at the time. It was the best experience I could have had before becoming a physical educator. I learned best teaching practices from the standpoint of being an excellent teacher, and I was able to apply them as I taught. This really helped me build a strong foundation to move forward in my career. In a lot of situations, I look at teaching from the framework of a classroom teacher and hold myself to the same expectations and standards classroom teachers face. I know that you come into the profession with a tremendous skill set and framework from which to work, which is transferable. Below are some general suggestions to help assuage your concerns and ease your transition.

Go back to basics:

Pull from your first couple of years of experience. Revisit those first year teacher books. Talk to some experienced physical educators. Best practices are best practices and are suitable, in general, across most subject areas.

Create structure:

P.E. is a subject area where teachers teach and students learn just like anywhere else. It is up to you to create structure that provides a safe environment for students to learn and to emphasize that it is indeed a place to learn.

In the classroom, this may have been done using a specific desk arrangement and posting rules and procedures everywhere. In physical education, structure is created through rules, procedures, and the proper teaching of them too with a twist that you have no desk and movement is prevalent. For example, in P.E., squads may take the place of desks. You may want to arrange your students in alphabetical order to make attendance and transitions smoother. Moreover, think through your average class. Consider all the parts that make up the class: attendance, warm-up/instant activity, instruction, cool down, water, transitioning between activities, etc. Make sure to have a clear procedure in place for each portion of the class, and teach it to the students the procedures until they meet your expectations. This will lead to less anxiety for the students and a safer learning environment.

Safety is paramount:

Because students are moving so much in physical education, safety is a primary concern. You address this when teaching rules and procedures. You practice it when teaching personal and general space, and you reinforce it through assertive discipline. If students can not work safely in your class, they will not be able to learn. Just like the classroom, this goes for their emotional and physical well-being. Character is something you teach. Therefore, you will want to teach your students what physical and emotional well being look and sound like. Moreover, you will have to be extra attentive to these issues on a daily basis.

Movement is the name of the game, and it is okay:

I realize for some instruction in the classroom it has to be direct instruction. In addition, I realize while students work in the classroom, sometimes silence is needed. In P.E. you will have some times where you have to talk more and need that silence, especially at the start of a new unit or complex topic. However, P.E. is about movement. Talk less, and let the kids move more. Instead of explaining a skill first, have them do the activity, then break down what they were doing and why. In P.E., expect movement and noise that comes with it.

Still integrate:

In the classroom, you may integrate certain subject areas regularly. Do the same in P.E. Students need to learn that what they learned in math or reading has applications elsewhere. They also need to be aware of accountable talk, curricular vocabulary, and learn interpersonal skills. These are all things they do in the classroom that are easily taught and integrated into P.E. Find small and meaningful ways to bring other subjects into physical education.

Be the role model:

In the classroom when teaching writing you want to make sure things you post set the example for students. The same goes in physical education. Be the role model. Lead some activities yourself, and let the students see and know you practice what you preach.

Working in Two Schools:

Working in two schools is hard. I have been there. You have to learn two different environments, many names, and adapt to a different way of doing things that may be different from your own. As a teacher, teaching in multiple schools it is important to know your role. In some counties, the full-time teacher does the lesson planning and you are supposed to follow them as well as how the Teacher runs his or her class. Each county is different. Find out what your role is and work with in it to do what is in the best interest of the children.

You are also new to p.e. With that in mind, it might be in your best interest to follow the other teachers' plans. You may not agree with everything, and you are entitled to express your opinion appropriately. However, if it is that Teacher's school, and they are set in their ways that are working for the school's population, I would go along with it until you are more established as a p.e. Teacher. This will allow you to learn and gain support of the other Teachers, which is always valuable.

In Summary:

Although there are some differences in physical education like more movement and less structure, the proper pedagogy that helped you in the classroom will help you in the gymnasium. Be aware, however, that you will have to create your own structure, acclimate your self with the ways in which physical education classes run, and think how you can run yours effectively through appropriate rules and procedures. Moreover, remember that in general the rule of less is more is a good when it comes

to using movement time with too much direct instruction. Focus on these things, and you will do just fine.

To have your question answered or to comment on this topic contact me at Charles.silberman@pgcps.org. You may also follow me on twitter: ThePeGuy.

To learn more about me, visit my website at www.charlessilberman.com.