

RECESS

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

ADVICE FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Every physical education class is different. While each school building offers varying availability of space and equipment, physical education teachers recognize the importance of play and physical movement for Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Below, nationally recognized teachers share their insight into some ways they connect with their students during online physical education classes.



National Physical Education Teachers

Allison Relyea¹ writes about what she did well, things that needed improvement, and what she would do differently in response to the pandemic and the transition to distance learning.

TIPS

- Conduct social and emotional check-ins with students during the week in addition to meeting virtually with students for physical education (PE) class.
- Get to know the students before a change happens—create a needs assessment survey for students to answer about what their home life is like and what kind of activities they like to do in their free time.
- Engage students of all abilities in virtual games - give students a list of games (such as Jeopardy, Name That Tune, or Charades) and provide information a few days before the scheduled class.
- Ask students to choose the PE activities they want to explore—allow them to research new activities and be creative as to how they want to move.

1 bit.ly/recess-allisonrelyea

Diane McRandal² is a teacher for Edmentum's EdOptions online learning academy for K-12 Pennsylvania students. She has 25 years of experience teaching PE in classroom and virtual settings. Diane reports that students improve their physical and mental health in her online PE class. They become healthier individuals and have an increased sense of confidence. She shares her virtual PE teaching best practices and successes for other PE instructors. Her students have shared that they have less anxiety and embarrassment when participating in online PE as opposed to regular gym classes.

TIPS

- Let students choose how their PE journey will unfold. They can choose between paths such as biomechanics, diet and exercise, fitness, running and walking, strength based, stress management, etc.
- Give students information on how to become experts in each course.
- Encourage students to track their chosen coursework in an activity log accessible by parents and/or teachers.
- Include in the coursework why the movement is important and the science behind moving their bodies.

2 bit.ly/recess-dianemcrandal



“Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, cognitive skills, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development.”

– Michelle Sparro

STEAM Educator at Amos K. Hutchinson Elementary School

Local Physical Education Teachers

Through connections from the Recess Advocacy Team (made up of individuals with experience in a school setting as well as parents themselves), the following recommendations come from PE teachers in the Western Pennsylvania region about how they are connecting with families and students during online remote learning.

Paul Casey Health and PE Greenfield K-8

“The online PE class has been quite an experience for all of us. It has given me the opportunity to learn more about individual students’ interests, which is great because I’m new to the school, and don’t know a lot about the students.”

TIPS

- Pose a question of the day to support students talking and socializing in an online environment.
- Be prepared with an asynchronous assignment in the event that technical difficulties interrupt class time.
- Focus on health topics that reiterate how diseases may be prevented by exercise, eating healthy, and getting ample sleep.
- Make PE fun for the students and let them take a break from their screens by getting out of their seats.

Cindy Haigh Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12, Physical Education and Health Teacher, National Board-Certified Teacher, PA Teacher of the Year Finalist—Class of 2006

“The remote learning experience is less about reaching content area goals (middle school physical education and health), and more about focusing on being physically active and finding laughter in that physical activity.”

TIPS

- Be willing to try new things outside of your comfort zone.
- Embracing laughter helps us and the children we teach to improve our moods.

Lisa Roberts

Elementary Health and PE Teacher

McKean Elementary School

Recently featured in

[Staying Active While Virtual Learning](#)¹

TIPS

- Bring awareness to activities and opportunities for movement for students and families. Give ideas for adding movement into the day and share their ideas.
- Create virtual activities that include families. When possible, provide incentives for participation.
- Embrace the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions with students and families through these activities. During a normal school year, there is very little family communication with special subject areas.

¹ bit.ly/recess-staying-active