

Instructor Spotlight – Ryan Martin (NCE Elementary fitness classes-Gymnastics Exploration, March Madness Winter 2020)

What is your favorite part about teaching in conjunction with a Community Education Program?

Being a full-time teacher at Mitchell, it is great to see my learners outside of the school day. It allows me to get to know them better, and develop the skills that are taught in our physical education curriculum. When I started doing NCE classes 11 years ago, I wanted the programs that I offered to be an extension of our physical education curriculum. The programs I offer align with the units of instruction that are being taught in physical education. I like that this gives more opportunity to learners to do the things that they are already passionate about. I also like that it provides opportunities to learners that want to learn more, but are not ready to commit to a whole season of something.

Can you share your teaching methods/philosophy?

The teaching strategies I use for team sport are based off of the teaching models: Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU) or Tactical Games Model (TGM). Both of these models use small sided games/game situations to develop skill paired with questioning to have learners use critical thinking to ensure they are learning in the psychomotor and cognitive learning domains.

In gymnastics I blend educational gymnastics with traditional gymnastics. Learners explore gymnastics concepts, but also develop fundamental traditional gymnastics skills.

The programs I offer are an extension of our physical education curriculum based off of George Graham's curriculum which is a skill based curriculum not a fitness based curriculum. Although learners better their cardiovascular and muscle endurance components of fitness through our programs it is not something that is explicitly taught.

What do you do to keep students engaged?

Learners voluntarily sign up for these programs, so right away they are usually motivated from the start. Things that I do to motivate in these programs and my physical education lessons is to try to cultivate a community in each class. A community where learners are honest with themselves (willing to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses), and feel willing to put themselves out of their comfort zone. Where they don't play their "greatest hits" (skills/strategies that are already developed), but focus on making their weaknesses strengths. As early as I have these learners in kindergarten I introduce them to their biggest competitor...themselves. Each lesson we try to be better than the lesson before.

What do you want students to take with them from participating?

I hope that they enjoy their time, develop their skills, and build confidence. I hope that the extension of doing these programs outside of the school day has them make a connection to do these things on their own to better their wellness in their own lives.

What drew you to becoming a Physical Education teacher and teaching fitness classes?

Growing up I was depressed and had very low self esteem. In high school I started following exercise and diet programs pretty strictly to better myself on the football field. Eating better and exercising regularly made me feel much better. It battled my depression, and increased my self esteem. Before I knew it, all parts of my life started getting better thanks to me taking care of my wellness. I didn't figure this out until I was in high school. I became an elementary physical education teacher to help my learners realize this earlier than I did. I want to help our youth know that our wellness needs to be a priority, and it is a prerequisite for happiness/ success in life.

Lastly, what do you do for fun outside of being an NCE Instructor?

I enjoy brazilian jiu jitsu, functional strength training, woodworking, cooking, and spending time with my wife Jess and daughter Ryhen.