



Chapter Thirteen

Preparing for an Interview

WHETHER YOU ARE RELOCATING, your position has been reduced or you simply need a change of environment, interviewing for a new role is likely to become a necessary aspect of your career journey. While it can be challenging to anticipate and prepare for the various questions interviewers may ask, being well-versed in the following topics should provide you with the talking points necessary to offer meaningful answers to most interview questions, helping you distinguish yourself from the competition.

Growth Mindset

Before exploring specific content-related topics you aim to cover in your responses, it's crucial to highlight two overarching themes that should be emphasized throughout the interview process: your commitment to reflective practice and your ability to implement feedback effectively. Interviewers are often inclined to favor candidates who, even if they may fall slightly short on certain questions, demonstrate a reflective approach to their teaching methods and show a proactive attitude toward seeking and integrating feedback into their practice. This growth-oriented mindset not only showcases a willingness to learn and adapt but also underscores a dedication to continuous improvement in one's professional development. Communicating this mindset effectively during the interview can significantly enhance your candidacy. The following is a common interview question along with a partial answer, demonstrating how to seamlessly integrate and highlight a growth mindset:

Interviewer: "How would your colleagues describe you?"

Candidate: "My colleagues would describe me as someone with a growth mindset who consistently engages in self-reflection, actively seeks feedback from multiple sources, and is committed to implementing feedback. I strongly believe in the significance of continuous reflection and growth, aiming to provide my students with an evolving and enriching physical education experience. Additionally, I consider myself a role model for my students, emphasizing the importance of being a reflective learner, creating an environment where they too can adopt these values in their learning journey."

Along with incorporating these values into responses to specific questions, you can also highlight your willingness to reflect and grow in instances where you feel you may not have a complete answer to the question. In such cases, provide your best response and express eagerness to further develop in that area, welcoming feedback and support as you strive to enhance your understanding.

With the core value of being a reflective teacher who implements feedback established, let's explore the essential topics one should address in every PE interview.

Learning Environment/PE Culture

The most important aspect of the culture you create in your gym is that all students feel welcomed, safe, and comfortable. Here is a question that may be asked during an interview and a potential, partial answer:

Interviewer: "What is your philosophy of teaching?"

Candidate: "My teaching philosophy revolves around establishing an inclusive culture within our gym space. I prioritize creating an environment where students feel genuinely welcomed, safe, and comfortable. Strategies I employ to create this inclusive environment include: [provide specific examples such as encouraging open communication, implementing cooperative activities, emphasizing respect for diverse abilities or backgrounds, etc.]. By establishing this inclusive space, I aim to encourage students not only to actively engage in physical activities but also to take risks, both physically – by attempting new skills – and academically."

Standards-Based Objectives

It is essential to convey during an interview that your lessons and objectives are based on state and/or national standards. Explaining how you integrate these standards into your lesson planning and monitor students' progress toward proficiency of them will demonstrate to your interviewer that your lessons and units are built on a strong foundation, with a well-planned scope and sequence.

Interviewer: "Describe how you plan your lessons."

Candidate: "When planning my lessons, I prioritize our state and/or national standards as my primary resource. This ensures that I'm delivering grade-level appropriate content to my students. These standards serve as the foundation for crafting daily objectives, which play a crucial role in guiding students toward the lesson's goals. Additionally, these objectives are used as benchmarks to measure students' progress throughout the lesson, ensuring that they show progress toward proficiency of the targeted skills. An example of a recent lesson that I taught and the standard that I used to create the daily objective was . . ."

Emphasizing Standards-Based Social Skills

Emphasizing the uniqueness and significance of our social skills standard may be the most important thing you can do to distinguish yourself from other applicants. While other candidates may discuss their methods for teaching specific physical education skills such as the overhand throw, soccer techniques, or building muscular endurance, emphasizing

ing the depth of your commitment to standards-based social skills will set you apart. Demonstrating the frequency with which you prioritize lessons and objectives centered around social skill development, such as teaching healthy approaches to competition and inclusive behaviors, showcases your dedication to providing a well-rounded physical education experience. This approach signals to interviewers that your teaching philosophy not only enhances individual growth but also contributes positively to the broader school culture.

Interviewer: "What is your favorite lesson or unit to teach? What lessons of yours do students enjoy most?"

Candidate: "I've noticed that the lessons students enjoy the most often revolve around standards-based social skills. At various times, I structure entire units around our social skills standard. For instance, during the start of the school year or following winter break, I will teach a unit focusing on cooperative activities. In this unit, I integrate grade level expectations from standards such as ...

Additionally, I've found that students respond positively when I infuse social skills concepts into traditional units. For example, toward the end of my soccer unit, after students have acquired skills and are engaged in modified games, I will write and communicate social skills objectives for students. Some examples of those are . . ."

Differentiating For Students Needs

One final crucial point to emphasize in your interview is the significance of tailoring your instruction and activities to suit your students'

diverse needs. This entails providing both modifications and extensions to cater to varying levels of learning.

Interviewer: "What strategies do you have in place to motivate students who don't want to participate?"

Candidate: "Differentiating for the diverse needs of my students is a proactive way to ensure that all students will be motivated to participate in the activities and learning of the lesson. This involves modifying activities for students who are at a beginner level and providing extensions for students who have shown proficiency. For instance, in a recent lesson I taught on _____, I made the following modifications and extensions, resulting in increased student motivation and active participation ..."

Interviewing for a new role can be a daunting and stressful experience. However, it's crucial to maintain focus on essential topics such as growth mindset, creating a positive physical education culture, adhering to standards, prioritizing standards-based social skills and emphasizing differentiation strategies. Integrating these key areas into the responses to interview questions and offering concrete examples of how these practices are implemented in your teaching methodologies, along with their tangible impact on student learning is essential. By articulating specific instances where you have applied these principles effectively, demonstrating their direct influence on students' growth and engagement, you can effectively showcase your teaching philosophy and abilities to the interview panel. Presenting a clear and confident portrayal of your teaching methods aligned with these vital aspects not only highlights

your expertise but also increases the likelihood of securing the desired position.