

Should student attitudes and behaviors be a part of the grading process in K-12 classes?

I am a firm believer in holding K-12 students accountable for their actions. As physical educators, aren't we educating the "whole" individual? This takes in all domains—including the affective. As a professor in a PETE program, I emphasize the importance of such to my students. Introducing my preservice teachers to a variety of curriculum models, strategies, and styles affords them the opportunity to choose which "model" is most appropriate to suit the needs of their students. Siedentop, Hellison, Rohnke, and others have implemented, created, and facilitated programs, activities, and strategies for emphasizing "appropriate" behaviors. Siedentop speaks of making "good sports people," Hellison reflects on the importance of self/social responsibility and strategies to reinforce these behaviors in the physical education realm.

As educators, be it in physical education or other subjects, we need to do the same. By establishing rules and appropriate consequences, and by using a variety of teaching strategies, models, and styles, physical educators should—yes!—teach, assess, and grade these behaviors. For example, it may take the form of a positive point system for appropriate "sport behaviors" during a sport education season. When using such a concept, points may be awarded for behaviors such as fair play, proper sport etiquette, communication, teammate praise, and assisting others. These points may then be translated into part of an affective grade that is averaged into a final grade at the end of the semester.

My advice to physical educators and future physical educators is to

"give the most" and to "expect the most." Maintain high standards in your classes. Post those rules that forbid put-downs, ridiculing, victimization, and bullying. If it does happen, address it, and speak with your students about the effects of such actions on others. Choose activities that equal out competition or place all students on balanced ground (e.g., adventure activities or individualized instruction), and allow your students to create personal fitness profiles. Implement appropriate models, vary your teaching styles, and don't play dodgeball! You will see behaviors change and positive interactions taking place. Get to all of your students, reinforce those "good behaviors," address the bad—and, yes, infuse this into your grading policy.
—Melissa Wissner-Fico, assistant professor, Kean University, Union, NJ.

I have been teaching for 10 years, and have never used attitude and/or behavior as a grading component. I often consider student attitude if the grade is borderline.

I have always had the theory that if I am doing my job, and making physical education class fun and challenging, and requiring from students their best efforts and positive attitudes, then I generally don't have to worry about bad attitudes or unacceptable behaviors. Generally, my theory works.

—Christy Killman, physical education teacher, Prescott Central Middle School, Cookeville, TN.

If we in the profession are committed to our stated national content standards for physical education, we

are obligated to include some measure of student attitudes and behaviors in our K-12 classes. Two of NASPE's national standards deal with this area (developing quality social skills and exhibiting responsible behavior). There are many ways to effectively evaluate social behaviors without resorting to the old "wear your sneakers and participate in class" method of grading in physical education. Through the use of journals, attitude/behavior scales, checklists, role-playing, and other assessments, we can provide continuous assessment throughout the K-12 program. As more and more attention is being focused on program accountability and adherence to state and national standards for assessment, we must be willing to provide a measurement of those outcomes we deem important. If we are unable or unwilling to do that, we should revisit those same outcomes to determine exactly what it is we do wish our students to know and be able to demonstrate.

—Monica A. Magner, associate professor, Department of HPS, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY.

The key to this question lies with the words "part" (of the grading process) and "attitudes." If we are to grade authentically, and if our grades are to reflect our standards, then the answer must be yes, if our standards include affective objectives. The NASPE standards, and many standards adopted by states, include desired outcomes in which students "value and appreciate lifetime physical activity." To be true to our profes-

sional standards, the process must be weighted according to the importance and numbers of outcomes. If the teachers are using affective standards, then behaviors and attitudes should be assessed, evaluated, and included in the grade. However, the problem usually lies within the common grading practices of many teachers: they fail to develop assessment instruments that accurately measure and record daily behaviors and attitudes, and fail to provide students with feedback on progress toward these objectives. The use of rubrics can help here. If psychomotor objectives are 50 percent of the unit's objectives, then the grade should be representative of achievement in skills up to at least 50 percent of the grade. The same should be done with the health-fitness, affective, and cognitive domains. A comprehensive grading system will consider evaluative practices that are reliable, valid, and fair. Many good teachers offer separate "grades" or reports related to each objective. Then they combine the grades to reach a more authentic universal grade and to report more accurately to parents the students' achievements and areas needing more work. Once again, grades should be based on our objectives related to standards and on valid, reliable, and fair assessments of student progress toward those goals.

—Debra Ballinger, associate professor, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI.

I do not believe that students should be graded on attitude or behavior. Students are not tested on their attitude or behavior, so why should these areas influence their grades? Too many students have daily issues to deal with that may contribute to their attitude and behavior. It would be difficult to distinguish between those students and students with intentional bad attitudes and behaviors. There are other ways of coping with or regulating bad attitudes in the classroom without affecting students' grades. This may be a good tactic at the high school level,

since many students at that age have the ability to decide whether or not to have a bad attitude in class. And at that age, teachers should not have to deal with misbehavior.

—Ana Romero, student, Texas A&M International University, Laredo, TX.

It is very difficult to assess and grade objectively in physical education classes. It is not as clear cut as 2 + 2. Grading on behavior alone, in my opinion, does not give parents a well-rounded report of their child's performance in physical education. I do believe that physical educators should base part of the student's grade on his or her attitude and behavior. Teaching positive attitudes and behaviors is part of the NASPE national standards (#5, personal and social responsibilities). If the educator can make the assessment more quantitative, then he or she can justify to the parents and the administration the need to grade students' behavior. Using a behavior rubric can help the educator to evaluate students' behavior objectively. I use the Hellison model levels 1 to 5 to give an objective assessment of students' affective behavior.

—David Moore, physical education

teacher, Pleasantview Elementary School, Derby, KS.

No. Grading a student on his or her attitude is subjective. As teachers, we cannot know the backgrounds and situations of every student. Students who are displaying bad attitudes are often the students who need the most help. They often act out to keep from being embarrassed. It is difficult to try to motivate a large group of students to engage in an activity when one or more students are displaying negative attitudes. However, as teachers we should stay focused on what our goals are for the class. Our grading process should include scores from tests and skills assessments.

A student with bad behavior is a different matter. All students need to follow certain guidelines in physical education for the sake of their safety. If a student chooses not to follow the rules, he or she should be sent to the office and dealt with in the same manner as a student who is disruptive in an "academic" classroom. Once the behavior is corrected, then the student can be assessed on his or her abilities through test scores and skills assessments.

MARCH QUESTION

Is parental involvement a liability to youth sports?



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—Fancy Meetze, physical education student, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, TX.

Providing a grade for behaviors and attitudes can be a touchy subject. First of all, it is a subjective decision. The grade is based on observation and/or appearance of student activity. A student may exhibit apathetic behavior due to illness, or due to personal, academic, or social problems that the instructor does not know about. A student may appear to be disruptive due to excitement about the class activity. Should either observation be the basis for a negative grade? On the other hand, a student may be inhibited by a subject area that is particularly difficult for him or her. I have observed some students demonstrating extraordinary amounts of effort and "good" behavior with results that—if they were measured objectively and quantita-

tively—might result only in moderate grades. Should this student be penalized by an objectively based grading system?

I believe the system is less than perfect. I also believe in the professionalism that a teacher brings to this issue. Given that level of trust, it is incumbent to leave behaviors and attitudes in the equation, but also to keep teachers informed about the many sides of the issue of how students bring "other" influences into school and into the classroom.

—Joseph Karwacki, instrumental music teacher, Donovan Middle School, Utica, NY.

I think that student attitudes play a large part in assessment. In the K-12 environment, students are learning appropriate behavior, social acceptance, collaboration, and leadership. I would definitely count participation and attitude as part of their grade. This also allows a teacher the

opportunity to use it as a disciplinary tool. I have lowered grades in college classes for absences. Lowering a grade for an activity class due to bad attitude is an acceptable and useful tool.

—Steven Grimes, assistant professor, physical education and health, Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro, KY

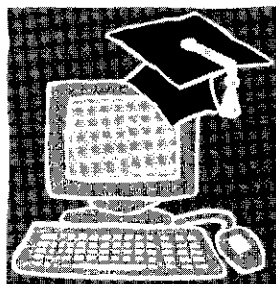
I think a student's behavior and attitude is very important, and I feel that it should be part of the grade they receive. A student's attitude can affect everyone else. Bad behavior can take away from what the other students are trying to accomplish. A reason for our overweight population could be our attitudes and habits. Our negative attitudes don't let us have confidence to try to go out and enjoy exercise or other activities that will enhance our way of life. Helping these kids have positive attitudes can influence the rest of their life. You have to use grades to get some kids to understand why this may be important. Their behavior is also important because you need to have control of your class. While good behavior may be expected, it is hard to always get it. So rewarding the ones who are showing positive behavior is important.

—D. P. Clarke, Winona State University, Winona, MN.

Grading needs to be as objective as possible or we open ourselves up to criticism and lack of respect. I believe grades are supposed to be a reflection of what students have learned. As a result, I run a skills-based program in which I spend a lot of time teaching technique that is based on written, objective criteria and is easily graded. Thus students can focus on easily identifiable goals. As student technique improves, success goes up; and as success goes up, enjoyment and participation go up.

Grading attitude is subjective and tends to be a personal reaction as

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to whether or not the teacher likes the student. Some students have more pleasant personalities than others and thus get a good grade for being nice rather than for accomplishment. I believe it reinforces the idea that many people have in physical education—that you should get an A just for showing up.

Also, grading behavior focuses on the negative and is a poor motivator. If there is a behavior problem, it is far more effective to deal with it on the spot and be done with it.

Finally, grading behavior and attitude is time and energy consuming. This time and energy is better spent on other things that develop your program.

—DuWayne Krause, physical education teacher, Magic Valley Christian School, Twin Falls, ID.

Student behavior and attitude is a cornerstone of physical education. It isn't just whether the student has dressed out or not. It is if they are dressed, motivated, and ready to learn. As educators, we need to promote an environment in which the student will show the proper behavior and attitudes. By saying, "This is how we want you to act and behave," we are actually telling them, "We expect you to act and behave like this and if you don't, then there must be a consequence." So, yes, we should grade on behavior and attitude. In doing so, we teach the students that their actions and attitudes will have positive or negative consequences.

—Don Prior, physical education student, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Mo.

In my opinion, attitude should have no influence on what a student's final grade is. Grading systems, as they are, do not effectively measure the amount a student has learned, only what they can memorize. However, since grades are what people look at in college applications and during job interviews, it is important that they are as accurate as pos-

sible. A student can have a bad attitude and still be an intelligent individual. It is possible that the student simply doesn't get along with a particular teacher. I don't think it is right for disagreements between a student and a teacher to hinder the student's chance of getting scholarships and jobs.

—J. Evans, student, Utah State University, Logan, UT.

Attitudes and behaviors should never directly affect academic performance. If students make a particular grade academically, that grade should not be raised or lowered because they behave a certain way in the class. Raising or lowering a grade because of behavior would be a direct affect on the grade. However, there is an indirect academic effect that often occurs. If students behave poorly, they will often make lower grades because they have not paid attention or because they do not care about their grades. Likewise, if students are well behaved, they will often make a higher grade because they are tuned in to what is being taught and they care about their grades.

We cannot always control the indirect effect of behavior on academic performance, but we can control the direct effect of behavior on academic performance.

As professional educators, our goal must be to treat all students fairly no matter how they behave. Poor attitudes and behaviors must be addressed in a positive manner. Lowering grades because of poor behavior only gives the student another reason to misbehave. Raising grades because of good behavior also sends a negative message to students. Discipline should never be confused with academics.

—Cassandra Matthews, health and physical education teacher, Whittemore Park Middle School, Conway, SC.

Behaviors should definitely be included in the student's grade evaluation. The only pitfall to this would be the grading of students

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who have not been properly diagnosed or treated for a behavioral or emotional problem. However, the "average" student should be graded on behavior. Perhaps this would encourage the parents to take notice of behaviors that are unacceptable in a social setting, so that they may address the problem and, one hopes, reduce the time and stress that teachers incur in disciplining some children. Unfortunately, I have seen that a few children with bad behavior in class disrupt the whole and also take away time from the teacher that could be spent with the overachievers (to keep them interested) and in working with those who truly show an interest in learning.

—*Cynthia Uhte-Johnson, student, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX.*

As much as we physical educators would love for our students to have positive attitudes about, and behaviors toward, the promotion of wellness, explaining the measurement of a student's attitude to a disappointed parent would be difficult. Students with positive attitudes about physical education are usually the ones that excel and perform at their optimal levels.

Furthermore, a student with a negative attitude could use more support. A student's behavior, however may be the determining factor on whether a borderline A/B student gets the higher grade or not. Lastly, we have to take into account that along with other disciplines, not all students will have a passion for the subject area that is taught.

—*Latonya Davis, physical education student, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO.*

Education is about change. Behavior modification is also about change. Education and behavior go hand in hand. Behavior that is inappropriate should definitely be considered as part of the grading process in the K-12, and even college, environment. We are fooling ourselves if we believe that informa-

tion assimilation at the cognitive level alone is education. Each year thousands of employers in America affirm that interpersonal skills are the most important attribute of new college graduates. That should be enough evidence that behavior is important, even important enough to be graded.

—*Neal W. Vickers, associate dean of students/director of career services, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR.*

There are two critical ways to look at this question. On one hand, I tend to agree that attitudes and behaviors should be part of the grading process, simply because the two seem to go hand in hand.

As a teacher, it is easy to tell the top students (grade-wise) for the most part based on their attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, some students may have great attitudes but do poorly in class. Should these students be rewarded for this?

Most people would say yes, and to an extent even I would have to agree to this, but the underlying question is why are students not performing well in class? What are we as teachers missing? Is the work too hard for certain students, do they need more help, are they not applying themselves that much, or are we not presenting the material to them very well?

I feel that if we were to adopt this into our grading scale it would not take long for most students to figure out that all they had to do is be nice and they would get a good grade. On the other hand, if I have a student who is working their tail off to make good grades, and still needs help, then I would help them out. No, I would not do this by giving them extra points. Instead I would try to find out why this student is struggling. I would evaluate the student to see if any additional help is needed. I would evaluate myself to see if I am getting the material out properly and on a level that they can understand. I would also try to get the parents in-

involved, and by this I mean not for them to punish the child, but simply to help with the child's studies.

At school, the trick I found is not to tell a student to work harder. This will lead nowhere. Instead I show a caring side of myself by encouraging the student and by using motivational techniques. Simply telling a young child that he or she is doing a good job will go a long way in improving the student's grades and class performance.

Still another issue to bring up involves the students who may be geniuses but are simply impossible to control. What do you do with these students? I believe you should find out why these students have behavioral problems. Maybe they are simply bored because the material is too easy. Maybe that's how they were taught at home. In this case, again, we should evaluate ourselves, get the parents more involved, talk to the student, and show them that we care about them and their future.

Students can tell if you really care about them and will work harder on their behavior and studies for a teacher who does. Ultimately it's the teacher, not the student, that makes the grade, because if we fail to show good attitudes and behaviors through caring, then we are the ones who fail!

—*Christopher R. Owens, senior physical education major, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO.*

Grades should be an indication of students' overall performance on what the teacher posits as the course objectives. Why wouldn't we grade students according to what we want them to experience in class? If our objective is to positively affect students' attitudes toward, or behavior when engaging in, physical activity, why wouldn't we assess it and report it as their grade? Excluding attitude from the grading process undermines the importance we claim for it as an outcome.

—*Ray Allen, assistant professor, De-*

partment of Kinesiology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

Absolutely not! This is one of the problems with programs that include tardiness, attendance, and behavior in the grading system. Being late or not dressing for physical education is a behavioral issue. Teachers should send repetitious behavior problems to the "behavior manager" (the principal) and move on to teaching their classes. If teachers want to inform parents by assigning a "conduct grade," that is fine, as long as it does not affect the academic grades.

We should not base grades on attitude. Disliking subject matter content is an attitude. A student can dislike soccer, yet learn to demonstrate soccer skills. A student can gain great knowledge about fitness and not appreciate or internalize it. Although we hope students develop an appreciation for our content and demonstrate positive attitudes, the attitude we hope for is not necessarily needed for learning to occur.

If we get to the point where grades are based on attitudes, we are in trouble. The ability to form one's own opinions and attitudes is what makes our country different from many others. We are, in fact, violating many principles this country was founded on if we grade student attitudes. Determine our subject matter, teach it, and grade it.

As a side-light, I am afraid to say that if teachers were graded on their performance and/or attitude, we may not like all the results.

—Dennis Docheff, chair, Department of Health and Human Performance, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, MO.

Students' attitudes and behaviors are already a part of our schools' grading system. Attitude and behavior play a major part when it comes to getting work graded, whether it is fair or not. Allow me to give a few examples.

No matter how professional a teacher is, there will always be a case

where little Johnny writes an essay and gets a decent grade because he is good kid and tries hard, even though his essay didn't really answer the question. Billy is the kid who gets in trouble all the time, and his essay wasn't any worse than Johnny's, but he didn't get as good a grade. Is this fair? No. Is this professional? No. This does happen, however, and I have seen it throughout my entire career as a student.

Another example would be in physical education class. Johnny cannot perform the skill very well. Billy, however, can do it easily. Does Johnny get a bad grade? No. He gets the same grade because he tries really hard and has a good attitude. In physical education, we can make behavior and attitude part of the grading system. I believe this is a subject where attitude and behavior *should* be graded. When it comes to science or math class, the only thing that matters is whether you understand it or not. It would be unfair to give a grade based on attitude or behavior. No one cares if you have a good attitude when you are trying to figure out that math problem.

—P. J. Sanders, graduate student, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO.

LETTERS

Continued from page 4

Boyce's personal experience) charge admission to their students for home basketball and/or football games. Boyce's contention that the under-represented females at the institution she is referring to, do not "receive any direct benefit" relative to their fees, can just as easily be applied to virtually every student at that university who is not a member of a varsity team. Institutions justify athletics fees as part of the cost of underwriting the total college lifestyle. Many choose to have visible fees, while others (such as most private institutions) build the costs of intercollegiate athletics into their tuition.

Along these lines, I question the
Continues on next page