



Each and Every Child

Volume 8, Issue 4

An e-newsletter by the Iowa Department of Education

Exercising the mind (and body)

This physical education class builds more than bodies

CEDAR RAPIDS – Michael Tierney is a former special education teacher.

Now he's a physical education teacher. And he loves bringing both

worlds together.

Tierney, who teaches at Prairie Ridge Elementary School in the College Community School District, brings all students with disabilities together for a once-a-week, 45-minute physical education class. This is up and beyond their regular physical education classes. And each student is paired with a fourth-grade peer.

With a plethora of adaptive physical education tools at their disposal, students let their imaginations run wild as to what they can do. The only requirement: Stay active.

Can't throw a ball? No problem, the ball launcher can do that. It's impossible to shoot hoops? Just use the adaptive basketball hoop.

As Ann Griffin says, she wants all kids



Photos by Iowa Department of Education's Deborah Darge

It's Wednesday morning, a physical education teacher Michael Tierney ensures each student receives individualized instruction.

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leaving class “smiling and sweating.” (They do.)

Griffin, a consultant for Grant Wood Area Education Agency, works with 32 school districts in seven counties, and provides adaptive physical education tools to enhance the experience of each and every child. The agency ramped up its efforts when retirees from Rockwell Collins – which is chockfull of engineers – came forward and said they wanted to help.

“It was about 15 or 20 years ago, when three guys from Rockwell Collins said they wanted to develop a retiree volunteer group,” Griffin said. “From there, we started a partnership. Their motto was, ‘If you can dream it, we can build it.’”

And they did.

Today, the agency has hundreds of adaptive tools, most of it on loan to schools.



Cheryl Kiburz

In Prairie Ridge’s gymnasium – it’s a Wednesday morning and general education kids are pairing up with their special education peers – there’s plenty of adaptive equipment throughout the room. And Tierney is eager to take on another class.

“During these classes, I get to work with kids one-on-one such as taking a step, refining motor skills – things that we can’t always do during general education,” he said. “It gives them a chance to build their bodies.

“I also think it gives them a chance to be a kid again. So much of their days they are in classrooms. For the gen. ed. kids, instead of seeing their peers as different, they see them as one of them. They smile, play and laugh. The gen. ed. kids benefit every bit as much as the students using adaptive equipment.”

Cheryl Kiburz, director of student services, says the inclusive physical



Michael Tierney



Ann Griffin

education activities support the district’s goal of meeting the needs of all learners.

“When it comes to physical education, we are dedicated to the development of all and lifelong fitness and leisure skills,” she said. “For some kids, they may need additional supports. Together, both gen. ed. and special ed., we can meet all of their needs.”

Griffin said as in academics, there is no one-size-fits-all to physical education.

“We always ask, ‘does the student need special services to be successful in p.e.?’” Griffin said. “And ‘what is the proper setting for each student?’”

And, occasionally, it’s concluded that a student requires even more time in physical education. For instance, one school in the district has daily physical education for students on the autism spectrum.

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“We focus on running and moving there,” Griffin said. “It’s evidence-based that physical activity increases their ability to focus and decreases challenging behaviors.”

Back at Prairie Ridge Elementary, visitors can readily see lots of activity – and lots of fun. While activity builds the body, the interaction builds the mind.

“When one student first started here, she didn’t want to interact with anyone,” Griffin said. “She was scared and crying. Today, she enjoys being here with other kids.”

Then there’s Brody.

“Two years ago, the only way we could take him from one activity to another was pulling him around on an inner tube,” Tierney said. “But last year, we put him on a stationary bike and his muscles developed. This year, he is walking everywhere.”

And making strides to his future.





Transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten

Prior to the IEP meeting

- Gather appropriate information for planning and decision making for kindergarten program.
- Encourage school/family to take advantage of any opportunities to visit new program, new staff, new playground, etc., and participate in any round-up activities offered by the school.

At the IEP meeting

- Schedule an IEP meeting within 90 days prior to the end of preschool that includes parents, staff of present preschool year, staff of upcoming kindergarten year, LEA rep, others as required or needed.

will be held **June 11-12, 2018**
at the **Iowa Events Center**

Save the date!

- Complete the final Early Child Outcomes.
- Outline future services the child will receive in kindergarten.
- Complete a Prior Written Notice of any proposed changes to the IEP.

In the fall of kindergarten

- Amend IEP to reflect services of kindergarten.

– Courtesy Keystone AEA

Great tips on working with autism

April is Autism Awareness Month. Cheryl Mulligan and Cheryl Case of Green Hills AEA took the time to come up with these tips.

- Early diagnosis is key, and so is learning what helps a child.
- Use visuals – even when you think they are not needed. They do not have to be pictures, they can be written words/objects/phone reminders/lists, etc., depending on the child's comprehension level. Benefits include: structure to the day, teach routines, establish attention, give information, explain social situations, give choices, organize materials in the environment, organize the space in the environment, teach new skills, support transitions, and stay on task.
- Some children need "wait time," time to process a response.
- Some children benefit from being given directions using few words.
- "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism." – Dr. Stephen Shore
- Video modeling can assist a child or parent when you go to a new place or situation. Hospital websites may offer video tutorials of their facility. There are many options of specific activities on YouTube that you can show a child before an event. Preparation is key and can help decrease anxiety and show expected behaviors for routines.

Have a tidbit you'd like to share? Send to jim.flansburg@iowa.gov.