



DAY 38

From Steve Stork

Proverbs 3:13 - Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding,

On my way to lunch along the fifth-grade hallway I heard a chirpy “Excuuuse ME!” A gaggle of girls giggled guardedly, averting their

eyes but delighting in the dig at me. “Excuse me” was my wildly overused teacherly admonition to settle down and pay attention. Returning to teaching after nearly a decade in the YMCA, I was under the misapprehension that ‘discipline’ was a key element in public school physical education. But it was evident that attempts to impose my will was making gym class a drudge for both students and myself.

The formal definition of physical education is “Guiding children toward becoming physically active for a lifetime.” My interpretation...children need experiences that make them feel competent; since they will eventually need to make reasoned choices contributing to their own health and well-being. That hallway jibe caused me to turn my teaching upside-down.

Rather than standing across from a partner on the volleyball court lines, throwing back and forth on command; my new instructions were “Get a ball and a partner. Find a place and distance that is comfortable for you to throw back and forth without losing control of the ball.” I presented challenges that could be adapted to individual abilities rather than directives with a single ‘correct’ outcome. As I gave more control to students, I became the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage. I no longer needed to excuse myself; students quieted themselves quickly in anticipation of each new challenge they knew would prove their abilities better than they thought possible.

Dear God, You created a world of possibilities, populated by people of varying interests and abilities. Your kingdom is open to all who believe; even those who believe in their own unique ways. Therefore, help us look past barriers toward new opportunities. And allow us to accept a constant state of ‘becoming’. We may never achieve perfection, but we can do better day by day. Amen

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