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A recent article presents a strong case for the importance of practicing management strategies in order to maximize physical activity in P-12 physical education classes. In it the authors offer the acronym “FRIG’N” to help instructors ensure that goal (Beighle & Erwin, 2013, p. 16). A cursory look at any dictionary will tell you that “frig” is a slang unit of language; “frig’n” is most used in urban culture to replace a more common curse word (Mercurium, 2003). For teachers and role models, in this case a P-12 environment, is their acronym acceptable? Pascual says that a lack of professionalism or rather “weaknesses in the personal and human training of teachers can harm pupils even more, if that is possible, than weaknesses in their professional knowledge” (2006, p. 76). Beighle and Erwin stress the importance of practicing the acronym so much that it becomes habit. If teachers repeat it over and over again, the likelihood of that word coming out of their mouths increases Freud-like. Students enrolled in teacher certification programs deserve more than a vulgar word to meet a desired outcome. They will be as professional as they are being taught. In this age that is constantly being degraded by social media and the like, the pursuit of professionalism is the constant that provides the rudder to their career ship. This should be earnestly modeled by instructors.

In asking various passers-by how they defined professionalism, I received answers ranging from proper attire and cleanliness, suitable speech and etiquette, being a master of your subject matter, to keeping your wits about you with a deadline. Surely these attitudes and skills are prevalent in your corner of the world! In looking at the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, I agree with the four main areas for teachers to

focus on and develop in their own professional lives: demonstrating professionalism; demonstrating leadership in their learning community; advocating for students, parents or guardians; and advocating for the teaching profession (ISBE, 2013, p. 43). These areas are discussed below and offered as concepts to reinforce that rudder.

Demonstrating professionalism – teachers must constantly research and review legislated standards. This can be done by locating current articles in their disciplines and comparing them to best practices. Having knowledge of the various legal requirements of the position and additional rules for the immediate teaching situation provides protection for both the teacher and student. A working knowledge of emergency response procedures - be they medical emergencies, weather-related, or security-related issues - provides the calm, comforting demeanor required in those situations. Professionals will make it a goal to further their education and actively look for opportunities for personal growth and improvement; they will go as far to pursue a plan as to accomplish that goal.

Demonstrating leadership in learning communities – teachers must be aware of both their developed and evolving leadership skills. Further they will seek out and accept areas in which to apply those skills. Volunteering for positions can be a “slam-dunk” or a “baptism by fire,” but it is always an opportunity to practice, learn and grow. Even being a good follower on a committee is a recipe for future leadership positions. Effective management of tasks as simple as maintaining accurate records and confidentiality reflects well on the teacher.

Advocating for students, parents or guardians – teachers must be aware of the significant role and responsibility they possess. They must have the cognitive ability to understand practices in their working environment that affect students and their families

and be able to discern whether to foster those practices or oppose their use in that particular situation. Societal issues, rightly or wrongly, often shape the learning environment and teachers must, again, understand the impact those issues have on the classroom. Professional teachers make it a rule to model appropriate and respectful behaviors and attitudes to all their constituents. Serving students and families with impartiality and honor is a significant duty to which teachers are called.

Advocating for the profession – first and foremost, a professional teacher models behavior that reflects honesty, integrity, personal responsibility and respect. Using a variety of technology, media, and formats ensures confidence in the teachers’ abilities to meet all students where they are individually. Working together with other teachers, other education professionals, and specialists offers opportunities to enhance the learning environment for themselves and for others. Being involved in a professional organization offers opportunities for personal growth while at the same time provides occasions for mentoring activities. Collegial experiences and growth need not stop with the bachelor degree!

Professionalism is the teacher’s most basic responsibility and should be both actively pursued and earnestly modeled (Murray & Mann, 1993). Increased job security is certainly an added benefit as well as a confidence builder that may set you apart from your peers. The purpose of this essay, by no means comprehensive, is to encourage rookies and veterans alike to review and apply strategies to maintain and enrich their professional lives -- *Professional is as professional does*.

## References

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