Critical Thinking
NASPE Symposium
Teaching Disability Awareness

October 2009
Using a video, the instructor introduces the game of sitting volleyball. In the classroom, the rules and equipment can be discussed before heading to the gym.

with disabilities is by providing persuasive messages (Flower et al., 2007). Such messages—which are used to change the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of others—fall in the exposure level of disability awareness. Online videos have many of these messages; if carefully used, they can be quite effective for teaching disability awareness.

The Advantages of Online Videos
Teachers need to embrace new technology in order to meet the needs of the millennial generation, which has been characterized as being more technology savvy than previous generations (Akagi, 2008; Skiba, 2007). Teachers need to update their teaching strategies and tools so their teaching will be attractive and comfortable for today's students. In fact, standard nine of the National Standards for Beginning Physical Education Teachers (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2003) states that model physical educators "Use information technology to enhance learning and personal and professional productivity" (p. 6). For experienced teachers seeking national board certification, it is recommended that they use technology to engage students and "use the computer to enhance their own teaching" (National Board of Certified Teachers, 2003).

Online videos can be a great means to motivate students to take a more active role in their learning (Burta, 2007; DeAvila, 2008; Skiba, 2007), and online video sites such as YouTube (www.youtube.com) are emerging as a new tool in today's classrooms (Adam & Mowers, 2007; Lapp, 2007). These videos can be a powerful way to teach disability awareness (Campbell, 2007). For example, teachers could assign students a specific video to review, such as one on disability sport; after watching the assigned video, teachers could then facilitate discussion with students.

Traditionally, disability awareness topics are presented in class via disability simulation activities, such as playing games like goalball and beep baseball, or by showing videos (Flower et al., 2007; Herbert, 2000). Instead of just playing the game or sport or watching a VHS or DVD video, students can watch the online video, discuss it, and play it and discuss it again, bringing the learning experience to a deeper level. By incorporating video access through online technology, teachers can expand their teaching strategies and present the content in a different way, meeting a wider variety of learning styles. Teachers may not be able to bring a wheelchair basketball team to their class, but they can show clips of the game to class with a click of the mouse.

It is important, however, for teachers to be very selective in their choice of videos, ensuring that it suits students' interest and needs and meets the class objectives. For example, if the objective is to teach about sport opportunities for children with visual impairments, the teacher can start the class by showing an online video of goalball. After showing the video, the teacher might divide the class into different stations for the students to practice the various individual skills of goalball. This can be followed by a discussion led by the teacher about students' experiences and feelings regarding playing a game in which they do not use their vision. An advantage that online videos have over VHS or DVD videos is that they are free and easy to access, making it possible for teachers to constantly search for new videos that better suit the needs of their students. Additionally, teachers can integrate different teaching modalities, maximizing the amount of feedback that is provided to the students. For example, teachers can download a video to an iPod and set up different stations in which students can see different videos. If teachers want to introduce a wheelchair basketball unit to the class, the teacher can divide the class into three different stations. At one station teachers can show a video related to proper hand position when shooting a ball, then have the students practice this skill. At another station, students could learn some basics of how to maneuver a wheelchair by watching a video. At the last station students can see on their iPod an online video related to the different passes that can be used during a wheelchair basketball game and then practice the different passes. At each station, students could practice the designated skills and do a peer assessment on each one.

Although online videos may improve the educational process, teachers need to be careful when using them because inappropriate material can be accessed as well. One of the most popular sites to retrieve online videos is YouTube. Despite its popularity, YouTube has been banned from some schools due to inappropriate content. To make sure the video they want to share with their students is appropriate, teachers can download a particular video to their computer for preview before showing it to the class. Other sources for online videos include TeacherTube (www.teachtube.com) and PE Universe (www.peuniverse.com). These websites are very similar to YouTube, but the videos available on these sites are created by educators for educational purposes. TeacherTube provides only educational videos, and PE Universe provides videos uploaded by physical education teachers.

How to Search for Online Videos
Most online videos are very easy to access. Searches can be done either by topic or by name. By typing key words or
a phrase in the search box, teachers can find a variety of videos related to the desired topic. However, if a word is misspelled or an inappropriate word or phrase is used, teachers might not be able to find the right videos. For example, if a teacher wants to introduce the game of goalball, he or she could go to YouTube and type “goalball” in the subject area. A number of goalball-related videos will be listed, some of tournaments, others of college students without disabilities playing goalball. However, if the teacher types the words “disability sport” or “goalball,” in PE Universe no hits may appear, while if the phrase “Adapted PE” is typed, teachers may get useful results (see table 1). It is essential to enter different phrases or key words until the desired video is retrieved. To take another example, if a teacher searching for a video on YouTube types “sitting volleyball,” it will result in only a few videos; but when the instructor uses the term “sitting volleyball,” numerous videos of competitions in countries all over the world will turn up.

**Assessing Online Videos**

Akagi (2008) proposed a two-step process for using YouTube in health education in grades ninth through 12th: first, preview the video to determine whether it is age- and content-appropriate, then decide whether the video enhances the lesson. Akagi further proposed that YouTube be used in the secondary health classroom only after verifying that the school’s curriculum guidelines allow it, and that the video be preceded with information connecting the health topic to the video, describing the tone (humorous, graphic, thoughtful), and allowing students to do an alternate activity if the content is graphic. The recommendations presented by Akagi are equally appropriate when using online videos in physical education.

Carefully evaluating videos and providing participation options for students is imperative because disability awareness is a complex topic, and the tone of the video may be difficult to assess. Disability awareness is also an individual process that includes a subjective response to the material. What one student finds funny and relatively light, another student may find powerful and moving.

One tool for assessing online videos is Safran’s (2000) rating scale for evaluating how characters with disabilities are portrayed in movies. This rating is a highly effective tool for drawing attention to both positive and negative representations of disability in feature-length films. In figure 1, Safran’s rating scale has been adapted to fit the short, amateur nature of most online videos for physical education. This modified rating scale helps the evaluator analyze positive and negative representations of disability and can guide teachers as they consider the message of each video and align it to the students’ learning objectives. Dual evaluation is recommended, as it allows for analysis from different perspectives.

**Using Online Videos in Physical Education**

Teachers are encouraged to use the four-step process presented in table 2 to implement online videos during physical education. The four steps are (1) choosing a time to show the video, (2) choosing a video or two related to the topic chosen, (3) setting the tone and showing the video, and (4) allowing time for reflection and discussion. A description of these steps is presented in table 2.

There are three general types of online videos to promote disability awareness: (1) disability sports, (2) major feats executed by individuals with disabilities, and (3) empowerment.

Disability Sport. The first step of disability awareness is to expose students to individuals with disabilities (Wilson & Lie-
Seventeen-year-old wheelchair athlete Aaron Fotheringham inspired the world when he performed the first successful wheelchair back flip in 2006. Such videos can powerfully influence student attitudes about the capabilities of people with disabilities.

How is each of these students successful? Why? What are the similarities and differences between these two scenarios? The videos showed two different skills, but the accomplishments of each student are equally celebrated.

Empowerment. Individuals with disabilities are the most powerful advocates for themselves. Teachers can serve as role models for how to treat students with disabilities; however, seeing individuals with disabilities and hearing them talk can dispel misplaced attitudes and beliefs, perhaps even more effectively. A popular video shows a Special Olympian talking about what the Special Olympics means to him. In the 41-second video, this athlete describes how “fantastic” he feels about competing in the Special Olympics.

Sharing Online Videos
One of the reasons YouTube is so popular is its accessibility and variety of videos. Another benefit of using YouTube is the ability to create a customized “channel.” One such is the APE/PE channel, which provides teachers, parents, and students a centralized, free web site through which to connect with other users and share comments about the videos.

Another feature that helps to connect people with similar interests is “Subscriptions.” Users can subscribe to another user’s channel or favorites, and any newly updated videos will show up on their homepage. Besides subscriptions, users
Figure 1. Evaluating Online Videos That Represent Disabilities

**Directions:** To what extent are the following portrayals of disability conveyed?
1.—Not at all
2.—Somewhat
3.—A great deal

### Positive Representations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Rating Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person with a disability...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. created the video</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. interacts as an equal</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. is part of a mainstream setting with people without disabilities</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. is portrayed as an ordinary person without superhuman abilities</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. provides insight into societal barriers</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. is shown as being capable of a loving relationship, expressing typical sexual needs</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** __________

### Negative Representations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Rating Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person with a disability is portrayed as...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. pitiable or pathetic</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. an object of violence</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. sinister or evil</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. superhuman, overcoming all barriers through personal determination</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. laughable</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. a burden</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. nonsexual</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. living separate from mainstream society</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** __________

**Review and Decision**

For all YouTube videos, provide introductory information including why you chose the video, what the tone is, and what you want the audience to notice in particular about the video.

*Adapted from Safran (2000)*

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**Table 2. Four-Step Process for Using Online Videos in Physical Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Rationale/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Choosing a time to show the video</td>
<td>Many school teachers do not have enough time for activity in physical education, so finding the time when students are focused and attentive may be difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Choosing a video or two related to the topic chosen</td>
<td>The topic chosen must be relevant to the unit. In addition, it cannot be too long, as you may lose the attention of the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3. Setting the tone and showing the video</td>
<td>When selecting a video, wait for a time in which the video can be related to the content taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4. Allowing time for reflection and discussion</td>
<td>Questions should help guide the students’ attention while they are watching the video.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
can also collect specific videos in “Playlists,” which can also be shared. Teachers can create playlists around any topic, like Autism or spina bifida, and have their students view the exact videos that help further their understanding and learning. Teachers can assign a playlist for students to view before or after class, and even during class in small groups.

Online Videos in College Classrooms

Online videos can be used to enhance the learning environment in the college setting as well. In many higher education institutions, physical education teacher candidates are assessed on their use of technology in the classroom, and are required to detail how they incorporate technology into their lesson planning. The increasing expectation that technology will be incorporated into lessons means that teachers must have the ability to effectively assess videos before use.

Professors who want to show the abilities of a child with cerebral palsy, autism, or a visual impairment can easily type in the disability and see a child with that disability doing anything from rock climbing, to skiing, to running races. Many college students may have no experience with a certain disability, and seeing a person with a disability doing various activities may give them a better appreciation for the level of skill that individuals with that disability can have. For example, YouTube videos have helped undergraduate students see the abilities of students with cerebral palsy and learn about modifications that can increase success. A short video of a boy with cerebral palsy rock climbing showed the class what a child with cerebral palsy can do with a few adaptations. The same evaluation considerations and careful reflection used at the K-12 setting should also be used when teaching in higher education.

Summary

Teachers have the responsibility to meet the needs and interests of today’s students. Teachers can achieve this task by incorporating technology into their classrooms. Online videos are a tool that teachers can use to complement their teaching strategies and activities. Using online videos for disability awareness is one way teachers can help their students learn about individual differences, and they can be a great means to motivate students to take a more active role in their learning. Teachers also can use these videos to supplement their lesson activities, especially when trying to demonstrate specific motor skills. Future trends for online video use include showing clips on video iPods as task stations, self and peer evaluation of motor skill performance, and leisure interest selections for individuals with disabilities. Careful selection and implementation of online videos can create an exciting and enriched learning environment for students with and without disabilities.

References


Lapp, A. (2007). Digital video with class: YouTube-like video technologies have found their way into schools. PC Magazine, 26(14), 1.


Skiba, D. J. (2007). Nursing education 2.0: YouTube. Nursing Education Perspective, 28(3) 100-1002.