

Tara has been teaching in the Des Moines Public Schools since 2012. She currently teaches 6th-8th grade physical education at Meredith Middle School where she is also considered an International Baccalaureate teacher and it is her job to teach on a global scale. This means her students become risk-takers, communicators, principled, and balanced through learning activities they may have seen, but never played. They get to explore, touch, and use equipment foreign to their eyes, but average to a student living halfway across the world.

Here is a glimpse into her program.... inquiry based teaching becomes a normal place in her classroom. They watch, react, and write the class expectations. Teambuilding holds a large part in the curriculum. Students choose roles within the class and take ownership of their learning and their assigned groups ability to learn, analyze, and work together in activities. Individualized learning begins with a pre-assessment using Fitnessgram. Students analyze their own scores, write SMART goals, and create a plan to reach their goals. There is something unique and exciting to experience at each of the grade levels. 6th graders start with an inquiry into activities called "Through the Eyes of Another". In this unit students play para-olympic sports and finish the school year with the Meredith Olympics. 7th graders experience a fitness unit where they get to create an individualized fitness program and end the year with outdoor recreation like fishing and geocaching which brings the outdoors to her inner city kids. 8th graders experience more global activities like aussie football, broomball, curling, and Tawkra. By the end of their middle school career, students will have left with having written 8 workouts, 3 dances, 1 game, Heart Rate Informational Poster, 3 warmups, and 2 Team Sport Video Tapes.

Outside of her classes she is a New York Road Runners Strides coordinator where she leads a group of students after school to teach them ways to make running fun. She also has a yoga club for students in the morning. She helps her school host an annual Turkey Trot 5k and she always makes sure her school is a yearly participant in the Live Healthy Iowa events offered.

A co-worker stated in his recommendation that, "Des Moines Public Schools is extremely lucky to have someone like Tara leading the way for educators." As members of this organization, we are lucky to have Tara representing us. She has been a member of IAHPERD since she was a student at the University of Northern Iowa and has served IAHPERD in a variety of roles throughout those years. Tara, we are grateful for your service and that you are always willing to share your knowledge and experiences to help others.

Let's have a round of applause to recognize our state of Iowa Middle School PE Teacher of the Year, Tara Stemsrud.