



THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO TEACHING WEIGHT LIFTING

presented by  PLT4M





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In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of physical education in high schools, with an emphasis on comprehensive fitness programs. Among these, weight lifting stands out as a valuable activity that not only promotes physical well-being but also instills discipline and resilience. For high school teachers venturing into the realm of weight training instruction, this essential guide aims to provide insights and strategies to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for students.

Let's dive in!

1

START WITH THE BASICS TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION

Before delving into the intricacies of weight lifting, high school teachers must establish a strong foundation of movement by teaching the basics. By starting with bodyweight exercises and having progressions for each movement, we allow students to master their technique from the outset. This approach will help build confidence prior to beginning to work with a barbell, creating not only a more positive experience, but a safer one as well!

Begin With Body Weight Movements

Commencing the weight lifting journey with body weight movements lays the groundwork for proper form and technique. While it may seem odd to start a weight training class without any weights, this can make or break the long term success of your program.

At PLT4M, our Intro To Fitness Part 1 course spends 15 classes teaching the five foundational human movements: Squat, Press, Pull, Hinge Lunge. As an entirely body weight course, it can be used at any level, providing a great starting point for beginners.



HELP STUDENTS MASTER THE FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Print out a copy of the Points of Performance Posters to hang up in your weight room!

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Add Movement Progressions for Skill Development

Giving students adequate time to master the basics through body weight classes is critical. During your instruction, focus on how students can scale and modify movements until they are ready for the next progression. Let's look at the "Pull". Many students will not be able to jump up to a pull-up bar and knock out pull-ups from Day 1. Therefore, we need to teach the pull with modifications and scaling options.

Step 1: Inverted Row

The inverted row is a great way to introduce the "Pull". By varying the foot placement in our basic inverted row, we can modify the difficulty of the pull movement. Students can adjust the position of their feet to modify the difficulty. This allows them to continually build up strength until they are ready for the next progression...the pull up!



FEET BACK FOR MORE EASE



FEET FORWARD FOR MORE DIFFICULTY

Step 2: Pull-Up

Once students have built up enough strength through the inverted row, we can introduce them to the pull-up. We can vary the difficulty of the pull-up by adding in bands, or partner assistance. Doing this allows students to further develop their strength while practicing the actual movement, until one day they can perform the pull up without assistance.

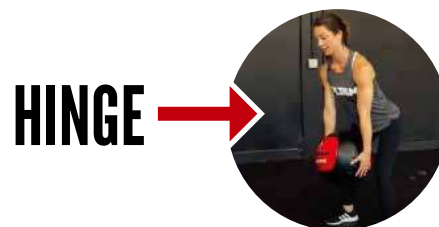


WITH BAND



WITHOUT BAND

Another important progression is the introduction of an external load. In our Intro to Fitness Part 2, we take all the same bodyweight movements from Part 1, and begin teaching their loaded progression. Introducing external loads like PVCs or Medballs further scaffolds our movement instruction, allowing students the ability to further master their skills. Let’s look at some basic movement progressions:



This meticulous approach to scaling, modification, and progression not only reduces the risk of injuries but also instills good habits that will benefit students as they progress to more advanced weight lifting exercises.

For PE Teacher Chris Cabe, utilizing PLT4M’s videos have helped provide tailored progressions for his students at Old Rochester High School in Massachusetts.

“The videos are awesome because they show a modified and more intense variation of different movements. This helps me encourage students to find the right fit and build up to more intense versions as they gain strength and confidence.”

SEE OUR FULL SQUAT PROGRESSION

Includes follow-along videos for each movement!

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Introduce Barbell Movements Gradually

While body weight exercises provide an excellent starting point, the ultimate goal is to transition students to barbell movements. An approach we favor at PLT4M is breaking out the “Powerlifts” and the “Olympic Lifts” into two different phases. This phased introduction ensures that students receive ample time with each movement before ultimately establishing a baseline max and continuing their weight training journey with more personalized programming.

In our Intro to Strength Training Part 1 we focus on the Powerlifts: Back Squat, Deadlift, and Bench Press. From there, we move into Intro to Strength Training Part 2, where we deconstruct the Olympic Lifts, focusing on Overhead Press, Front Squat, and Clean.

Within each program, the first section begins with an empty barbell (only if the student is ready), and in each subsequent section, the student can add weight. In the final section, we establish a “baseline max”. From here, our more personalized programs at the advanced level will develop strength and give them opportunities to add to their max (more on that later).

For a shining example of this gradual movement progression in practice, look no further than Athletic powerhouse Southeast Polk in Iowa.

With the mission of unified strength and conditioning, Southeast Polk structured a plan around long-term athletic development. Jason Christenson, PE Teacher and Strength Coach, describes the layout as a way to build the complete picture of athletic development,

“We wanted to create a plan guiding students from middle to high school. And because we were doing it in physical education, the goal was to be consistent across the school in what and how we taught foundational movements before hitting full weight room workouts.”



To help with consistency, Southeast Polk integrated PLT4M as their programming resource. Drawing from PLT4M's fitness-to-strength program progression, Southeast Polk established a long-term athletic development plan for 7th-12th graders:

7TH Grade – Intro To Fitness

- A robust introduction to foundational human movements (squat, lunge, hinge, press, and pull) via bodyweight and lightly loaded objects.

8TH Grade – Intro To Strength Training

- A comprehensive introduction to the weight room with barbell and dumbbell movements.

9TH-12TH Grade – Intro To Strength Training or Advanced Program Options

- Students who didn't complete Intro to Strength Training in 8th grade must take it before starting advanced programs.
- Students who are ready advance to in-season and off-season training programs (athletes) or personal weight training (general population).
- General population students interested in things other than weightlifting participate in units and curriculum via PLT4M like yoga, bootcamp, and pickleball.



CHECK OUT OUR CURRICULUM PLANNING PLAYBOOK

Tips On Vertically Aligning Your Middle and High School Programming

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2

MOVE BEYOND THE BASICS BY INDIVIDUALIZING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE

Once students have mastered the barbell movements, and established baseline maxes, the next crucial step is to move beyond the basics by individualizing the student's experience. This means recognizing and adapting to the varied fitness levels present in the classroom, and ensuring that each student's experience is tailored to their unique abilities, interests, and goals.

Cater to Individuals' Needs By Differentiating Programming

Coordinating your curriculum from middle school through high school can help ensure that kids have a common foundation to build on when they get to high school. However, this takes time, and a lot of coordination (and a lot of help from the guidance office)! Therefore, most high school weights classes are likely to have a mixed bag of students and athletes, all with mixed abilities.

Having a system in place to categorize students by ability and goals and then tailor programs accordingly is vital. This ensures that beginners aren't being forced to perform movements they aren't ready for, and conversely, more advanced lifters don't lose interest by being forced to do beginner level programs.

As discussed in the previous section, this means having an "On-Ramp" approach with body weight based programming, and introductory barbell training. From there, more advanced program options would include In-Season and Off-Season training for athletes, and more challenging weight training programs for non-athletes. These could be options like Personal Weight Training, Crossfit, Powerlifting, or Personal Fitness, to name a few.

At Cordova High School in California, PE Teacher and Strength Coach Chris Tamez describes what any weights teacher can relate to, "In each class, there are in-season, off-season, and general population students that require different training programs and workouts throughout the school year."

For Chris, PLT4M makes differentiation easy, *"The biggest thing with PLT4M is that I can effectively train multiple groups at once in a busy 50-student class. It streamlines our approach to make the most out of a short class period. Because the app personalizes the weights, every student has an individualized workout with a click of a button."*



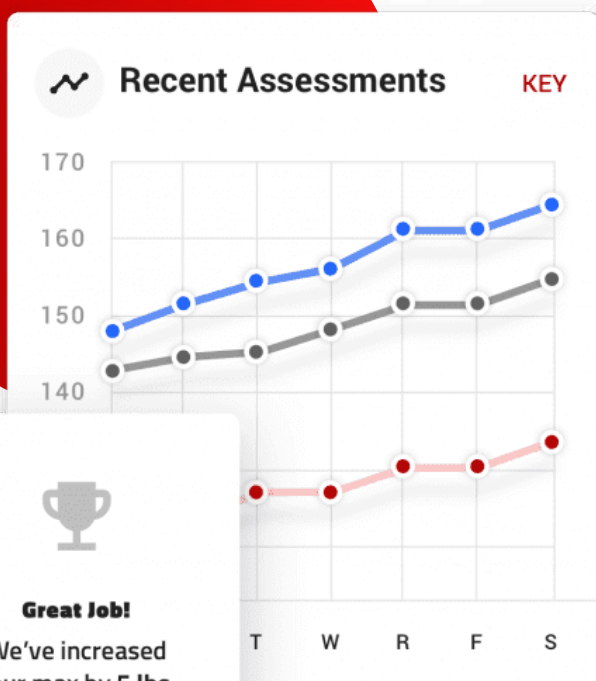
Individualize Training for Optimal Results

Beyond ensuring that every student and athlete gets a program that aligns with their abilities and goals, you can further individualize their weight training experience through the use of percentage-based programming. This will ensure that not only do they have the right program, but every exercise and set comes with precise instructions for the weight to use.

At PLT4M, our “Advanced” programs such as Personal Weight Training, or Off-Season, leverage their maxes from Intro to Strength Training, to personalize the daily workout.

To further optimize results, we like to use a concept we call “worksets”, which incorporate the concept of “progressive overload”. While nothing new in concept, the ability to automate the process can be game changing.

With a prompt to log their reps on their final set of a core lift, students receive instant feedback, and the system adjusts their max up 5lbs, down 5 lbs, or keeps it the same.



Steve Turkington, PE teacher at Baraboo in Wisconsin, describes the impact worksets have had, *“With weekly worksets, students don’t have to wait until the middle or end of the semester to see progress. The worksets allow students to see real-time feedback week over week that can be extremely motivating. If a student isn’t showing growth, we know something is wrong. It helps us have conversations and change our approach to meet students where they are at.”*

More on this next! ”

THE #1 SOFTWARE FOR WEIGHT TRAINING CLASSES

Discover The Transformative Impact Of PLT4M's Professionally Crafted Content and *Easy-to-Use Software*



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3

IMPROVE YOUR PROCESS BY LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

In the modern educational landscape, technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing the learning experience, and weight lifting instruction is no exception.

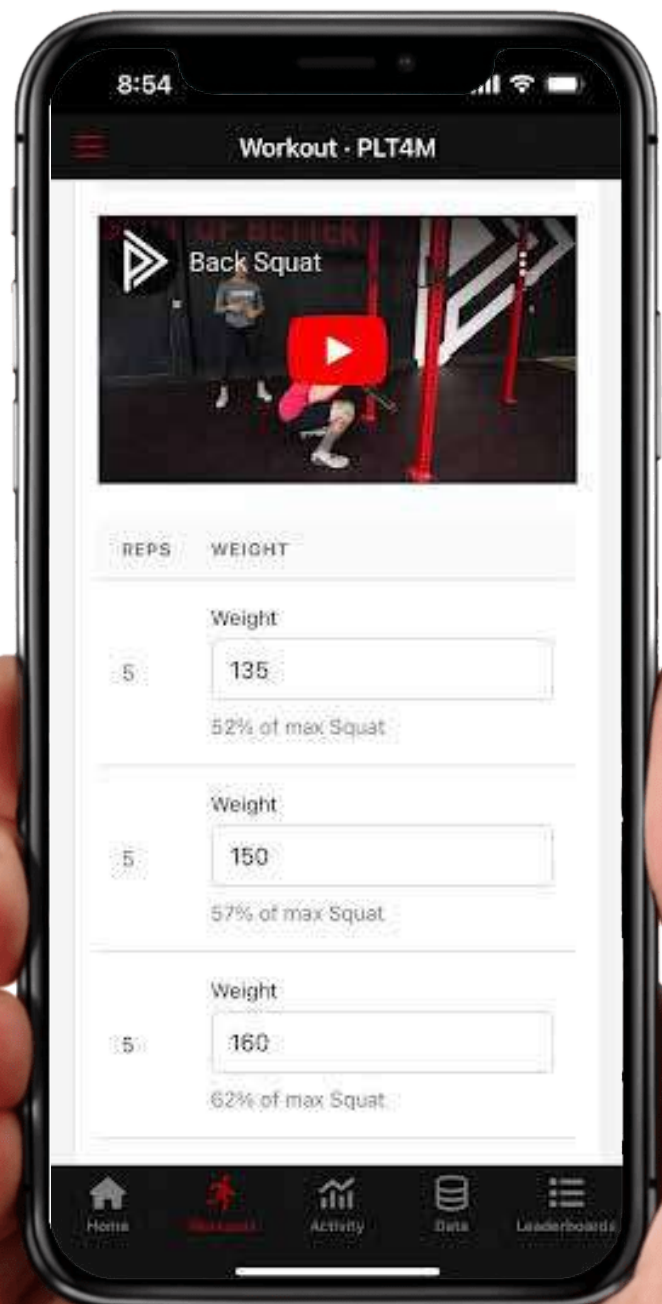
Technology can help improve classroom management, while also providing staff with crucial data to modify their curriculum over time. Furthermore, it can help staff collaborate and communicate with each other to ensure a consistent training experience.

Make Your Curriculum Responsive

Leveraging data allows teachers to adapt and refine the weight lifting curriculum in real-time. Identifying trends and assessing the effectiveness of different exercises or teaching approaches enables instructors to make informed adjustments.

This data-driven approach to curriculum design ensures that the program remains responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of the student body. By tailoring the content based on data insights, teachers create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that resonates with students, fostering a sustained interest in weight lifting.

Similar to the staff at Baraboo, Bart Stricklin, PE Teacher and Strength coach at Wyoming's largest high school, uses PLT4M to adapt his programming over time. *"What I like most about using PLT4M is the ability to edit and adjust the program to fit our exact goals. There is a great structure in place with what PLT4M offers, and it is easy for anyone to tailor the existing programs to their specific needs."*



Keep Class On Track

Keeping students on task is important for any PE class, but especially for weight training. This is even more important if you have shorter class times. Here, technology can prove to be a useful ally.

One way to improve the efficiency of your workouts is to automate the weight calculation for students' lifts. Rather than needing to reference percentage charts, or record things into a log book, students can have all their information preloaded into workouts. This can be done with low tech options like Google Sheets, or software, like PLT4M.



PE Teacher Kyle Barth notes a marked improvement in workouts. “The efficiency of being able to distribute training programs complete with weights used, percentages of 1RM, customized descriptions or notes, etc. for many different groups of kids or teams has been a game changer!”



You can also use display technology to keep kids on track. This could be as simple as an interval timer. At PLT4M, we use a Live Feed that teachers can screencast to a TV or Projector. This allows staff and students to see exactly where they are at in the workout in relation to the rest of the class. This approach maintains the individualization we

want, but also brings some order and structure to the weight room.

For Strength Coach Ryan Jones, the individualization of training has helped students get the most out of their time in the weight room, while the display screen helps keep everyone on task.

“We display the workout on a TV monitor for everyone to see and follow. But from there, students enter and log workouts right on their individual devices. It has helped us streamline and maximize our time in the weight room.”

Collaborate With Coaches

Athletic programs have long embraced the importance of weight training. However, with students playing multiple sports, working jobs, and balancing life and school, requiring them to get to the weight room every day outside of school hours is a big ask!

Physical education can be a secret weapon for high school athletic departments.

By providing time during the day for athletes to get their lifts in, your PE staff can not only deliver on the mission of empowering student wellness, but win the support of coaches at the same time.

Some questions to consider when attempting to implement this approach:

- Who will develop the program and how will it be accessed by kids during class?
- How will coaches keep track of their athletes who lifted during the day?
- How will coaches build teamwork and competition amongst their team if they don't all workout at the same time?



Technology can once again streamline your approach by making sure that all programming and data live in one central location, providing easy access to staff and students.

At Plainfield South, the school is seeing the impact of coordinated, school-wide weight training.

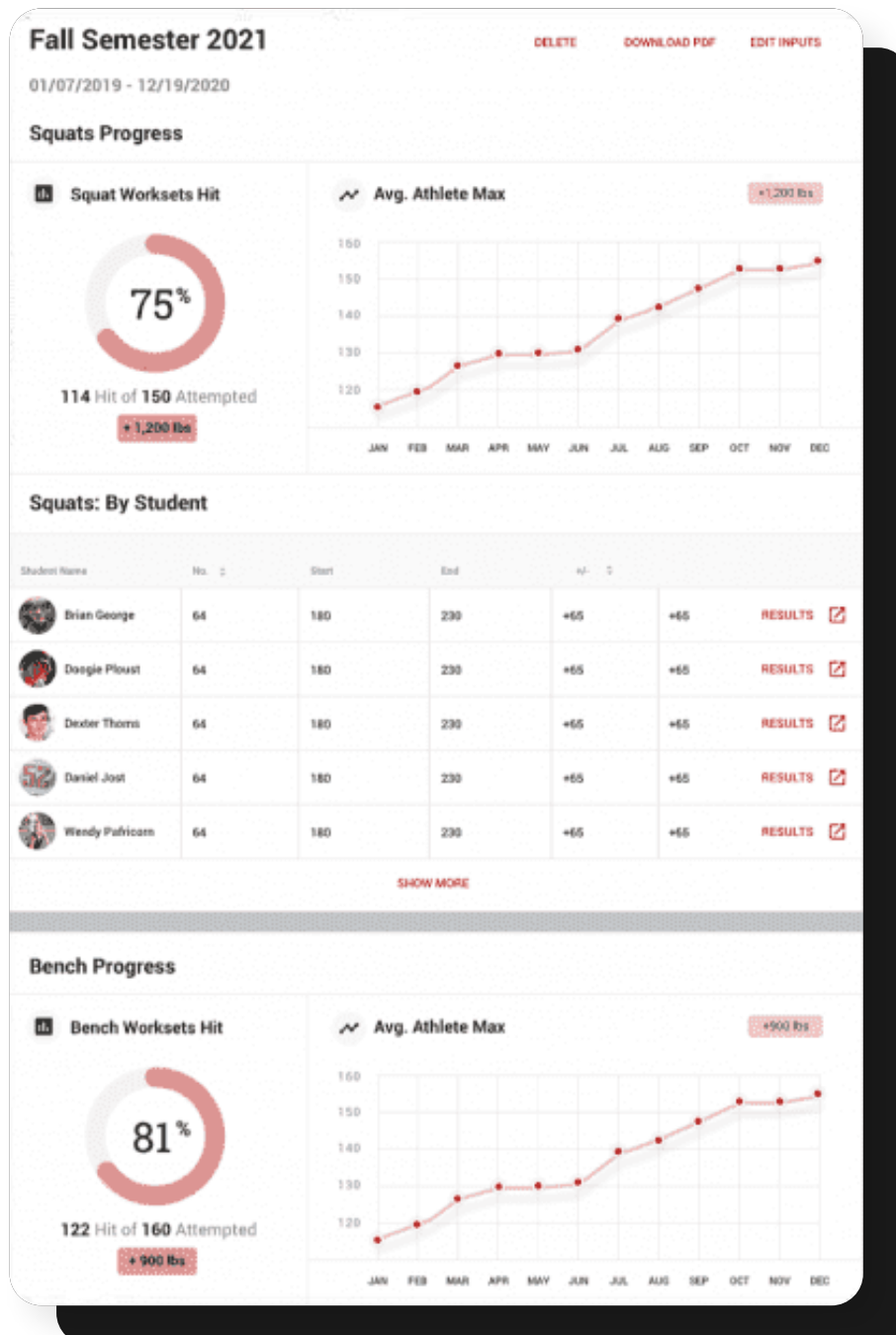
PE Teacher Brian Beck explains, “[In the past] It was very disjointed. We had a good group of teachers and coaches trying to get students

and athletes into the weight room, but we were all over the place.”

“We saw physical education classes as a place to bring everyone together. Not only would we get more students involved, but it would also free up students’ already hectic schedules after school.”

By coordinating training amongst PE staff and Athletic Coaches, the school has seen weight training enrollment ramp up from one class to twelve.

For Bart Stricklin in Wyoming, software has improved the ability of staff to work together, *“With PLT4M, we have a centralized training hub. Everything is right there for the students. For teachers and coaches, we can all be on the same page with how we train our athletes, even without everyone being in the building.”*



4

USE DATA TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND EXCITEMENT

Technology allows for the collection and analysis of data related to students' performance and progress. Teachers can use this data to identify trends, celebrate individual achievement, and show students the impact of their effort.

Celebrate Individual Achievements

Acknowledging and celebrating individual achievements, regardless of the magnitude, creates a positive and inclusive atmosphere. High school teachers should highlight the progress made by each student, reinforcing the idea that success is personal and can be achieved at different rates. This positive reinforcement encourages students to embrace their unique fitness journeys.

Joe Ryan, PE Chair and Coach at Sycamore High School in Illinois has a bell in the weight room students can ring when they hit a personal best or log a new milestone.

“Every student gets a chance to ring the bell when they hit a new personal best. From our top-level athletes to students in the weight room for the first time, we make it a point to celebrate success in all forms at Sycamore.”



Because the workouts are delivered through PLT4M using the student’s 1-to-1 devices, acknowledging these achievements is easy!

“We have all the data in one place. Once a student logs a new weight or time, I can easily highlight and showcase students’ improvement and progress.”

At Plainfield South in Illinois, the staff has also incorporated personal best bells, but also t-shirts, and a “weight training champ of the day award.”

PE Teacher Jim O’Connell says that all the different pieces are helping to build the weight training program in an exciting way,

“With PLT4M, we can see the gains charted over time. We pull top performers and improvements that showcase all the hard work that our students are putting in during class. Data is becoming a driving force for our success.”

Another Illinois school has found leaderboards to be an immensely popular way to celebrate individual achievement. According to Weight Room Coach DeAndre Smith, “Seeing the numbers on PLT4M motivates students in a completely different way. Better yet, the leaderboards we have on PLT4M and displayed in the weight room have sparked a new level of excitement at the school.”

Whether it is a bell, t-shirts, stickers, or leaderboards, be sure that you have a system in place to recognize student improvement and celebrate progress!

CARBONDALE COMMUNITY HIGH STRENGTH RECORDS			
MEN'S TOP 5			
BENCH	SQUAT	CLEAN	DEADLIFT
Chris Lee - 225	Chris Lee - 400	Chris Lee - 215	Chris Lee - 500
Kaaron Fumic - 255	Chris Lee - 405	Chris Lee - 205	Kaaron Fumic - 495
Chris Lee - 215	Austin Aard - 385	Jon Weidner - 195	Kevin Hays - 425
Lucas Hays - 215	Chris Lee - 365	Chris Lee - 185	Kevin Hays - 425
Chris Lee - 215	Kyle Miller - 325	Chris Lee - 175	Chris Lee - 385
WOMEN'S TOP 5			
Tella Scott - 150	Tanya Trutt - 315	Tanya Trutt - 195	Tanya Trutt - 335
Tanya Trutt - 135	Aerie Summels - 270	Aerie Summels - 100	Aerie Summels - 245
Stella Ghanter - 115	Jessica Murta - 215	Chris Lee - 85	Chris Lee - 225
Chris Lee - 100	Noelle Bank - 255	Chris Lee - 85	Aurora F - 205
Chris Lee - 95	Kyle Marshall - 245	Chris Lee - 75	Zanevill - 200

Provide Visibility Into Personal Progress

Data provides students with a transparent view of their progress, showcasing incremental improvements over time. Witnessing tangible advancements in strength, technique, or endurance serves as a powerful motivator. This sense of accomplishment encourages students to persist in their efforts and further invest in their fitness journey.

While technology is not required to collect data and demonstrate progress, it can radically improve the efficiency of analysis for both staff and students. Furthermore, technology can make data more accessible for students throughout their time in class, providing consistent encouragement.

For Annie Hinkhouse at Reedsburg High School, technology has been a game-changer in student engagement.

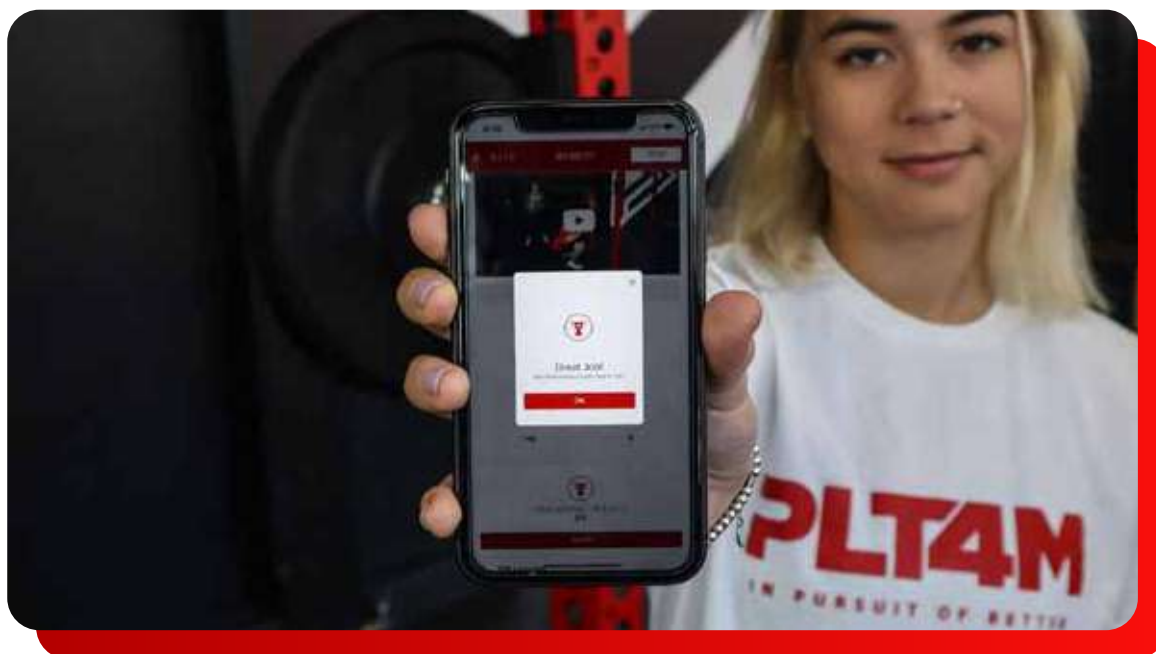
“Before incorporating technology in PE, the teacher held all the information. As a result, students had no idea what their data or progress looked like because they couldn’t easily access it. With PLT4M, students can see everything that has ever been logged. Now, they are more engaged and excited about PE.”

Personalize Feedback

Data-driven insights allow teachers to provide personalized feedback to each student based on their performance and progress.

A personalized approach to feedback not only boosts motivation but also instills a genuine enthusiasm for the learning process. Students understand that their hard work and dedication are not only noticed but actively acknowledged. This connection reinforces the idea that consistent effort leads to tangible achievements. As a result, students are more likely to engage wholeheartedly in the learning process, knowing that their commitment is an integral part of their success

Once again, the concept of a weekly workset can be incredibly impactful. Giving students instant access to see their max move up helps encourage on-going effort and participation.



5

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE, AND MAKE IT HOLISTIC

Weight lifting isn't just for football players! It is an incredibly valuable lifetime skill that should be taught to every high school student. To make sure that students have a positive experience, we must make it accessible and welcoming for everyone. Furthermore, we should take a holistic approach that teaches students about the importance of recovery and nutrition, and how they impact weight training progress. To complement this, it is important to encourage self-reflection and goal setting in order for your students to learn how to best utilize their newfound skills to work towards a positive outcome.

Make It Accessible for ALL



Historically, the high school weight room has been dominated by male athletes. But the benefits of weight training are not limited to the athletic field. All students, male and female, athlete and non-athlete, can reap the benefits of a strength and conditioning program.

Strength and conditioning classes should be accessible to everyone!

Rich Hargitt, a high school football coach and PE teacher at Emmett High School in Idaho, saw the weight room being dominated by his football team. He set out to change the culture of the weight room so that more female students wanted to take the strength & conditioning classes, *“Our main goal as educators is to promote healthy and happy lifestyles.”*

“This class provides opportunities for each and every student to embrace the various aspects of that life.” Now, Hargitt is proud to see more female students taking part in the class and taking advantage of the high-energy workouts that he runs during physical education class.

At Pennfield High School in Michigan, PE teacher Molly Collins created a Womens Fitness Class after realizing the majority of her elective weights and fitness class was boys. In order to create a more comfortable environment for female students, Molly worked with guidance to create an all female elective, and the results have been inspiring.

Furthermore, you may need to make modifications to programming for students with additional needs. Chris Cabe of Old Rochester in Massachusetts, finds it helpful to be able to easily modify workouts through PLT4M, *“We can adjust workouts so every student can explore lifetime fitness. For example, the other day, we modified a deadlift to a different exercise for our adaptive students, and they still got to have a great workout and built new fitness skills.”*





Encourage Self-Reflection and Goal Setting

Empowering students to take ownership of their fitness journey is a key aspect of quality weight training. Teachers can facilitate this by encouraging self-reflection and goal setting. By setting realistic and achievable fitness goals, students become more invested in their progress. This individualized approach not only promotes a sense of autonomy but also fosters a mindset of continuous improvement.

To do this effectively, it is imperative that teachers provide students with an easy to use system to log goals, reflect on those goals, and evaluate their progress.

At PLT4M, students have their own accounts, accessible on any device. With this, students can track their participation data, and evaluate their progress against their goals. This visualization of their fitness journey can be hugely motivating for students.

Take a Holistic Approach

Students must understand that weight training isn't just about lifting weights. It is also about giving the body time to recover and rebuild. To emphasize the importance of recovery, it can be useful to introduce things like Yoga, Pilates, and Flexibility. Not only will these activities help the body recover, they will improve mobility, and thus, enhance performance.

For schools with block scheduling, these types of activities are great ways to end the class. For schools with shorter class times but class everyday, this can be a great way to “recover” in the middle of the week.

For Steve Wagner of Riley County, the non-weight training programs provided by PLT4M have helped create a more positive experience, “We never did yoga before PLT4M, and now those lessons are some of our favorites. We even created a space where we have a blow-up projector set up so students can do these different programs. It helps for students to know they don't have to lift every class.”

Furthermore, pairing weight training activities with nutritional knowledge can be a powerful one-two punch. Some schools may have nutrition covered under their health classes. If not, finding time to help students understand the importance of what they eat, and how it will not only impact their progress in the weight room, but their overall wellness, is crucially important.



CHECK OUT A SAMPLE OF OUR INTRO TO NUTRITION PROGRAM!

Comprehensive E-book that focuses on providing student and athletes with the knowledge and tools they need to optimize their nutrition for performance.

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PLT4M

As a Weight Training teacher, you have a tremendous opportunity to instill a lifelong love of exercise in your students. By starting with the basics, you can create a strong foundation for the rest of their lives, and help build confidence from the outset.

Individualizing students' experience with programming tailored to their ability and goals will help keep them engaged and motivated. Be sure to have a systematic approach to differentiating lessons and programs within mixed-class settings.

Using technology and data will not only save you time, but it will help create a more positive experience for students. Whether individualizing workouts, tracking and celebrating success, or sharing results with coaches, the right technology can make all the difference in the success of your class.

At PLT4M, we specialize in helping schools develop, implement, and run successful weight training programs in Physical Education and Athletics. If you want to learn more about our approach, our content, or our technology, we'd love to speak with you!



THANK YOU FOR READING

Want to learn more about PLT4M?



QUESTIONS?

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