

2006 HONOREE

## Jerry D. Styrsky

Thornwood High School, South Holland, IL  
Wellness and Sports Education • 9th-12th Grade



**Years Teaching:** 14

**Average Class Size:** 38

**Classes Taught Per Day:** 1

**School's % of ESL Students:** 1%

**School Type:** Public, Suburban

**Type of Class:** Fieldhouse

“There are many moments that have left a lasting impression on me, but one in particular stands out in my mind. It occurred during parent-teacher conferences two years ago. A parent approached me and asked me if her daughter’s grade in PE was correct. From her questioning, I assumed she had received a failing mark, but when I looked up her grade, I discovered she had earned an ‘A.’ As the mother and I continued to talk, I soon learned that her daughter had never passed PE before, and her mom was ecstatic and in shock. She proceeded to tell me how her daughter was losing weight, eating healthier, and was excited about working out because she was seeing the results and the benefits of her hard work. Her daughter was so excited about her ‘new self’ that she convinced her mother to join the local recreation center to workout as a family, and the whole family also radically changed their dietary habits as well. Throughout the semester, the mother called me three more times to thank me for helping her daughter both for her physical, as well as her mental well-being, and this past year that young lady became a student leader to the PE Department. I cannot tell you the excitement and happiness I feel when I hear stories like this.”

“I wholeheartedly agree with Socrates that a sound body equals a sound mind. I personally work out five times per week and I also coach basketball and coached track. I have had various students join me for running



and weight lifting workouts throughout the school year. I not only teach quality of life, but I model it to our students. Our department believes in leading and encouraging people by example, not simply by verbal instruction, so we are thoroughly excited for the opportunity to teach and workout daily with the students during their PE classes.”

“Mr. Styrsky is an outstanding educator who has balanced his work ethic, vision, creativity, and leadership to create a fantastic program. In the past, a large portion of our student body disliked PE because of the competitive, skill-based team sports that dominated the curriculum and activities. If a student was not a natural athlete, he or she did not want to be routinely beaten by those that were. Now, thanks to Mr. Styrsky, our students compete with themselves, being motivated by their own improvement in skills, aerobic and anaerobic fitness, strength, and body image. And a healthier student body results in a healthier school climate and culture.”

– Gary Lester, principal,  
Thornwood High School

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

PEP Grant Recipient (2001) • Assistant coach, Thornwood Track Team (Four State Championships, 2001-2004)