Aside from being energetic, friendly and fun – as her students say – Stacey Levy is passionate about keeping kids moving for the many benefits physical exercise renders outside of the Stanley gymnasium. “Beyond the benefits of physical activity to promote learning, which I feel is obvious but not intuitive to many, I like that the time students have with me isn’t the only time they’re moving at Stanley. I’ve been in schools where the only exercise kids get outside of class is for gym; so, the P.E. class was treated like recess. Here, we prioritize kids being outside and getting physical breaks. A lot of social cues and skills can be created and come out of what we play,” she adds. “We all need to learn to lose, to take turns … there’s a lot that comes out social-emotionally through physical activity.”

Working on a curriculum together, Stacey, Chris Delmedico and Donna Meallet, come up with a K-8 physical education program that’s both challenging and thoughtful. It’s designed to introduce and practice skills, teach kids to play together, and also to inspire a love of being active. That’s a lot to do, but the three P.E. teachers find working in collaboration is a good way to mentor new staff and transition and maintain what the K-1-2 learn to 3-4-5 and then to 6-7-8 students.

Stacey’s role is to teach grades 3-4. When students arrive to Stacey’s classes, first they run two laps (for energy release and cardiovascular, says Stacey), then they begin a short mini-choice that might introduce or reinforce different kinds of equipment. What follows is a “movement of the week” – anything from a yoga pose to a plyometric drill to cartwheels or lunges. Then comes a short game or skill finally the day’s main game or activity. In each two-week unit, like soccer for example, the games and skills relate to the unit. For 45-55 minutes, the kids are moving and learning non-stop.

“With some of my units,” says Stacey, “I like to get the kids involved in activities and movement to keep us physically healthy, which will also help our mental and social selves as well as our health and wellness. I think it’s important to promote lifelong activity in our society.”

What’s fun about P.E. at Stanley? “Kids are enthusiastic and are so willing to try new games and activities,” says Stacey. “The 3-4-5 age level gives me the freedom to explore new games, activities, units. I’ve added a lot since I’ve been here. Kids still want to do the traditional – they can’t wait for soccer! But here I have the autonomy to create activities based on the unit and the interests of the kids and the support I get to simply try new things.”

Stacey’s classes are anything but routine. “Kids are motivated by new activities,” says Stacey, “and represent the best parts of Stanley: The love of learning for students as well as teachers.” Added to the Curriculum this year is a stand-alone unit on golf. Like fencing – a pursuit that requires more safety and infrastructure – the golf unit’s instructors come from outside of Stanley, and the culminating activity takes place off-site. “Units like fencing and golf,” says Stacey, “benefit from an expert. With a few classes taught by our partner (in the case of Golf, a Park Hill Golf Course pro), the students get a few classes of deep instruction, skills practice at Stanley with birdie balls, and a field trip at the end. This way, kids get the idea of the swing, and fundamentals of skills they need so the field trip to the range ends up more successful.”

As you’d expect from a Stanley P.E. teacher excited about creativity, in between skills units, Stacey offers the games and activities that promote problem solving and imagination. One favorite of Stacey’s 3rd and 4th graders: Benchball. “All the kids need to do,” she explains, “is to get onto the bench.” Easy enough? There’s hoops to jump through (literally and figuratively) a way to free your opponents bench standers – it’s frenetic and fun. The idea is a mash-up of a game Donna created and one Stacey’s sister, a gym teacher in Massachusetts, created. Kids also look forward to noodle war “Star Wars tag,” “Capture the Chicken-Fish” and others alongside kickball, lacrosse or capture the flag outside. These kinds of games all teach different skills and lessons. And here a Vince Lombardi quote comes to mind, “If you can’t accept losing, you can’t win.” Says Stacey, “I feel it is important for students to understand that mistakes are okay and that they need to take risks whether they win or lose.”

Stacey has her Bachelor’s of Science in Physical Education from the University of Vermont, with a minor in Nutrition and
concentration in Athletic Training. She has a Master's and Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies from Boston University where she MEd in Counseling specializing in Sports and Exercise Psychology. That degree accounts for one of her proudest accomplishments: Receiving her advanced degree at BU while still teaching full-time. Did we say Stacey’s also a certified athletic trainer? She is, but she is ever drawn back to teaching and coaching.

Away from school, Stacey enjoys time with family as well as running, skiing and yoga. She grew up in Falmouth, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, and can’t help but love and miss the ocean. To get that dose, Stacey and her family (husband Corey, daughter Sydney, son Jack), make a trek eastward every year. The pattern is to spend time with family, go to the beach and catch up before heading to Maine’s Camp Manitou where Corey runs the staff, and Stacey, former staff herself, once ran the sophomore unit of campers and counselors.

Before joining Stanley in 2009, Stacey was a teacher, coach and advisor at an independent school outside of Boston, Thayer Academy, where she coached girl’s hockey. After moving to Colorado for her husband’s education, Stacey looked for a similar school. “Once I visited and interviewed at Stanley, I knew I’d found a community I wanted to be part of.” Her biggest career contributions are positive sports psychology, mindfulness and physical education – all of which she says are life-long activities for students. At Stanley, Stacey coached soccer, field hockey and basketball before having her own children, and now coaches girl’s soccer. “I have high hopes,” she adds with a smile, “for our many talented and enthusiastic 6-7-8 girls this season!”