

PEDAGOGY

Power Play: Leveraging Early Role Modeling in PETE to Influence Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

This article details how two teacher education programs are leveraging role modeling to influence teacher candidates (TCs) by providing a prolonged, immersive, and high quality physical education (PE) activity experience early in each program and by systematically referring to and reflecting upon that experience in subsequent courses across the program. This early experience has been coined “Grade A Physical Education.” Effective health and PE programs can help empower children to lead healthy and active lives. To help future health and PE teachers be effective, PE teacher education (PETE) programs, in part, need to consider the extensive work done on teacher socialization and teacher education curriculum design. Grade A PE has been informed by such research and systematically addresses critical professional preparation issues including but not limited to recruitment and retention, occupational socialization, and cultural relevance and inclusivity. This foundational activity-based experience provides vast opportunities for PETE programs to connect with and positively affect TCs’ pedagogical values, knowledge, and skills. Therefore, this article presents two Grade A PE prototypes, each from a different university. It

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describes efforts made by each institution to leverage early role modeling to influence TCs' perceptions of and ability to teach PE for learning. Additionally, it offers key recommendations for the successful design and implementation of Grade A PE. Ideally, the reader will consider the need for and understand the components of Grade A PE, will examine the two prototypes presented, and will ultimately be inspired to design and implement similar experiences in their own teacher education programs.

A physical education teacher education (PETE) faculty member asks teacher candidates (TCs) during a lesson in an Introduction to Teaching Physical Education course, “Can you imagine a high school physical education class that is energized and festive, where students show up early, give 100% effort, are all highly active, demonstrate leadership and teamwork, genuinely cheer the efforts of their classmates, and learn?” It is a challenging question and sadly one that many TCs cannot imagine because they did not experience such a program during their time as pupils in physical education (PE). Perhaps an even more profound and pressing question is, how do we, PETE faculty, best help TCs design, implement, and sustain high quality PE programs when the concept is so completely foreign to most of them?

The influence of the K–12 acculturation period is exceptionally powerful as TCs form robust beliefs and biases about PE and PE teachers (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Lawson, 1983). Accordingly, PE TCs need and benefit from real-world experiences as pupils in quality K–12 PE programs. Some TCs' K–12 experiences likely align with best practices (i.e., SHAPE America, 2009), but the unfortunate reality is many do not, particularly at the secondary level. Inasmuch, TCs enter PETE programs as individuals with unique, well-established, and likely flawed ideologies regarding PE and PE teachers. Even as PETE faculty attempt to teach for and reinforce characteristics of quality PE, such processes and content are mediated by TCs who have vastly different, and often competing, experiences and perspectives (Betourne & Richards, 2015). Striving to reconcile these differences is not new, but given the type of experience TCs have as pupils in K–12 PE programs and the persistent nature of personal perspectives, coupled with the need to address recruitment and retention issues, experimenting with alternative and innovative

approaches in the PETE program is warranted (O’Neil & Richards, 2018; Richards et al., 2013). One such idea is to provide TCs with a shared, exemplary, and prolonged activity-based experience as pupils early in the PETE program so that they develop a mutual perspective of quality PE. Subsequently, this firsthand foundational quality PE experience can be systematically utilized by university faculty and teacher candidates as a point of reflection, discussion, and aspiration throughout the remainder of the undergraduate program.

We have coined this approach “Grade A Physical Education” and it has been employed by the teacher education programs at Appalachian State University (App State) and the University of West Georgia (UWG). In short, Grade A PE is a prolonged foundational activity-based PE experience taught by highly qualified, effective instructors applying best practices while using research-verified, teacher-tested curriculum and instruction models that promote physical literacy. Considering teacher candidates have observed their own K–12 teachers for upward of 13,000 hr (Lortie, 1975), coupled with the notion that most incoming PE majors have not had exemplary high school experiences, we believe providing an approach such as Grade A PE is a necessary component of the teacher education curriculum.

According to Curtner-Smith et al. (2008), PETE programs are considered one of the weakest forms of socialization. Although this may be for a variety of reasons, PETE faculty do have the ability to influence TCs’ thoughts and perceptions related to PE (O’Neil & Richards, 2018). Accordingly, by way of Grade A PE, faculty can offer all TCs a shared, positive socializing agent early in the curriculum and a model to reference as they progress through the PETE program.

This article presents two Grade A PE prototypes, each from a different university. We outline the efforts made by each institution to leverage early role modeling to influence TCs’ perceptions of and ability to teach PE for learning. We also offer key recommendations for the successful design and implementation of Grade A PE. Ideally, the reader will consider the need for and understand the components of Grade A PE, examine the two prototypes presented, and ultimately design and implement similar experiences in their own teacher education programs.

Appalachian State University

Program Overview

Students completing the program of study in Health and Physical Education (HPE) at App State earn a bachelor of science degree with a K–12 HPE professional educator’s license. The HPE major curriculum consists of 45 semester hours of coursework and operates in a coordinated sequence, utilizing a cohort grouping system over four semesters. Each semester of coursework is referred to as a professional block (pro-block). This pro-block structure allows for a vertical model of integration where salient knowledge, skills, and dispositions are initially introduced and systematically developed across the curriculum through a variety of highly connected classroom, laboratory, and field-based teaching–learning experiences. Each successive teaching–learning experience across the curriculum requires the integration and application of increasingly sophisticated knowledge and pedagogy.

In addition, HPE majors select an 18–semester hour second academic concentration in either sport science and coaching or public health and complete 24 semester hours of professional education coursework, which includes a 12–semester hour student teaching internship as part of the degree requirements.

Grade A Physical Education Overview

At App State, Grade A PE takes place in the Introduction to Health, Physical Education, and Coaching (HPEC) course, which is situated in Pro-Block 1. The course meets 2 days/week for 75 min/day, is open to all students, has no pre- or co-requisites, and is organized into two distinct yet related segments, each lasting for one half of the semester. Segment 1 is classroom-based and like most introductory courses provides an overview of the HPEC professions, surveying issues integral to effective, professional practice in HPEC. Example topics include HPEC histories; national and state organizations and standards; learning theories, philosophies, ethics, and appropriate practices; trends, problems, and issues affecting the HPEC professions; diversity; and technology in HPEC. During this segment, specific teaching–learning activities in many of the topics listed purposefully prepare TCs for more fully understanding, valuing,

and assessing the pending Grade A PE experience. For example, TCs complete a personal biography assignment that requires a reflective analysis on their experiences in K–12 PE, including evaluations of the characteristics of their former PE teachers, and on their instructional practices and programs. Such information stimulates preliminary, albeit relevant and necessary, conversations regarding effective PE teachers and programs.

In Segment 2, Grade A PE begins in earnest. This segment engages TCs as pupils in a high quality “secondary-like” PE activity-based experience for a prolonged period (2 days/week for 7 weeks; 75 min/lesson). It utilizes the SPARK High School Physical Education program (Hart et al., 2011), a hybrid Sport Education (SE)/Tactical Games (TG)/Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model, to best showcase the HPEC program’s philosophy regarding quality secondary PE. A variety of nontraditional content such as orienteering, pickleball, cricket, speedball, and Kinball is selected, with each content typically being taught across two lessons (see Table 1). The instructor intentionally selects relatively novel content to pique interest and to provide for a more authentic, enriching teaching–learning experience for both the TCs and the instructor. However, they also select activities that are tactically similar to more common activities in which TCs are likely to have engaged previously. This “pairing” capitalizes on tactical transfer and accelerates learning of the novel content. For example, speedball is tactically similar to basketball, soccer, and football, and although speedball is relatively novel, the relationship among these invasion games gives TCs a better chance to learn the activity quickly.

Assessments of fitness, skill, and experience and dispositions are administered at the beginning and end of the 7-week experience. TCs use preassessment data to develop individual goals, and in alignment with the tenets of Sport Education, these data are also utilized in the creation of fair and equitable groups that persist for the entire experience. These groups engage in a team-building process, developing team names, mascots, slogans, and so forth; acknowledge and sign a fair-play agreement; and are assigned essential roles (e.g., coach, fitness trainer, official, scorekeeper, etc.) to complete over the “season.” Also, a team points system is employed whereby teams earn daily points for (1) preparation and engagement, (2) fair

Table 1*Appalachian State University Grade A PE Sample Daily Overview*

Day	Content/topic & lesson type
1	Preassessment: <i>Personal Best</i> (FitnessGram & Skills)
2	Orienteering: On-a-Line Orienteering <i>Game Day</i>
3	Orienteering: Map Challenge <i>Game Day</i>
4	Disc Games: KanJam <i>Game Day</i>
5	Disc Games: Disc Golf <i>Game Day</i>
6	Speedball: <i>Adventure Race</i>
7	Speedball: <i>Game Day</i>
8	Kin-Ball: <i>Skill Builder</i>
9	Kin-Ball: <i>Event</i>
10	Cricket: <i>Fun-Day-Mentals Jigsaw</i>
11	Cricket: <i>Event</i>
12	SportFIT: <i>Create Your Own Routine & Game Day</i>
13	Postassessment: <i>Personal Best</i> (FitnessGram & Skills)
14	Culminating Event: Awards Banquet/Celebration Day

play, and (3) performance in the daily game or activity. Students earn bonus points by demonstrating exemplary in-class behaviors; by creating team posters, playlists, and jerseys; and by engaging with teammates in physical activity outside of class. Teams accrue points across lessons and ultimately one team is recognized as season champion during the culminating event.

The Grade A PE experience is administered via Moodle, an on-line course management system. The program uses technology in a variety of ways before, during, and after each class to showcase its effective implementation in PE. For example, the program employs a flipped-classroom approach whereby TCs watch a video, complete an assigned reading, and take a brief knowledge quiz online outside of class prior to the teaching of new content. Accordingly, this approach prepares TCs in advance and makes for a more efficient and effective face-to-face experience. The typical face-to-face lesson in this SE/TG/TPSR hybrid approach includes three major segments: (1) Instant Activity, (2) Main Activity, and (3) Closure. Technology such as Plickers, QR codes, mobile devices and apps,

and Bluetooth speakers are also employed. A spectrum of teaching methods ranging from direct instruction, to peer teaching and cooperative learning, to problem solving are used. Most frequently, a game-question-practice-game format is used during the main activity segment of the lesson. This format showcases the major elements of the TG model while helping the TCs to develop tactical awareness and improved game performance. In addition, the TPSR model is highlighted through a process of defining and discussing a daily character trait during the beginning of the lesson; challenging TCs to attend to and demonstrate that trait during the activity time; and then, during the closure, allowing TCs to reflect upon and assess the degree to which they successfully demonstrated the focus-trait of the day.

The primary purpose of Grade A PE is to simulate quality PE and allow TCs to fully operate as pupils, but the opportunity for TCs to concurrently draw meaningful pedagogical connections regarding the experience cannot be squandered or left to chance. Accordingly, TCs complete postclass reflections focused on specific instructional practices (SHAPE America, 2009) after each lesson. The reflections prompt TCs to compare and contrast appropriate and inappropriate practices related to their personal experiences in both secondary PE and Grade A PE. The reflections also shape their perceptions to be more consistent with those espoused by the profession at large. For example, after Lesson 1, Preassessment: Personal Best (FitnessGram & Skills), TCs complete a reflection focused on practices associated with fitness testing (i.e., 4.3.1 of SHAPE America's Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for High School Physical Education). By design, the reflections have great potential to change perceptions and instructional practice given that they take place immediately after class, challenge prior experiences and perceptions, and are based on recent personal experience that was engineered to be appropriate.

As TCs progress forward through the PETE program, the value of Grade A PE is fully realized when in subsequent courses instructors and TCs are challenged to draw upon the foundational experience to further reflect, dissect, and project. For example, when instructors engage TCs in pointed discussions and ask if TCs have ever experienced “this” or “that” appropriate practice, TCs can indeed now

say “yes.” Instructors are also free to draw the curtain back on the theoretical and applied pedagogical aspects of Grade A PE, making meaningful connections that are often elusive when TCs do not have firsthand experience with high quality PE.

As educators, we understand and value the powerful effect of beginning with the end in mind. Grade A PE, when taught early in the teacher education program, not only fulfills that important purpose but also provides a much needed aspirational function whereby TCs can envision a future in which high quality PE is personal reality. The following discussion lists a few of the many ways that App State intentionally uses Grade A PE in subsequent courses as a part of a larger educational process in the PETE program. Many of the activities and assignments highlighted herein may appear typical or even familiar, but the Grade A PE lens enhances their transformational potential.

In Pro-Block 2, TCs take a general pedagogy course focused on learning and applying Rink’s (2014) teaching functions. Multiple activities are used to address each of the teaching functions, but particular assignments rely on the TCs’ previous experience in Grade A PE. For example, elements of task presentation and of management and organization from Grade A PE lessons are evaluated for effectiveness and congruence with those advocated by Rink. Simultaneously, TCs are enrolled in another course focused on assessment in health and PE. An assignment in this course challenges students to analyze the Grade A PE grading system for alignment with (1) national and state standards and (2) guidelines for effectively measuring and evaluating student learning outcomes in each domain. Consequently, drawing on a quality personal experience makes for authentic and impactful reflections, each of which are aimed at influencing perceptions and future instructional actions.

In Pro-Block 3, TCs enroll in a course focused on teaching health-related fitness. In this course, TCs review the fitness education process (Corbin et al., 2016; i.e., diagnosing, goal setting, creating and implementing an activity plan, and monitoring and reassessment) and compare that to the one implemented in Grade A PE. In addition, TCs are enrolled in a course focused on model-based instruction in PE. In this course, TCs study the theoretical and applied aspects of research-validated, teacher-tested instructional models such as SE,

TG, and TPSR, which make up the hybrid model used in Grade A PE. The process of examining the theory, research, and application of each model, coupled with the previous Grade A experience, provides fertile ground for exploring, demystifying, and making model-based instruction in PE more likely for these TCs. A third course, which can be thought of as the “laboratory” for the models-based course, focuses on the teaching of sport and activity. This course provides one of the most unique and worthwhile experiences in the PETE program; that is, TCs in this course attend, participate in, manage, and teach Grade A PE. The teaching is carried out under the direct supervision of both the Grade A PE instructor and the Pro-Block 3 course instructor. Though logistically challenging, this arrangement, which has evolved over time, provides Pro-Block 3 TCs with an authentic, secondary-like teaching experience. This is particularly meaningful given the limited number of secondary placements in the immediate vicinity and the need to preserve those placements for student teaching balanced against the need to have TCs teach as much as possible. TCs assist in the administration of the Grade A experience via the online course management system, gaining valuable instructional technology skills in the process. In addition, the professional relationships developed between the Pro-Block 1 students and the Pro-Block 3 peer teachers are significant and valued, enduring even after the experience. This experience also serves as a stepping stone to prepare the Pro-Block 3 TCs for a similar yet more involved field-based experience in Pro-Block 4.

TCs in Pro-Block 4 complete a 7-week field-based experience teaching a course in the university’s basic PE activity program. TC pairs are assigned to one of a variety of courses such as basketball, badminton, soccer, ultimate, volleyball, and weight training. TCs are under the cosupervision of the activity course and PETE instructors and implement modified versions of the corresponding SPARK High School Physical Education units. TCs rely upon the Grade A PE experience, both as pupils during Pro-Block 1 and as managers and peer teachers during Pro-Block 3, to support and shape their planning, instruction, and assessment during this Pro-Block 4 teaching assignment.

Finally, during student teaching, TCs are challenged to apply what they have learned during the PETE program. Accordingly, Grade A PE becomes a frame of reference for what is possible, and

even expected, given that it is a part of each TC's recent reality. Ideally, the cumulative effect of engaging in and systematically reflecting upon Grade A PE is high quality PE for all students who will be served by these TCs during student teaching and beyond.

University of West Georgia

Program Overview

Preservice teacher candidates completing the program of study in Health and Physical Education at UWG earn a bachelor of science degree and are eligible for a K–12 HPE professional educator's license. TCs in the UWG PETE program engage in 64 credit hours of professional content courses, in addition to 60 credit hours before beginning the teacher education program, totaling 124 credit hours. The PETE program at UWG is grounded upon the National Standards for Initial Physical Education Teacher Education (SHAPE America, 2017). All courses within the program have been developed from or align with these six national standards. Certain courses, however, are considered the backbone and foundation of the program, whereas the other required courses complement the foundational courses. These “foundational courses” include Instructional Strategies in Physical Education (a 3-credit hour plus lab methods course offered in Block 1), Physical Education in Elementary Schools (a 4-credit hour plus lab methods course offered in Block 2), Physical Education in Middle/Secondary Schools (a 4-credit hour plus lab methods course offered in Block 3), and the student teaching internship (9 credit hours of internship plus 3-credit seminar course offered in Block 4). The courses that complement the foundational courses include a series of “skills and strategies” courses, in which the objective is to increase the TCs' knowledge and skills in a variety of sport- and fitness-related content (e.g., educational games, gymnastics, dance, invasion games, net/wall games, outdoor activities, and strength and conditioning). Other complementary courses include Human Movement Studies, Contemporary Health Issues, Advanced Concepts of Personal Training, Adapted Physical Education (field-based), Assessment in HPE, Health Education (field-based), and Current Issues in HPE (Heidorn & Mosier, 2017).

Beyond initial certification for teacher licensure in Georgia, all teacher candidates at UWG are required to earn First Aid/CPR

certification. In addition, all teacher candidates have the opportunity to pursue (1) national certification as a personal trainer, (2) national coaching certification, and (3) a state-level physical activity leader certificate. This UWG-based physical activity leader certificate is the result of a partnership supported by the Georgia Department of Education and Georgia Department of Public Health.

Grade A Physical Education Overview

At UWG, the Introduction to Health and Physical Education course is open to all students throughout the university as one strategy for recruiting a diverse population of students. Diversity not only includes race and gender but also engaging students who have broad experiences and interests in all forms of physical activity (Woods et al., 2016). For example, some students have experiences in nontraditional physical activities such as step clubs, gymnastics, or hiking. Broadening the pool of potential PE teachers to include students who value (and want to teach) other content besides the traditional team sports could lead to more TCs teaching nontraditional content in K–12 schools upon graduation. In turn, this also has the potential to reframe the traditional high school PE model (Richards et al., 2014). Purposeful recruitment of all students at UWG requires the concerted effort of the academic department and advisors, attractive and engaging flyers, individual messaging to students through email, word-of-mouth from current TCs, social media campaigns, recruiting events, student clubs, and learning communities.

The Introduction to Health and Physical Education course at UWG is a 15-week course. Students meet 2 days/week, 70 min/lesson (see Table 2 for weekly overview). This course, much like the course at App State, is taught in two distinct segments. The first segment, Weeks 1 to 9, is similar to most traditional introductory courses. The second segment, Weeks 10 to 15, introduces the common, exemplary experience coined “Grade A PE.”

During the first week of the course, TCs submit an autobiographical essay based upon their experiences as students of K–12 PE at every level (elementary, middle, and high school). TCs then participate in an instructor-led, in-class discussion that questions and challenges their belief structures of PE. These group discussions are nonthreatening and are not evaluated. They provide a safe space for TCs to consider what knowledge and skills their former teachers

Table 2*University of West Georgia Grade A PE Sample Weekly Overview*

Week	Content/topic & lesson type
1	Walking Through Past Experiences in HPE
2	Preassessment: <i>Personal Best</i> (FitnessGram & Skills)
3	Appropriate Practices of Health and Physical Education
4	Historical Perspectives of Health and Physical Education
5	Professional Dispositions for Teachers and Coaches
6	Adapted Physical Education
7	Advocacy in Health and Physical Education
8	Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs
9	Personal Experiences & Philosophical Approaches
10	Disc Skills and Drills
11	Disc Strategies and Small-Sided Games
12	Disc Strategies and Small-Sided Games
13	Disc Tournaments
14	Disc Tournaments and Celebration
15	Postassessment: <i>Personal Best</i> (FitnessGram & Skills)

possessed and/or demonstrated and for TCs to consider their own perspectives of effective or ineffective teaching or coaching strategies.

In Week 2 of the semester, TCs are introduced to the fitness education process (Corbin et al., 2016). Fitness education is an important component of the program's curriculum and is integrated throughout this course. After learning and practicing FitnessGram protocols, TCs are evaluated in the five areas of health-related fitness (HRF): aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. TCs record their baseline fitness levels in each area of HRF, as well as blood pressure and body fat analysis. TCs then set goals to improve and/or maintain appropriate levels of fitness according to the FitnessGram (HFZ). The instructor allows students a variety of methods to monitor fitness goals (e.g., activity logs, apps, etc.). TCs are required to reevaluate any FitnessGram assessments throughout the semester and realign goals with their instructor as needed. Skipping ahead to the last week of the semester,

students complete a post-FitnessGram assessment and compare their results to the individual fitness goals set at the beginning of the semester. Each subsequent semester in the undergraduate program, TCs are reassessed on their fitness level and reevaluate their levels of HRF. TCs are expected to reach the HFZ in each area of HRF and continue setting goals to maintain or improve their levels of fitness to meet Standard 2.b (i.e., “Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of fitness throughout the program”) of the National Standards for Initial Physical Education Teacher Education (SHAPE America, 2017). If TCs do not meet the recommended HFZ levels, the PETE faculty continue to hold TCs accountable for setting and meeting short-term goals related to their own fitness levels. At no point are the TCs’ fitness levels used for grades or compared with other TCs’ fitness levels. The TCs also spend considerable time participating in and reflecting on their short- and long-term goals. In turn, the instructor capitalizes on the common experience and uses this to frame appropriate practice as it relates to fitness, fitness testing, and fitness education. This same process should be happening in personal fitness classes at the high school level across the nation. Additionally, but unrelated, PETE faculty also regularly evaluate and assess their own fitness levels with the TCs. The PETE faculty believe role modeling this process brings another level of engagement and can motivate the TCs.

In Weeks 3 to 9, TCs are introduced to content related to appropriate practices of HPE, historical perspectives, professional dispositions, adapted PE, current advocacy efforts, comprehensive school physical activity programs, and philosophical approaches in HPE. TCs read assigned professional journal articles related to these topics and engage in class discussions and debates. TCs also observe quality PE classes (at least two sites) in local schools for a total of 8 hr. Along with the observations, TCs interview at least one current PE teacher. The PETE faculty provide guidance in coordinating the observations and interviews. This allows for TCs to visit sites that the faculty would consider Grade A programs. Using all of the information gained from the assignments, observations, and interviews, each TC submits an initial draft of their personal teaching philosophy. The TCs then revisit and revise their personal teaching

philosophy while continuing to learn concepts related to standards-based, quality PE throughout the course and subsequent semesters.

The last segment of the introductory course (Weeks 10 to 15) focuses on participation in a Grade A PE experience. The instructor plans and delivers a 5-week unit (2 days/week for 5 weeks; 70 min/lesson). The instructor has discovered that disc games (ultimate Frisbee) is a unit that the TCs have not had much experience with but are able to transfer their skills from more common invasion games to. Further, disc games facilitate moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, do not require much equipment, and do not need a referee. The instructor highlights why the unit was chosen and how it promotes lifetime physical activity. On a typical day, TCs enter the class and begin in physical activity related to the content. All instructor-led lessons incorporate components of the eight teaching functions defined by Rink (2014). These include identifying outcomes, planning, presenting tasks, organizing and managing the learning environment, monitoring the learning environment, developing the content, assessing student performance, and evaluating the instructional process. Lesson outcomes are established for all three domains of learning and are periodically evaluated and assessed as part of the TCs' grade for the course. The psychomotor domain is assessed using the PE Metrics rubric for ultimate Frisbee (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2011). The TCs should meet the minimum level of skill performance (Level 3) according to the criterion-based rubric by the end of the unit. Many TCs practice outside of class time to perform well on the rubric. The cognitive domain of learning is measured by online quizzes related to rules and etiquette of the game, critical cues and features of the skills, and strategy related to invasion games. By completing the quizzes online, TCs gain an understanding of the game without having to lose critical practice time during class. The online quizzes are included in the TCs' final grade as well. The affective domain is measured by a program approved dispositions assessment. The areas evaluated on the dispositional instrument are attendance, class preparation, appearance, communication, ethics, responsiveness, participation, and professional development. TCs have the opportunity to review the rubric prior to the unit, making sure they have a clear understanding of the expectations of the program. Although evaluated, students

are not graded on their dispositions assessment. Students receive feedback related to their dispositions and are reevaluated each subsequent semester.

Extending the Grade A Physical Education Experience

After completing the Introduction to Health and Physical Education course, TCs engage in 64 credit hours of professional content courses. Although not all of the complementary courses directly connect to the Grade A PE experience, many courses integrate the concepts of quality PE, building upon the TCs' previous knowledge and experiences. Instructors can continually refer back to common, shared experiences to draw upon effective and appropriate strategies for teaching and learning.

The semester immediately following the Introduction to Health and Physical Education course, TCs are enrolled in Instructional Strategies (Block 1). Instructional Strategies is a lab-based course that meets twice a week, 140 min/session. This course provides TCs with the basic pedagogical skills and knowledge related to teaching HPE in K–12 settings. TCs develop and build teaching skills through observations and by practicing effective teaching behaviors through peer teaching experiences. Each TC completes five peer-teaching experiences throughout the semester. The first experience begins with a 10-min “micro-lesson” focusing on an effective set induction and clear task presentation. The subsequent lessons build upon the first by adding additional elements such as quality demonstrations, teacher movement, instructional feedback, alignment to objectives, and a closure, all leading up to a 30-min lesson. TCs record each lesson and submit time-stamped, guided reflections that align with the tenets of Grade A PE. The instructor observes and grades two peer teachers at one time and also grades the TCs' lesson plans and reflections.

After Instructional Strategies, TCs enroll in Physical Education in Elementary Schools (Block 2) and then Physical Education in Middle and Secondary Schools (Block 3). During these courses, TCs teach 14 lessons to K–12 students in each course. The TCs receive guidance and feedback from the university instructor and the K–12 teacher (site supervisor or cooperating teacher) with respect to the planning and implementation of lessons. TCs are evaluated on the effectiveness of their planning, teaching, and reflective practices by

both the university instructor and the K–12 teacher through formative and summative assessments. The practicum-based courses culminate with a traditional 15-week student teaching internship (Block 4).

Historically, the PETE faculty determine specific schools and teachers for the practicum sequence and the student teaching internships. This process enables the faculty to be selective in terms of the environment(s) in which TCs observe and teach. Securing quality, Grade A programs is necessary in the development of an effective and sustainable practicum sequence. To maintain and secure additional quality K–12 programs as partners, the PETE faculty have created a Physical Education Advisory Council. Members of the council are teachers (approximately eight) who have been appointed because of their efforts in teaching standards-based, quality PE. The teachers model effective pedagogical practices, assist in the practicum sequence, stay active in professional associations, and/or attend professional conferences. They volunteer their time and efforts with the mission to maintain and improve quality PE in local schools. The council collaborates with the PETE faculty on a variety of topics. Specific monetary compensation is not provided to council members. For the scope of this paper, one particular task is assisting the PETE faculty in evaluating programs for internship experiences. When the program receives a new inquiry for hosting a student teacher, the program coordinator requests a completed application packet from the potential cooperating teacher. The packet includes a résumé, a teaching philosophy, a yearlong curriculum, and a sample lesson plan. The program coordinator sends the materials to the council for review. After completing the review, the council provides a recommendation to the PETE program. If the council approves the application, the PETE program begins developing a professional relationship with the new prospective cooperating teachers. The faculty have learned that K–12 teachers who do not have a set curriculum do not attempt to follow through with the application process. This, in turn, has provided the program a mechanism to collaborate with school partners that share the same philosophical approach in terms of quality PE programming. Additionally, council members feel honored to be a part of the process. They do this work voluntarily, without any stipend. The program provides to the

administrator of each council member a letter of support identifying their effort and professional contribution to the field.

The TCs also take a variety of skills and strategies courses designed to improve their level of knowledge, competence, and confidence in a variety of activities. These courses include net/wall games, target/outdoor games, invasion games, strength and conditioning, education games, gymnastics, and dance. These courses are lab-based and meet for 100 min, twice a week for 15 weeks. TCs ultimately receive over 15,000 min of skill-based instruction and practice before graduation. In the skills and strategies courses, TCs are evaluated on Standard 1 (Content and Foundational Knowledge) and Standard 2 (Skillfulness and Health-Related Fitness) of the National Standards for Initial Physical Education Teacher Education (SHAPE America, 2017). The skills and strategies courses reinforce the Grade A PE philosophical approach shared earlier in the program. The design of the skills and strategies sequence allows TCs to be pupils of PE and physical activity. The instructor in each course is the expert and plans and delivers quality PE lessons. The PETE faculty find that TCs repurpose many of the lessons from the skills and strategies sequence as they plan and teach lessons to K–12 students in the practicum sequence and internship.

In their third semester, TCs are enrolled in an Assessment in Health and Physical Education course. One outcome of this course is comparing, contrasting, and analyzing different grading systems related to PE. While TCs take this course, they are simultaneously enrolled in the Physical Education in Middle and Secondary Schools course and begin to implement evaluation and assessment measures in their teaching. At this point in the undergraduate curriculum, TCs have been evaluated and assessed on each domain of learning (as a student) and often see the value in conducting similar assessments among K–12 students in their practicum experience.

In the last semester, TCs complete a student teaching experience. TCs participate in the full context of a K–12 school day for 15 weeks at one school. In addition to planning, teaching, and reflection in a PE environment, TCs complete the edTPA submission portfolio process (state requirement). TCs also plan and implement an action-based research comprehensive school physical activity program project. Additionally, all TCs take a 3-credit hour teaching internship seminar in which, among other content, they compare

and contrast their daily experiences with standards-based, quality PE programs. Throughout the PETE program, TCs are encouraged to reflect upon their foundational Grade A experiences. These experiences begin in the introductory course and build upon each other in subsequent semesters. Ideally, the TCs hold value in their shared, elongated experiences throughout the PETE program. In turn, when TCs start their careers as new teachers, they will have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to administer and advocate for quality PE to K–12 students.

Recommendations for Implementing Grade A Physical Education

The challenge associated with envisioning, designing, implementing, assessing, revising, and sustaining a Grade A PE experience cannot be underestimated. However, in our judgment, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. The recommendations offered, although not exhaustive or perfect, come from many years of trial and error, represent the most critical elements of the process, and are intended to serve as a catalyst for making Grade A PE a reality in any program.

Pause: Start With Why

Before embarking on the Grade A PE process, those involved must ask and answer this critical question: Why do this? Fully answering this question will provide a clear purpose, giving direction, focus, and energy to planning, implementing, and sustaining Grade A PE.

Timing: Early and Prolonged

Grade A PE should be offered as early as possible in the program so that faculty can leverage its potential in as many subsequent courses as possible. In addition, consideration should be given to how much time will be devoted to the experience so that relationships and memories that will endure across the program are built. While one or two days is insufficient, an entire semester may not be possible either. We recommend a duration of at least 5 weeks (10 lessons).

Content: Go Novel

In an effort to make Grade A PE as meaningful as possible for both the TCs and the instructor, we recommend selecting novel

content; that is, content in which TCs likely have limited experience. Selecting such content not only serves to make teaching and learning more authentic but also piques interest and provides TCs with a perspective on being a beginner. Having firsthand experience as a beginner builds up pedagogical empathy in TCs, allowing them to more successfully relate with beginning learners in their future classes. Additionally, decisions need to be made regarding the variety of content. For example, will the instructor teach one or multiple activities or sports? While there is not necessarily a right of wrong answer here, it is important to consider facilities, equipment, time, number of students, and instructor expertise as you determine what to teach.

Instruction: Model the Master

A major challenge is determining who will teach Grade A PE. We have experimented with many instructional arrangements including nontenure track activity program instructors, PETE faculty, and TCs with varying levels of experience. Regardless who is called into action to teach, the bottom line is that Grade A instructors should be good at teaching PE, particularly since a significant intent of Grade A PE is for instructors to role model quality instruction in PE for TCs.

Format: Master the Model

The method of teaching Grade A PE is equally important as who teaches it. Given the need to train TCs in model-based instruction, it is advantageous for instructors to use research-verified, teacher-tested PE models during Grade A PE to launch such training. We advocate and have had great success using SE, TG, and TPSR instructional models. Grade A PE, in this way, represents a first step in helping TCs to master model-based instruction.

Extend: Integrate to Accelerate

With TCs general lack of experience in quality K–12 PE as pupils, PETE faculty face significant challenges in making meaningful connections that yield changes in TCs' preconceived notions regarding PE and PE teachers. However, this issue can, in part, be mitigated when faculty intentionally rely on and refer to the Grade A PE experience in subsequent coursework. To maximize the potential of Grade A PE in subsequent courses, however, all PETE faculty need to be made aware of the Grade A PE experience and rationale

and should support its inclusion in the curriculum. Furthermore, it is helpful if faculty share ideas with one another and have a coordinated approach for integrating teaching–learning assignments that draw upon the Grade A PE experience. In doing so, faculty integrate Grade A-based activities to accelerate learning in their own courses.

Market: Recruit & Retain to Train

Enlisting, keeping, and positively affecting TCs in PETE programs is a longstanding issue that has received much needed attention (SHAPE America & National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education, 2018; Ayers & Richards, 2019). Calls for non-traditional approaches to address this issue have been made (O’Neil & Richards, 2018). Grade A PE appears to align well with such current thinking, offering a multifaceted mechanism that can serve as a recruitment, retention, and training tool.

Regarding recruitment, intentional and comprehensive marketing campaigns are critical to bolstering enrollment and to enlisting a diverse clientele. Accordingly, getting the word out to all students about Grade A PE is critical. Posting flyers, using social media and on an eBoard, and sharing information via direct email and face-to-face meetings with students, faculty, general and program-specific advisors, and administrators can effectively broadcast information about Grade A PE. Messaging about Grade A PE, with a particular focus on the novel content and testimonials regarding how enjoyable and influential the experience is, piques student interest and aids in the recruitment efforts. Doing Grade A PE well is part of the marketing strategy too. As Grade A PE is implemented successfully over time and becomes an increasingly institutionalized part of the program, word-of-mouth represents a critical part of the marketing process. Additionally, structuring the course as part of the general education curriculum entices students who may not otherwise consider taking the course, to enroll and perhaps later join the major. Grade A PE also aids in the retention of TCs. For example, Grade A PE is intended to be enjoyable, to help TCs develop meaningful relationships with their peers early in the program, and to provide an aspirational vision of quality PE. Collectively, these elements may influence TCs to remain in the program. At a time when enrollment in PETE is a serious issue, it is worth it for PETE programs to consider

Grade A PE as part of a comprehensive strategy to recruit and retain TCs.

Conclusion

Grade A PE is an immersive experience that a cohort of PE TCs complete together. This shared, exemplary experience begins early, is leveraged throughout the program, and is fully applied in the student teaching internship. Grade A PE gives TCs an opportunity to systematically decouple their subjective warrants regarding their past K–12 PE experiences, provides an exceptional common experience that TCs revisit throughout the program, and supports instructional effectiveness in their future K–12 programs. We have integrated and have continued to refine the Grade A PE experience in our respective programs over the past several years, believing this is a worthwhile endeavor. We hope you share that perspective and accept the challenge of integrating such an experience in your own program.

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