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ABSTRACT

A major goal of physical education teacher education (PETE) programs is to develop future teachers who can demonstrate effective decision-making tendencies and instructional behaviors. The student teaching experience allows preservice teachers to advance their instructional skills while gaining confidence and competence, and it provides an opportunity to discuss social, ethical, and political issues related to the process of schooling. The purpose of this paper is to describe the efforts put forth by faculty from one PETE program and from physical education teachers throughout the state to improve the student teaching experience via the development of a statewide communication network. The network of university faculty and state physical educators was developed with the initial emphasis on training cooperating teachers to be effective student teacher supervisors and on establishing channels that would allow for continual communication between university faculty and physical education teachers throughout the state. Implementation of the communication network hinged on university cooperation and statewide collaboration. (Contains 45 references.) (Author/LL)

Resolving the Student Teaching Dilemma: A Collaborative Approach

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Abstract

The major objective of the student teaching experience is to allow preservice teachers to advance their instructional skills while gaining confidence and competence, and to allow preservice teachers an opportunity to discuss the social, ethical, and political issues related to the process of schooling. The purpose of this paper is to describe the efforts put forth by faculty from one PETE program and physical education teachers from throughout one state to improve the student teaching experience via the development of a statewide communication network. In essence, a statewide communication network was developed between university faculty and state physical educators, with the initial emphasis on training cooperating teachers to be effective student teacher supervisors and establishing channels allowing for continual communication between university faculty and physical education teachers throughout the state. The implementation of the communication network hinged on university cooperation and statewide collaboration.

Resolving the Student Teaching Dilemma: A Collaborative Approach

A major goal of most undergraduate physical education teacher education (PETE) programs is to develop future teachers who can demonstrate effective pre-interactive and interactive decision-making tendencies and instructional behaviors. The systematic development of these decision-making tendencies and instructional behaviors is often done via practical fieldwork which involves a sequence of teaching experiences beginning with peer teaching and culminating with student teaching. Student teaching has been identified as one of the most widely accepted components of teacher education programs. Renown educators such as Conant (1963) and Andrews (1964) describe student teaching as the most important part of teacher preparation. This assertion is supported by the high ratings teachers consistently place on their student teaching experience (Appleberry, 1976; Nosow, 1975) and the attention that state and national groups are placing on teaching and learning the professional role of a teacher (Carnegie Forum's Task Force, 1986; Murry, 1986).

Although student teaching is one of the most widely accepted components of teacher education programs, researchers have criticized it for failing to have evolved much beyond the early apprenticeship model used in the training of skilled trades, for lacking a sound theoretical base, a commonly shared structure, and a set of activities (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre, 1983; Rivilin, 1965). Watts (1987) and Zeichner (1987) state that major differences exist between and even within university teacher preparation programs in the way that the purpose and goals of the student teaching experience are conceptualized and organized, and subsequently implemented. Given these deficiencies, it has been suggested that student teaching is far from fulfilling its potential (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990).

The major participants in the practice of student teaching are the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor (the triad). It is generally agreed that the cooperating teacher is believed to have the most influence on the student teacher during the student teaching experience (Copeland, 1980; Karmos & Jacko, 1977; Seperson & Joyce, 1973). Cooperating teachers perceive that their roles as supervisors are to observe student teachers teach, provide feedback about their instructional and managerial behaviors, provide demonstration lessons (exemplary role model), guide in the planning of lessons, and support and encourage student teachers in their personal growth (O'Neal, 1983a; Enz & Cook, 1992).

The study of supervisory conferences in general education and physical education reveals that the student teacher's instructional behaviors are seldom the focus of a conference discussion between the student and cooperating teachers. Most frequently the thrust of the interaction revolves around specific instructional occurrences and noninstructional tasks (Koehler, 1986; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1988). O'Neal (1983b) found that almost 80 % of the dialogue between cooperating and student teachers focused on class events and activities not related to instruction. When teaching behaviors were discussed during the supervisory conference, which was seldom, the cooperating teacher's feedback was described as being general, deferred, vague, implicit, or negative (Brunelle, Tousignant, & Pieron, 1981; Hawkins, Wiegand, & Landin, 1985).

The other major participant who serves in a supervisory capacity within the triad is the university supervisor. The function of the university supervisor is often described as overlapping the role of the cooperating teacher. University supervisor visitations (which include observation, data collection, and feedback) are typically short, 30 to 90 minutes, and infrequent, once every two weeks

(Bowman, 1978; Koehler, 1984). Koehler suggests that this is an inadequate amount of time for supervision to have any effect on the student teacher. In fact, in one study no significant difference was found between the performance and adjustment of student teachers who had a university supervisor who supervised infrequently and those who had no university supervisor (Morris, 1974).

Although the effect of the university supervisor may be minimal during student teaching in terms of the performance and growth of a student teacher, the university supervisor seems to be instrumental to the enactment of student teaching. University supervisors can make a difference to student teaching in a number of other very important ways. These include (a) training cooperating teachers in supervisory techniques, (b) informing cooperating teachers about the goals of the preservice program, (c) clarifying the outcomes of the student teaching experience and the expectations of the cooperating teacher, and (d) examining with cooperating teachers the need for a critical pedagogy.

Cooperating teachers who have been trained in supervisory techniques emphasizing observation, systematic data collection, analysis of behavior, and feedback feel more comfortable working with student teachers, and are more effective in changing student teachers' instructional behaviors as well as their own conferencing behaviors (Drummond, 1980; Nagel, Berg, Malian, & Murphy, 1988; Thorlacius, 1980; Twa, 1984). Killian and McIntyre (1986) found that cooperating teachers who were trained in supervisory techniques were more likely to offer students (preservice teachers) feedback about their teaching performance than cooperating teachers who received no training. Furthermore, student teachers perceived the student teaching experience to be stabler and more positive in terms of the amount and type of dialogue with the cooperating teacher when working with trained cooperating teachers (Wheeler, 1989). In another study cooperating teachers who had been trained in supervision

strategies were rated more positively by student teachers than those who had not (Whitehead, 1984).

The university supervisor can also make a difference by clearly articulating expectations of the student teaching experience and identifying the role of the cooperating teacher in this process. However, this task must be completed in collaboration with the cooperating teacher for meaningful and lasting impact. University supervisors and cooperating teachers need to discuss and agree on the goals of the student teaching experience and expectations of the cooperating teacher before a student teacher is assigned (Koehler, 1984; Rothman, 1981). Rothman found that without agreement, conflict between the three members of the triad was inherent. Furthermore, Koehler found that the effect of this conflict reflected negatively on the university supervisor. Clearly, it seems imperative that university supervisors and cooperating teachers define their roles and the goals of the student teaching experience collaboratively. This, in turn, will likely increase the possibility of fulfilling the potential of the student teaching experience.

Intertwined with articulating purposes of the student teaching experience and expectations of the cooperating teacher is the need for discussing the student teacher's undergraduate teacher preparation program. The goal of this discourse is to provide continuity between what is being taught in the practical and theoretical components of the undergraduate program and what the expectations are of the student teaching experience (Mitchell & Schwager, 1993).

The final and most difficult area in which the university supervisor can make an impact is in dialoguing the need for a critical pedagogy. A critical pedagogy involves a discourse in which ethical, political, and social issues related to schooling are examined, not as unquestionable, but rather as problematic or

changing (Giroux, 1981; Kirk, 1986). Tinning (1991) suggests that critical pedagogy uses a discourse in which the four key concepts are emancipation, dialogue, critique, and student voice. Kirk (1986) and Tinning (1991) indicate that future teachers who receive an education based only on technical competence will likely not reflect on the ethical, political, and social issues related to the process of schooling. However, they also espouse that both technical competence in teaching and critical pedagogy must be included in the major themes of teacher education programs. This task, dialoguing a critical pedagogy, will become an integral part of the cooperating teacher supervisory training program.

The major objective of the student teaching experience is to allow preservice teachers to advance their instructional skills while gaining confidence and competence, and to allow preservice teachers an opportunity to discuss the social, ethical, and political issues related to the process of schooling. The purpose of this paper is to describe the efforts put forth by faculty from one PETE program and physical education teachers from throughout one state to improve the student teaching experience via the development of a statewide communication network. In essence, a statewide communication network was developed between university faculty and state physical educators, with the initial emphasis on training cooperating teachers to be effective student teacher supervisors and establishing channels allowing for continual communication between university faculty and physical education teachers throughout the state.

Formation of the Communication Network

The implementation of the communication network hinged on university cooperation and statewide collaboration. Graham (1988) defines cooperation

as two parties agreeing to work together to make each program more successful without affecting each other's operational policies. In contrast, collaboration requires the involved parties to share responsibility and authority for basic policy decision making, which eliminates a certain degree of autonomy. The network formation, which included cooperation between the PETE and College of Education faculty and collaboration between the PETE faculty, school district superintendents, and state physical education teachers, consisted of four steps: (a) seeking support from the Wyoming Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (WAHPERD), (b) capturing the student teaching component from the College of Education, (c) gaining the support of school district personnel, and (d) gaining the support of state physical educators.

Seeking Support from WAHPERD

Support for the creation of a communication network was first sought from the members of the State WAHPERD Association. Before initiating the mission to create a statewide communication network between University of Wyoming PETE faculty and Wyoming physical educators, the concept was formally presented during two invited sessions at the 1991 State WAHPERD Conference. One presentation was open to all physical educators while the other was for the WAHPERD executive board. In total, an audience of approximately 70 physical educators from all corners of the state attended. The support received for the ideas of placing and supervising our student teachers with trained cooperating teachers and developing a statewide network between the university and state physical educators was overwhelming. The only concern identified was the anticipated tenure of the present PETE faculty. The scenario of teachers buying into the network only to have the PETE faculty leave in a few short years would inevitably deter any future university

endeavors. The WAHPERD association demonstrated their support for the anticipated collaborative project by awarding a $500.00 grant.

Capturing Student Teaching

After having gained the support of our colleagues out in the trenches, the next task that the PETE faculty faced was to gain control of the placement and supervision of their student teachers. All components of student teaching, including student placement and supervision, were being managed by the College of Education even though the School of Physical and Health Education (SPHE) was located in a different college within the university. Student teaching was the only component of the PETE program that was managed by the College of Education. All other aspects of the PETE program, such as the teaching of methods, curriculum, and measurement courses, and the three pre-student teaching practicums, were offered through the SPHE, taught and supervised by PETE faculty. Consequently, the PETE faculty had no knowledge of what precipitated during the 16 week student teaching experience. PETE faculty were unaware with whom the student teachers were being placed, by whom they were being supervised, and if previously learned instructional behaviors were being demonstrated.

It was obvious that the PETE faculty had to work cooperatively with faculty from the College of Education if control of the overall student teaching process was to be secured, and, at the same time, if positive communication channels were to be maintained. The needed cooperative effort was achieved through the formation of a task force which was comprised of PETE and College of Education faculty members. Members of this task force met twice per month to discuss program directions, one of which was the proposed change in student teaching. It took approximately one year to have all of the responsibilities surrounding student teaching to be shifted to the SPHE. At the time this took

place, faculty in the College of Education were restructuring their own program; this allowed for a less complicated transfer of control over student teaching placements and supervision. In retrospect, the initiation for change by the PETE faculty was timely.

Gaining School District Approval

The third step in the implementation of the statewide communication network was to inform school district personnel of the change in the student teaching placement and supervision policy. Every district superintendent across the state (total of 49 districts) was notified of the new physical education student teaching format. A letter was sent to each district superintendent describing the change in policy. School district superintendents responded to the letter in one of three ways. They (a) supported the change in full, (b) requested more information about the identified change, or (c) did not respond. Twenty-five percent of district superintendents were in full support of the change, 10% requested more information about the change, and 65% did not respond.

The superintendents who initially did not support the policy change (10% who requested more information) were not willing to allow an outside agency identify appropriate cooperating teachers within their district because they felt that their district's supervisory expectations and process for selecting effective cooperating teachers was acceptable. Upon providing these superintendents with further information about the program, such as a description of the three sequenced pre-student teaching practicums, the manner in which district physical education teachers would be trained prior to placing student teachers, and the manner in which supervision of student teachers and follow-up with cooperating teachers by PETE faculty would be conducted, full support was gained. Additional program information was delivered to the district personnel

via telephone, written documents, and in some cases, a formal 60-minute presentation provided by the PETE faculty.

The district superintendents who did not respond to the initial letter are being contacted one by one as our need to place a student teacher in those districts transpires. The PETE students identify three sites, in order of preference, where they wish to be placed for their student teaching experience. Every effort is made to place the student teacher at their requested site.

Teacher Involvement

Having gained support from the State WAHPERD Association and school district personnel, the next step was to begin to initiate the drive to train approximately 100 physical education teachers (at least one elementary and one secondary physical education teacher from each school district in the state) in supervisory techniques, outcomes of the student teaching experience, expectations of cooperating teachers, goals of our preservice program, and a critical pedagogy. The training took the form of one-week seminars (each five days long with 8 hours contact per day) offered twice each summer. It is felt that the goal of training 100 physical education teachers can be achieved in five years. The network is in the second year of this five year plan.

Eighty physical education teachers from across the state were contacted by letter and telephone for the initial two summer sessions (1992). These 80 teachers were identified because they matriculated from the School of Physical and Health Education, University of Wyoming (undergraduate and/or graduate program), were active WAHPERD members, and/or had personal contact with PETE faculty. The objectives of the network (to enhance communication between the PETE faculty and the teaching professional across the state; to improve classroom and gymnasium instruction both at the preservice and inservice level; to train inservice teachers to systematically supervise student

teachers; and, to discuss a critical pedagogy) were identified in a letter and discussed in a follow-up telephone conversation with each invited teacher. In addition, the PETE faculty informed the teachers of an organizational meeting to be held at the upcoming State WAHPERD Conference. Each teacher was asked to attend the organizational meeting for further information.

Letters from 49 of the 80 physical education teachers contacted were returned (61%). Of the 49 returned, 89% were positive responses (ie., they intended to attend that summer or a subsequent summer). Twenty-one physical education teachers attended the inaugural summer seminar, nine during the first session and 12 during the second. The seminar requirements involved a review of research in the content area of supervision, training in systematic observation strategies, coding of videotapes of the participants own teaching, and open discussion of curricula and various pedagogical issues.

All participants found the experience to be invaluable. Training in systematic observation, analyzing ones own instructional behaviors, and communicating and sharing schooling ideas and ideals with fellow professionals were identified as essential components of the seminar. By the end of each week-long seminar, the participants felt much more prepared to work with a student teacher and took greater ownership in their role because of their involvement in the network.

The Current Status and Future Directions of the Network

The placement of student teachers with trained cooperating teachers began in the Fall semester (1992) after the inaugural Summer seminar. Every effort was made to place student teachers with cooperating teachers who had successfully completed the seminar. In the fall, 80% of student teachers were placed with trained cooperating teachers and in the spring 55%. The

placement percentage of student teachers with trained network members will increase as more teachers become involved in the network. The goal obviously is to place student teachers only with cooperating teachers belonging to the communication network.

During the Fall (1992) and Spring (1993) semesters, PETE faculty visited each student teacher a minimum of four times, twice at the elementary placement site and twice at the secondary site. The visitations are designed to facilitate the student teaching experience and to develop stronger communication ties with the cooperating teachers. Discussion often focused on the student teacher's instructional progress, previously learned supervisory strategies, and current pedagogical issues. The personal contact with the cooperating teachers achieved through onsite visitation seemed to help strengthen the use of the learned supervisory strategies and curriculum concepts introduced during the Summer seminar. This perception reflects what Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987) found in their study regarding the link between inservice training and subsequent follow-up contact.

The goals of the communication network were presented again at the 1992 State WAHPERD Conference. An audience of approximately 100 physical educators attended, a small number of whom had attended the presentation the previous year and had student teachers that Fall semester. Interest in what was going on in physical education in the state mushroomed.

The growth of the State Communication Network for Physical Education Teachers will depend on consistent communication with present network members and involvement of new members. Communication with present members includes discussion during onsite visitations of student teachers, interaction during organizational meetings and research sessions at the State

WAHPERD conference, and the mailing of the Communication Network Newsletter designed to keep members abreast of network activities.

This summer (1993) the one-week seminar will again be offered twice. Over 100 physical education teachers have been invited to participate. Thus far 25 teachers have registered. This will bring total network membership to over 45. Involvement of experienced and new teachers is emphasized each year. The same strategies which attracted the original group of physical education teachers are being utilized to increase the network's membership. As mentioned previously, the summer seminar will be offered for five years or until a cadre of 100 teachers complete the course. Thereafter, it will continue to be offered once every other year for newly hired physical education teachers.

Conclusions

The professional significance of this network is twofold. First, training cooperating teachers to be effective supervisors makes enormous sense, as university supervision in the form of frequent visitation is economically and pedagogically inefficient (Siedentop, 1981). Consistent onsite supervision by a cooperating teacher who accepts the goals of the teacher preparation program and has the supervisory skills to reinforce those goals will make student teaching a more fruitful experience for the student teacher. Joyce and Showers (1980) found the combination of technical feedback and reinforcement to be most effective in generalizing the teacher's acquired behaviors to the special characteristics of the local environment. Locke, Graber, and Dodds (1984) suggested that the effectiveness of any method or combination of methods depends primarily on the nature of the client and the goal to be achieved. Therefore, a cooperating teacher who knows expected outcomes and can

provide specific feedback toward those goals could greatly enhance the student teacher's culminating experience.

Second, the development of communication channels between physical education teachers and PETE faculty can provide a means to minimize professional isolation and enhance physical education across the state. Unfortunately, for most PETE faculty assigned workload is dedicated to preservice teacher training. Inservice training becomes an additional responsibility often not identified in a teacher educator's pedagogical charge (Griffin & Hutchinson, 1988).

This lack of emphasis in inservice training has two negative effects. First, the appropriate placement of student teachers with trained cooperating teachers is essential if teacher education goals are to be realized. Second, improving the overall instruction of physical education at the school, district, and state level may never be accomplished by only focusing on the preservice program.

The communication network must act as a support system if the effects of supervisory training are to be sustained (Anderson, 1982). A successful support network necessitate hard work, communication, and collaboration of all parties involved (Graham, 1988). An active and comprehensive network, established by state teachers and university faculty, can provide adequate and effective leadership which could lead to educational change (Futrell, 1988).

An effective support system between PETE faculty and state physical education teachers has been established. Effective inservice programming can now be realized through the network. Graham (1988) indicated that some of the benefits derived from university-school collaboration are improved preservice and inservice education, improved research consumption, increased parity between university and public schools, and effective assistance in times of urgency. Continued consultation through the communication network will

provide on-going support for the inservice teachers and school principals, not only for the student teaching experience, but also for improvement of physical education statewide.

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