

PEDAGOGY

Physical Education Teacher Motivation, Self-Efficacy, and Burnout in a Successful, District-Wide Program

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Abstract

This study is the final piece in a line of research examining the functioning of a successful district-wide elementary physical education (PE) program. Previous papers in this line examined the district and school structures and functioning, history, and student and parent perceptions of this program, collectively providing valuable insights into systemic success in PE. The present study uses a mixed methods design to examine the motivation, self-efficacy, and burnout of district elementary PE teachers. Survey results indicate that the teachers in this district experience (a) high levels of job-related motivation, (b) self-efficacy toward classroom tasks and student needs, and (c) low levels of burnout. Qualitative analysis provides a more detailed understanding of sources of burnout and of various coping mechanisms they use to

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deal with it. Additional insights and implications that could provide useful for other programs seeking systemic success are discussed.

Introduction

In 1997, Siedentop and Locke boldly argued that the physical education profession has a “*systemic failure (emphasis added)*—one that involves the *relationship* of physical education programs in public schools with teacher preparation in higher education” (p. 26). Further, they asserted that it may be impossible to recover unless physical education teacher education (PETE) and practitioners came together soon (p. 27). Amid this era of uncertainty, a group of doctoral students between the years 1997 through 2004 found themselves in a puzzling situation. Despite the desperate national physical education (PE) zeitgeist, these students were exposed to a group of teachers thriving in a largely barrier-free environment. Since then, we have made a concerted effort to study this enclave of teachers, what they were doing, what made them successful, and how it affected the students and parents.

This paper represents the concluding piece in a line of research that explores the multifaceted workings of a large-scale, long-lasting achievement of quality physical education. Previous studies in this line of research—described in brief detail herein—provide background and context for the present study. In order, these studies have described (a) the structures and functioning of a district-wide approach—*what they do* (Prusak et al., 2010), (b) the journey through four decades viewed through a business organizational lens—*the key moments, decisions, and actions when success or failure hung in the balance* (Pennington et al., 2014; Prusak et al., 2014) (c) the impact on student perceptions and outcomes—*doing what is best for kids* (Prusak et al., 2010), (d) parental perceptions of the program to which their children are subjected—*a study in effective advocacy* (Griffiths, 2017) and now, finally, in the present study, (e) the teachers who are at the center of it all—*a story of dedicated service*. We encourage readers to familiarize themselves with each of these studies to gain a more holistic understanding of systemic success in PE (SSPE).

Our examination of the teachers used three complementary theoretical lenses: self-determined (SDT) motivation, self-efficacy

(SE), and teacher burnout (TBO) to provide a more holistic teacher motivational profile. We thereby explored our assumptions about apparent teacher volition and professional vitality and, secondly, made inferences about how district-embedded structures and practices in our earlier work facilitated these conditions.

This examination using two complementary motivational theories (SDT and SE) and a third opposing theory (TBO) could allow a more nuanced understanding of teacher psychological profiles regarding working as teachers in the SSPE structures.

Teacher Motivation, Self-Efficacy, and Burnout

Motivation

In comparison with other professions, K-12 teacher motivation is distressingly low (Jesus & Lens, 2004) leading to lower levels of job-related engagement and satisfaction (Levesque et al., 2004). In brief, Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1987) has provided a useful framework for examining the nuanced regulations for motivated behavior: namely (a) intrinsic motivation (IM, engagement for the inherent appeal, pleasure, or satisfaction of the behavior), (b) extrinsic motivation (EM, activities are performed as a means to an end; some by choice others, not), and (c) amotivation (AM, lack of intentional or volitional participation in given behaviors). Further, individual motivational profiles are fluid, allowing for movement along a continuum spanning from low self-determination (i.e., amotivation) through increasing levels of autonomous behaviors (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation) then to the highest form of self-determination (i.e., intrinsic motivation).

In the workplace, higher levels of self-determination (autonomous) are associated with positive work outcomes such as *job satisfaction* (Blais et al., 1993) and *less burnout* (Fernet et al., 2004). Low levels of self-determined behaviors (controlled) are associated with negative ones (e.g., turnover intentions; Richer et al., 2002). Because of SDT's sensitivity to the nuances of motivated behaviors across the entire continuum, it is particularly well suited to this study. In other words, SDT allows us to discriminate against reasons for job performance, whether from external (e.g., district/school administration,

controlling) expectations or internal (e.g., personal or intrinsic values and goals) sources.

To become more self-determined (moving toward intrinsic motivation and away from amotivation), it is necessary for one to have three intrinsic needs fulfilled: (a) autonomy (choice or volition in one's tasks), (b) competence (capability of succeeding within a given task), and (c) relatedness (respected and understood by others). PE teachers who feel satisfied with their work report higher levels of autonomy-, competence-, and relatedness-support than those who feel dissatisfied with their work (Makela et al., 2014; Whipp & Salin, 2018). Simply stated, when PE teachers are valued and treated as professionals, they display higher levels of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction (Richards et al., 2017).

Self-Efficacy

Another often-used framework for examining healthy teacher perspectives is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the degree to which a person feels confident (most often expressed as a percentage, e.g., "I feel 80% confident that I can...") in their abilities to achieve a successful outcome. Self-efficacy is highly contextually dependent and correlates positively with one's motivational profile relative to a given task. According to research conducted by Whipp and Salin (2018), PE teachers in Australia obtained work-related motivation through the acquisition of personal expertise, engaging collaboratively with others, and experiencing a sense of efficacy in controlling their pedagogy and student learning outcomes. Moreover, the PE teachers were found to have higher levels of career fulfillment, e.g., less burnout and higher professional vitality when supportive policies and actions were in place (rather than simply the absence of negative policies). Per previous research, teachers in the SSPE district examined in this study enjoyed high levels of supportive district policies and actions (Prusak et al., 2010; Pennington et al., 2014).

Friedman and Kass (2002) conceptualized teacher self-efficacy specific to one's confidence in the (a) classroom and (b) school organization. They propose that classroom efficacy consists of three constructs, namely (a) instruction, (b) discipline and control, and (c) consideration (showing empathy, attention, and care for students). Organizational efficacy consists of (a) influence (being influential, persuasive, and assertive in interpersonal relations at school) and

(b) inclusion (playing a pivotal role in contributing to the school). Because both of these contexts (classroom and the district/school organization) are pertinent to this line of research, the Friedman Kass instrument becomes of key importance to this study.

Burnout

Teacher burnout (TBO) is a state of unmediated stress, overload, lacking of support buffers or coping mechanisms, resulting in feelings of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, negativity, and a deep sense of unaccomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Whereas one's self-efficacy for a given task contributes positively to one's motivation and self-efficacy, teacher burnout has the opposite effect.

Physical education teacher burnout is often typified by indifference or learned helplessness, that nothing one does makes a difference—a disconnect between effort and outcome. This barren emotional state is often the result of having too many barriers stacked against a PE teacher (Barroso et al., 2005; Rovengno & Bandhauer, 1997). For example, traditional barriers to physical activity and PE in schools include: (a) the deprioritization of physical activity/education, (b) lack of time and resources, (c) perceived negative parent/guardian and student values toward physical activity/education, (d) competing district policies (Nathan et al., 2018). Extensive research with the SSPE teachers suggests that each of the aforementioned barriers has been systematically and largely removed via district policy and actions, helping the teachers to focus on one central task—educating children.

Therefore, this study aims to examine teacher motivational profiles via SDT, self-efficacy, and burnout due to perceptions of working conditions, expectations, and barriers in the SSPE school district.

Methods

Participants and Setting

Study participants included elementary PE teachers ($n = 70$, 39 males and 31 females), four elementary school principals, and one district PE coordinator in a large metropolitan school district in the desert southwest of the United States. From the 52 elementary schools in this district, 70 of the 82 teachers ($r_{\text{response}} = 85\%$) consent-

ed to participate in this study. Grouped age ranges reveal that 24.3% of teachers were aged 20-30 years, 17.2% were aged 31-40 years, and 59% of the teachers were 41 years or older. Commensurately, teaching-experience groupings indicated that 37.2% were in years 1-10, 27.2% in years 11-20, and 36% had more than 26 years of experience. Ethnic identities included: Caucasian = 70%, Hispanic = 21.4%, Asian = 4.3%, African American = 1.4 %, Pacific Islanders = 1.4%, and other = 1.43%. Education level in terms of degree attained are as follows: bachelor = 40%, master = 58.6%, and doctorate = 1.43%. Further, 89% of the teachers reported having attended the partnership university. Professional organization membership rates were state (24%) and national (31%).

The school district oversees 52 elementary schools with some 42,000 K-6 students. Overall, 46% are Hispanic, 41% are Caucasian, 5% are Native American, 4% are African American, 2% have a multi-ethnicity, and less than 1% are Asian. Fifty-nine percent of students live in a single-family home, while 22% live in a one-parent family. Seventy-two percent speak English as their primary language, and 67% qualify for free or reduced lunch. Most schools ($n = 42$, 81.4%) report between 501 and 1,000 students. The remaining ($n = 10$, 18.6%) have fewer than 500 students (Griffiths, 2017).

Procedures

University IRB and district permission were attained before this study. Participants received, signed, and returned letters of consent electronically. This was a mixed-methods study in which participants first took an online survey via Qualtrics® two weeks before onsite visits. The survey comprised 11 demographic questions, 15 teacher-motivation questions, 30 teacher-self-efficacy questions, 12 teacher-burnout questions, and 25 barriers to PE questions. District approval for the survey was granted only on an anonymous basis, which placed some limitations on our representative sampling procedures for follow-up interviews.

A sampling procedure that (a) assured equal representation across district SES demographics and gender and (b) informed by the results of the surveys was used to invite 24 teachers ($n = 12$ males) from across the school district to participate in formal 30-minute, onsite interviews. The district coordinator and four principals were also interviewed for triangulation purposes.

Data Collection and Analysis

Survey Instruments and Analysis

Four validated and reliable scales were used in this study. The 15-item, six-subscale Work Tasks Motivation Scale for Teachers (WTMST, Fernet et al., 2008), the 30-item, five-subscale Teacher Efficacy scale (Fernet et al., 2008), and the Teacher Burnout scale (Friedman, 1999) were used to measure pertinent variables. Lastly, a 25-item Barriers to PE scale (Rodriguez-Ayala, 2014) was used to assess how teachers perceive barriers to their teaching ability. All response options used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). All items were entered into a single survey. Participants accessed and completed the survey using the Qualtrics® online service. Responses were downloaded into SPSS (version 25) for statistical analyses. Means and standard deviations were examined for all demographic variables. Subscale and composite means for each of the four instruments were formed and used for all subsequent analyses. Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each subscale. A self-determination index (SDI) score was calculated using $SDI = (2 \times IM + IDR - ER - 2 \times AM)$. Pearson, bi-variate correlations were calculated for selected subscale means.

Qualitative Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected from two sources: (a) audiotaped interviews with teachers ($n = 24$), school principals ($n = 4$), and the district coordinator ($n = 1$), and (b) field notes from 60 hours of observation and daily debriefing sessions. Researchers also observed the teachers as they taught several lessons and kept notes of teacher confidence, approachability, interest in individuals, motivation, and evidence of burnout.

A semi-structured interview (Patton, 1980) procedure, consisting of questions was used to access deeper levels of meaning and personal experiences with our selected constructs of interest (motivation, self-efficacy, burnout, and barriers). Examples of questions include, "How has your enthusiasm for doing your job changed over the years?" Or "Do you feel the district is supportive or controlling?" And "Are you confident in your ability to teach as you are expected to?" Follow-up questions were used to further explore teacher re-

sponses. Participant identifiers were removed, and all qualitative data were transcribed and typed into a single Word document.

Data were content analyzed using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to identify emerging themes. The initial analysis was conducted in a group discussion format. Next, a fourth member assumed the peripheral member role to provide an independent assessment of the data presented by the three active-member researchers.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness measures included varied researcher roles, addressing research bias, member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and an inquiry audit. Members of the research team were designated specific analytical roles before data collection, primary analysis in active-member roles (Adler & Adler, 1994). Personal biases existed due to their respective histories as physical educators and PETE professors. Two members had no prior experience with the district. All members were involved in a procedural meeting one week prior to the onsite visits. Each member was assigned readings detailing the SSPE model, its history, and student- and parent-perceptions. To validate initial conclusions, a fifth outside researcher (peer-debriefer) was engaged for independent analysis, tasked with challenging biases, discussing field notes, clarifying interpretations, and playing devil's advocate (Hanson & Newburg, 1992). Lastly, an inquiry audit, similar to a fiscal audit, allows an outside researcher to examine the audit trail, data reduction and reconstruction, analysis and synthesis products, process notes, and instrument development information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) included (a) data triangulation (use of data from a variety of sources), (b) investigator triangulation (using several different researchers and backgrounds), (c) theory triangulation (multiple theoretical perspectives in the examination; herein self-determination, self-efficacy, and burnout), and (d) methodological triangulation (using multiple methods to examine a single problem).

Results and Discussion

The entire SSPE line of research would not be complete without the present examination of the perspective of those at the center of

it all: the teachers. This mixed-methods study was conducted using three related theoretical constructs, namely, self-determination, self-efficacy, and teacher burnout to examine elementary PE teacher perceptions of a district-wide PE program.

Motivation

Quantitative

Survey results indicate that the SSPE teachers reported high levels of self-determination toward their job (see Table 1). Intrinsic motivation ($M_{IM} = 4.38$) and identified regulation ($M_{IDR} = 4.44$) scores reveal that internalized motivational processes strongly regulated their motivation to do their jobs. Conversely, Introjected- and external-regulation scores indicate low levels of externally derived motives. Amotivation scores were very low ($M_{AM} = 1.51$)—i.e., a strong disagreement about disinterest in their jobs. The SDI scores (SDI, $M = 7.62$, $SD = 2.84$) further reflect a decidedly autonomous orientation in their motivational profiles toward their job. In other words, the reasons they do their job are largely internalized or are completely under their control. There was a small measure of perceptions of external controls evident in the scores for introjected- ($M_{IJR} = 2.27$) and external regulation ($M_{ER} = 2.52$). Reliability scores (Cronbach's α) were generally above the acceptable level ($> .7$) for all subscales (the exception was the ER subscale [$\alpha = .50$]; see Table 1).

Correlation analysis shows support for the simplex pattern (subscale scores lie in an adjacent, ordered sequence) in the WTMST and evidence of expected relationships among variables from the three theoretical frameworks. For example, teachers demonstrating high SDI scores also had moderate-to-high self-efficacy scores and low levels of burnout. In other words, motivational indices generally had a positive relationship with self-efficacy and a negative relationship with burnout indices.

The positive nature of the responses is noteworthy and likely has much to do with the longevity pattern among the teachers. This group of veteran teachers expresses a healthy sense of self-efficacy in their classroom and their ability to engage in and influence the district PE program. Also noteworthy are the low levels of burnout and the reasons revealed in the interviews as to the sources of the burnout. A multi-theoretical examination has provided construct

Table 1

Motivation, Self-efficacy, and Teacher Burnout for Teaching Physical Education Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas

Subscale	Mean	SD	α
IM	4.38	.66	.81
IDR	4.44	.63	.81
IIR	2.27	.84	.80
ER	2.52	.76	.50
AM	1.51	.63	.76
SD _{Index}	7.62	2.84	--
SE Class Instruction	4.17 (83%)	.57	.82
SE Class Discipline	4.16 (83%)	.69	.82
SE Class Consideration	4.12 (82%)	.54	.89
SE _{Class Index}	4.15(83%)	.54	--
SE Org. Influence	3.81 (76%)	.47	.79
SE Org. Inclusion	3.94 (78%)	.57	.83
SE _{Organization Index}	3.88 (78%)	.48	--
SETPE _{Index}	4.01	.46	--
TBO Exhaustion	2.91	1.01	.93
TBO Unaccomplished	2.11	.69	.80
TBO Depression	2.10	.78	.89
TBO _{Index}	2.37	.66	.66
Barriers _{Index}	3.92	.37	--

Note: SD Index score was calculated using $SDI = (2*IM+IDR-ER-2*AM)$; Self-efficacy is depicted as raw scores (confidence percentages)

validity across complementary theoretical perspectives. These results support the conclusion of Prusak et al. (2014) that a systemic approach (common curriculum, district coordinator/gatekeeper, monthly in-service, and university partnership and mutual accountability) to remove traditional barriers has direct effects that increase motivation and lower burnout.

Qualitative.

High levels of motivation similarly emerged from the qualitative analysis labeled as motivation, which is made up of three themes: (a) passion for physical education, (b) love for kids, and (c) sustainability of motivation. To preserve space within this paper, one or two quotes are selected to be *representative* of the findings included in each of the broader themes.

Passion for Physical Education

This often-mentioned notion may have been best expressed by Tyler, a 25-year veteran PE teacher, “You have to find something you love to do... and this is it, my passion, I found my niche... what I was born to do.”

Love for the ‘Kiddos’

One of the most cited reasons these teachers entered the profession is because they enjoy working with children and youth. Indeed, Pennington et al. (2014) discovered that a love for working with children was a key reason these teachers were recruited to this district. Notably, even in the more experienced group (59% were 41+ years of age; 36% with 26+ years of experience) it was clear they still have a genuine love for kids. It “gets them up in the morning” and sustains them on the days when they are tired or have less to give. To this point, one teacher stated,

If it is one word in regard to motivation it is ‘kids’...you see them light up when they get to come to PE. When class is over you hear them, ‘Oh man, do we have to go back to class now?’...and you know the kids just love it.

Another said, “When it comes down to it, it is seeing the kids’ faces when they’re having fun...it makes it so easy to get up for work.”

The SSPE teachers’ satisfaction with teaching originated from an inner desire to impact the lives of their students. The interview responses did not indicate that these PE teachers felt obligated, externally controlled, or driven by internal or external pressures. Nor were any of the teachers motivated or lacking in volitional participation.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix Across All Composite Scores for Motivation, Self-efficacy, and Teacher Burnout, and Alpha Scores

Subscales	IM	IDR	IJR	ER	AM	SE Instruction	SE Discipline	SE Consideration	SE Org. Influence	SE Org. Inclusion	BO Exhaustion	BO Unaccomplished	BO Depression	SD Index	SE Classroom Index	SE Organization Index	SE Teaching PE Index	BO Index	Barriers Index
Motivation																			
IM	[.81]	.70**	.15	.08	-.44**	.81**	.40**	.68**	.55**	.30**	-.47**	-.55**	-.46**	.80**	.65**	.50**	.65**	-.61**	.57**
IDR		[.81]	.04	.00	-.33**	.60**	.50**	.70**	.40**	.40**	-.30	-.35**	-.31**	.70**	.70**	.44**	.62**	-.35**	.51**
IJR			[.80]	.41**	.40**	-.01	.06	.09	.06	-.04	-.07	-.04	.19	-.23	.00	.03	.01	.05	-.12
ER				[.50]	.39**	.00	.15	-.23	.03	.04	.10	.20	.25*	-.40**	.05	.04	.05	.22	-.16
AM					[.76]	-.36**	-.12	-.25*	-.32**	-.23	.36**	.47**	.49**	-.83**	-.26*	-.30*	-.31**	.52**	-.31**
Self-Efficacy																			
SE Instruction						[.82]	.66**	.77**	.56**	.46**	-.32**	-.44**	-.44**	.58**	.80**	.60**	.82**	.40**	.44**
SE Discipline							[.82]	.71**	.48**	.48**	-.33**	-.42**	-.37**	.36**	.90**	.52**	.81**	-.46**	.30*
SE Consideration								[.82]	.56**	.47**	-.30**	-.30**	-.38**	.59**	.91**	.55**	.83**	-.48**	.47**
SE Org. Influence									[.89]	.68**	-.34**	-.41**	-.48**	.48**	.58**	.90**	.82**	-.51**	.51**
SE Org. Inclusion										[.79]	-.34**	-.41**	-.48**	.36**	.52**	.92**	.80**	-.37**	.31**
Burnout																			
BO Exhaustion											[.83]	.45**	.36**	-.45**	-.38**	-.27*	-.37**	.81**	-.36**
BO Unaccomplished												[.83]	.59**	-.58**	-.47**	-.45**	-.52**	.81**	-.47**
BO Depression													[.80]	-.55**	-.44**	-.44**	-.46**	.78**	-.20**
Index Scores																			
SD Index														--	.55**	.45**	.56**	-.65**	.57**
SE Classroom															--	.60**	.91**	-.53**	.44**
SE Organization																--	.88**	-.47**	.43**
SE Teaching PE Index																	--	.56**	.40**
BO Index																		--	-.50**
Barriers Index																			--

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$. Cronbach's α scores are located along the diagonal, .70 or above are acceptable.

Sustainability of Motivation

Given the high physical demands of this district's elementary PE curriculum and its delivery expectations, teachers expend a great deal of energy and enthusiasm while teaching. It is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. Researchers noted how hard these teachers worked in this and the previous studies. They are fully engaged, moving constantly, tending to the needs of the students, etc.; not at all the "roll-out-the-ball" teachers sitting on the sidelines.

Such dedication has been maintained faithfully throughout the district, and after four decades, it certainly appears sustainable. One researcher noted after observing classes at five different schools, "One thing that stands out is the energy level of the PE teachers even though they seem to have different personalities." One teacher remarked,

I love coming to work every day. I get to play...I'm exhausted at the end of the day, but I go home with a smile on my face. I will continue till my body cannot move anymore which is wonderful.

This is no small notion considering that there are a mandated curriculum, methodologies, and advocacy activities, all with district oversight. One might think these teachers would feel more controlled than teachers elsewhere with more "autonomy."

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy subscale composite scores are shown as both raw scores and confidence percentages (see Table 1). Classroom self-efficacy is high ($r_{SE} = 82\%-83\%$). Interpreting percentages is straightforward. In this case, teachers are 83% confident in their abilities to achieve desirable learner outcomes in discipline scenarios and to demonstrate considerate care for their students. They are slightly less confident in their abilities to exert organizational influence (76%) and to play pivotal roles (78%). Alpha scores indicated robust scale reliability ($r_{\alpha} = .79 - .89$). Overall, SE across all classroom activities was also high (80%), as was overall organizational SE (77%). The composite or overall SE for teaching PE was strong (80%).

The vast majority of these SSPE teachers are held to a high, common-standard curriculum and methodological expectations and ap-

pear to be realistically attuned to confidence in their own abilities in a very demanding job. Yet, their perceptions of self-efficacy seem to provide a healthy assessment in a system that holds them accountable for activities both in the classroom ($M_{\text{classroom self-efficacy}} = 83\%$) and within the district organization ($M_{\text{district self-efficacy}} = 77\%$).

Teachers are notably more self-efficacious in classroom duties than in the district structures. Considering the district-level expectations and oversight in SSPE, lower self-efficacy for district influence and inclusion is likely understandable. This is not to say that this is a heavy-handed district leadership model. Instead, the mutual accountability measures (Prusak et al., 2010) likely contribute to these healthy levels of district self-efficacy. For example, the district administration systematically removes traditional barriers and expects, in return, that teachers perform and adhere to district curriculum and methodologies; to teach and teach well.

If the district were to cease such support, teachers may feel justified in abandoning district mandates. If the district hopes to have a willing workforce, it recognizes the necessary priority of tending to the needs of the teachers.

Significant, positive, and moderate-large correlations were noted among the context-specific SE scores (see Table 4). The most substantial relationships are found between the three classroom SE constructs (instruction, discipline, and consideration), with the largest between instruction-consideration ($r = .77$), discipline-consideration ($r = .71$), and organization influence-inclusion ($r = .68$).

These strong levels of self-efficacy may be further explained through the qualitative analysis in the category titled *curriculum and district support* made up of two themes, (a) common curriculum and (b) in-services.

Common Curriculum

Teachers viewed the mandated curriculum and instructional methods as strengths of the district PE program, allowing them to focus their time and energy on its delivery. This may have been best expressed by one teacher who shared,

When teachers from other districts come to observe, they all say the same thing to me. You are so lucky that you don't have

to create the curriculum and spend all of your time preparing lessons and finding activities.

Despite the overwhelming support for the common curriculum, one teacher expressed a desire to have more personal control over curricular decisions.

Further, collaboration via professional development activities may be more focused and intentional because of the shared curriculum, contributing to the high levels of self-efficacy among the teachers both in the classroom and district.

In-Services

The common curriculum also provides the foundation of monthly district in-service in which teachers are all on the same page, speaking the same language, and sharing best practices. One teacher explained,

The in-services allow us to all come together and work as a group and they are great...our curriculum is so structured but just to hear, "oh, he does it a different way and that is a cool idea." I get set [in my ways] from so many years of doing it the same way and its neat when you see it done differently and I think, I'm going to do it that way now...

One of the benefits of teacher participation in the in-services is the feeling of camaraderie and community, as well as a stronger sense of confidence in their ability to deliver the curriculum.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher responses indicate that they experience (a) slightly less burnout than neutral ($M = 2.91$), (b) low-level burnout due to feelings of lack of accomplishment ($M = 2.11$), or (c) low-level burnout due to feelings of depression ($M = 2.10$, see Table 5). Although teachers experience low levels of burnout, the reality is they are experiencing some; the highest associated with feelings of exhaustion and the lowest with feelings of lack of accomplishment or depression.

Correlations among sources of burnout are significant, positive, and moderate in size, particularly when TBO is included due to feelings of lack of accomplishment.

Although fluid and not restricted to traditional sources cited earlier in this paper, feelings of burnout in this district are relatively low. However, the subtle nuances of burnout and its contributing factors emerged from the qualitative data in three themes: (a) physical demands, (b) barriers, and (c) the social-emotional needs of students.

Physical Demands

Teachers identified feelings of burnout with (a) constantly having to move PE equipment associated with the equipment-intensive curriculum, (b) exposure to the sun, and (c) the physical wear and tear of being on your feet teaching physical activities all day. Often expressed as feelings of exhaustion was the most frequent contributor to feelings of burnout. A veteran teacher described it this way,

It is tiring and it's real physical fatigue. You have to pace yourself ... manage yourself ... to make sure that you can make it through the day... you don't realize the physical demand of being on your feet all day, moving, playing ... and the toll it can take year after year.

Barriers

The barriers that teachers described as contributing to feelings of burnout varied depending on whether the PE teacher was a school-based or a district-based (traveling) teacher. School-based teachers (teaching at the same school and classes each day) experienced barriers related to (a) extra responsibilities, (b) feelings of isolation within the school, (c) being overworked, and (d) feelings of marginalization from other faculty within the school. A school-based teacher spoke of these barriers, saying:

You get this attitude from some of the classroom teachers when they drop off their kids for PE ... I think, look ... I am teaching your kids and it's frustrating not to feel valued by them.

District-based (traveling) teachers rotate between several schools during the week and reported a large variation in support. One district-based teacher shared, "I think from the district we feel very supported, but I think each individual school is different. It is hard

... [its] different over there ... a completely different atmosphere... not as supportive.”

Thankfully, a lack of collegial respect seems to be isolated to those schools where administrative support may be lacking. On the other hand, one principal’s assessment recognizes the value of the PE teachers while also acknowledging the feeling of being overworked:

They are the hardest working teachers and staff by far because of the amount of work they put in... I rely heavily on [them] because they see so many kids and their influence ... than it is with like a sixth-grade teacher.

Social-Emotional Learning Issues

This theme seems to be part of a larger challenge across the educational landscape as teachers are faced with working with students with a variety of social and emotional issues ranging from anxiety and depression to gender identity (Zins et al., 2004). Teachers do not feel prepared with the knowledge and skills to help students with such challenges. A teacher expressed his concerns with this relatively new challenge:

[It] has been super frustrating over the last two years ... kids ... can’t self-regulate ... I don’t understand what to do ... we need ... more resources on how to deal with ... kids emotionally shutting down.

Additionally, a wide range of parental support is often associated with familial status. One teacher reported:

With the emotional stuff, it really depends on whether or not the parent will come and meet with the teachers and principal. Some [children] have parental support and resources [but] others are afraid because they may not be legal [residents].

Conclusion

This study’s findings provide the SSPE teachers with essential perspectives and contributing elements to their healthy motivational profiles. SSPE teachers displayed high levels of motivation and self-efficacy and relatively low levels of teacher burnout.

The demands of teaching PE within a district with rigorous expectations appear to be motivating and exhausting. Teachers are confident and have high competence, relatedness, and self-efficacy. Yet, they experience some frustration and lower self-efficacy relative to teaching children how to regulate their emotions. This is not necessarily uncommon or unexpected considering teacher concerns about the rise of mental health issues in schools and among children and youth generally (Reinke et al., 2011). Further and future emphasis by the district leaders could be (and is currently) placed on preparing teachers, through in-services, with the skills and knowledge to incorporate relevant aspects of social and emotional learning (SEL) within the curriculum.

Looking Back

This paper represents a conclusory piece for this study and all that preceded it. It is a story of success on a large scale with a long history. Our examination over the past 20 years or more has taught us much about how systemic success might be accomplished. We have learned how a university and school district partnership can operate synergistically. We have learned who the key players were and what their positions were, and we have learned about critical moments and decisions when a wrong move would have been disastrous. We have learned how a large organization functions, from its leadership down to the students and parents it serves. We have discovered a template—a comprehensive structure for others who might wish to replicate the SSPE model. Quoting from the original paper in this line of inquiry, “Some teachers and administrators may say that if they had all these things in place in their school district, they too could succeed—that is exactly the point of this [these] article[s].” (Prusak et al., 2010, p. 105). Upon this premise, we offer several principles for creating systemic success in other PE/district/university contexts.

First, the role of the district coordinator must be underscored in the recruiting and retention of the teachers. “She has our back!” is a common theme when teachers are asked to comment on her contribution to their success. Since little is known about how the DC/Professional development coordinator ought to function in their position, we recommend that as new district coordinators are hired, *the* key component of the job description should be “Take care

of your teachers!” Give them what they need to succeed. Establish high standards and hold everyone to them. Let them know you are as accountable to them as they are to you. When new challenges arise, seek solutions that first take care of your teachers. Make decisions with their input and with their best interests at heart.

Next, monthly in-servicing provides oversight, quality control, and fidelity across the district and creates a community of support among the teachers. Times of personal crisis often are addressed by fellow teachers. Strategies for self-care are developed and shared to help alleviate burnout resulting from the physical nature of the job or even age-related issues. SSPE effectively minimizes or mitigates burnout for teachers, especially given the job’s high expectations and physical and emotional demands. In an era of high attrition rates, it is particularly noteworthy that 59% of the teachers have 20+ years in this district and still report themselves as self-efficacious and motivated.

Lastly, nimble and reactive, the SSPE structures can move with practiced efficiency to meet new challenges and trends. Rather than being organizationally stagnant, it maintains its *dynamic stability*. (Cuban, 1992; Prusak et al., 2010). This allows the district to examine, change, adopt, or ignore changes in the educational landscape to remain true to its core values. Further, it reduces the theory-to-practice lag time. For example, the subject district is currently developing and training its teachers with a uniform framework to effectively address the increasing numbers of students experiencing social and emotional learning challenges (Zins et al., 2004). SSPE structures and mechanisms ensure appropriate responses are employed with expedience and consistency.

Now, more than 40 years from the conception of SSPE, here is a brief description of what we see. When the SSPE structures have been put into play, mutual accountability binds key players in a common purpose—their hedgehog concept: *doing what is best for kids*. Leadership doggedly pursues the core mission of the organization. The district and PE coordinator strive daily to remove devastating barriers to protect and support its teachers. Quality PE lessons in a common curriculum are delivered with fidelity and a sense of duty and pride. The focus is on serving the needs of the students and parents’ wishes for their children. With all of this, at the heart of

it all is the *centrality* of the dedicated teacher. Teachers who have professional disposition, humility, and dedication to subsume some personal preferences and perhaps ambitions to do the job they were hired to do. We find teachers who aspired to climb aboard *this* particular bus because of an intense desire to be a part of something larger than self. These are special things, and teachers were willing to accept the additional work that is not necessarily expected or required elsewhere. But, in doing so, they knew they would not be alone. They knew of and expected the faithful support of the administration, classroom colleagues, and fellow PE teachers if they, each one, added their strength to that of many others over decades of dedicated service to pushing the flywheel—many pushers, most of them teachers. In the end, this is a *people* story. At its heart is the vigilant district coordinator(s) who takes care of their dedicated teachers who, in turn, *do what is best for ... the “kiddos.”*

Limitations

We recognize that no study is without its shortcomings and this paper is no exception. Access to district administration, school administration, teachers, and students has required greater levels of anonymity; something increasingly common. Thus, the survey respondents were impossible to identify, so we might explore contrary opinions in follow-up interviews. However, we were pleased to have a high response rate, making it likely that at least some negative examples were interviewed. The value of the surveys was to (a) provide an efficient cross-sectional understanding of the teachers with respect to motivation, self-efficacy, and burnout, and (b) provide theoretical parameters to guide the interview questions. Interviewees were selected to ensure that we had a representative sampling of nearly one-third of the teachers in consideration of age, demographics, school SES status, gender, and experience.

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