

PEDAGOGY

Rethinking PETE Program Admissions to Include Teacher Candidate Dispositions

Kacey Lynn DiGiacinto, Sean M. Bulger, Valerie Wayda

Abstract

The former National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, now the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of teacher candidate dispositions. Many physical education teacher education programs continue to struggle with the resultant challenge of positively influencing professional dispositions in the area of teacher education. Given this emphasis on dispositions as a program accreditation requirement and the apparent difficulties associated with facilitating positive change, the teacher candidate admissions process merits increased attention as a critical program component. The purpose of this paper is to provide recommendations regarding the use of dispositions during the teacher candidate admissions process. This paper includes (a) an overview of current practices in teacher candidate admissions in PETE, (b) identification of desirable dispositions in teacher education, and (c) related recommendations for improving teacher candidate selection.

Kacey Lynn DiGiacinto is an associate professor and the Health and Physical Education program coordinator, Department of Education, Psychology, and Health, Elizabeth City State University. Sean M. Bulger is an associate professor, College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, Department of Coaching and Teaching Studies, West Virginia University. Valerie Wayda is an associate professor, College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, Department of Coaching and Teaching Studies, West Virginia University. Please send author correspondence to kldigiacinto@ecu.edu

In the teacher education literature, dispositions have long been recognized as an important consideration in the preparation of preservice teachers because of the related influence on the trends of a teacher's actions or behaviors across similar instructional contexts (Katz & Raths, 1986). In 2007, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) clarified its definition of dispositions as "the professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities" (para. 12). Other definitions exist, but the notion that dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes that are shown through observable behaviors is common to all. If the premise that dispositions underlie teacher decision making and behavior is accepted, the indirect influence of these dispositions on student behavior and learning becomes even more apparent. Accordingly, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which has succeeded NCATE, has placed an even greater emphasis on the importance of teacher candidate dispositions in relation to professional preparation. From an accreditation standpoint, teacher education faculty are required to evaluate teacher candidates' professional dispositions on a regular basis with the resultant expectation that program graduates will teach in a manner that is conducive to student learning.

In this paper, the term *teacher candidate* reflects CAEP's definition, which refers to individuals preparing for professional teaching positions (CAEP, 2015). CAEP's first standard, Content and Pedagogical Knowledge, focuses on the importance of all candidates possessing a strong pedagogical foundation and content background. Based on this standard, providing institutions must ensure all candidates have the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to be effective to enhance the learning of all students (CAEP, 2015).

Despite their obvious importance, many physical education teacher education (PETE) programs continue to struggle with the challenge of assessing dispositions and using those data to facilitate continued professional development (Lund, Wayda, Woodard, & Buck, 2007). The related literature also demonstrates that certain teacher candidate dispositions may be somewhat resistant to change within the context of undergraduate PETE programs (e.g., Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Keating, Silverman, & Kulinna, 2002;

Matanin & Collier, 2003; Tjeerdsma, Metzler, Walker, & Mozen, 2000). Curtner-Smith (2009) argued that PETE programs need to engage teacher candidates in a more rigorous program admissions process that accounts for preexisting attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching.

The primary purpose of engaging teacher candidates in a more rigorous admissions process is to weed out, rather than change, students who demonstrate undesirable dispositions and unproductive behaviors: ball rollers, paper readers, free play monitors, and game players (Curtner-Smith, 2009). Unfortunately, few definitive standards are available to inform college and university teacher education faculty seeking to increase the rigor of teacher candidate screening and selection in a fair and unbiased manner (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). In the absence of well-defined standards for program admissions and limited access to resources, teacher education faculty are left to their own devices and often rely on measures of convenience, such as standardized test scores, which offer limited insight into a teacher candidate's dispositional orientation and/or professional potential (Wakefield, 2006).

Given the increased emphasis on dispositions as a program accreditation requirement, the apparent difficulties associated with the facilitation of positive dispositional change, and the lack of accepted guidelines for teacher candidate selection, the program admissions process merits renewed attention as a critical administrative function. The purpose of this paper is to provide recommendations regarding the use of dispositions during the teacher candidate admissions process. This paper includes (a) an overview of current practices in teacher candidate admissions in PETE, (b) identification of desirable dispositions in teacher education, and (c) related recommendations for improving teacher candidate selection.

Current Practices in PETE Program Admissions

According to Doolittle et al. (1993), preservice teacher beliefs act as filters as teachers internalize new experiences within the PETE program. Prior experiences in physical education influence these initial beliefs about teaching, and teacher candidates tend to pick and choose the aspects of the curriculum to which they adhere. Accordingly, PETE programs need to pay extra attention to who they admit because that person's dispositions will dictate how much of an

effect the program has on his or her teaching behavior. If a teacher candidate was admitted who had views on physical education that differed markedly from those of the program, that recruit would be less likely to adhere to the effective teaching practices he or she was introduced to across the plan of study.

Assuming that teacher candidates' dispositions in some key areas cannot be changed or positively influenced, the role of the PETE faculty in teacher candidate recruitment, screening, and selection becomes more important. Curtner-Smith (2009) concluded that if the quality of school-based physical education is to be improved, PETE programs must (a) recruit capable students with innovative teaching orientations, (b) improve teacher candidate screening at the start of the program, and (c) demonstrate the willingness to reject program applicants who exhibit problematic dispositional orientations (e.g., custodial coaching orientation). Given the intense competition among academic programs for the brightest students on college campuses and the growing pressure to generate student credit hours, PETE faculty may experience difficulty implementing these rather straightforward recommendations.

In many PETE programs, faculty members commit a limited amount of discretionary resources toward the teacher candidate admissions process (see Table 1). Academic performance, as measured by college GPA and/or standardized test score, is employed as the key program admissions criteria in many programs. This primary focus on academic criteria is likely to persist given the rigorous nature of CAEP (2015) Standard 3.2, which requires each cohort admitted to have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Standard 3.2 also requires the cohort average performance on achievement assessments (i.e., ACT, SAT, or GRE) to be in the top 50% from 2016–2017, with this percentage increasing to 40% of distribution from 2018–2019, and top 33% of the distribution by 2020. In addition, institutions are encouraged to use professional dispositions in the admissions process that are psychometrically valid and reliable measures of an effective teacher. The use of “additional selectivity factors” for candidate admissions places greater responsibility on teacher preparation programs to recruit and retain quality candidates. There is a growing awareness by CAEP that when a program admissions process is focused solely on the academic achievements of prospective candidates, there is an

ease of administration and a certain measure of objectivity; however, several ethical (and potentially legal) concerns exist. First, the academic measures do not assess the dispositions of fairness and the belief that all students can learn. Second, the strict reliance on academic requirements for program admissions appears to be problematic given the disadvantages afforded minority test-takers and students with learning disabilities (Allen, 2003; CAEP, 2015; Stevens, 2001; Wakefield, 2006; Wilson & Floden, 2003).

Table 1
Prevalence of Assessment Strategy Use in PETE Program Admissions

Category	Sample assessment	Frequency	%
Standardized test	PPST	65	56
	PLT		
	ACT		
	C-BASE		
	Individual state test		
Academic performance	GPA	90	78
	Writing proficiency		
	Teaching portfolio		
	Pre-program work		
	Computer competency		
	Academic skills test		
	Not removed from another teacher education program		
Junior standing			
Fitness & skill	Fitness test	13	11
	Motor skills		
	Swimming test		
	Wellness/fitness plan		
Field training	Volunteer work	13	11
	Observation hours		
	Preteaching		
	Experience in a multicultural setting		
	Experiences with children in an educational setting		

Table 1 (cont.)

Category	Sample assessment	Frequency	%
Attitudinal & professional information	Member of a professional organization	43	37
	Statement of good moral character		
	Liability insurance		
	Letter of commitment to the profession		
	Criminal background check		
	Strong's Interest Inventory		
	Dispositional information		
	Letters of recommendation		
	Interview		
	Professional skills survey		
Other	Speech screening	14	12
	Negative TB test		
	CPR/First Aid certification		
No requirements	School reported no requirements	12	10

Note. Table based on a descriptive analysis of PETE program admissions requirements described in *Directory of Programs in Physical Education Teacher Education*, by S. F. Ayres, L. D. Housner, and H. Y. Kim, 2004, Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology, West Virginia University.

Third and perhaps more problematic than the other two issues is that standardized tests measuring academic ability are not always strong predictors of preservice teachers' eventual performance in the classroom (Salzman, 1991). A teacher candidate might perform marginally on academic tests for a number of reasons, but he or she could still develop the dispositions, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills required for a successful teaching career (Stevens, 2001). Conversely, a teacher candidate with a high college GPA or standardized test scores might demonstrate a range of inappropriate attitudes or behaviors, yet still gain admission into the program.

Identification of Desirable Dispositions

Despite the limitations associated with current practice in teacher candidate program admissions, the associated literature provides few conclusive guidelines or recommendations for conducting screening of teacher candidates that is more selective (Allen, 2003; Wilson & Floden, 2003). Given the lack of research in this important area, there is a clear need for additional studies related to screening

and selecting preservice teachers. More precisely, researchers need to identify the prerequisite dispositions considered to be critical for admission into a PETE program and successful employment in preK–12 physical education settings (Lund et al., 2007).

Desirable Dispositions Determined by PETE Research

Most PETE programs weight test scores the heaviest during admissions decision making. Many educators understand that high test scores are most useful for predicting future test scores rather than actual teaching performance (Fallon & Ackley, 2003). Goodlad (2002) stated that high test scores do not tell an admissions committee if a teacher candidate possesses problem-solving skills, good work habits, honesty, dependability, loyalty, or virtues. These types of dispositions are valuable to producing effective physical educators and need to be taught, nurtured, and assessed across the plan of study to communicate their importance to the teacher candidate (Lund et al., 2007). Unfortunately, Lund et al. (2007) found that PETE programs only hold students accountable for a few dispositions such as being prepared for class, following oral and written instructions/directions, regular attendance, participation in professional organizations/associations, and active engagement during class. In the same study, the dispositions of dependability, acceptance of constructive criticism, support for school policies, attitudes toward work, and enthusiasm toward teaching were noted as being important but not taught by most PETE programs. Perhaps one reason for this finding is that these dispositions are more difficult to define and/or observe.

Numerous key professional dispositions are often neglected within PETE programs because they are not formally identified by program organizers as important (Lund et al., 2007). Determining which dispositions PETE faculty deem important for preservice physical education teachers to possess is no easy task. Dispositions found to be essential for preservice teachers by Lund et al. (2007) included preparedness for class, dependability, ability to cooperate with others, ability to communicate with others, seeks solutions to problems, sensitivity to individuals with differences, enthusiasm, ability to work without supervision, taking initiative, and trustworthiness. These dispositions were not always assessed by the programs that cited their importance, but they were nevertheless judged to be important. This illustrates a possible disconnect between what a pro-

gram identifies as important and what it teaches, promotes, and measures. This is problematic because student dispositions serve as a filter for internalizing new experiences within the PETE program, and certain dispositions may be resistant to change (Doolittle et al., 1993; Matanin & Collier, 2003). The results of the Lund et al. study highlight how essential it is for a PETE program to identify dispositions it deems desirable, to create measures for assessing the dispositions, and then to monitor and reinforce those dispositions throughout the program. Thinking a disposition is important is different from teaching that a disposition is important and holding teacher candidates accountable for behaving accordingly. But programs must also make sure the dispositions they identify, reinforce, and assess are the dispositions deemed important in the workforce.

Desirable Dispositions Determined by Employers

Desirable dispositions for employment have been determined by Poole and Zahn (1993) to be applicable to students entering college and students entering the workforce; “success in learning basic skills is often directly related to personal characteristics such as employability skills, a good work ethic, dependability, a positive attitude, and determination” (Why Should Employability Skills Be Taught? section, para. 5). Employers not only look for employees to be intelligent enough to do the job, but they also look for dedication, applicants who have lives outside the job, applicants who can stand alone, applicants who can assimilate into the work environment appropriately, leadership, enthusiasm, problem solving, stress management, professional characteristics, communication skills, human relation principles, professional discretion, and professional appearance.

The Parker Project in Wisconsin pooled business representatives and identified important employability skills needed for entry-level employees: understanding how to apply and interview for a job, presenting a neat appearance, understanding career ladders and advancement, possessing good work habits and attitudes, getting along with others/human relations, adapting to change; learning new skills, solving problems; and developing thinking skills (Oinonen, 1985). When employers look to hire a candidate, they look at the individual’s total being that includes mental competence and personality. These employability skills represent the summation of what

an individual should be able to do and how he or she should be able to act once deciding to apply for employment.

More specifically, Mason and Schroeder (2010) reviewed the related literature and surveyed a sample of 60 principals to determine the professional and personal attributes looked for during the employment process within the schools. The majority of principals indicated that the most sought after positive attributes were of a personal nature including excitement, appearance, confidence, love of children, willingness to learn, and cooperative attitude. The professional attributes most frequently mentioned included content/pedagogical knowledge and professionalism. The negative characteristics reported were deficits of the previously mentioned positive attributes such as poor appearance, inadequate preparation, ineffective communication, arrogance, tardiness, and lack of confidence. These findings are consistent with previous studies and

support the idea that professional attributes [as determined by college transcripts, references, experience] seem to weigh heavily in the first level of the hiring process when the candidate pool is being reduced, but at the second level, personal attributes [including positive or negative dispositions] are weighed more heavily. (Mason & Schroeder, 2010, p. 190)

Improving Teacher Candidate Selection in PETE

Once faculty identify these preferred dispositions, it is essential that PETE programs communicate them during the teacher candidate recruitment process and again later during program admissions decision making (Bulger, Jones, Taliaferro, & Wayda, 2014). Concerns regarding PETE program enrollment persist at many colleges/universities, but that administrative issue cannot take precedence over the obligation to recruit, retain, and graduate high quality candidates capable of developing the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach effectively in school-based settings. Another concept from the previously described employment literature deals with the hiring principal in the schools must “devise some method of ‘reducing uncertainty’ and whittling down the large number of candidates to a workable number” (Mason &

Schroeder, 2010, p. 191). Mason and Schroeder (2010) maintain that the entire employment process can be conceptualized as a risk management strategy during which the principal uses an assortment of hiring practices to decrease the possibility of a poor hiring decision and avoid the resultant damaging effect on school culture. To accomplish this difficult task, principals in the schools make use of a wide assortment of low-cost (e.g., transcripts, résumés, application forms), medium-cost (e.g., reference reviews, telephone contacts, formal interviews, teacher tests), and high-cost (e.g., teacher observations) data collection methods at various points of the employment process to determine which candidates best match the desired teacher characteristic profile (Mason & Schroeder, 2010).

This section includes a summary of the potential uses of these low-, medium-, and high-cost data collection approaches, along with suggestions regarding their application to strengthen the PETE program admissions process. Rather than focusing exclusively on academic performance, the revised admissions process should account for a broader range of variables related to the fundamental dispositions, content knowledge, and basic teaching skills required for success within the involved PETE program.

Low-Cost Methods

Low-cost methods of reviewing PETE applicants include written résumé, cover letter, dispositions rubrics, written teaching philosophy, and attitudinal questionnaires. See Table 2 for an analysis of the pros and cons of each of the low-cost assessment methods, along with suggestions for implementation. Teaching philosophies, cover letters, and résumés are artifacts required for most job applications, so early preparation of teacher candidates to develop these items and the resultant evaluation processes simulates real-world application. If these types of materials are used during the program admissions process, faculty must provide applicants with clear guidelines regarding preparation and the preferred qualifications for a successful teacher candidate in advance.

Table 2*Low-Cost Methods for Use in the Teacher Candidate Admissions Process*

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommendations for use
Cover letter and résumé	<p>Highlights the applicant's key qualifications and experiences in two concise documents.</p> <p>Represents forward-looking approach for screening.</p> <p>Provides important insight to applicant's attention to detail.</p>	<p>Reliance of applicants on résumé templates might make it hard to differentiate.</p> <p>Systematic screening procedures need to be established for screening cover letters and résumés.</p>	<p>Do not use in isolation—employ in combination with additional screening methods.</p> <p>Applicants need to be provided with clear guidelines regarding preparation and preferred qualifications.</p> <p>Career service personnel can be involved to help applicants learn how to develop their materials.</p>
Dispositions rubric	Identifies if an applicant possesses beliefs and values that align with those of the program.	Related items may not totally capture all of the applicant's beliefs and values.	Rubrics can be embedded in probationary courses within a major so that data are collected on a continual basis and feedback is provided.
Teaching philosophy statement	<p>Offers insight into an applicant's assumptions about teaching.</p> <p>Allows for the expression of beliefs on a variety of basic concerns: goals of physical education and the role of the physical education teacher.</p>	<p>Nature of the probationary coursework could influence applicant readiness to respond.</p> <p>Provision of socially desirable responses by applicants as an act of studentship.</p>	<p>Protocol for screening philosophies that includes written documentation of evaluation.</p> <p>Consider use of short answer questions about teaching philosophy because this may represent a more appropriate alternative format early in the program of study.</p>
Attitudinal questionnaire	<p>Offers ease of administration and management of data when employed with large groups.</p> <p>Lends itself to quantitative data management and analysis, which is more time efficient.</p> <p>Affords faculty the opportunity to select from a variety of preexisting instruments.</p>	<p>Standardized approaches provide a limited representation of the applicant's "total being."</p> <p>Depending on the complexity of the questionnaire, it might be necessary to consult with the appropriate experts in statistical analysis.</p>	<p>Decide on a tool that will best measure the dispositions the program wants to examine.</p> <p>Adherence to the specific protocol for the questionnaire administration and data analysis is necessary.</p>

Colleges and universities have also created or adopted various dispositional rubrics and attitudinal questionnaires used to quantify teacher candidate attitudes and related behaviors. For example, Wayda and Lund (2005) developed a dispositions rubric to be used with teacher candidates in PETE. This rubric could also be repurposed to assess applicants for program admission. Performance is rated on the rubric according to four indicators: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, distinguished, and a not applicable option, in case a faculty member has not observed a behavior category exhibited by a teacher candidate. This rating system is used along with five behavior categories and subcategories: values learning and knowledge (attendance, in-class performance, class preparation); values diversity (relationships with others); values collaboration (group work); values professionalism (professional development and involvement; respect for school rules, policies, and norms; and communication); and values personal integrity (emotional control/responsibility and ethical behavior and role model). This rubric was based on the premise that these “skills are representative of a pre-service teacher’s attitude and commitment toward the teaching profession” (Wayda & Lund, 2005, p. 38). By identifying teacher candidates with problem dispositions prior to program admission through the systematic use of rubrics or questionnaires, PETE faculty can better address individual student needs during the application process and following program admission.

Medium-Cost Methods

The medium-cost methods are more time and resource intensive. See Table 3 for an analysis of the various medium-cost methods including teaching portfolio or work samples, Internet search engines, individual interviews, and small group interviews. Having the admissions committee examine a teaching portfolio (or work sample), which highlights selected teaching competencies by providing an organized collection of the program applicant’s most exemplary artifacts, allows for the critical examination of a teacher candidate’s level of preparedness for more intensive coursework in the field. One significant benefit of including a teaching portfolio relates to the assessment of teacher candidate performance in a formative manner and in a summative manner. Toward that end, teaching portfolios can be embedded as an assignment in various probationary courses for better facilitation of uniform preparation and compliance.

Table 3*Medium-Cost Methods for Use in the Teacher Candidate Admissions Process*

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommendations for use
Teaching portfolio or work samples	Provides opportunity for formative and summative evaluation. Includes a variety of supporting artifacts such as résumé, teaching philosophy, sample unit and lesson plans, student learning data, and so forth.	Development of a teaching portfolio is labor intensive. Assessment can also prove labor intensive and time consuming. Use of electronic portfolio system may result in additional subscription costs for the teacher candidate.	Embed portfolio as a series of assignments during probationary coursework. Need to provide clear guidelines to applicants regarding preparation of the teaching portfolio. Establish a protocol for screening portfolios that includes written documentation of results.
Internet search engines	Used by employers in different fields including education. Increases applicant awareness of his or her actions and consequences. Cost-effective approach to learning more about applicants. Wide range of social networks and search engines available to gather information.	Information obtained may not always be accurate. Information may be posted without an applicant's prior knowledge. Employers may learn things with little bearing on teaching qualification (e.g., sexual orientation, political affiliation).	Consistent search procedures need to be followed for each applicant. Procedures for handling individuals with unacceptable content need to be clarified before searches are conducted. Generally not advised given the lack of control that the applicant has over the information and the inability to judge the obtained information fairly.
Individual interviews	Demonstrates applicant's verbal and nonverbal interaction in a professional setting. Assesses communication skills and readiness to assimilate.	Preparation and administration can be time consuming. Criteria for "fit" within the organization need to be predetermined.	Interview protocol and written script needs to be prepared and piloted in advance. Consistent application of the interview protocol across applicants is critical. Assessment criteria need to be established.
Small group interviews	Measures communication skills, cognitive reasoning, problem solving, work ethic, and cooperation.	Group interview protocols often require video analysis, which is time and labor intensive.	Guidelines for scenarios and rating procedures need to be outlined ahead of time. Incorporate the group interview as an assignment during probationary coursework.

Even though the admissions process sometimes becomes time consuming, teacher candidate interviews should be considered, to provide program faculty with a more complete understanding of the manner in which teacher candidates will act and present themselves in a professional setting. Individual interviews provide an opportunity for structured interactions that demonstrate interpersonal communication skills and readiness to assimilate into the program. Use of individual interviews and teaching portfolios in tandem provides faculty with information pertinent to the caliber of work a teacher candidate can produce, plus allows teacher candidates to explain and justify their evidences so faculty gain insight into why they included the selected artifacts. Alternatively, small group interviews may be incorporated that include problem-solving requirements so faculty can directly observe teacher candidate behaviors in a work-like setting: communication skills, cognitive reasoning skills, work ethic, and cooperation. Working in the small group context, it becomes more difficult for a teacher candidate to hide undesirable dispositions and behaviors. Development of the protocol and specific problem or scenario is often challenging, however, and it is suggested that the group interview be embedded as an assignment in a probationary course with use of digital video to record the small group interaction.

Internet searches represent a more recent trend used to examine applicants during the program admissions process. These searches can help to identify Internet content that could adversely affect a program applicant's employability as a teacher. Internet searches are used by employers, colleges and universities, and academic programs. Internet searches can turn up interesting information about teacher candidates that is relevant to program admissions decision making. Internet searches using social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest enable faculty to examine how teacher candidates conduct themselves on a daily basis. A major limitation of Internet searches relates to the possibility that false information can be uploaded about a person and/or information can be posted without their awareness. In some circumstances, the teacher candidates may have limited control over posted information, and program decision makers may learn information about an applicant that has no bearing on their qualifications to teach (e.g., sexual ori-

entation, political affiliation, religious beliefs). As of right now, it is advisable not to use the Internet because of the lack of control the teacher candidate has over the information and the inability of faculty to judge the information fairly.

High-Cost Methods

High-cost methods include criminal background disclosures, pre-physical activity screenings and fitness testing, and teaching experiences (see Table 4). Criminal background checks are required to earn a teaching license in most states and are used to document past legal issues that could disqualify a teacher candidate from later obtaining a teaching license or certification. Although the monetary cost is typically incurred by the teacher candidate, teacher education programs adopting this screening strategy must take special precautions given the private and sensitive nature of the data collected. Suggestions for implementation include regular consultation with university lawyers and the establishment of a protocol for dealing with problem background checks in advance. A key contact person or review board is also needed, along with a classification system for criminal offenses and a mechanism for counseling applicants with problematic background checks. The cost-benefit of this approach to screening requires careful consideration prior to application.

Pre-activity screening for health and physical fitness provides a baseline measure regarding the applicant's health, physical activity, and health-related fitness. This is an advantage when it comes to providing an initial level of pre-activity screening prior to participation in activity classes that require moderate to vigorous physical activity. Screenings also highlight the need for prospective physical educators to serve as role models with healthy physically active lifestyles. On the other hand, the appropriateness of high-stakes fitness testing is questionable in PETE and may result in the reinforcement of many of the negative fitness testing practices observed in preK-12 settings. Suggestions for implementation include use of pre-activity screening and health-related fitness testing not for the purpose of excluding program applicants, but as a basis for physician's referral if indicated (e.g., PAR-Q) and/or personalized physical activity program design.

Table 4*High-Cost Methods for Use in the Teacher Candidate Admissions Process*

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommendations for use
Criminal background disclosures	Provides pertinent information relevant to applicant's eligibility to procure a teaching license. Indicates existing patterns of problem behavior.	Potential applicants must spend money to have the background check completed. Programs must add safeguards to maintain confidentiality. Background checks exclude infractions committed as minor.	Classification system for criminal offenses must be constructed and legal advisors consulted. A contact person or review board must be designated and a mechanism for counseling applicants with problem background checks must be created.
Pre-physical activity screening	Establishes a baseline measure regarding the applicant's health, physical activity, and health-related fitness. Highlights the need for prospective physical educators to serve as role models with healthy physically active lifestyles. Identifies the need for physician's referral if indicated and/or basis for personalized physical activity program design.	High-stakes fitness testing is questionable in any educational context. Possible reinforcement of many negative fitness testing practices in K-12 schools. Testing in large numbers of applicants is time consuming and labor intensive.	An established testing procedure must be selected and demonstrated in advance. Teacher candidates afforded time to practice and engage in preconditioning for fitness testing. Testing protocols must be adhered to and standard criteria used for interpreting scores. Mechanism needed for remediation of low test scores including consultation, goal setting, access to programming, and social support.
Teaching experiences	Provides access to early field experience in community, corporate, clinical, and/or commercial settings. Affords teacher candidates the opportunity to test-drive their selected profession.	Gaining access to early quality field placements can present a challenge. Monitoring quality can prove difficult and requires some supervisory training of field placement personnel.	Clear guidelines need to be provided for everyone involved with the field placement. Embedding field experience requirements in probationary courses provides a greater measure of quality control. Protocol for documenting performance could include professionalism scoring rubrics, supervisor observations, and/or letters of recommendation.

Providing evidence of successful teaching experience is an important part of the teacher development process. Requiring program applicants to provide proof of successful interaction with children and adolescents in early teaching experiences related to health, physical activity, and/or youth sport allows applicants the opportunity to test-drive a career in teaching. It also provides a valuable teaching experience that they can call upon later in the teacher education curriculum. Various community, corporate, clinical, and commercial settings could be used to provide teaching opportunities. Monitoring the quality of these early teaching experiences in certain contexts could prove difficult, allowing for inappropriate beliefs and assumptions about teaching to be reinforced. When implementing such teaching experiences, the program needs to provide clear guidelines to the applicants regarding completion of the teaching experiences and to establish a list of approved field placement sites to ensure applicants do not end up in a placement that is not conducive to effective teaching. These early teaching experiences could be embedded in various probationary courses, which would make them more manageable than if applicants had to find their own placements and extra time to complete the experience. A protocol for screening teaching experiences that includes written documentation such as letters of recommendation and scoring rubrics regarding professionalism completed by site supervisors would aid decision making during the admissions process.

Sample Admissions Processes

It has been argued that PETE programs must “strive to recruit bright students with innovative teaching orientations, improve screening at the beginning of our programs, and reject applicants with hard core custodial coaching orientations” (Curtner-Smith, 2009, p. 222). With regard to the PETE screening process, the field as a whole needs to take a long, hard look at what dispositions we want to represent us. Once those dispositions are defined, students who do not display those dispositions need to be screened out. Locke (2003) is convinced that teacher candidates who demonstrate behaviors contrary to those defined by the profession and its programs should be eliminated. This would be an aggressive attempt to train teacher candidates to hold and demonstrate desirable professional ideals and values. Ideally, the teacher candidate admissions process

would involve multiple levels and methods used to generate a more complete picture of each applicant to assist faculty in finding the best qualified applicants for their PETE program. It is helpful for programs to consider each level of their admissions process as getting slightly more in depth than the previous level as the potential pool narrows with each successive round of screening. An example of a three-level model for program admission is provided to demonstrate how methods can be combined to generate a process that creates a detailed composite of each candidate.

At the initial level of screening, academic performance (e.g., GPA, standardized test scores) could be used in combination with a cover letter, professional résumé, and teaching philosophy to narrow a larger pool of applicants to a more workable quantity in a time-efficient manner. In some instances, states, universities, and/or programs may have minimal requirements already established for various academic measures. In other cases, faculty will have to make an educated determination about an appropriate admissions standard that will depend in part on the size of the applicant pool. These academic performance standards provide evidence of teacher candidate preparedness to complete the associated coursework, the cover letter, résumé, and teaching philosophy successfully and enables them to highlight their best qualifications and teaching-related experiences.

During the second level of screening, faculty could critically examine key work samples collected during probationary coursework (e.g., teaching portfolios, dispositions rubrics, attitudinal questionnaires). As described earlier, a small group interview format would work well at this stage of the admissions process in that the faculty can screen larger numbers of applicants efficiently while determining whether the participants have sufficiently developed the communication, cognitive reasoning, problem-solving, and cooperation skills and work ethic needed to function effectively in the school environment. Alternatively, program faculty could complete dispositional rubrics in probationary courses to provide information about the professionalism of a teacher candidate. In some situations, these assessments could reflect how teacher candidates perform during very early field placements in schools. Preferably, all data collection (and preliminary analyses) associated with this level of screening could be

embedded across probationary coursework and later used to inform admissions decision making.

The third and final level of screening in this example could incorporate an individual interview with the remaining teacher candidates, during which they provide descriptions of volunteer experiences, instructional materials created independently, unique or special skills, and service-related activities, all of which could support their qualifications. Various interview formats could be employed depending on the types of information being sought and desired interactions (e.g., one-on-one interview, panel interview, behavioral-based interview, speed interview). In accordance with college or university policy, a criminal background check could be required and used to identify major problems or issues that would disqualify a teacher candidate from obtaining a teaching license or certification. It is advisable to complete these types of checks (if permitted by the institution) at the end of the admissions process to reduce the administrative burden and associated costs for teacher candidates who were previously excluded for other reasons (e.g., inadequate GPA or test scores, poor performance during group or individual interview).

Conclusion

If PETE programs experience difficulty changing teacher candidate beliefs about teaching physical education, then they need to consider dispositions more seriously during the program admissions process. Before the admissions process is to be changed, however, PETE professionals need to determine what characteristics, beliefs, and values physical education teachers should possess to be effective and excel professionally. Once desirable characteristics, beliefs, and values are defined, the profession needs to decide how it wants to identify/measure those qualities using psychometrically sound measures. PETE programs must then actively recruit candidates who are a good fit for the program. PETE programs need to prepare applicants for the admissions process and clarify the expectations. Alternative ways to examine dispositions during the admissions process include examining the cover letter and résumé, requiring a written teaching philosophy, requiring a teaching portfolio, reviewing results of teaching experiences, holding interviews, conducting a group problems analysis interview, using standardized attitudinal questionnaires, running criminal background checks, exploring

Internet searches, and conducting pre-activity screening. It is suggested the PETE programs use a variety of these approaches to get a better picture of each candidate. The most important thing to keep in mind when conducting the admissions process is to make sure that every step is executed consistently. Creating a mechanism for advising students who are accepted and those who are not accepted would lead to developing higher quality candidates. The suggested strategies for refining teacher candidate screening and selection were adopted from a variety of fields including teacher education, PETE, business administration, and human resources.

References

- Allen, M. (2003). *Eight questions on teacher preparation: What does the research say? A summary of the findings*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EED479051)
- American Federation of Teachers. (2000). *Building a profession: Strengthening teacher preparation and induction* (Report of the K-16 Teacher Education Task Force, Item No. 36-0697). Washington, DC: Author.
- Ayres, S. F., Housner, L. D., & Kim, H. Y. (2004). *Directory of programs in physical education teacher education*. Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology, West Virginia University.
- Bulger, S., Jones, E. M., Taliaferro, A. R., & Wayda, V. (2015). If you build it, they will come (or not): Going the distance in teacher candidate recruitment. *Quest*, 67(1), 73-92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2014.984731>
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2015). The CAEP standards. Retrieved September 1, 2015, from <http://caepnet.org/standards/introduction>
- Curtner-Smith, M. (2009). Breaking the cycle of non-teaching physical education teachers: Lessons to be learned from the occupational socialization literature. In L. Housner, M. Metzler, P. Schempp, & T. Templin (Eds.), *Historic traditions and future directions of research on teaching and teacher education* (pp. 221-225). Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology, West Virginia University.

- Doolittle, S. A., Dodds, P., & Placek, J. H. (1993). Persistence of beliefs about teaching during formal training of preservice teachers. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 12, 355–365. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.12.4.355>
- Fallon, M., & Ackley, B. C. (2003, April). *Standards for admission to teacher education programs*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED477735)
- Goodlad, J. (2002). Kudzu, rabbits, and school reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(1), 16–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170208400107>
- Katz, L. G., & Raths, J. D. (1986). *Dispositional goals for teacher education: Problems of identification and assessment*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED2722470)
- Keating, X. D., Silverman, S., & Kulinna, P. H. (2002). Preservice physical education teacher attitudes toward fitness tests and the factors influencing their attitudes. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 21, 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.21.2.193>
- Locke, L. (2003, October). *Preparing teachers to grab the brass ring: Lessons from the carousel at Missoula*. Paper presented at NASPE PETE Conference, Baton Rouge, LA.
- Lund, J., Wayda, V., Woodard, R., & Buck, M. (2007). Professional dispositions: What are we teaching prospective physical education teachers? *The Physical Educator*, 64, 38–48.
- Mason, R. W., & Schroeder, M. P. (2010). Principal hiring practices: Toward a reduction of uncertainty. *The Clearing House*, 83, 186–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650903583727>
- Matanin, M., & Collier, C. (2003). Longitudinal analysis of preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 22, 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.22.2.153>
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2007, November 13). NCATE issues call for action; defines professional dispositions as used in teacher education. Retrieved May 27, 2010, from <http://www.ncate.org/public/102407.asp?ch=148>
- Oinonen, C. (1985). *Parker Project*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

- Poole, V. A., & Zahn, D. K. (1993). Define and teach employability skills to guarantee student success. *The Clearing House*, 67, 55–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.1993.9956019>
- Salzman, S. A. (1991). *Selecting the qualified: Predictors of student teacher performance*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED330672).
- Stevens, C. (2001). Formulating new criteria for teacher candidate selection. *Education*, 122, 365–371.
- Tjeerdsma, B. L., Metzler, M. W., Walker, T. M., & Mozen, D. (2000). Assessing dispositions. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 19, 451–475. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.19.4.451>
- Wakefield, D. (2006). Taking hope out of teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(1), 79–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170608800114>
- Wayda, V., & Lund, J. (2005). Assessing dispositions: An unresolved challenge in teacher education. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*, 76(1), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2005.10607317>
- Wilson, S. M., & Floden, R. E. (2003). *Creating effective teachers: Concise answers for hard questions*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED476366)