

Advocacy in Action:

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

K-12 and University Partnerships: Bridging the Advocacy Gap

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Advocacy is critical to the advancement and success of physical education programs across our country and to our field as a whole. Many advocacy efforts are concentrated at the local level, involving K-12 school personnel, local school boards, and local elected officials. However, expanding our advocacy efforts to include college and university departments of kinesiology will enhance our efforts and build collaborations that can advance our field in a powerful way. Colleges and universities can assist local advocacy efforts and facilitate these efforts statewide, regionally, and even nationally. University administrators, faculty, and college student participation can all be utilized to spread the message and provide “real world” advocacy learning opportunities for our physical education teacher education (PETE) candidates.

College and University Partnerships

Research has cited numerous advantages and benefits of K-12

collaborations with the larger university community (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Crocco, Faithfull, & Schwartz, 2003). Departments of kinesiology across the country are well positioned to establish partnerships with local school systems in order to advocate for quality, daily physical education and increased opportunities for physical activity for children and young adults. University administrators can be tremendous advocates for health and physical education issues across their state. Many college and university deans have regular meetings with superintendents and other stakeholders in the state who are also concerned about the health and wellbeing of school children. These meetings with high-ranking school personnel are an excellent opportunity to advocate for quality health and physical education programs.

Faculty members at colleges and universities can be tremendous allies in advocating for quality daily physical education. Specifically, PETE faculty are the best liaison between school personnel, physical education teachers,

and the local university. PETE faculty have a unique opportunity to involve future professionals in their advocacy efforts by utilizing class projects and other hands-on activities which help future teachers obtain experience in physical education, while providing advocacy related efforts on behalf of the school. Also, majors clubs are always looking for worthwhile and meaningful service oriented projects in the local community.

Partnering with a university or college will create numerous opportunities to collaborate together for events. The events can be local such as “physical activity day in school” or a PTA presentation. Or the events can be national such as celebrating National Physical Fitness and Sport Month in May or AAHPERD’s Let’s Move in School. No matter what the event, a dynamic advocacy connection can be created.

Example of a Collaboration: Let’s Move in School

The recent efforts of the Let’s Move

in School (LMIS) campaign from AAHPERD is a great example. Both K-12 school systems and colleges/universities are encouraged to participate in LMIS. Working together on a LMIS event can be an incredible advocacy collaboration. Here are some examples:

1. A university majors club helps organize an after school fitness program.
2. A college professor speaks at a local PTA meeting educating parents on the need for physical activity throughout the day including the time at home.
3. A fitness leadership student teaches a zumba class for all of the school faculty and staff.
4. A PETE faculty member speaks at a local school board meeting promoting quality physical education in every school.
5. University students contact state legislators to visit their LMIS event at the partner school.

The LMIS collaboration effort can easily be anything you can imagine it to be!

Creating the Dynamic Advocacy Connection: Step-by-Step

Partnerships between colleges/universities and K-12 physical education teachers are strategically effective when it comes to advocating for quality, daily physical education on a large scale. How then, do we begin to form these partnerships?

School physical education teachers should:

1. Make contact with the nearest college/university/community college in your area. A good place to start is with the department head of the Kinesiology Department, or with a particular faculty member who teaches in the PETE program. A listing of faculty in the department can be found on the university website in just a few clicks.
2. Set up a meeting with the faculty member or department head. Begin to plan mutually beneficial activities which will promote the school physical education program, but which will also be a high-quality, hands-on experience for the PETE candidates who will also be involved.
3. Contact the media to feature special events such as LMIS activities or National Physical Fitness and Sport Month.
4. Continue the relationships you have developed with the university faculty and, working with the faculty member, determine if there are other invested stakeholders who may wish to join you in your advocacy efforts.

University faculty and administrators should:

1. Seek local schools and physical education teachers who may benefit by partnering with your department of kinesiology.
2. Meet with those teachers, principals, and other school personnel that would be an integral part of the partnership as you move forward.

3. Contact the university public relations office to inform them of upcoming events where the department of kinesiology will be working with the local school. Most universities are very interested in community partnerships and highlighting the ways in which faculty and students are involved in projects beyond the walls of the university.

4. Continue to nurture the relationships established with school personnel and consider ways to take your advocacy efforts to the “next level” (i.e., local school board, state school board, etc.).

Ultimately, K-12/university partnerships can bridge many of the gaps in advocacy efforts by bringing together school physical educators, school personnel and university faculty and administrators who, working together can take advocacy efforts for quality daily physical education to a new level. The biggest step is the first one. So bridge the gap today – make the connection!

References

Castle, S., Fox, R. K., & Souder, K. (2006). Do professional development schools (PDSs) make a difference? A comparative study of PDS and non-PDS teacher candidates. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57 (1), 65-80.

Crocco, M., Faithfull, S. & Schwartz, S. (2003). Inquiring minds want to know. Action research at a New York City professional development school. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54 (1), 19-30.



A global view of sport and physical education that combines an online and face-to-face approach to learning

This blended learning approach gives the opportunity to all individuals and organizations involved in physical education and sport to register free to the Sports Media Open Campus. The Open Campus is a web-based learning content management system that allows educators and coaches to create their own online physical education and sport courses. They can assemble, package and redistribute instructional content, easily retrieve, and import content. Visit <http://www.sports-media.org/atutoreng.htm> for more information.

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