Promoting and advocating for our profession is the responsibility of all physical education teachers (Richards & Wilson, 2012). If no one else promotes our profession, who will? It is up to us. Do it for students! Advocate physical education for future physical educators and for the future of physical education.

One of the many means for advocating of physical education is to teach students that they can have a career in physical education or in related professions (Woods, Richards, & Ayers, 2016). Black Hills High School in Tumwater, WA, has done just that. This high school has organized the “Black Hills High School Physical Education Hall of Fame,” which is composed of alumni who work or have worked in physical education and related fields. This hall of fame has displayed, showcased and modeled what can be accomplished in the physical education profession. Showcasing school alumni who have worked or currently are working in the profession by putting their pictures up on the hall of fame helps to draw students’ attention to physical education as a career. This hall of fame serves as a recruitment and advocacy tool.

Developing a Physical Education Hall of Fame

The first step in developing a hall of fame is to pick a wall on which to display framed pictures of former students who are now in the profession. Black Hills physical education teachers involved students from the Leadership Class to paint “BHHS Physical Education Hall of Fame” on the wall.

The most difficult part might be finding previous students who are in the profession. Ask other department members if they know of any alumni who are now physical education teachers. School administrators may know of someone and can ask fellow administrators. Talk to community members who might have knowledge of previous students. Try a Twitter search for #P.E. to find teachers who attended your school. The National Board Certified Teacher website may be a good resource as well. Some high schools have alumni associations that can help. Put a message in your school newsletter to ask for any graduate information related to your search. Even a Google search may provide some information. Facebook is also an excellent way to stay in touch with recent graduates and to seek out information. Find recent graduates and begin with them.
Connect with physical educators in other schools across your district and their administrators as a way to expand your search. For example, Black Hills has three elementary schools and one middle school, all of which could be contacted. These connections will have the added benefit of promoting the hall of fame across the district.

There are many careers related to physical education of which students are not aware. Limiting the hall of fame to only alumni who taught or are teaching physical education is one option. On the other hand, expanding the hall of fame to include school alumni who have gone on to work in other fields related to physical education may give students a broader sense of career options and brings additional advocates and professionals into the dual realms of physical education and physical activity. The more people who are involved, the more recruitment will be possible. The criteria that are chosen for the hall of fame are up to each physical education department. Black Hills includes the following categories of professionals: physical education teachers, gym owners, personal trainers, physical therapists, exercise science professionals, dance instructors, recreation directors, college physical education teacher education instructors, nutritionists/dietitians, wellness coordinators, health educators and individuals working in sports medicine. Black Hills does not put athletics in the hall of fame. This school opened in 1997, and presently, there are 11 hall of fame members, with a few more on the way!

Once hall of fame members were identified, Black Hills purchased inexpensive frames and asked each member for a picture to post in their spin/indoor cycling room where the hall of fame is housed. Included with each photo is the alumnus’s high school graduation date, college major if applicable, field of expertise and name. For example, the label on the picture might read: “Jordan Parker, Class of 2008, Washington State University Class of 2013, Exercise Science, Physical Education Teacher.” After the pictures are mounted on the wall, they remind students that when they are in the room or gym, it is their physical education hall of fame.

The hall of fame helps to advocate for physical education by giving students real-life examples of graduates who attended their school. Students are able to see actual “school to work” examples of careers associated with physical activity and physical education. These examples can give meaning to a student’s physical education class by personalizing the instruction for students and providing an occupational goal to pursue. After the hall of fame is up and running, further advocacy for physical education can take place. Send an email to all school staff as well as to school and district administrators to announce the hall of fame and its inaugural members. Contacting the local newspaper is another option. Send tweets and Facebook messages to announce the opening of your physical education hall of fame or the induction of new members.

Discussion and Implications for Advocacy

Developing a physical education hall of fame is about career readiness and giving students positive role models. The hall of fame could be incorporated into a class assignment where students choose a career related to those included in the hall of fame and write a research paper related to the requirements for getting a job in that field. After completing their research, students can present their findings to others in their class. Their findings can help everyone learn more about potential fields connected to physical activity and physical education. Allow the students to create their own trifold pamphlets describing one of the careers as if they were attending a job fair and have them recruit others to join their occupation of interest. You can also bring in school alumni who are teaching physical education and working in other related fields as guest speakers. These speakers can give students advice related to their careers. Students can team with a mentor — someone who can guide and offer advice. In other words, do not let the hall of fame just be something to look at; make it a living, breathing thing that reaches out to students and grabs their interest and attention.

The key is to use the hall of fame as a focal point for advocating for the discipline by helping students understand potential future careers. We need to champion the physical activity and physical education fields, as well as the rewards and benefits of physical education, health, activity and fitness promotion. What better way is there to advocate for physical education than motivating students to become physical educators?

References


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