In response to the increased prevalence of childhood obesity and physical inactivity, a whole-school approach has been endorsed by the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2013) as having the greatest potential for providing coordinated opportunities for children to engage in daily physical activity. One model, the comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP), seeks to extend skills learned in physical education into applied situations that include but are not limited to: (1) before- and after-school programs, (2) physical activity during the school day (e.g., recess, physical activity in the classrooms), (3) family and community engagement, and (4) teacher involvement through physical activity leadership and commitment to address their own personal wellness (Figure 1). As part of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child initiative (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015), a CSPAP makes purposeful connections between public health, learning experiences, and desirable behavioral and cultural norms (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013). The integration of a CSPAP in a school provides a starting point for organizational change (Corbin, 2002). Given the current volume of national physical activity initiatives that are led primarily by teachers, coupled with the fact that the CSPAP is now considered the guiding national framework for schoolwide physical activity integration (CDC, 2013), the purpose of this JOPERD feature is to provide a platform for teacher educators to describe their efforts with the hope of inspiring fellow teacher educators to consider integrating similar CSPAP experiences that have the potential to increase physical activity engagement and change school culture.

Teacher Leaders and the Process of Change

Teachers are change agents. Effective physical activity champions recognize supportive administrators as the primary reason why

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they were empowered to implement a CSPAP (Centeio, Erwin, & Castelli, 2014; Centeio, McCaugtry, et al., 2014). In turn, school administrators commonly credit the teachers when a CSPAP is successfully integrated, creating a shift in school culture (Deslatte & Carson, 2014). If teachers are key facilitators in the integration of a sustainable CSPAP, then how do physical education teacher education (PETE) programs prepare future teachers to assume such leadership roles? Furthermore, what teacher skills have been identified as valuable and necessary in the 21st century to provide quality physical education programming and opportunities for physical activity across the curriculum? As if educating future teachers was not already difficult enough, administrators who may consider supporting a CSPAP will have the expectation that teachers and programs will change the school health culture, thus creating an environment where children will thrive academically.

The idea of teachers as change agents is not new. In 1971 Hill suggested that teachers are well positioned to be change agents, but they often experience frustration and can even be labeled as “assuming a role of active obstructionists” (p. 424). Historically, teachers — especially those in physical education — have been left out of reform efforts and the decision-making process surrounding the integration of initiatives (Rink & Mitchell, 2002, 2003). Yet physical education has been identified as a logical place for behavioral and cultural change (Corbin, 2002; IOM, 2013), because it is an ideal forum for promoting the National Physical Activity Plan (n.d.).

Physical Education Teacher Education in a Public Health Era

Teacher development, for both future and practicing teachers, is a critical component for integrating any school initiative, especially when considering a CSPAP given the expanded role and responsibilities that a physical education teacher must assume (Carson et al., 2014; Rink & Mitchell, 2002). Because they believe that a CSPAP will add value and enrich students’ lives, the PETE faculty highlighted in this special feature are early adopters who have committed to reimagining and restructuring their undergraduate and graduate programs. The strategies across the different PETE programs range from an emphasis on social marketing or cultural relevance, to advocacy training and theory-based program planning. From a positivist’s perspective these teacher educators should be applauded for their efforts to develop the skills necessary for addressing public health issues in schools. Here are some highlights of the unique approaches currently being integrated into the PETE programs, organized by the targeted student level of CSPAP integration used.

Undergraduate Students or Preservice Teachers

• In the first article, titled Building CSPAP Development into Arizona State University’s PETE Program: A Work in Progress, the faculty place an emphasis on the idea of “added value” as a purposeful strategy to garner student buy-in to the importance of a CSPAP as part of the induction process into the profession. While maintaining a strong focus on effective teaching, new skills such as social marketing are integrated into the latter stages of the undergraduate education.

• The second article, titled Integrating CSPAP into the PETE Programs at Southern Connecticut University and Central Connecticut State University, describes how the teacher education programs at two Connecticut universities have integrated specific CSPAP trainings and certifications, such as attending the Speak Out and Lobby Day at the State Capitol in Hartford, CT in response to the Physically Active School System (PASS).

• With core coursework focused on enhancing healthy, active lifestyles, the University of Idaho is cultivating leadership, pedagogy and marketing skills into their PETE program. The third article, titled Cultivating Leadership, Pedagogy and Programming for CSPAP and Healthy, Active Lifestyles at the University of Idaho, describes a cross-disciplinary approach that includes team teaching and field experiences in health-promoting schools.

• The fourth article, titled PETE Preparation for CSPAP at the University of Kentucky, describes how the CSPAP concept is taught and prepares preservice teachers to assume the role of physical activity champion. The learning experiences focus on maximizing the opportunities to be physically active within and beyond school.

• Centered on five core themes, the Wayne State University PETE program develops individuals who are ready to promote physical activity, advocate and develop policies, assess physical activity, and deliver culturally relevant pedagogies in a variety of settings, as described in the fifth article, titled Implementing Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Wayne State University Case Study.

• The sixth article, Sharing Insights and Strategies from the University of West Georgia, shows how the faculty have aligned key program assessments to the national standards and CSPAP components. It also describes how student-teaching interns are taught to assess a school’s needs and opportunities for physical activity and to develop a proposal to implement at least one CSPAP component.
Master’s Students or In-service Teachers

- Enrollment in the graduate program at Adelphi University offers preservice and practicing teachers a chance to expand their role within schools beyond teaching physical education to that of a physical activity promoter. Focused internships and course assignments are the emergent strategies that are presented in the seventh article of this feature, titled Moving toward Integration of CSPAP in a Highly Regulated PETE Context.
- The eighth article introduces A Newly Revised Master’s Degree in Physical Education and Physical Activity Leadership at the University of Northern Colorado, which is believed to be the first of its kind, with coursework delivered in a hybrid format by PETE faculty. Key learning outcomes include advanced knowledge of school-based physical activity promotion and evaluation, enhanced teacher efficacy, and the implementation and advocacy of physical activity initiatives that contribute to the health of school communities.

Doctoral Students or Future PETE Faculty

- The ninth article, titled Infusing CSPAP Knowledge, Training and Research into Doctoral PETE, describes how at the University of Utah the integration of CSPAP began in the doctoral program, where participation in school physical education and activity programs is a required element of becoming a teacher educator. Further, the doctoral students are charged with investigating the effects of a CSPAP as a means of refining their own research skills.

Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

- Over the past several years the faculty and doctoral students at the University of South Carolina have begun to integrate learning experiences that prepare teacher candidates to promote physical activity in schools. The tenth article, titled CSPAP Professional Preparation and Research Initiatives at the University of South Carolina, shares their journey.
- In the final article of this feature, titled Achieving Alignment in the Preparation of CSPAP Leaders in PETE Programs, faculty from West Virginia University share their journey and describe how they used doctoral student research and web-based concept mapping to interpret their initial attempts of integrating CSPAP content across the PETE curriculum. Several well-developed artifacts are included.

This special feature will appear in two consecutive issues of JOPERD. Part 1 (the current issue) includes the first six articles focusing on the undergraduate-level PETE programs with CSPAP programming. Part 2 of this feature (February 2017 JOPERD) will include the remaining five articles focusing on the universities with graduate-level CSPAP programming, as well as the feature conclusion.

The articles are organized with common headers, so the readers can recognize strategies that might be applicable in their own context. An overview is provided for each program, as well as a discussion on where the CSPAP focus is situated in the curriculum. To determine where programmatic changes align with the initial teacher standards (SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2008), the learning experiences and corresponding learning outcomes will be summarized in a table identifying points of intervention, content and learning experiences. Specific professional development, trainings and certifications are also identified, if applicable. Finally, research initiatives and future efforts are discussed.

In summary, the collective efforts of the teacher educators who authored these articles are impressive. Yet, despite the encouraging attempts of these PETE programs, teacher educators still face the issue of a lack of consensus regarding the required skill set for future physical education teachers. Further, regional differences in terminology, state mandates and policies, as well as inconsistencies in their application, may inhibit progress in some PETE programs. The lack of common agreement about such conceptions is irresponsible in the current political climate. With few resources, declining employment opportunities, and the looming threat of PETE program closures, more research on the effects of programmatic reforms is needed. Although some programs highlighted in this issue have engaged in self-study or the examination of CSPAPs in local schools, research about PETE program effects remains in its infancy. Today, evidence of best practices is necessary to justify the allocation of resources to PETE programs and their partners. This JOPERD feature is a chance for us to extend the dialogue between our respective institutions to better understand who we are and where we are headed as a field in a public heath era.

References


