Physical Education Paraeducators

by

Ashleigh Kaitlyn Higgins

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Approved by

Alice M. Buchanan, Chair, Associate Professor of Kinesiology
Peter Hastie, Wayne T Smith Distinguished Professor of Kinesiology
Sheri Thornburg-Brock, Associate Professor of Kinesiology
Jared Russell, Assistant Director of Kinesiology
David Thomas Marshall, Assistant Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to discover the lived experiences and perceptions of administrators, physical educators, and physical education paraeducators (PEPs) in Alabama regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs within physical education and the school as a whole. Role Socialization Theory (RST) was used as a guiding lens to discover the roles of PEPs within physical education and the school as a whole. Thirty-five administrators, 34 physical educators, and 20 PEPs took part in a state-wide anonymous online survey. This survey addressed participants perceptions and experiences regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs both in physical education and the school as a whole. Additionally, 12 physical educators and 12 PEPs took part in informal semi-structured virtual interviews concerning their experiences and perceptions working with or being a PEP. Surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Interviews were analyzed using phenomenological analysis procedures utilizing RST as a guiding lens. Results show that PEPs play an integral role in the success of physical education programs given the large class sizes that exist in this subject area. PEPs are often unprepared and untrained, leaving it to the physical educator to train them "on-the-job". There seems to be a disconnect between school administrators and school district level employees and those PEPs who work in their physical education programs, which has led to PEPs reporting a lack of communication and acknowledgement from these personnel. Additionally, schools are more frequently moving to hiring for this position through an outside temp agency. Physical educators and PEPs report this is decreasing the value of the position. Physical educators often serve as advocates for their PEPs in their school, and report that their PEPs are commonly taking on more responsibilities than they are qualified for or paid to do.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GED	General Educational Development Test
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IRB	Institutional Review Board
OST	Occupational Socialization Theory
PD	Professional Development
PE	Physical Education
PEP	Physical Education Paraeducators
PETE	Physical Education Teacher Education
RST	Role Socialization Theory
RT	Role Theory
SEP	Special Education Paraeducators
SwD	Students with Disabilities
SwMD	Students with Multiple Disabilities
TA	Teacher Assistant
WES	Waivers, Exemptions, & Substitutions

Chapter I

Introduction

The hiring of non-certified personnel in public schools who work to support student(s) and/or teachers has been a prevalent tradition in the United States for over 70 years. Paraeducators are employed in schools to aide in the provision of education and educational services to students and their families by working parallel to or under the supervision of a certified teacher (National Education Association [NEA], 2015). These non-certified staff members have been referred to by many names over the years, such as instructional aide, instructional assistant, teacher's aide, teacher's assistant, paraprofessional, and paraeducator. For the purpose of this dissertation, when referring to this group as a whole, I will use the term paraeducator. There are many different types of paraeducators working in schools. The majority of paraeducators are hired as part of special education, others are hired as assistants for general classroom teachers.

The type of paraeducator that is less common, and more diverse is that of the paraeducator who assists the physical educator. This position is referred to in this dissertation as a physical education paraeducator (PEP). PEPs are hired to work specifically in the physical education classroom alongside a certified physical educator. In some states such as Alabama, it has been found that the practice of hiring PEPs has helped mitigate student-to-teacher ratios, while operating under budgeting restrictions (Hastie, Sanders, & Rowland, 1999). Student-to-teacher ratios are very important in physical education given the general nature of physical education and the large number of students who attend class together. Even though we know that this position exists and that it would seem beneficial, there is a considerable lack of information regarding this type of paraeducator position.

There are no public national data about the PEP position, making it hard to determine how common this practice is nationally. In addition, there have only been a minute number of studies

conducted in the United States that mention PEPs in their findings (Hannon, Destani, Williams, & Hill, 2013; Hall, Larson, Heinemann, & Brusseau, 2015; Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). There have been no studies to date in the United States looking at the PEP position. In addition to the lack of national data and empirical studies regarding the PEP position, there are no national or state level requirements or responsibilities established for this position in most states, including Alabama. Instead, this is left to the school district or school level to determine, making it difficult to obtain information about the job.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of administrators, physical educators, students, and PEPs in Alabama regarding the role of PEPs both in physical education, and in the school as a whole.

The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of administrators in public schools in Alabama regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school as a whole?
2. What are the perceptions of physical educators in public schools in Alabama regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school as a whole?
3. What are the perceptions of PEPs in public schools in Alabama regarding their hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles within physical education and the school as a whole?
4. How do physical educators describe their lived experiences working with PEPs in public schools in Alabama?
5. How do PEPs describe their lived experiences working as PEPs in public schools in Alabama?

Organization of the Dissertation

The final product of this dissertation will contain two publication-ready articles. Chapter I offers a short introduction to this dissertation, the research questions, a short overview of chapters, and a positionality statement. Chapter II of this dissertation contains a section on the conceptual and theoretical framework used in this dissertation, followed by a review of literature on paraeducators, paraeducators in physical education, physical education class sizes, and marginalization of physical education. This dissertation is written in a manuscript style; Therefore, Chapter III and Chapter IV are not written in the traditional style. Chapter III contains the abstract, introduction, methods, findings, discussion, recommendations for future research, and references for Study I: Administrators', Physical Educators', and Physical Education Paraeducators' (PEPs) Perceptions of the Jobs of PEPs. Chapter IV contains the abstract, introduction, methods, findings, discussion, recommendations for future research, and references for Study II: Physical educators' and PEPs' Experiences and Perceptions Regarding the Role of PEPs in Physical Education.

Positionality

I am a firm believer in this infamous quote by Hall, "There's no enunciation without positionality" (1990, p.18). I am positioned in my research as a twenty-nine year-old, single, lower-middle class, white female, raised in a rural area. I am certified to teach physical education and health education in the state of Alabama, and I am a doctoral candidate at Auburn University. I have an abundance of knowledge in the area of physical education, including teaching strategies, and knowledge of state and national standards, as well as the Alabama course of study. However, I do not have any knowledge of what it is like to be a PEP, nor what it is like to work with a PEP in physical education.

As a researcher, you need to position yourself in order for your research to have clout, especially when that research is qualitative in nature (Bourke, 2014; Hall, 1990). I believe that my

positionality as a certified physical educator and doctoral candidate in the field of physical education leads me to approach this research with a desire to create and disseminate knowledge about this use of paraeducators in physical education. My positionality leads me to have a general curiosity about how common this practice of hiring PEPs is, and how physical educators are utilizing them to improve their physical education classes. My positionality also comes with biases that can affect research of this nature. My biases are that physical education is under-funded, misunderstood, and often treated as a recess than an educational core curriculum, where students learn motor skills, teamwork, responsibility, and empathy. I recognize these biases and remain mindful of them throughout this research process in order to increase objectivity and limit subjectivity in this study. By acknowledging my positionality and biases throughout this study, I am further taking part in a reflexive process (Pillow, 2003). Through remaining mindful of my positionality and the biases it may bring, I intend to limit the influence my positionality and biases may have on my interpretation of the findings (Bourke, 2014). I intend to do so by relating to the participants that they are the experts in this subject area, as I have never been a full-time physical educator, administrator, or physical education paraeducator. Additionally, I will employ the use of reflective journaling (Ortlipp, 2008) throughout the research process. I will employ the use of reflexive journaling to remain mindful of my positionality and any biases it might bring in mind throughout this project and thus, remain true to the participants' voices. However, in my analysis and writing of the participants' perceptions I will remain honest about my use of self as research instrument noting that objectivity is never completely obtained in qualitative research (Bourke, 2014).

Chapter I of this dissertation contains an introduction for this dissertation. Chapter II of this dissertation contains a review of literature and theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this dissertation.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Physical education has struggled for years within the school context to become equal to other academic areas. Evidence that PE is perceived to lack value as a subject area is, among other things, frequent cancellations for school functions, class sizes larger than other content areas, insufficient facilities and equipment, and lack of administrative support (Gross & Buchanan, 2014). This dissertation will examine the perceptions of administrators, physical educators, and physical education paraeducators (PEPs) regarding the roles of PEPs. This chapter has been organized and written in order to best understand the school context and the placement that physical education holds within that context. In addition, it is written to highlight the marginal status that physical education and physical educators hold within schools, and the roles that PEPs play working with marginalized personnel, within a marginalized subject. Due to the scant research regarding PEPs, the most relevant literature has been reviewed which addresses special education paraeducators (SEPs), classroom teacher assistants (TAs), as well as SEPs' roles in physical education. Literature addressing class sizes, aspects of marginalization faced by physical education, and the marginalization and perceived mattering of physical educators are also included. Last, this chapter will address the roles and socialization of physical educators leading to the conceptual and theoretical framework for this dissertation. Although the issues addressed seed to be global (Warren, Cooper, & Baturo, 2004; Hardman, 2008; Kougioumtzis, Patriksson, & Strahlman, 2011; Laureano et al., 2014; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Morrison & Gleddie, 2019; Hyndman et al., 2020) this review is limited to research done in the United States.

Paraeducators

The hiring of non-certified personnel in public schools who work alongside teachers in their daily duties of supporting both the teacher and the student(s) has been a growing trend in the United

States since the 1950s. Once popularly referred to as paraprofessionals, they are now more commonly called paraeducators. “Paraprofessionals [paraeducators] are school employees who work alongside and/or under the direction of a licensed or certificated educator to support and assist in providing instructional and non-instructional services to children, youth, and their families” (National Education Association [NEA], 2015). Paraeducators will be used as an umbrella term to define all support staff working within schools to assist either the teacher or student(s) within the school system.

From the definition one can see that paraeducators are an important part of an educational team in special education. In fact, special education programs are the largest employer of paraprofessionals (French, 2003). SEPs work alongside the teachers (classroom, physical education, music, etc.) who educate a student with disabilities who requires support (Haegle & Kozub, 2010). SEPs are also the most researched of all paraeducator jobs. This category of school staff has also been referred to by other names as well, including teacher aides, teacher assistants, instructional aides, instructional assistants, educational aides, and educational assistants (Douglas, Uitto, Reinfelds, & D’Agostine, 2019; Sharma & Salend, 2016). These terms refer to many different jobs and tend to be used interchangeably. In these different types of jobs, the roles and responsibilities that fall under them are loosely defined and ambiguous. To make matters even more confusing, there is very little in the realm of credentialing and training for personnel in these positions (Beale, 2001; Douglas et al., 2019). Even then, the problem exists that the persons hired to fill these positions often do not know about or take part in those credentialing programs. There is evidence that many people with these jobs have some higher education, but higher education degrees are not required for the job, hence the term PARAeducator.

The majority of SEPs remain untrained (Douglas, Chapin, & Nolan, 2016). There is also a lack of preparation and training in teacher education programs pertaining to working with SEPs as

an educational team (French & Pickett, 1997; Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Breton, 2010; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Biggs, Gilson, & Carter, 2018). Due to the ambiguity of roles and responsibilities this finding could also apply to PEPs. Researchers have given attention to the need for training of SEPs (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Breton, 2010; Malian, 2011; Douglas, et al., 2019). This need for training is warranted by research that shows students with disabilities (SwD) often are over reliant on SEPs (Marks, Shrader, & Levine, 1999; Giangreco, Broer, & Suter, 2011). This overreliance on SEPs has shown negative impacts on the potential independence of SwD (Giangreco et al., 1997; Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEiA, 2004) mandates that special education teachers should supervise and support all SEPs whether working in special education classrooms, or in general education classrooms. Therefore, concerns about support from administration, proper supervision from teachers, respect from school staff, and the lack of training have been expressed by SEPs themselves (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012) as well as by those researchers in the field (Downing et al., 2000). Though research has continuously mentioned a need for training, there seems to be a number of differing opinions regarding how to train SEPs, what they should be trained on, and who should give that training (Giangreco et al., 1997; Malian, 2011). In fact, much of the research revolving around SEPs is done on their roles, responsibilities, and training needs (Giangreco, et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999; Downing et al., 2000; Beale, 2001; Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Broer et al., 2005; Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, Pelsue, 2009; Breton, 2010; Malian, 2011; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Douglas, et al., 2019). These topics continue to be discussed in the literature (Stewart, 2019; Massafra, Gershwin, & Gosselin, 2020), along with the impact SEPs have on students (Mason et al., 2020). Most of the studies come to similar conclusions, yet not all states have mandated training for any type of paraeducator, and

national recommendations on the hiring of paraeducators seem to be more loosely adhered to (Massafra et al., 2020).

Special Education Paraeducators (SEPs). Fisher and Pleasants (2012) sent out a statewide survey to all SEPs in a Midwestern state. Twenty seven percent responded totaling 1867 surveys; 1,800 returned surveys were used in the data analysis for their study. SEPs who participated worked one-on-one or in small group settings with Students with disabilities (SwD). One-fifth of the participants spent the entire day in a general education classroom, just below one-fifth spent 75% of their day in general education classrooms. The survey addressed SEPs' perceptions about their roles and responsibilities, current issues identified in the literature relative to their role, and areas of concern, including an open-ended question addressing other concerns of the job. Participants were asked to rank a list of 12 commonly mentioned roles of SEPs in order of "primary", "secondary", "rarely", or "not my role". They were then asked to state whether the role was appropriate. Fifty-three percent of respondents ranked "behavioral and social support" as their primary role, and 94% believed it was an appropriate role. "Implementing teacher-planned instruction" was a primary role 48% of respondents, 20% said it was a secondary role, and 20% said they rarely performed this role, however 81% said that it was an appropriate role. "Supervising students" was a primary role for 36% of respondents and a secondary role for 35% of respondents, 80% of respondents said this was an appropriate role. "Personal care support" was also ranked as a primary role for 34% of respondents, secondary for 23%, rarely a role for 20%, and not a role for 21%, and 75% said it was an appropriate role. "Attending planning meetings" was rarely a role for 32% of respondents, and not a role for 42% of respondents, yet 75% agreed that it was an appropriate role. Seventy-four percent of respondents ranked "adapting lessons designed by the general education teacher" as an appropriate role, yet it was a primary role for only 28% and a secondary role for only 22%. Other roles that were ranked as appropriate by 69-60% of respondents, but also ranked as majorly not

their role, followed by rarely a role, are listed accordingly: “providing information between general education teacher and special education teacher”, “clerical duties”, “attending faculty meetings”, and “providing information between school and parents”. The majority of respondents ranked “developing lesson plans” and “interpreting for families” as not an appropriate role, and not their role.

In addition to roles paraeducators were asked to rate a list of concerns as either primary or secondary or not a concern. Their highest concern was “lack of appreciation by others”. These concerns followed, in order: “turnover of paraeducators”, “insufficient expertise for roles required”, “general education teacher less likely to interact with student who has IEP when paraeducator present”, and “paraeducator viewed as primary instructor for students with IEP rather than general education teacher”. Thirty percent of respondents chose to answer the open-ended question regarding concerns, for a total of 599 comments. Researchers coded these extra comments and six categories emerged. “Treatment of the job” was the highest mentioned category and included statements in regard to being required to do the teachers job, and little cooperation or communication from special education teacher or general education teachers and receiving little respect or inclusion in planning. This finding is important, as other recent literature has mentioned the need for efficient collaboration within educational teams to achieve better education for SwD (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003; Chopra, Sandoval-Lucero, & French, 2011; Giangreco et al., 2011).

The second category of concerns, with 123 comments, was “compensation”. These comments related to turnover, low pay and lack of benefits, and lack of information related to the job in the hiring process. This finding is important because other research has also mentioned the concerns SEPs have in these areas (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007; Shyman, 2010). The third category, with 113 comments, was “concerns about teacher colleagues”. This category included comments

regarding general education teachers' lack of information on students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), or the general education teachers did not want students with IEPs in their class. The fourth category that emerged was "need for preparation"; this category included comments about preparation in general as well as staff development.

Other categories of concerns included "Administration concerns" where comments centered on a lack of materials needed and lack of support or concern about staff shortages, and concerns about hiring practices. These findings are like other findings in the field regarding hiring practices (Downing et al., 2000; Dillon & Ebmeier, 2009). The last category that emerged revolved around inclusion. Comments included supports that were authorized in IEPs not being provided, lack of discipline, different treatment, and some even mentioning that some students did not belong in the general education classrooms. These same concerns have existed for more than 20 years (Marks et al., 1999), and have been called into action, by means of research and development of paraeducator training since 1995 (Wolery, et al., 1995).

In 2020, Downing and colleagues (2000) published a study on SEPs perceptions of their work in inclusive classrooms as well as their training and ability to fulfill those roles. The findings are very similar to the study by Fisher and Pleasants (2012). Sixteen SEPs, who worked at least 50% of their day in inclusive classrooms, took part in a semi-structured interview. Researchers developed themes. The first theme was "a wide range of activities for which they were responsible". SEPs reported being responsible for behavioral support, monitoring students, teaching, adapting and modifying materials, curricula and activities, personal care and support, aid student interactions with peers, and completing clerical duties. Other researchers have noted similar findings in the classroom (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Malian, 2011; Marks et al., 1999) and in physical education classes (Davis, Kotecki, Harvey, & Oliver, 2007).

The second theme was “relationships and collaboration with team members”. When SEPs mentioned collaborating with school teams with and without outside team members, they mentioned contributing information to IEPs but sometimes it was through other team members, as not all were required to attend the meetings. SEPs also mentioned joint decision making with team members in regard to adaptations, behavioral issues, and instructional strategies. They stated that this took place in five - 10 minute meetings with all or one team member. SEPs also mentioned receiving feedback from team members in regard to their interactions or instruction being supportive. However, some team members reported receiving conflicting advice from different professionals to be hindering to their duties. Few SEPs reported a lack of communication in this area, but the majority were ok with the amount of collaboration within their team.

The third theme was “a high level of responsibility”. SEPs mentioned making decisions that could impact the student in regard to modifying curriculum, providing behavioral support, and informing team members and parents. These seem to be common responsibilities for SEPs (Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999).

The fourth theme was “training and personal qualities needed”. SEPs mentioned that they felt training was necessary to do their job, yet many mentioned that they were not trained prior to starting their job. SEPs instead reported learning what to do on their own. They reported that training was needed on behavioral interventions, student specific needs, disability specific information, teaching strategies, and how to make correct adaptations to curriculum. Behavioral topics and disability specific topics have been reported as training needs by other researchers more recently (Breton, 2010; Carter et al., 2009; Malian, 2011). Other researchers have also mentioned instruction and adaptations as training topics (Breton, 2010; Carter & Hughes, 2006; Giangreco et al., 1997). In regard to the personal qualities needed, paraeducators mentioned a love for children, good communication skills (both with adults and children), being able to tell the level of the

student, and being capable of understanding and following team plans. SEPs also mentioned attributes such as being caring, patient, firm, flexible, ability to remain calm, and "hanging in there" (p. 178).

The fifth theme was "concerns and challenges related to their work". Under this theme SEPs mentioned time constraints regarding planning with team members. More commonly under this theme, SEPs, although repeatedly stating their comfort within their position, expressed apprehension about whether they were qualified to perform some of their responsibilities. This included a sense of worry about delivering direct instruction and if they were qualified to do so. Other researchers have also reported that SEPs need training in order to effectively deliver instruction, such as training on modifying curricula and additional resources (Carter & Hughes, 2006). Other researchers have reported that both SEPs and teachers alike need training on instructional methods that limit dependency on SEPs (Giangreco et al., 1997).

The research evidence above shows a shift in SEPs' roles since the 1980s, when they performed mostly clerical duties (Frank, Keith, & Steil, 1988), to currently playing more one-on-one roles. This is due to changes in educational thinking, resulting in more inclusive classes, making the general education classroom the setting in which most SEPs spend most of their day. This could point to a deeper connection between SEPs in group settings and PEPs. In fact, researchers (Giangreco et al., 1997) recommended the use of paraeducators assigned to specific general education classrooms over one-on-one SEPs, due to the social and exclusion effects that having a one-on-one SEP had on those students. Other researchers have also shared this concern throughout the past 20 years (Marks et al., 1999; Broer et al., 2005). Such a classroom placement would also cut down on the amount of teaching that the research reports SEPs have been reported doing (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

In a National study of SEPs' roles and responsibilities, Malian (2011), deployed a survey through the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals Newsletter, on-line. This organization is now referred to as the National Resource Center for Paraeducators. This survey contained five sections: definitions of terms, demographics (both respondents and their classrooms), responsibilities, beliefs, collaborating, and open-ended questions. Two hundred and two SEPs from 34 states returned the survey. The majority of respondents were Caucasian, Female, and English-speaking, with an average of seven years' experience. Most of the respondents reported working in inclusive classrooms with an average of 20 students, working in small-groups, or working in one-on-one roles. Respondents were also most commonly placed in seventh-ninth grades, and averaged being the SEP for three students. SEPs reported that they did not meet with their teachers regularly. They also reported that they directed instruction in small groups; however, one-on-one instruction was also common. The most common concern mentioned was lack of time for planning instruction or other responsibilities related to their job. SEPs reported that they did not have time to plan with their supervising teacher; in fact, on average they reported having six 15-minute meetings per week to plan and collaborate with their supervising teacher (Downing, et al., 2000).

Another interesting finding of this was that 70% of SEPs reported being supervised in the inclusive setting, yet still 30% did not report being supervised, thus showing little movement forward in relation to proper training and supervision (Giangreco et al., 2011). The SEPs, who were supervised, were split down the middle when it came to who they were supervised by (special educator or general classroom teacher). Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that their inclusive classroom teacher asked their opinions regarding students in class. The author here states that, "this indicates a level of respect and credibility of the work of the paraeducator" (p.17). However, I believe that is not necessarily a generalization that can be made. Given all other studies that I have read, I could conclude that the general education teacher may ask paraeducators opinions

about the students in their class, because the general education teacher is not the one who teaches SwD (Giangreco et al.,1997; Marks et al., 1999; Downing et al., 2000; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Malian, 2011; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

When asked about training and professional development majority of SEPs reported that their special education or general education teachers were not present for that training. This finding adds power to the assertion that special educators and classroom teachers need training on how to work with SEPs (French & Pickett, 1997; Downing et al., 2000; Breton, 2010; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Biggs et al., 2018). When SEPs reported on their roles and responsibilities, the survey asked about teaching strategies employed in inclusive settings. Sixty-eight percent of respondents noted managing student behavior, instructing students individually in inclusive settings (59%), and teaching social skills (50%), which is in line with the previously reviewed studies (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Downing et al., 2000). The least reported teaching strategies included supervision of peer tutoring; help with homework, and the supervision of cooperative learning groups. In regard to their beliefs about inclusive education, majority of SEPs reported, "not all students need to do the same activity the same way" (p.14). Another strong belief was that SEPs should adjust instructional practices to fit students' needs. This study's finding indicates that SEPs need more time for collaboration with teachers in order to be most effective in their jobs. These findings also indicate that these paraeducators across 34 states reported they needed training on behavior management, specific disabilities, and law.

To further go over the job of SEPs who work exclusively in a specific student or a small group of students, the most detailed study is reviewed with studies that found similar findings referenced throughout. This is done because the jobs of PEPS more closely align with paraeducators of all kinds who work with large groups of students. Broer and colleagues (2005), interviewed former students with intellectual disabilities (SwID) in Vermont, reporting on their experiences

receiving one-on-one support by a SEP. Participants mentioned their SEP in roles that the researchers categorized as a mother, friend, protector, and primary teacher. Participants mentioned both positive and negatives of all these roles that their SEP played. They mentioned the mother figure most often as a hindrance to their image and capabilities of forming friendships with other students. They mentioned their SEP as a friend. Students spent most of their time with their SEP during school, and since they often felt isolated from their peers, their SEP was a friend. Participants mentioned their SEP as a protector, in the sense that they were not bullied when their SEP was around, and that their SEP often reported bullying incidents to the administration or teacher.

Lastly, participants mentioned their SEP as their primary teacher. Participants mentioned this in a sense that, the primary teacher was never taking time out of class to explain assignments to them and spent very little time with them. They also mentioned being aware that this was a result of a lack of communication between the general education teacher and their SEP. This finding denotes a team approach with is advocated for by (Malian, 2001; French, 2003; Chopra et al., 2011; NEA, 2015). The findings of this study also indicate that SwID reported receiving all or most of their education from their SEP (Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999; Downing et al., 2000; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Malian, 2011; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

These findings also show a concern for inclusion. These former SwID related their SEP as not only a hindrance to their social image and their ability to create friendships with other students, which at times led them to report feeling like an outsider, or that they did not belong, further influencing their feelings of being different from their peers. These former students felt that receiving their instruction from their SEP further excluded them from the class. They mentioned that their SEP often sat with them away from the rest of the class and that they often only worked with their SEP. These former students also mentioned how this separation in the classroom both

from other students and from the teacher, left them to feel less, and undeserving of the teacher's attention. This could be due to preference of the general classroom teacher, as Marks and colleagues (1999), found that educators' main concern with the inclusion of SwD, was that SwD might disrupt class. This is concerning, not only because classroom teachers are not teaching their SwD, and have reported that they are a hindrance; but also because SEPs are not qualified to teach. These findings indicate that inclusion is not working in meeting all the needs of the student, and that the SEP is not the only educational team member who needs training (French, 2003; Chopra et al., 2011; Malian, 2011; NEA, 2015). It was found by Cater and Hughes (2006), that classroom teachers had different priorities and expectations for SwD who were included in their classrooms. These findings that hinder correct inclusion agree with the findings of research from over twenty years ago. Giangreco and colleagues (1997), who conducted observations, and informal interviews with special education team members in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Utah, & Vermont. These researchers found that students with multiple disabilities (SwMD) were often hindered in their peer interactions by their SEP, often had acquired a dependency on adults (or an overreliance on their SEP), and that they were often taught separately by their SEP, who did not provide the same quality of instruction that the other students received from the classroom teacher. This is again due to the ambiguity of their roles and responsibilities.

In their implications section, Giangreco and colleagues (1997) made a recommended the hiring of paraeducators for the classroom teacher, to aide in instruction rather than an assistant for the student, which would "..allow general and special education teachers to distribute instructional assistants [paraeducators] time and job responsibilities more equitably to benefit a variety of students, both with and without disabilities" (p.16). This finding is important because other research has also mentioned problems with both student and staff overreliance on SEPs (Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Suter & Giangreco, 2009; Giangreco et al.,

2011) and PEPs are hired this way (Hastie, Sanders, & Rowland, 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Morrison & Gleddie, 2019).

Carter and Hughes (2006) found that administrators, classroom teachers, SEPs, and special educators all agreed that training, additional personnel, and resources would help them to better include SwD into general education classrooms, as well as help them to better serve as an "educational team" (Giangreco et al., 2003; Giangreco et al., 2011; Chopra et al., 2011; Malian, 2011; NEA, 2015). Carter and Hughes (2006) fell short by not including qualitative data that might inform researchers what areas paraeducators most needed training in.

In a study on SEPs training needs, roles, and responsibilities, Carter and colleagues (2009) developed a questionnaire divided into three sections consisting of demographic and job description questions, questions about their knowledge of standards, and questions about tasks that they perform on the job. At the end of the questionnaire there was space for SEPs to list any additional training needs they felt were needed. Three-hundred-thirteen SEPs working with SwD in public elementary, middle, and high schools across nine school districts in a Midwestern state, completed the questionnaire. The school districts spread across rural, urban and suburban areas, with a school average of 657 students, an average of 26.5% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Average student ethnicity included: 76.5% Caucasian, 12.6% African American, 6.2% Hispanic, and 6.1% Asian American. In addition to learning about SEPs training needs and job tasks, the researchers also looked to see if tasks and training needs changed across the grade level that they were employed, and the disabilities of students with whom they worked. Knowledge of standards items on the questionnaire were drawn from the Council for Exceptional Children (2004) standards for paraeducators (CEC, 2004), which were developed in collaboration with the National Resource Center for Paraeducators. The questions pertained to their knowledge of special education foundations, learning development and characteristics, learning differences of individuals, learning

environments, social interactions, instructional strategies, language, collaboration, and professional practices. Job related tasks were included from the practices section of the Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (2002) as well as a review of literature that the researchers conducted on training needs of SEPs.

Carter and colleagues (2009) distributed 631 questionnaires, and 331 were returned. Participating SEPs reported working with an average of 5.2 different disabilities, and 41.5% worked with low-occurrence disabilities, with the remainder working with more common occurrence disabilities. Approximately 33% of SEPs reported working the majority of their time in inclusive classrooms, 39.3% reported splitting their time evenly between inclusive settings and the special education classroom, and the remainder reported working primarily in the special education classroom. This finding is important to note how many different job settings, and jobs are actually being performed by SEPs.

In response to the knowledge of CEC (2004) standards, the researchers compared responses to look for differences between knowledge of standards and years of experience, disability level, training, and school level at which they were employed. As one would assume, SEPs reported higher levels of knowledge as their years of experience increased, and SEPs who had received training reported higher knowledge than those who reported no training. Overall SEPs reported higher knowledge on categories including ethical practices of confidentiality, and communicating with team members, and potential effects of disabilities on student life. The least knowledge was reported on topics such as: assessment rationale, team member roles during IEP planning, technologies relevant to SwD, and family's and children's rights and obligations relating to individualized learning. In regard to training, of those who had received training, the least common form was conference training. The highest reported forms of training included on-the-job training, in-service training, and other forms of training, in that order. The most common topics SEPs

reported being trained on by their schools included topics such as: educational terminology in regard to students, instructional activities, roles, programs for SwD and their purposes, behavior management rules and procedures, correct practices for confidential communication in regards to students with disabilities, and the potential effects of disabilities on students' lives. SEPs reported a lack of training by schools in regard to, assessment rationale, neglect and abuse indictors, biases and differences that affect ability to work with others, IEP planning roles, and rights and responsibilities of children and their families in regards to their learning (p.350). These findings are important because, according to IDEiA 2004 the schools are responsible for making sure all SEPs are appropriately trained and supervised (IDEA 20 U.S.C. 1412(a) (14). This is also important as many of the areas where paraeducators reported the least knowledge were also areas in which paraeducators reported less training.

In addition to those findings, Carter and colleagues (2009) also reported findings related to tasks that SEPs played in their daily work. Ninety-seven percent of SEPs reported one-on-one instruction as a daily task, followed by 87% reporting facilitating social interactions, 85.3% reporting small group instructional support, 79.4% reporting behavior management, and 79.2% reporting tasks classified as clerical work. Only 4.2% of SEPs reported participating in IEP meetings or planning, and 21.7% reported administering assessments. When the researchers performed chi-square analyses to look for differences in task frequency between elementary, middle, and high school levels, it was found that SEPs in the elementary school level were more commonly performing daily or weekly task such as: monitoring duties, grading papers, and communicating with parents. Significantly less SEPs working in the middle and high school settings reported performing these tasks daily or weekly. Significantly more SEPs at the high school (42.4%) and middle school (23.6%) level reported performing community based instructional tasks daily or weekly compared to elementary (8.9%) level. Researchers also performed chi-square

analysis to see a relationship between task frequency and disability level (low incidence/ high incidence). SEPs working with students with low-incidence disabilities reported performing monitoring tasks, clerical tasks, and small group instruction daily or weekly, significantly less often than SEPs working with high incidence disabilities. On the other hand, significantly more SEPs working with students with high incidence disabilities performed data collection daily or weekly, than paraeducators working with students with low-incidence disabilities.

In addition to those findings, Carter and colleagues (2009) found that SEPs reported being most prepared to perform monitoring tasks, meeting with team members, providing one-on-one instruction, clerical work, and providing small group instructional support. These SEPs reported being least prepared to perform tasks such as completing paperwork related to specific disabilities, helping with speech therapy, creating lesson plans, helping with physical or occupational therapy, and IEP planning. Following this SEPs reported the highest need for training on tasks such as: student use of assistive technology and how to help them learn to use it, completing paperwork specific to disability, implementation of behavior management programs, and assisting with therapies (speech, physical, occupational). These findings are important because it shows that SEPs in this study were most often trained in an on-the-job format, which means that they may have been trained more completely on the tasks in which they most often perform. However, this study showed that tasks change as students' progress through their schooling, meaning that those paraeducators working in one-on-one settings will need training on other tasks as their student progresses through school, if they are to stay with that student for their educational career. These findings also further reiterate, that even though training is by law, the responsibility of the school system or school for which they work, they are potentially not being trained completely as the standards for which they are to meet were not being completely met through their training.

Years later, some progress has been made in regard to training of SEPs. Recently, Douglas and colleagues (2019) published a systematic review of paraeducator training materials. The researchers used a rubric designed to test alignment with professional standards, federal legislation, and adult learning methods based on research, in order to review 26 SEP training materials. The rubric was developed in accordance to SEP learning goals, instructional designs to support knowledge and skill, facilitator guides to support SEP training. The rubric underwent multiple revisions including feedback from two field experts. The researchers then searched using key words paraeducator and paraprofessional on Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) and Amazon. They then searched google.com using paraeducator training and paraprofessional training as keywords. Finally, the researchers searched the National Resource Center for Paraeducators website (www.nrcpara.org) (p.198). Inclusion criteria included a publish date between 2004 and 2016, published in the United States, and provided instruction for special education paraeducators. Items were excluded that contained older versions, were online based, had a "train-the-trainer" layout, were for supporting children younger than five years old, included preparation materials for SEP tests, were textbooks, or were school or teacher developed. The final search excluding non-training and duplicates produced 174 materials. Those materials then went through the inclusion-exclusion process and the final breakdown produced 26 training materials.

Douglas and colleagues (2019) found that of the 26 training materials, nine were classified as a general training focus, following that two were classified as general/strategies, one was general/roles, one was general/autism, one was general/transitioning, two were general/teaming, one was RTI/teaming, one was legal, one was legal/administration, one was instructional modifications, one was visual impairments, four were behavior, and one was physical education. Researchers noted that most of the training materials were relatable to federal legislation; meaning they mentioned collaboration, or teacher as the supervisor or direction giver. However, the researchers

also mentioned very few followed the best practices for adult learners. The researchers also reported that the materials contained features related to training resources and content as well as planning. However, no materials provided empirical support for measuring training outcomes. Lastly, the training materials they reviewed ranged from free to US$1225.00.

In a recent study Biggs and colleagues (2019) explored the perceptions of SEPs and special education teachers' perceptions of competencies needed in order to effectively work with their SEP as a team, as well as their recommendations for developing these competencies. The researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured, individual interviews with 13 paraeducators and nine Special Educators who worked as teams in diverse rural, suburban, and urban school systems in the United States. In order to participate the team had to work with one or more students with major disabilities. The piloted interview questions were organized into four categories: The working relationship between special educators and SEPs, roles and responsibilities, advantages, concerns, and perceived impact, and lastly proposals for increased efficacy. The competencies participants mentioned that special education teachers needed in order to create a "balanced leadership" within their team, included knowledge, skill, and disposition competencies. Within knowledge competencies, participants often mentioned knowledge of roles: knowing what the teacher's job is, what they are expected to do, and also knowing what the SEP's job is and what they are required to do. The second knowledge competency mentioned was of professional backgrounds. Participants reported that it was important that special education teachers have knowledge of SEP backgrounds and an understanding that many have little to no prior training. One SEP reported this by saying, "To work with us, I guess you need patience, especially because we're learning, and we didn't go to school for this" (p.121). The largest group of competencies mentioned was related to skills. Participants mentioned that in order to work together effectively special education teachers should have assertive communication skills, collaboration skills, coaching skills, organizational skills, and

conflict management skills. Participants mentioned that it was important to be able to communicate expectations, responsibilities and feedback without being too passive or dominant. Participants mentioned that teachers must create a cooperative relationship with their paraeducators where they are involved in decisions and planning. Coaching skills were mentioned as necessary, in order to help their SEP develop professionally, as teachers are their main source of professional development. Organizational skills were mentioned as creating a clear vision as to what their classroom should look like, and by creating appropriate schedules for students and SEPs alike. Conflict management skills were mentioned as necessary in order to keep things running smoothly as is needed for any leader of a team. Participants mentioned this as being able to see all points of view and being able to compromise or find creative solutions. Dispositional competencies included personal attributes such as being open-minded, respectful, and personable. When participants were asked about means of preparation and support for special educators to work with SEPs three routes were mentioned. The first route was that of a university studies to include both courses on working with SEP and providing field experiences following SEPs. Another route mentioned was continuing school and district professional development opportunities. The last route mentioned was through their personal experiences. This route was described as making mistakes, learning from them, as well as learning from other teachers' trial and error.

Since the IDEiA (2004), which stated that SEPs were to be supervised by the special education teacher, the need for effective supervision has been a common research topic (Chopra et al., 2011). SEPs are looked at as valuable team members, yet they are not present for planning meetings, possibly due to the way they are hired by school systems (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). They also report feeling unappreciated by their teachers as a result of the teacher's lack of training to deal with SEPs (Douglas et al., 2016).

SEPs in Physical Education. The rise in inclusive classrooms has led to paraeducators working less in special education classrooms and more often in general education classrooms (Giangreco et al., 1997; Downing et al., 2000; Broer et al., 2005; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). This has created a new trend in educational teams, which include the general education classroom teacher, special education teacher, paraeducator, administrator, parent, and more recently the physical education teacher (NEA, 2015). As there have been multiple studies that have explored the exclusion that occurs when one-on-one SEPs are employed in inclusive classrooms, one could assume those negative effects also occur when in the physical education setting. Studies on one-on-one aides in physical education have existed since the 1980s (Folsom-Meek, 1984), when it was recommended that using SwD's parents serve as their aides in adapted physical education programs. The roles and responsibilities of SEPs in physical education is a common topic in academia, though the empirical work in the U.S. is under abundant. Yet, it has been documented that physical education teachers may be effective teachers but not be effective at inclusion of SwD (Hodge et al., 2004). Therefore, the SEP could be a useful tool at helping with the inclusion process, if they are properly trained to do so in physical education.

Davis and colleagues (2007) conducted a study on the responsibilities and training needs of SEPs in physical education. For their study they created and validated a survey containing seven demographic questions, 10 multiple-choice questions relating to responsibilities, and seven multiple choice questions related to training needs. The survey was distributed to 138 SEPs in Indiana and Ohio, using a modification of Salant and Dillon (1994) survey design. SEPs that responded were all female with the exception of one. They ranged from 27-64 years of age, 36 respondents worked with elementary school teachers, and 40 respondents had fewer than five years' experience. As all the studies in this literature review have mentioned this is a female dominated field.

In this study by Davis and colleagues (2007) only 38% of respondents reported having responsibilities in physical education. Of the 29 SEPs who reported having responsibilities in physical education, 86% played the role of escort, 83% reported providing prompting cues, and 59% reported working directly with their student during activities. While playing the role of escort does provide some benefits like overseeing and fostering interpersonal skills in those students with disabilities, researchers have also reported negative consequences reported by the SWD themselves (see Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999; Gerber et al., 2001; Giangreco et al., 2011). This is also noteworthy because only nine SEPs reported assisting all students in physical education as one of their responsibilities. Following those findings, only 38% reported implementing physical education curriculum, 28% reported providing IEP suggestions, and 28% reported implementing behavior modification programs. Further only 24% assisted with assessments of SwD. These are commonly known responsibilities of SEPs (Downing et al., 2000) yet, in physical education their responsibilities change. It is fair to say that in physical education there should also be a collaborative effort of both the physical education teacher and the SEP just like there should be in the classroom (Malian, 2011). Lastly, 10% of respondents reported only being responsible for watching from the sidelines during physical education, and 28% reported only assisting when asked. This could be because those SEPs play more of an escort role with their students, and without the knowledge of individual student needs such as those listed in their IEP, scant conclusions can be drawn on those data.

In the section of the questionnaire on training, Davis and colleagues (2007) note that 61% of all SEPs felt they had been adequately trained to assist in physical education, however only 16% reported receiving physical education specific training, related to assisting their student(s). Of those SEPs who were trained, 67% were trained in a full day in-service. Following that, only five respondents reported that their school districts made physical education specific training available

to them. Sixty-eight percent reported a willingness to participate in training, and 53% reported that incentives would increase their likelihood of participating in that training. Eighty-two percent of SEPs expressed an aspiration to be trained in physical education, and of those, a one-day workshop was reported by 92% as the most preferable format for that training. This could mean that schools who do provide training are providing it in a more desirable way, but there still is the finding that the majority of SEPs are not trained to assist with their students in physical education. The most desired training topic was motor activity adaptations with 28% reporting it was most desired and 17% reported it was least desired. Learning attributes of SWD and motor development were the second and third most popularly reported highest training needs. Other training topics that were reported as a low need or had a low amount of responses included: nutrition, assistive devices in physical education, legal issues in physical education, mobility devices in physical education, motor control, neuromas function, assessment, and other. These findings indicate that SEPs who have responsibilities in physical education need training that covers mostly skills that assist in carrying out activities, and modifications for activities.

Lieberman and Conroy (2013) investigated the training needs of SEPs who assisted students with visual impairments in physical education. The participants in this study included 143 parents and professionals across 10 states that work with or have children with visual impairments. Professionals included 49 physical education teachers and 33 teachers who taught students with visual impairments, not in physical education. These professionals ranged from 6-10 years' experience, and taught students with visual impairments with and without other disabilities, across all age groups. The first researcher developed a questionnaire examining existing training for SEPs as well as what further training is needed in the realm of physical education. Researchers distributed the questionnaire at workshops on physical education and visual impairments in Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Washington.

In response to the questionnaire, fifty-two percent of respondents reported that the students they worked with were in inclusive classes, 29% said their students were in a combination of inclusive and separate classes, 9% said that they were in separate settings, and 20% were at schools for the blind. Participants were asked if SEPs were trained to work with children with visual impairments in the classroom. Thirty-seven percent said yes, 38% said no, six percent said yes and no, seven percent were unsure, and 12% did not answer. The most commonly reported areas covered in the classroom training of SEPs to work with children with visual impairments included: visual impairment information, guiding techniques, teaching techniques, strategies for modifying activities, and safety. When asked how long the training was, 55% of participants did not respond, 25% said ongoing, and 8% said under an hour. Sixty-one percent said they were not trained to work in physical education, 24% were unsure or did not answer, and only 15% said they were. Of the participants that said they were trained, the most common topics of that training included: instructional strategies, visual impairment information, and information on modifying activities. When the participants were asked if the SEPs worked with those students with visual impairments in physical education, 14% did not answer, 13% said no, 64% said yes, and 11% said yes and no. When asked how long the physical education training lasted, 61% did not answer, 3% said they were unsure, 15% said under one hour, 3% said somewhere between one and two hours, and two participants said 3-5 hours, one participant said one day, one participant said two days, and four participants said ongoing. Many physical education teachers reported that they gave the training to the SEPs on physical education. When asked who trained them, 85% participants did not answer, while 3% of participants said physical education teacher, and 3% of participants said the adapted physical education teachers gave the training. When participants were asked who should conduct the training, 21% said a trained professional in the field. The majority of participants also reported that the training should be done annually (26%), with other responses being under one day (11%),

one to three days (14%), as needed (8%), and ongoing (10%). When asked if the SEP training should include the child with whom they worked, 72% said yes, 10% said no, and six percent said that the child's presence should be dependent on the child's age. Seventy five percent agreed that training should be in a video format while 73% said a speaker, 51% said websites, 50% said webinars, and 43% thought it should be led by experienced and trained SEPs. In addition, 40% thought there should be a book involved in the training. The top duties of SEPs working with children with visual impairments in physical education were ensuring safety, providing instruction, assisting with modifications, guiding the students, and supervising the student. Some of these duties are in line with other research on SEPs in physical education (Davis et al., 2007). Physical education teachers reported that they relied on the SEP for guidance and support. Physical educators also reported that training was key in order for those students to receive the most out of their physical education experience. As the findings point out, these SEPs' main duties in physical education are duties for which they are not trained in physical education.

In a recent qualitative study Bryan, McCubbin, and Van der Mars (2013), found that the SEPs' role in physical education can be very ambiguous. Other studies have mentioned the same thing in relation to SEPs in the classroom (Giangreco et al., 1997). The participants in this study included three special education teachers, four physical education teachers, four adapted physical education teachers, and four SEPs. The SEPs in this study worked with students with intellectual disabilities who did not have any physical disabilities. Participants included nine females and six males, with at least one male and one female in each position. SEPs in this study did not have any course work in special education or adapted physical education. They worked with SwD were in general physical education classes.

Bryan and colleagues (2013) collected data through full day observations of SEPs, research notes, a demographic questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes. The

researchers revealed three main themes, including: “elastic definitions of student protection and teacher backup”, “dealing with contradictory expectations and mixed acceptance”, and “SEPs’ role ambiguity” (p.171). Four subthemes included managing students’ safety and learning, and inclusion/integration.

In the findings the first theme of flexible definitions of teacher backup and student protection, special educators and physical educators described the SEPs role under this theme as “co-teachers” helping with the class. This theme included the subtheme of “managing students: safety first, student learning second” (p. 172). Participants generally agreed on the SEPs role in general physical education in relation to keeping students safe and managing student behavior. The researchers note that the special educators did struggle with answering physical education related questions, which researchers state could be because of their lack of involvement with physical education. Researchers’ notes showed evidence of physical educators accepting the presence of those SwD and their SEP, but not taking the responsibility of educating them. It is noteworthy that the male participants at times described the situations differently than the female participants. For example, the male SEP at one school noted that he had no responsibilities in physical education; even stating “I’m a fly on the wall” (p. 172). At this school physical education classes were separated by gender, creating large male classes and small female classes. This led to different experiences between those female and male SEPs. The male physical educator at that school did not allow SwD to enter the gym without a SEP, special educator, or adapted physical education teacher. However, the researchers noted that those students did not seem to be struggling or behind in this class. The adapted physical educators overall described the role of the SEP in physical education to be that of managing behavior, safety, overall management, and personal care (such as escorting and helping them dress out). Physical education teachers also felt it was the SEPs job to manage their students by keeping them on task.

Under the theme of dealing with contradicting expectations and mixed acceptance, SEPs mentioned challenges they endure in inclusion. Both SEPs and special education teachers agreed that the biggest challenge was student behavior. SEPs also mentioned challenges in relation to the type of student they had, and meeting that students' needs while keeping up with the teacher and class. They noted challenges relating to the expectations others have for their students and for them in their job. The biggest part of this challenge for SEPs was negotiating with the teachers, their expectations of the SEPs responsibilities while in class with their SwD. SEPs also mentioned being confused in regard to what they were "allowed" to do in the physical education setting. These findings note a lack of communication and collaboration. SEPs elaborated more on the acceptance challenges, stating that they had difficulty getting teachers to not only accept their SwD but also their knowledge about their SwD.

When discussing the ambiguity of roles of SEPs in physical education, SEPs reported that their roles had been clearly defined and told to them by the teachers. However, SEPs did report that those roles changed between different teachers. Physical educators reported the roles of the SEP as never being elaborated to them. Special education teachers stated that aside from receiving a sheet of instructional assistant responsibilities, the roles of the SEPs had never been described to them. Further, half the adapted physical education teachers felt that the SEP roles had been clearly defined to them, however the other half felt that SEP roles had not been clearly defined to them. The researchers also compared the roles SEPs mentioned in previous sections to the district sheet of instruction assistant responsibilities and found a lack of clarity in regard to their roles. Neither district had clear definitions of how teachers should use their SEPs as well. Overall, these findings point further at the ambiguity of what SEPs are expected or required to do.

The Physical Education Paraeducator. There is evidence that having smaller class sizes in physical education results in higher levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity (Kirkham-King

et al., 2017). It has been found that most physical education teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade teach classes larger than the recommended student-to-teacher ratio of 25:1 by National Association of Sport and Physical Education (Gross & Buchanan, 2014). When there are budgeting concerns that do not permit the hiring of an additional physical education teacher, hiring a TA for physical education seems to be a noteworthy step to try to improve the conditions in which physical education is conducted (Hardy, 1980). Large class sizes are a common exemplar of the marginalization of physical education as an academic subject.

Lux and McCullick (2011) conducted a case study to analyze how one elementary physical education teacher worked while being marginalized within her school. Though this study focuses on Grace, the "exceptional" elementary physical education teacher, I will be reviewing the information regarding her PEP. Grace was a physical education teacher with 27 years of teaching experience and worked during this study at an elementary school in Georgia with about 750 students. All data were analyzed, and themes emerged which were then coded, and quotes were pulled. Finally, those codes and quotes were analyzed referring to Structuration theory. Findings showed that Grace had four strategies for sailing through such an environment. The first described how grace made and kept close relationships with people in the community. The second, referred to Grace's ongoing pursuit of equipment and resources she needed to continue an effective physical education program. Another theme explained ways that Grace created relationships with staff that benefited her as well as them. The last theme, pertinent to this study, was "cultivating and nurturing kinship with a paraprofessional [PEP]" (p.367). Under this theme Grace discussed how she created a beneficial and unbreakable relationship with her PEP Amanda. Grace explained how their relationship was vital to Grace's mental and emotion health. She trusted her PEP more than anyone else at the school and they could both vent to each other. Grace could share her frustrations and other negative feelings about administration and staff, because Grace and Amanda [PEP] completed trusted each

other. Grace felt heard and accepted by Amanda, even though she, Grace, often did not in other settings at school. Grace also explained how her PEP helped to reduce her workload, and therefore increase the effectiveness of "their" physical education program. Grace saw her PEP as a critical part of her program as well as her working environment. Grace reported that she could accomplish so much more with the help of her PEP. The researchers noted in observations that Grace included her PEP, Amanda in practically all aspect of the physical education program.

In a study on the effects that large physical education classes have on those physical education teachers, Hastie and colleagues (1999) interviewed and observed three physical education teachers and their PEPs when applicable. The physical education teachers were all female and employed in kindergarten through fourth grade schools in the same school district in Alabama. Teachers A and B both had master's degrees in physical education and teacher C was currently working towards her masters. Teachers' experience ranged from four to nineteen years. Due to the state requirement of 30 minutes of physical education a day for children, these teachers taught 30-minute classes of physical education that contained students from two-three classrooms in each class. Teacher A taught eleven classes a day with 38-49 students, teacher B taught nine classes a day with 44-75 students, and teacher C taught 10 classes a day with 43-55 students. Each teacher had one or two PEPs. All PEP had degrees, though not in physical education, and their only training was "on-the-job" and were seen as "assistant classroom managers" (p.280).

Hastie and colleagues (1999) conducted observations by videotaping three second grade physical education classes and two fourth grade physical education classes taught by each teacher, totaling five observations for each teacher. The videos were analyzed to find the amount of time during the classes that teachers spent on instruction, management, waiting, and activity. Researchers found no significant differences among teachers regarding the amount of time spent on these tasks.

The researchers note that these teachers organized their lessons around skills rather than games, and verbalized concepts and cues, which they attribute to the short class times, and large classes.

Researchers conducted informal interviews following the observation. Four major themes emerged: curriculum limitations, safety over instruction, administrative constraints, and the use of TA. Hastie and colleagues (1999) found that teachers were concerned regarding curriculum, and noted limitations such as facilities, weather, and funding that prohibited them at times from implementing the curriculum and meeting the national, state, and district standards. Teachers also mentioned concerns in regard to safety, feeling they had to limit instruction in order to keep students safe in such large classes, especially when in small facilities. Teachers talked about administrative decisions such as lack of breaks for physical educators with such a large load, as well as lack of planning time. Additionally, teachers discussed an administrative constraint in relation to classroom teachers getting so many breaks for planning and taking a break. This was further exacerbated by the lack of assistance when students traveled to physical education, creating the ideal time for behavioral issues. Another administrative constraint was inconvenient scheduling, such as having recess at the same time as physical education, hindering all aspects of effective teaching for one physical educator. Finally, the teachers mentioned the allocation of a PEP by administration, and their uses and importance in their physical education classes. Two of the physical education teachers had only one PEP, while one teacher split her classes with her PEP (both teacher and PEP providing instruction), the other reported using her PEP strictly as an assistant. The third physical educator was allocated two PEPs, and she reported splitting her classes into three groups and teaching one group skills while the PEPs taught recreational lessons. These teachers incorporated their PEP in different ways, however they agreed on two concerns regarding them. Teachers agreed that the PEPs were helpful, however they all mentioned their lack of training and unpreparedness. Teachers followed by discussing that the TAs were underpaid and

coincidentally unmotivated at times. The second concern all physical education teachers expressed regarding the use of PEP was that they needed more time to work with them, in order to train them and prepare them, yet administration left them with no time to do so. All of these findings illustrate the negative impact of the student and work overload on these teachers. More importantly one can see their appreciation for their PEP and their concerns of their lack of experience and training.

In a more recent study, Hannon, Destani, Williams, and Hill (2013) conducted a study examining physical activity levels, lesson context, and teacher behaviors in elementary physical education classes. The participants in this study were 18 randomly selected PEPs from a large school district in the Southwest United States. These PEPs were hired by their school district to instruct 20 hours of physical education classes per week, without a certified physical education teacher present. The district provided training in the form of an 8-hour workshop delivered by three physical educators held annually. The PEPs in this study were divided into categories of experience, six PEPs from each experience level (zero years, one-three years, and four to seven years) participated. Researchers used the System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time (SOFIT) to identify student activity time, lesson context the activity occurred in, and involvement of the PEP. SOFIT was used to observe each PEP teaching one fourth-grade class and one fifth-grade class. Researchers used a 10-second observe, 10-second record format. The observation intervals began when 51% of students entered the gym and ended when 50% had left. Observations were conducted on five students including at least two of each gender, who represented the class. SOFIT was used to observe physical activity, lesson contexts, and teacher behaviors.

Hannon and colleagues (2013) found no significant differences between years of experience for any categories. PEPs conducted physical education classes where students were involved in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) 32.1% of class time on average. In a thirty-minute-long physical education class, this would mean that students were typically involved in MVPA for

under 10 minutes. This is well below the recommended time children should spend in MVPA according to Healthy People 2020. Observations also showed that students stood on average for almost half of the class time, making standing their most common activity. Further, it was found that 29.9% of lesson context was game play and 28.4% was spent on content knowledge. This indicates that PEPs were more than likely not reaching the national standards in physical education. When looking at teacher behavior, PEPs spent 57.7% of time instructing generally, and 21.2% of the time managing. This left only 21.1% of class time for checking for understanding, providing feedback, or demonstrating and promoting fitness. Researchers cautioned against generalizations, ; however, they point out that even after "training" PEP were not effective replacements for certified physical education teachers, regardless of their amount of experience.

In a study on reinstruction strategies of PEP and physical educators, Hall, Larson, Heinemann, and Brusseau (2015) evaluated four female PEPs from a school district in the southwest. The PEPs in this study had attended school provided training and had between five- and 10-years' experience. Researchers employed a modified version of self-assessment feedback instrument (SAFI). This instrument allows teachers to analyze all their feedback including non-verbal, and identify areas that need improving, set goals, and monitor their own progress. The instrument was used for the first 30 minutes of class, as classes lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

The researchers found that physical education teachers provided feedback in a constructive criticism format while PEPs used a behavior modification approach. They also found that certified physical education teachers provided more than twice as the amount of feedback than their PEP counterparts. Given that feedback is essential for successfully learning skills in physical education, this study further points out PEPs are not an effective replacement to trained and certified physical educators.

These studies all point to the fact the PEPs should not be leading physical education classes, as they are not adequately prepared to do so effectively. The studies demonstrate benefits of the position, and while those benefits are worthy of noting, the presence of an additional physical education teacher would be a much more effective practice. This is easier said than done, considering the financial situation of some school systems.

Class Sizes in Physical Education.

Given that only sixteen states in the United States, require the state-mandated student-teacher ratio to be applied to physical education (Society of Health and Physical Educators [SHAPE America], 2016), large class sizes are a very common occurrence in physical education. Research has noted that physical education is the chief outlet for promoting physical activity in schools. Research has also shown that low physical activity levels of children have been reported in physical education with large class sizes (McKenzie, Marshall, Sallis, & Conway, 2000). Appropriate class sizes have been linked to successful physical education programs (Curtner-Smith, 2001). Over the years, physical education has experienced decreases in class time, and increases in class size (Gross, 2010). This is due to "educational progress" which has benefitted other academic subjects, but not physical education. With the slight increase in the number of states enacting physical education time requirements (SHAPE America, 2016), physical educators have been left with class sizes at least doubling those of the classroom teacher (Gross, 2010). Physical educators have noted large class sizes as an environmental factor prohibiting their delivery of quality physical education (Barroso et al., 2005).

In a study by Gross (2010), 132 physical educators from the southeastern United States completed a questionnaire. The results showed that the average class size was 85 students typically taught by two physical educators and an aide. Results also showed that on average physical educators taught 600 students a day, within eight physical education classes a day. Eighty-eight

percent of these physical educators reported that having large class sizes hindered the potential of producing quality physical education. Eighty-nine percent of these physical educators believed that larger class sizes hindered students' ability to master and retain physical education content.

In a study by Bevans and colleagues (2010) on physical education resources, classroom management, and physical activity, 46 physical educators across 34 elementary and middle schools were interviewed, and 184 of their physical education classes systematically observed using the Systems for Observing Fitness Instruction Time (SOFIT). Interview questions were adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s School Health Policies and Programs Survey (SHPPS), which was found to be valid and reliable (Brener, Kann, & Smith, 2003). Results from this study showed that students in smaller physical education class sizes had more time in physical education and higher physical activity levels during that class time. Following that, it was also found that the greater the number of physical education teachers in class and the lower the student-to-teacher ratio, the less time spent on classroom management, resulting in higher physical activity levels of the students. Kirkham-King and colleagues (2017) found similar results in their study on class size, lesson context, and elementary students physical activity levels. Researchers found that that smaller classes (small class size was determined to be below 25 students) resulted in higher percentage of class time spent in MVPA.

In a study by Skala and colleagues (2012), data were used from two previous studies on 74 randomly selected public elementary schools, totaling 211 third-fifth grade classes with 6,740 students in two large cities in Texas. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between environmental characteristics and students' physical activity levels. Observations of these classes were conducted using SOFIT. The results showed that as class sizes increased, so did the amount of class time devoted to management (Bevans et al., 2010). In this study class sizes of 20 students or less yielded 19.5% of class time devoted to management, whereas class sizes of 60 or

more students resulted in 28.2% of class time devoted to management. This finding is alarming, when looking at the average class size of 85 in the study by Gross (2010). Additionally, it was found that smaller class sizes focused on skill acquisition, while classes of 40-59 engaged in game type play. Smaller class sizes resulting in more skill practice has been shown in research since the early 1990s (Hastie & Saunders, 1991). This is concerning considering physical education is where students learn those motor skills needed to live physically active lives. The findings of these studies are all concerning in regard to delivering quality physical education (Barroso et al., 2005).

In the study by Hastie and colleagues (1999), which was previously mentioned in the section of this chapter labeled "The Physical Education Paraeducator", researchers examined three physical educators in the southeastern United States with kindergarten – fourth grade schools with class sizes ranging from 38-75 students. Results from this study showed that teachers felt they did not have enough space or equipment to accommodate their class sizes, which resulted in curriculum limitations that hindered them from meeting state-mandated standards. When weather was inclement, this lack of space for the number of students was exacerbated by the inability to move class outside. The large class sizes also concerned teachers in regard to safety and preventing injuries. Teachers noted that they had to spend time at the beginning of every year going over safe practices, which further prohibited them from meeting state-mandated standards. Two of these physical educators reported dividing their physical education classes between them and their PEP. Even though the PEPs were not trained or prepared to teach physical education, it was a way to make ends meet. These studies show evidence that physical educators are teaching classes that at least double the size of most classroom teachers, and that there are many negative effects that large class sizes have on physical educators, curriculum delivery, classroom management, and students' physical activity levels.

The Marginalization of Physical Education.

The fight against marginalization of the field of physical education has been discussed in literature for over 56 years (Henry, 1964). Marginalization is defined as a situation whereby a person, group, or subject is given a low status or positioning within the larger group or culture, rendering it not significant for vital functions (Lux & McCullick, 2011). Research shows that physical education occupies a marginalized placement within schools as a whole and is seen as "less than" in comparison to more cognitively driven subject areas (Henninger & Carlson, 2011; Laureano et al., 2014). Perhaps there is no better example of this marginalization than the lack of required physical education in 12 states in the United States (SHAPE America, 2016). This means within those 12 states, whether or not physical education is required or even offered, is left up to the individual school district's leaders. Such variability in policies leads to even further variability within states' and local districts' physical education policies and Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs' curriculum. Consequently, physical education programs throughout the country vary greatly because those policies are set into action by physical educators (Lawson, 2020). With all this variability one thing remains the same, physical education is indeed perceived as a "less than" core subject area. There are many factors that both directly and indirectly influence the marginalization of physical education. These factors have been categorized and are listed in the following three sub-categories: perceptions, educational policies, and environmental factors.

Perceptions. The perceptions of teachers, administrators, students, and physical educators regarding physical education have been studied for decades, with not much changing among them. The perceptions of these stakeholders have an effect on where physical education stands in the school culture and in academia as a whole (Lee, 2019; Richards, Washburn, & Hemphill, 2019; Gaudreault, Richards, & Woods, 2018; Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018C; Wilson, Richards, Haegle, & Holland, 2020).

Tannehill and colleagues (1994) investigated student and parent attitudes regarding physical education. Participants included 314 tenth and eleventh grade students, and 139 parents. The researchers employed a 42-item student questionnaire addressing what the goals should be for physical education, their likes and dislikes in physical education, and how important it is in relation to other subjects and their education, and how their experiences in physical education influenced these attitudes. Additionally, the researchers employed a 36-item parent questionnaire, which addressed parent's own physical education experiences, perceptions of their children's physical education program, thoughts on assessment in physical education, importance of physical education in their child's education, and if physical education should be required.

Despite the time that has passed since this study took place, the results of this study show a lack of generational changes in perceptions of physical education. The results of Tannehill and colleagues (1994) showed that students thought that for the most part physical education was doing what it was supposed to be doing (teaching team sports), however students did feel exercise/fitness should be a focus, yet it was not a part of their physical education program. More importantly, only 31% of students felt that physical education was important or very important to their education. Students reported that math (77%), English (75%), science (71%), history (71%), foreign language (64%), and vocational education (55%) were more important than physical education. Only art was perceived as equally important to these students. In addition to this, 40-44% of students reported enjoying history, math, foreign language, science, and English more than physical education. While this is not the majority of students, it is nearly half of the student participants. The findings of Tannehill and colleagues (1994) regarding student perceptions of physical educations importance, could in part be due to the lack of importance placed on physical education by the school, parents, and peers, as well as the students' own personality and behaviors (Tudor, Sarkar, & Spray, 2020).

The researchers found that out of the parent participants, 90% said physical education was required at elementary, middle, and high school levels when they attended school. The majority of parents ranked that program as satisfactory in relation to poor or excellent. A majority of parents (79%) had knowledge of policies requiring physical education to be provided at ninth and tenth grade levels. This indicates an interest and understanding of educational policies by these parents. When asked if physical education should be required in high school grade levels 69% supported ninth grade, 63% supported tenth grade, 46% supported eleventh grade, and 37% supported twelfth grade. Only 48% of parents thought that passing physical education should be a stipulation for graduation. Only 51% of parents thought that it was an important piece of their education, and when compared to other subjects, over 70% of parents ranked music, art, and athletics as important, and all other subject areas were ranked as exceeding physical education's importance. These findings show that both parents and students saw physical education as less important, and students found it less enjoyable than other common school subjects.

The findings of this study are in line with research regarding parent perceptions of physical education at a kindergarten through sixth grade school. In a case study by Sheehy (2006), 27 parents were interviewed about their child's fifth grade physical education program. In addition to this, the physical education teacher and principal were interviewed, field observations were conducted on fifth grade physical education, and educational policy documents, and informal conversations with parents at school events. Through interviews with the physical educator, it was found that she sent out information letters regarding the days that children had physical education, and expectations related to clothing and behavior, and contact information for the physical educator. The only other information the physical educator sent to parents was in the form of permission slips for different things outside of the normal school environment. Despite providing her contact information, the physical educator reported that parents did not stop in to see her, or the classroom. The physical

educator did report however that at times parents would send emails or call regarding their child being sick or concerns about their child's grade.

After analysis of the interviews with parents, it was reported that eight of the parents did not know the physical educator's name, and three of them indicated that they would not recognize her (Sheehy, 2006). Eighteen of the parents reported knowing the number of days their child had physical education a week, one had no idea, and eight were unsure. The primary source of information about physical education for parents was their children, and they reported that it was a reliable source of information. However, observations and interviews with the physical educator showed that the information parents had about their child's physical education class were often incorrect. These findings suggest that that these parents did not see physical education as an important part of their child's education (Tannehill et al., 1994; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). This points us directly to the marginalization of physical education as it is often perceived as "less than" in relation to other school subjects, especially those "core" subjects. This is amplified by one parent's response when describing her son's physical education class. She stated that her son gets graded, though she did not know how, she just knew that it was an S, N, or U. She reported that this was the grading system for all "nonacademic" subjects (Sheehy, 2006, p.33). This is in line with research on assessment in physical education, which related the lack of assessments and number/letter grading to the marginalization of physical education (James, Griffin, & France, 2005; Curtner-Smith, 2001). In this study by Sheehy (2006) a mother indicated that if the school had placed stronger "value" on physical education, then she would have thought of physical education as valuable. This finding points to the responsibilities of key stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and physical educators) in advocating for and supporting physical education in their schools. This finding clearly shows that when key stakeholders do not value physical education or advocate for it as a worthy part of the educational curriculum, parents do not perceive physical education as

important. Another factor that could be influential in parental perceptions of physical education could be the relation of current physical education to their own experiences in physical education (Sheehy, 2011).

The findings of these studies are important because research has shown that parent perceptions are especially important in physical education (Sheehy, 2006; Graham, 2008; Prior, Curtner-Smith, 2020). In addition, both of these studies similar findings show a potential lack of progress for parental perceptions of physical education. These perceptions are not only important because they can be passed down to the next generation, but also because they are paramount in advocating and supporting the progress of physical education in the future. Parents witness their children develop and grow into young adults through thirteen years of schooling. They are therefore important stakeholders who can influence educational policy and the school climate in general (Sheehy, 2006; Graham, 2008; Sheehy, 2011; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020).

Classroom teachers, and administrators are important stakeholders in the move for progress in physical education. Yet, even their own perceptions have been reported in literature as supporting the marginalization of the field. In a study by Stroot, Collier, O'Sullivan, and England (1994) physical educators reported asking for a different duty than lunch duty every year, yet every year they still had lunch duty. Several physical educators mentioned their opinions on being dealt this assignment continuously, despite requests to change, was due to administrative perceptions, "…the physical education teacher was perceived by the central administration as the school disciplinarian and someone who could best handle this assignment" (Stroot et al., 1994, p.351). The administrators' perceptions of physical education were also apparent through the common disruptions of physical education due to use of physical education facilities for assemblies throughout the year or pulling of students from physical education by administrators or classroom teachers for work in other subject areas (Stroot et al., 1994). These actions indirectly signal to

school staff and students that physical education is “less than” important, and unfortunately, they are still common today despite national recommendations and state mandates (SHAPE America, 2016; Lawson, 2018). When administrators show they value physical education and take time to relate to their physical educators, it reduces feelings of marginalization and isolation, and enhances the socialization of physical educators into the school climate (Curtner-Smith, 2001).

It has been reported that while classroom teachers value physical education, the reason they value it may not be validating. Common reasons for teachers’ and administrators’ positive perceptions about physical education have related to these reasons: it creates a free time frame for teachers to work on their planning, the long-term health benefits for students, improvement in students’ academic success, and physical education provides a break from the sedentary posture that commonly accompanies classrooms (Graham, 2008; Richards, Gaudreault, Starck, & Woods, 2018A). While these reasons are validating, they do not show a support of physical education as an academic subject, but rather the indirect services it delivers to stakeholders (Graham, 2008; Richards et al., 2018A). It was also reported in a review of literature that teacher, parent, and administrator perceptions of physical education are fairly situational, vary greatly from school to school, and are often contradictory (Graham, 2008).

Educational Policies. An increased focus on standards, assessment, and catching up with the rest of the world, has led to schools being “forced” to make budget cuts and time restrictions in physical education. The average annual budget for physical education in the United States was reported to be $764.00 per school year (National Association of Sport and Physical Education [NASPE], 2009). Physical education developed their national standards in 1995, which have since been revised (SHAPE America, 2014). However, there is no set national assessment for physical education, and some states do not even require physical education at different levels (SHAPE America, 2016). Even when states set state-mandated standards, and require assessments related to

them, incorporating standard aligned assessments in physical education is difficult. Some of these difficulties relate to the environment, lack of time to plan and conduct assessment, lack of formal preparation, large class sizes, teacher socialization, and student and teacher perceptions (Barroso et al., 2005; James et al., 2005; Rink et al., 2007). The politics and procedures of schools have been mentioned in the literature as the most difficult aspects of the school for first year physical educators (Curtner-Smith, 2001).

In a study on the effects of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) on physical education, specifically the implementation of integrated lessons in physical education, Seymour and colleagues (2019) conducted surveys, checklists, and physical activity measures on one physical educator and 21 of her sixth-grade students from a public, suburban, New York school district. A fidelity checklist provided assurance that the described lesson components were actually used during observations of six physical education classes. Physical activity levels were also assessed during these observed physical education classes through accelerometer usage. The teacher and student survey was designed using Likert-scale agree-disagree responses to questions regarding enjoyment of activities, perceptions about physical activity levels, content learned, and degrees to which the activities were cognitively and physically challenging. Results showed agreement between students and teachers on all survey items, with both reporting a high level of enjoyment in integrated lessons. There was a lower level of responses showing participants thought that the integrated activities were cognitively and physically challenging. More importantly, the results showed that in integrated physical education classes, students were engaged in MVPA for 19.7% of class time, where as in the non-integrated lessons, students were engaged in MVPA for 33.1% of class time. Thus, results showed that non-integrated physical education lessons created more opportunities for MVPA. Showing that the push to meet the standards in other content areas has, at times, affected physical education classes.

It has been reported that physical educators understand the importance of assessment, think physical education should be on children's report cards (Rink et al., 2007), and have reported that it helps with accountability and producing appropriate lessons (James et al., 2005). It has also been documented that including and reporting assessment in physical education helps notify stakeholders of progresses made and thus increases the value of physical education (Collier, 2011). James and colleagues (2005) reported that assessment was beneficial for students, and that students had more respect for physical education when assessments were included. The researchers also reported that students still did not perceive physical education to be as important as their other classes (James et al., 2005). Physical educators have also reported that incorporating assessments into physical education increased support from administration, but that there were no changes in administrators' perceptions of the value of physical education (Rink et al., 2007).

Another way that educational policies have crippled physical educations importance are through the use of waivers, exemptions, and substitutes (WES). Despite the recommendations of SHAPE that opting out of physical education should not be allowed, 31 states allow WES in physical education (SHAPE America, 2016). However, neglecting physical education policies is normal practice in the United States (Lawson, 2018). Prior and Curtner-Smith (2020) conducted a study on three schools in a school district that allowed WES policy to exist, 10 physical educators, eight principals, two assistant principals, one school district employee, and six parents were interviewed, and six students took part in a focus group. The purpose of the study was to shed light on the elements that led stakeholders to support this practice, and the level to which they supported the practice. The second purpose of this study was to shed light on the types of WES that are implemented.

Prior and Curtner-Smith (2020) found that there were three types of WES: participating in in-school physical activity, participating in out-of-school physical activity, and innovative waivers.

In-school physical activity WES allowed students who were participating in school sports, physical activity in school, or other "approved" activities within the school, to be exempt from taking physical education and using their practice time as their physical education. This is common in high schools for students are enrolled in "athletics". In "athletics" students are typically with their team participating in workouts or practice for that sport or activity. This type of WES had been in place for over twenty years (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). Activities allowed for this type of WES included: traditional school sports, and activities such as cheerleading, show choir, band activities, and flag corps (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). The school board held the responsibility of approving those substitutable activities every two years. The school board was also responsible for ensuring that those students who substituted activities for physical education met physical education standards. However, the school board official and one principal reported that neither of those stipulations were easy to meet, therefore were not always achieved. This shows a lack of prioritizing physical education and policies regarding physical education. The second type of WES was for out-of-school physical activities, which allowed parents to waive their child's physical education credit due to participation in out-of-school activities. This type of WES had been in existence for three years, was primarily for secondary students, and was relatively uncommon across the state (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). In cases, these types of WES were monitored by use of checklist and supervising adult signatures, making sure they met the number of hours required for a physical education credit.

The third type of WES were "innovative waivers", which had been in use for two-years. These were designed by the state department of education in an attempt to alleviate scheduling and budgeting restrictions. Official documents of one participating school district suggested that this type of WES would allow for students to have flexibility in their scheduling, allowing them to take more advanced courses or enroll in vocational/technical courses (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020).

This type of WES inevitably allowed schools to offer less physical education and larger physical education class sizes than state standards allowed. This type of WES was frequently adopted by elementary schools to allow for classroom teacher/principal data meetings. These findings reveals the lack of value key stakeholders placed on physical education at all school levels, the lack of respect of policies that hold physical education to the same standard as other academic subjects, further illustrating the lack of change in school policy to promote and value physical education. On top of those findings, one state department employee who oversaw physical education, stated that most of the times these type of waivers were approved on "the good ole boy system" without her knowledge (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020, p.622). This shows a lack of valuing physical education over competitive sports or other academic subjects, and how key stakeholders have been socialized into seeing physical education as "less than" (Tannehill et al., 1994; Barroso et al., 2005; James et al., 2005; Sheehy, 2006; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020).

Environmental/Contextual Factors. In the beginning physical education was associated with other names like recess or gym and the perceptions that those names created. Thus, physical education has long been seen as an extracurricular or bonus subject area, along with subjects like music and art (Tannehill et al., 1994). One particular way in which physical education is marginalized can be seen by looking around schools across the United States, while not all schools have environmental factors marginalizing physical education, the sad truth is that a great number of schools across the country do. Environmental factors include: access to equipment and facilities, appropriateness of equipment and facilities, canceling of physical education for school functions, large class sizes, access to human resources, teaching requirements, and so on.

Barroso and colleagues (2005) sent a survey to physical educators who were employed in a school where a Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program had been implemented. The survey addressed barriers relating to delivering quality physical education and the

implementation and satisfaction of their school's CATCH program. The CATCH program is a comprehensive school wide health program drafted to aide in the prevention of obesity and health related diseases (Barroso et al., 2005). In this study, data analysis showed that physical educators saw the low academic value placed on physical education in relation to other academic subjects, and large class sizes were the most significant barrier hindering their delivery of quality physical education (Tannehill, 1994; James et al., 2005; Sheehy, 2006; Rink et al., 2007; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020). Other barriers reported by these physical educators included, inadequate funding and facilities, both indoor and outdoor (Bevans et al., 2010). The physical educators in this study by Barroso and colleagues (2005) additionally mentioned that they perceive physical education as an important part of children's complete education, and that key stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, and school district officials) should hold physical education to a more elevated position.

Bevans and colleagues (2010) found that access to adequate facilities and equipment led to a decrease in the amount of class time physical educators spent on management, and thus an increased in the amount of class time students spent in MVPA. Similarly, Xu, Chepyator-Thomson, Liu, and Schmidlein (2010) reported that access to adequate facilities had a significant impact on students' physical activity opportunities in middle school. This indicates that having access to appropriate gymnasiums and/or outdoor spaces significantly increases student opportunities to be physically active.

In addition, Bevans and colleagues (2010) found that the more days per week physical education was offered, the greater the access to human resources physical educators had. This is important considering that this study also showed that only 17.4% of these schools offered daily physical education. Thus, these findings suggest that having access to appropriate facilities and equipment and access to human resources are important environmental factors affecting the

provision of physical education. In addition to these findings, Bevans and colleagues (2010) found that around 33% of the 46 physical educators were required to teach content areas other than health education, in addition to physical education.

Stroot and colleagues (1994) additionally found those secondary physical educators' workloads and schedules provided them with full days that left them with inopportune times to plan. Similar to the physical educators in the study by Barroso and colleagues (2010) four of the 11 physical educators in this study were responsible for teaching other content areas. One taught biology, one taught a quest program (focus on social skill development), and two taught health (p.351). In this study, seven physical educators were coaches, and four taught other classes in addition to physical education, yet all had but one planning period, which was typically at the end of the day. Additional duties were also a part of these teachers' schedules: lunch duty, study hall, or supervising an "open gym" (p.351). Of these additional duties, lunch duty was the least favorite as it was "physically exhausting" and left them tired for all afternoon classes (p.351). Additionally, the frequent cancellation of physical education due to assemblies, which required the use of the physical education facilities, hindered the physical educator's jobs and their ability to provide quality physical education to their students. This shows a lack of valuing physical education, and physical educators by their administrators, which inevitably led to schedules and duties being factors that marginalized the physical education programs at these secondary schools. Additionally, physical educators' commonly mentioned factors that amplified or impeded their ability to deliver quality education. The most commonly mentioned factors included facilities, equipment, support from administrators, and cooperation amongst colleagues (Stroot et al., 1994, p.353). Perceptions of key stakeholders, policies in education, and environmental and contextual factors not only affect physical education, but can also create a sense of isolation, marginalization, and lack of perceived mattering for the physical educator (Richards, Gaudreault, & Woods, 2018B).

Physical Educators' Marginalization & Mattering

Equal to the research on physical education as a subject area, research has shown that physical educators themselves hold marginalized positions in schools (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Lee, 2019; Richards et al., 2018a). Such marginalization is due to isolation and working in a subject that does not hold the same importance as more cognitively driven subjects in America's school culture (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Richards et al., 2018A). In addition, they hold much different positions than the classroom teachers who comprise the majority. Physical educators' jobs are different in regard to the content they teach, the classroom setting, the activities that take place in learning, and duties that their job entails (Lee, 2019). Perceptions of mattering are important for physical educators, because physical educators who feel they do not matter to the key stakeholders in physical education, and/or their school has been negatively associated with feelings of marginalization (Richards, Gaudreault, & Woods, 2016).

Additionally, feeling that one matters in their work environment has been noted as important for ones' social and psychological wellbeing (Marshall, 2001; Richards et al., 2018A). There are four dimensions of mattering (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981): importance- perceiving that your contributions are valued by others; attention- perceiving that others have interest in you; dependence- perceiving that others rely on you; and ego-extension- perceiving that others care about your successes and failures (Rosenburg & McCullough, 1981; Gaudreault et al., 2018). Status of educators can be based off the relative importance of what subject area they teach (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014), and their own status is socially negotiated within their school culture (Richards, 2015). Thus, perceptions of mattering capture how significant educators feel they are relative to their school environment and coworkers (Richards et al., 2016). Therefore, given the marginalized position that physical educators and physical education hold in America's school

systems, perceived mattering can help us to understand how important physical educators perceive they are in the school context, relative to their administrators, students, and other educators.

Commonly mentioned in research on marginalization and perceived mattering of physical educators, are role stress, burnout, resilience, isolation, and personal accomplishment (Richards, Templin, & Gaudreault, 2013; Gaudreault, Richards, & Woods, 2017; Gaudreault et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2018A; Richards et al., 2018B; Richards et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020). Research has shown that physical educators are highly susceptible to workplace stress, most commonly role stress (Richards et al., 2018C). Role stress refers to experiencing stress related to conflicting opinions regarding one's role (Richards et al., 2019). Role stressors include role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflict (Richards et al., 2018C; Wilson et al., 2020). Role stress can lead to burnout (Byrne, 1994). Burnout occurs when teachers experience emotional exhaustion, which in turn leads to depersonalization, and ends in a decreased sense of personal accomplishment, which leads to a decrease in job satisfaction and interest in one's job (Richards et al., 2018C). On the other hand, personal accomplishment indicates feelings of satisfaction, pride, value, and finesse relative to ones' work (Richards et al., 2018b). Personal accomplishment is a requirement of resilience (Richards et al., 2018B). Resilience refers to one's ability to thrive in spite of any experiences of adversity (Richards et al., 2018C). Last but not least, isolation refers to the feeling of being separated from others and alone. Research shows that physical educators are susceptible to isolation both physically and intellectually, because they are more commonly the only educator dealing with students all day, at a location separated from other teachers, and often are the only physical educator within a school (Gaudreault et al., 2017).

Gaudreault and colleagues (2018) conducted a study with the purpose of determining the perceived mattering of physical educators, physical educators' reports on the mattering of physical education as a subject, and if perceptions of mattering differed between degree levels of physical

educators. The researchers employed a survey called: Perceived Mattering Questionnaire-Physical Education (PMQ-PE), which had been previously validated (Gaudreault et al., 2017), and consisted of eight questions. Physical educators (n=105) in a rural mountain state, located in the Western United States completed the online (PMQ-PE) survey. Twenty-three of those physical educators agreed to take part in telephone interviews lasting about 45 minutes.

Gaudreault and colleagues (2018) found that physical educators felt that physical education as a subject area mattered slightly more than they did as teachers of the subject. There were no significant effects on perceived mattering between teaching level and educational degree level. Secondary physical educators felt they mattered more than elementary physical educators, and physical educators with advanced degrees felt they mattered more than those physical educators with a bachelor's degree. Secondary physical educators are often also coaches (Richards & Templin, 2012), therefore their increased perceptions of mattering could be in part due to their perceptions of mattering as a coach. Elementary schools are more apt to hire only one physical educator, which could increase feelings of isolation, resulting in a decrease in perceptions of mattering.

Gaudreault and colleagues (2018) found from their qualitative study that students provided physical educators with the most considerable source of mattering, in all senses of the word. This finding was shown through physical educator statements relating to students depending on the physical educator, and that students pay attention and notice their physical educators. Their statements were not only reflective of them as educators, but also that students were the most considerable source of mattering for physical education as a subject. This makes sense and is very beneficial for physical education, being that students are the ones whom physical educators serve; however, when it comes to stakeholders, adults rather than students usually have the power, which leads to cause for concern. Physical educators did mention adult stakeholders as a source of

mattering. A little more than half of the participants felt that others in the school saw them as important. Physical educators who saw themselves as important typically followed that with a testimony of a particular event or action that aided the school's success. Those physical educators who did not perceive themselves as mattering to adult stakeholders within the school mentioned: administrators neglecting their contributions, administrators and other teachers being socialized into thinking physical education was a recess, or less important than other subjects. One participant felt "belittled" and went on to describe how other teachers made comments hinting at the fact that physical educators should not get paid the same amount as classroom teachers (Gaudreault et al., 2018, p.584). This physical educator blamed bad physical educators for giving the profession a bad name, thus limiting her mattering in her school context.

When discussing the basis of physical educators' perceived mattering, Gaudreault and colleagues (2018) found that relationships and support from students, teachers, and administrators were often recounted (Barroso et al., 2005). Physical educators mentioned interpersonal relationships with students continuously as their largest source of mattering, noting that students valued and depended on them. When discussing the relationships and support from colleagues and administrators, several physical educators noted how this came from some, but not all. Faculty meetings were noted as a time where importance, or lack thereof, could be assessed. Physical educators mentioned how their opinions were not valued during these meetings, others mentioned events or actions during these meetings that segregated them from their colleagues in other subject areas and signaled that they were "less than" other faculty members because of their subject area.

When discussing factors that impeded or aided physical educator's perceptions of mattering, Gaudreault and colleagues (2018) found that the location of the gymnasium factored into their perceptions of mattering, in both positive and negative ways. These findings suggested that when the gymnasium was located around the perimeter of the school it reduced their sense of mattering,

and when it was located in the heart of the school it enriched their sense of mattering. Thus, the location of the gym, which has been linked to feelings of isolation in physical educators had a large effect on their sense of mattering, which was likely connected to a decrease in feelings of isolation (Gaudreault et al., 2017; Lee, 209). Last, but not least, the service that physical education provided to classroom teachers, was perceived as the basis for the value of physical education. Physical education commonly takes place during classroom teacher's planning periods. Thus, physical educators felt that classroom teachers and administrators valued physical education simply because of the break that it provided them. Additionally, several physical educators did mention that their colleagues were beginning to notice the benefits on academic achievement that physical education provides students. Either way, physical educators thought that the basis of their mattering to administrators and teachers was based on services they provided, rather than for their being a teacher of an important academic subject. This finding corroborates the findings of other researchers (Graham, 2008; Richards et al., 2018A).

In a similar study that sought to fathom the social context of schools, and how they influenced perceived mattering and sense of marginalization, and how those constructs relate, Richards and colleagues (2018a) conducted in-depth interviews with 30 physical educators from the Midwest United States. The findings of this study showed that physical educators encounter both marginalization and perceived mattering which are both socially constructed within the context of the school. The researchers reported that receiving affirmation from key stakeholders, or when key stakeholders advocated for their subject matter, physical educators perceived mattering was enhanced. The participants noted that by advocating for physical education as a subject matter, through doing their jobs and letting stakeholders know what was going on in physical education their perceived mattering was enhanced. These findings point to the theme of interpersonal relationships, which was a key factor in their perceived mattering (Gaudreault et al., 2018). Other

studies have also shown that these interpersonal relationships with students are important for physical educators' personal accomplishment and job satisfaction. One study specifically reported that physical educators who felt that they were making a difference in students' lives had low rates of burnout (Richards et al., 2018C). When physical educators do not feel that they are treated as "less than", they experience lower rates of washout, which is where teachers give up on their learned practices and give in to the custodial norms of their school (Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008).

A second theme was experiencing marginalization, which reportedly tends to decrease perceived mattering. Participants experienced marginalization when physical education was treated as a "dispensable commodity" (Richards et al., 2018a, p.451), which has also been shown to increase burnout and role stress in physical educators (Richards et al., 2018c). The treatment of physical education as a "dispensable commodity" was seen by physical educators when students missed or got pulled from physical education to take tests in other classes, and when the gymnasium was used for school-wide events, like blood drives. Physical educators also felt that physical education held a marginalized position when its importance was described in terms of the services it provided (Gaudreault et al., 2018). This was experienced when teachers mentioned the importance of physical education when speaking of how it provided classroom teachers with a planning period.

Under the third and final theme in Richards and colleagues' study (2018a), participants mentioned validation as a double-edged sword. Perceived mattering was enhanced when administrators praised their teaching, and when they were given autonomy to create curriculum. Though autonomy was not validating in itself, physical educators felt validation by the trust that the administrators had in their abilities. Physical educators also felt validated when they felt that they were making a difference in students' lives. Physical educators experienced the negative edge of this validation sword when their partner physical educators challenged them. A lack of

collaboration amongst physical educators, especially when new physical educators are hired, has been previously mentioned in the literature as a hindrance to successful physical education (Curtner-Smith, 2001). Most of these experiences were related to physical educators trying to implement innovative teaching strategies. This was experienced as disapproval and resulted in pressure to conform to "how it's always been". This disapproval from coworkers negatively impacted physical educators' perceptions of mattering.

Another study on perceived mattering, isolation, marginalization, personal accomplishment, and resilience, Richards and colleagues (2018b) sought to quantitatively measure the connections among these factors. Researchers employed the Physical Educators Perceptions of Marginalization and Isolation (PE-MAIS) Questionnaire (Gaudreault et al., 2017), the Perceived Mattering Questionnaire for Physical Educators (PMQ-PE) (Richards et al., 2016), the CD-RISC resilience questionnaire, and the MBI-ES personal accomplishment questionnaire. Participants in this study included 419 physical educators from varying grade levels from the mid-western, and mountain western United States.

Richards and his colleagues (2018b) found that these physical educators felt high levels of resilience and personal accomplishment, moderate to high levels of physical education and physical education teacher matters, and moderate levels of isolation and marginalization. Results showed personal accomplishment had a direct relationship with resilience (Tudor et al., 2020) and physical education matters. Personal accomplishment had an indirect consequence on marginalization, isolation, and teacher matters. Physical education matters directly forecasted teacher matters and marginalization and indirectly forecasted isolation. Resilience was shown to directly decrease marginalization, directly increase teacher matters, indirect effects on isolation, and no effect on physical education matters. Additionally, marginalization and isolation were both directly predicated by teacher matters. To put it simply, "the current study illustrates that feeling a sense of

personal accomplishment, building resilience, and possessing a sense of mattering can directly and indirectly reduce teachers' perceptions of marginalization and isolation" (Richards et al., 2018b, p.87). Research has shown that feelings of marginalization and isolation can be internalized by physical educators, and therefore hinder their ability to deliver quality physical education (Lee, 2019).

In a study that aimed to determine the relationship between perceived mattering, emotional exhaustion, and role stress on physical educators' and physical educator/coaches' job satisfaction, It was found that both teacher matters and physical education matters increased job satisfaction (Richards et al., 2019). This study also showed that role stressors had a negative impact on emotional exhaustion, which had a negative effect on job satisfaction. Therefore, it was found that the job satisfaction of physical educators was hindered by role stressors and emotional exhaustion, but was intensified by physical education matters and teacher matters. Thus, enhancing perceived mattering in physical educators should amplify job satisfaction and reduce feelings of role stress and emotional exhaustion (Richards et al., 2019). In addition, Richards and colleagues (2018b) found that a nurturing and affirmative school culture led to lower rates of burnout in physical educators, which has been connected to the delivery of quality physical education (Lee, 2019).

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework used in this qualitative study is phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Role Socialization Theory (Richards, 2015) is the theoretical framework employed.

Conceptual Framework

There are many approaches to qualitative research, and each has its own processes and theoretical and philosophical underpinnings. "Generally, the province of qualitative research is the world of individuals' experiences and their socially constructed realities" (Hallberg, 2006, p.141). Qualitative research in education can be difficult given the diverse populations and diverse

educational settings that learning occurs in, and it can be difficult to assume shared knowledge (Boote & Beile, 2005). Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research in which the researcher finds commonalities within the experiences of individuals regarding a central phenomenon or concept and moves to explain those commonalities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, the use of phenomenological research is to describe commonalities within lived experiences by describing the substance of those experiences. Phenomenology is a focus on revealing the "essence" of experiences (Katsirikou & Lin, 2017). Phenomenology is a complex and multifaceted philosophy that goes against basic characterization, because it is not a "single unified philosophical standpoint" (Schwandt, 2015, p.234). Phenomenologists typically reject scientific realism and disagree with the empiricist idea that the only way real genuine knowledge can be achieved is through rejecting the way we see the world as a "mere appearance" (Schwandt, 2015).

The first aim of this dissertation is to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of PEPs regarding their roles within the school and within physical education. The best way to find out information about the role of PEPs in their school as well as in physical education is to first ask PEPs. There are very few studies including paraeducators' perceptions (Marks et al., 1999; Downing et al., 2000; Carter & Hughes, 2006; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012) and no studies of perceptions of PEPs. Additionally, this dissertation seeks to explore the perceptions of the administrators and physical educators that work with PEPs on their lived experiences hiring and working with PEPs, and how that has shaped their perceptions of the roles of PEPs both within the school and within physical education. Third, this dissertation seeks to gather physical educators' experiences and perceptions of the roles and uses of PEPs in physical education across the nation.

Given the purposes of this dissertation, phenomenology was adopted as the conceptual framework for this study. Phenomenology was adopted in order to find out what is at the core of the lived experiences of physical educators and administrators who are employed in schools where a

PEP is employed and PEPs themselves surrounding the practice of utilizing PEPs in public school physical education classes (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). Phenomenology has been used as the conceptual framework guiding research on paraeducators (Tutty & Hocking, 2004; Bryan et al., 2013; Docherty, 2014; Haegele, Sato, Zhu, & Kirk, 2019) and in the field of physical education (Dodds, 2005; Thornburn, 2008; Bower & Hums, 2009; Brown & Payne, 2009; Perrin-Wallqvist, & Carlsson, 2011; Smith, 2012; Stolz, 2013; Haegele, Sato, Zhu, & Avery, 2017)

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation utilizes Role Socialization Theory (RST) as the theoretical framework (Richards, 2015). Combining two parent theoretical frameworks, Occupational Socialization Theory (OST) (Templin & Schempp, 1989) and Role Theory (RT), Richards (2015) presented RST. OST is the most commonly used theory for research regarding physical educators' socialization into the profession (Templin & Richards, 2014). The use of OST explains the socialization of physical educators, particularly how they are drawn to and recruited into the profession and how they are socialized into their roles as physical educators (Richards et al., 2013). Specifically, it is used to "understand all kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of PE and that later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers" (Lawson, 1986, p.107).

Occupational Socialization takes into account three phases of socialization: acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization (Richards et al., 2014). Acculturation refers to the "anticipatory" socialization that occurs before teacher education programs, beginning in k-12 educational setting and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence until a decision is made to enter the field. This socialization occurs through interactions with teachers, peers, coaches, and counselors, to name a few (Templin & Richards, 2014). The second phase, professional socialization, occurs during physical education teacher education (PETE) programs during college

courses and field experience (Gaudreault et al., 2018). Lawson (1983) proclaims that in this stage PETE faculties provide recruits with knowledge, techniques, methods, and inclinations of the profession (Templin & Schempp, 1989). The third phase, organizational socialization occurs when these recruits now take on the role of physical educator in a k-12 school (Lawson, 1983; Templin & Schempp, 1989). This phase is where physical education teachers are socialized into their school context (Gaudreault et al., 2018). Physical educators' roles are "socially constructed and contextually bound" (Richards, 2015, p. 380). OST accounts for certain consequences of the socially constructed roles of physical educators, specifically marginalization and isolation (Richards, 2015). However, the roles of physical educators can vary depending on who is defining them. For example, students might think that the role of the physical educator is to watch them while they play, whereas the classroom teacher might see their role as a provider of a planning period (Gaudreault et al., 2018). Physical educators are also often coaches which creates multiple roles that could be competing (Richards & Templin, 2012). However, given that these roles are contextual constrained and socially created, OST does not capture the ways that physical educators navigate their roles, as they vary (Richards, 2015). That is where RT comes into play.

Role Theory (RT) brings into RST the ways in which physical educators navigate the socially erected roles that are constrained by the context of the school, and how those social agents in context specific settings create those roles (Richards, 2015). Sharing genealogy with identity theory (Mead, 1934), RT "seeks to explain the ways in which individuals are expected to act and how they expect others to act in reference to particular positions they occupy within the social milieu" (Richards, 2015, p.382). RT incorporates a theatrical explanation of roles (Turner, 2001), meaning seeing physical educators as actors playing their roles, by adhering to the script provided to them by social agents, that tells them who they should be as a physical educator (Turner, 2001). Within role theory one must take into account role stressors. Role stressors include: role consensus

(Biddle, 1986), role ambiguity (Conley & You, 2009), role overload (Hindin, 2007), and role conflict (Richards & Templin, 2012). These stressors can occur within one role, called intrarole stress. Intrarole stress occurs with conflicts that can be caused by events such as an increase in responsibilities and a decrease in time (Turner, 2001). Role stressors can also occur between multiple roles, which is called interrole stress. Interrole stress can occur when roles such as teacher, coach, student, husband/wife, mother/father, and daughter/son begin competing with each other (Richards, 2015).

Role Socialization Theory (RST) is the combination of both OST & RT and has been chosen as the theoretical framework for this dissertation. OST brings to this theory the examination of how persons are socialized into their roles, and RT brings to this theory the way that one's role is socially created and how differing expectations affect that role. RST delves into how occupational roles are socially created and contextually constrained within schools, how persons are recruited and socialized into those roles, and how role-sets are manipulated by socialization and in what ways does this shape the persons role as a member of the school (Richards, 2015, p.384). RST has become a common theoretical framework for understanding the roles of physical educators in the past few years (Richards et al., 2018A; 2018B; 2018C; Richards et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020).

Therefore, this dissertation seeks to determine the ways that PEPs are socialized into their roles, how their roles are socially created and constrained by the context of their school, and how key stakeholders and PEPs are socialized into seeing the role of PEPs.

CHAPTER III - STUDY I

Administrators', Physical Educators', and PEPs' Perceptions of the Jobs of PEPs

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, physical educators, and PEPs regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs. Thirty-five administrators, 34 physical educators, and 20 PEPs took part in anonymous online surveys. The purpose of these surveys was to explore the perceptions of these key-stakeholders regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school as a whole. Following the surveys, 12 physical educators and six PEPs took part in follow-up semi-structured interviews to elaborate on their experiences working with or being a PEP. Results showed a disconnect between administrators and those who work in their physical education programs. Additionally, physical educators and PEPs reported PEPs taking on responsibilities that they are neither certified nor paid to do. Last, it was found that many schools are moving to outsource this position which has created a decrease in value of the position.

Introduction

The hiring of non-certified personnel to assist with education by supporting students and/or teachers has been a prevalent trend in the United States for over 70 years (Park, 1956). These non-certified support staff are referred to as paraeducators. There are many kinds of paraeducators; they can work one-on-one with students as part of special education, as an assistant or aide for a classroom teacher, or less commonly, as an assistant in physical education (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Lux & McCullick, 2011). Physical education has struggled for years within the school context to have equity with other academic areas (Lawson, 2018; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020; Richards, Gaudreault, Starck, & Woods, 2018; Tannehill, Romar, O'Sullivan, England, & Rosenburg, 1994). Evidence of this struggle includes lack of value as

a subject area, frequent cancellations for school functions, minimal requirements, class sizes larger than other content areas, inadequate facilities and equipment, lack of funding, training of personnel, and administrative support (Gross, 2010). There is little known about the physical education paraeducator (PEP); in fact, only four studies are published in the United States that mention PEPs (Hall, Larson, Heinemann, & Brusseau, 2015; Hannon, Destani, Williams, & Hill, 2013; Hastie, Sanders, & Rowland, 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). Two studies examined PEPs who were functioning as physical educators in a state that did not require physical education to be taught by certified physical educators (Hannon et al., 2013; Hall et al., 2015). The other two studies did not examine PEPs, but rather they mention PEPs in the findings, as the physical educators whom they were studying worked with a PEP (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). In both of these studies, the physical educators mentioned their PEPs criticality in their delivery of quality physical education while dealing with large class sizes, and that their PEPs were hired strictly to assist in physical education and are assigned to the physical educator (Hastie, et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). However, given that these are the only studies that mention PEPs, little else is known about them.

Purpose and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to discover school administrators' (principals and vice/assistant principals), physical educators', and PEPs' perceptions of the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education as well as the school in general. The second purpose of this study was to discover physical educators' and PEPs' lived experiences of working with/being a PEP. The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of administrators in public schools in Alabama regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school as a whole?

2. What are the perceptions of physical educators in public schools in Alabama regarding the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school as a whole?
3. What are the perceptions of PEPs in public schools in Alabama regarding their hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles within physical education and the school as a whole?
4. How do physical educators describe their lived experiences working with PEPs in public schools in Alabama?
5. How do PEPs describe their lived experiences working as a PEPs in public schools in Alabama?

Method

Design

This study followed a convergent mixed methods design. Convergent mixed methods design involves analyzing all data sources simultaneously and separately, then combining data to create a single elucidation (Zumbrunn & McMillan, 2015). This type of design was chosen because the researcher was interested in a thorough understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of administrators, physical educators, and PEPs regarding PEPs, which can be achieved by obtaining independent but complimentary sources of data (Creswell, 2014). Online surveys were employed to discover administrators', physical educators', and PEPs' perceptions of the hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles of PEPs in physical education and the school in general. Follow-up informal interviews were held with physical educators and PEPs who participated in the online survey and indicated a willingness to be interviewed. Convergent mixed methods studies commonly employ qualitative methodology to expand on or support quantitative data, which is what this study sought to do (Zumbrunn & McMillan, 2015). This study employed a phenomenological design as the researcher was interested in exploring and describing commonalities within the lived experiences

and perceptions of these participants regarding the phenomenon of PEPs' jobs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Recruitment Procedures

This study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approved flyer for this study was sent out through the State Department of Educations' monthly physical education newsletter (see Appendix F). Then, the researcher sent an email to administrators in 1,474 public schools in the state. This email asked if a PEP was employed at their school. The administrators who replied that they did employ PEP(s) at their school, were then sent the IRB approved email invitation for the study which contained links to the online surveys for administrators, physical educators, and PEPs (see Appendix G). In this second email, the researcher requested that the administrator forward the information to the physical educator(s) and PEP(s) they employed. Following this email, all physical educators and PEPs in those schools, whose email addresses were publicly available, were sent the IRB approved invitation email.

Participants

Survey Participants.

All administrators, physical educators, and PEPs working in public schools in Alabama made up the participant pool for this study. Thirty-eight administrators took the administrator survey; however, two only completed 37% of the survey, and one only completed 85% of the survey, so they were excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 35 administrators. Of the administrators who completed the survey, 57% (n=20) were female, and 43% (n=15) were male. One participant had a bachelors degree, 34% (n=12) had a masters degree, 26% (n=9) administrators had a doctoral degree, and 37% (n=13) had an Educational Specialist degree. Forty-nine percent (n=17) administrators had 10 or more years experience in administration, 11% (n=4) had seven to nine years of experience, 29% (n=10) had four to six years of experience, and 11% (n=4) had one to three years of experience.

Thirty-four physical educators completed the survey. Sixty-two percent (n=21) were male, and 38% (n=13) were female. Thirty-two percent of physical educators (n=11) held a bachelors degree, and 68% (n=23) held a masters degree. Seventeen percent (n=6) physical educators had one to three years of experience in physical education, one had four to six years of experience, 15% (n=5) had seven to nine years of experience, and 65% (n=22) had 10 or more years of experience. Fifteen percent of physical educators (n=5) worked with physical education class sizes less than forty students, 56% (n=19) worked with class sizes ranging between 41 and 75 students, 23% (n=8) worked with class sizes between 76 and 110, and six percent (n=2) worked with class sizes of 111 students or more.

Twenty PEPs participated in the online survey. Fifteen percent (n=3) were male, and 85% (n=17) were female. Ten percent (n=2) of the PEPs reported having a high school diploma or GED, 40% (n=8) reported completing some college, 30% (n=6) reported having a bachelors degree, 15% (n=3) reported having a masters or doctoral degree, and one pep reported "other" as their highest level of education. Forty-five percent (n=9) of the PEPs had one to three years of experience as a paraeducator, 25% (n=5) had four to six years of experience as a paraeducator, and 30% (n=6) had 10 or more years of experience as a paraeducator. Twenty percent (n=4) PEPs worked in a school with physical education class sizes less than 40 students, 60% (n=12) worked in schools with 41-75 students per physical education class, and 20% (n=4) worked with physical education classes between 76 and 110 students.

Interview Participants

Eighteen physical educators indicated that they were willing to be contacted about an interview; however, only 16 left their email address and only 12 responded to emails about the interview. Therefore, 12 physical educators participated in the follow-up interviews. Eight PEPs indicated that they were willing to be contacted about an interview; however, only seven PEPs left

their email address, and only six responded to emails about the interview. Therefore, follow-up interviews were held with six PEPs.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation in this convergent mixed methods study consisted of online surveys and researcher-conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

Surveys

In order to reach the largest possible number of potential participants, three anonymous online surveys were created and employed as the primary form of data collection. These surveys were created on and hosted by Qualtrics. The surveys were created based on literature regarding Special Education Paraeducators (SEPs) (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012), physical education class sizes, and marginalization of physical education/physical educators. The first question for all surveys was the informed consent document, which allowed participants to indicate: "Yes, I will participate in the online Qualtrics survey" or "No, I do not wish to participate in this study". All survey questions were multiple-choice, with the exception of the questions regarding grade levels taught at their school, and student enrollment at their school. All surveys provided text boxes for all answer choices labeled "other", "yes", and "no".

The administrator survey (see Appendix A) was comprised of 27 questions. Those questions included one informed consent question, four demographic questions, and four school and physical education demographic questions. The remaining 16 questions were multiple choice questions which addressed their perceptions of the hiring, compensation, training, roles, and responsibilities of PEPs both inside and outside the physical education program.

The physical educator survey (see Appendix B) was comprised of 41 questions. Those questions included two informed consent questions, the first for the survey, and the last question addressed their willingness to be contacted about a follow-up interview. The survey included four

participant demographic questions, five questions about their school and physical education program, and three questions addressed the hiring of PEPs in their school. Following that, 11 questions address physical educators' perceptions about training, job requirements, and roles of PEPs. The last 16 questions addressed common responsibilities of PEPs, and requested physical educators rate them as: not a responsibility, rarely a responsibility, sometimes a responsibility, or primary responsibility. All of these answer selections included a text box for any additional information they deemed necessary.

The PEP survey (see Appendix C) was comprised of 42 questions. Those questions included two informed consent questions, the first for the survey, and the last question of the survey asked about their willingness to be contacted about a potential follow-up interview. The survey began with four participant demographic questions, and five school/physical education demographic questions, and three questions regarding their hiring. Following that, 12 questions addressed their perceptions of their training, job requirements, and roles. The last 16 questions addressed common responsibilities of PEPs and requested that PEPs rate them as: not my responsibility, rarely my responsibility, sometimes my responsibility, or primary responsibility. All of these answer choices included a text box for any additional information they deemed necessary.

Semi-structured Interviews

Following the completion of the survey, semi-structured interviews were held on Zoom™ with physical educators and PEPs who left their email address indicating their willingness to be contacted about an interview. Phenomenological studies in physical education commonly employ the use of semi-structured interviews (Bryan, McGubbin, & Van Der Mars, 2015). The semi-structured interviews were held between the participant and the researcher, on Zoom™, following an interview guide (see Appendix E). These interviews lasted 30-80 minutes and were recorded by a handheld device and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

The interview guide for physical educators was comprised of 10 prompts. Examples of the prompts were explaining what working with a PEP was like, their perceptions of PEPs preparedness for the job, and the PEP's role within physical education.

There were 13 prompts for the PEP interviews. Examples of the prompts were to discuss their lived experiences and perceptions regarding their role within physical education and the school, their duties and responsibilities, their preparedness for those responsibilities and roles they play, and how others perceived them within the school (including students).

Analytic Procedures

The researcher engaged in the process of reflective journaling throughout the entirety of this research project, making note of any potential biases, preconceived notions, and personal experiences with the phenomenon, in order to stay true to the participants voices (Ortlipp, 2008). This was done through remaining mindful of her positionality as a female, certified physical educator, and doctoral candidate in physical education, and any biases that might bring to this research (Bourke, 2014; Carpenter, 2007).

Survey responses were converted and analyzed by item through the automated frequency report by Qualtrics XM. All additional comments left on survey responses were copied and pasted to a Word document and were not analyzed but were saved and used to present possible reasons for any unexplainable trends in the data. These survey comments were useful in the process of triangulation to verify any emerging themes from the semi-structured interviews. Triangulation is described as a process of using various data sources to verify the understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999).

In order to decrease the chance of a confidentiality breach interviews were recorded by a digital audio recorder that was not connected to the Internet. Through the process of bracketing, the researcher was able to separate her personal experiences from PEPs so that she could keep an open mindset, allowing unanticipated meanings to emerge in analysis (Chan, Fung, & Chein, 2013;

Giorgi, 2011; Keen 1975). The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, and all participants were given pseudonyms. The researcher re-read transcriptions and listened to interviews repeatedly for a sense of the "whole" (Hycner, 1985). Then, the researcher and an assistant developed units of meaning (Giorgi, 2000). These units of meaning were then delineated to address the research questions (Hycner, 1985). These "units of meaning", still in raw form, were categorized under themes that relayed the "essence" of these perceptions and experiences (Moustakas, 1994) and then categorized again and again until a consensus was met regarding the themes. Four themes were developed based off the survey categories: PEPs hiring, training, responsibilities, and roles.

Findings

Hiring

Administrators were asked their perceptions regarding the reason for hiring PEPs. Eighty percent of Administrators (n=28) believed that the hiring of PEPs was at least partially in order to meet student-to-teacher ratios, while 49% (n=17) indicated that it was also or solely a cost-effective solution to budgeting restrictions. Twenty percent of administrators (n=7) selected "other," five of whom left additional reasons for the hiring of PEPs, "safety," "legal requirement," and three of these administrators mentioned "assisting students". One of the administrators who selected "other" stated that they were "unsure" on the reason for PEPs hiring. The last administrator who selected "other" believe that the hiring of PEPs came from "the elimination of library aides". When physical educators were asked the reason for the hiring of PEPs, 79% physical educators (n=27) agreed that the hiring of PEPs was at least in part a means to "meeting student-to-teacher ratios", 47% (n=16) agreed that it was also or primarily a "cost effective solution to budgeting restrictions", while two physical educators (n=6%) commented that they hired strictly because of the services they provided the physical educator. When PEPs were asked about their reason for hiring, 90% of PEPs (n=18) agreed that they were hired in part to "meet student-to-teacher ratios", 26% (n=9) acknowledged that

their hiring was also or solely a “cost effective solution to budgeting restrictions”. One PEP (n=5%) was unsure about the reasoning for their employment, and one (n=5%) believed it was also to manage equipment.

All surveys included questions about the required qualifications of the PEP position. All administrators agreed that a degree in physical education and teaching experience in physical education were not required qualifications. Only one administrator selected “a college degree,” one administrator selected “experience as a paraeducator,” and two selected having “experience with sport or coaching” as required qualifications. Forty percent of administrators (n=14) selected “some college” as a requirement. The two most commonly reported required qualifications for the job of a PEP were “high school diploma or GED” which was selected by 83% of administrators (n=29), followed by “background check” which was selected by 77% of administrators (n=27). One administrator commented that “substitute teaching experience” was an additional requirement. Two administrators mentioned additional requirements included “passing” or “completing” the ACT Work Keys Test. When physical educators were asked about the required qualifications for the job of a PEP, only one physical educator (3%) indicated either “degree in physical education” or “teaching experience in physical education” as a requirement, and two (6%) indicated “other experience as a paraeducator” as a requirement. A “college degree” and “experience with sport or coaching” were each indicated as a requirement by 9% of physical educators (n=3). Twenty-six percent of physical educators (n=9) indicated that completing “some college” as a requirement. The most commonly indicated requirements were a “high school diploma or GED” which was reported by 82% of physical educators (n=28), followed by a “background check” which was reported by 70% (n=24). Fifteen percent of physical educators (n=5) also selected “other” and explained further requirements, such as “interview” or “fitness background”, and two of these physical educators left comments stating that they were unsure due to their PEPs being hired through an outside agency. When PEPs

were asked about the required qualifications of the job, a “degree in physical education”, “teaching experience in physical education”, and “experience with sport or coaching” were each reported by only one PEP (n=5%). Only two PEPs (n=10%) indicated that “other experience as a paraeducator” was a requirement. Twenty percent of PEPs (n=4) reported a “college degree” and 25% (n=5) reported “some college” as a requirement. A “high school diploma or GED” was the most commonly reported requirement by 90% of PEPs (n=18), followed by a “background check” by 85% of PEPs (n=17). Additionally, two PEPs (10%) stated that passing or completing the “ACT Work Keys Testing” was a requirement.

Administrators were asked about who was responsible for the hiring of PEPs in their school. Eighty-eight percent of administrators (n=31) indicated that they were responsible, while 6% of administrators (n=2) said school district level employees were responsible, and 6% (n=2) indicated that it was a collaborative effort between administrators and district level employees. Physical educators were then asked who was responsible for hiring the PEPs at their school. Eighty-five percent of physical educators (n=29) indicated that their administrators were responsible, and two (n=6%) indicated that district level employees were responsible, and 9% (n=3) stated that they were hired by an outside source like a “temp agency”. When PEPs were asked who was responsible for their hiring, 85% of PEPs (n=17) reported that “administrators” were responsible and two PEPs (10%) reported that “school district level employees”, while only one PEP (5%) reported that a “temp-service” was responsible.

Only one physical educator who agreed to interview worked with PEPs who were hired by a temp agency; however, all physical educators mentioned other paraeducator or “aide” positions in their school being filled this way. The physical educator who worked with "temp" PEPs, acknowledged the downfalls of this which included getting people who were not physically capable of performing the

job duties, lack of knowledge or input in their hiring criteria, the increase in turnover, and the lack of value this had created for the position. Mickey stated:

> The school system used to hire aids and they were an employee of the school system and it was a more valuable job to the aides, because they had retirement and health care and benefits, stuff like that. My last one was only getting like 11 dollars an hour and NO benefits. I tell them, "you know, you're been exploited as labor." So, you're definitely going to see a higher turnover.

Mickey explained how this affected his job as he mentioned his inability and unwillingness to share a lot of responsibilities with his PEPs, as he stated, "I mean it's like squeezing a turnip. They do a great job. But why ask them to do more when you're not valuing them?"

Jaquie elaborated on what it was like to be a PEP who was hired through an outside temp agency. Jaquie had been a paraeducator in a different capacity in her school system for many years. When they made this switch 10-years prior to our interview, she said that the school system made the option to switch to the temp agency look very "enticing" through increasing their pay if the switched to this agency. Jaquie stated, "So, I went with the temp. And of course, you know, I wish I had never done that, but you don't know at the time, you know?" Jaquie explained that after the first year or so, the temp agency continued to decrease the pay to where she now made less than she used to with the school system. Jaquie explained that the temp agency offers no paid leave, no benefits, and most importantly no job security. She commented on how this had been a horrible experience for her in the past as she was sent to a school where she was treated badly. Jaquie explained more on how this hiring process worked, as she stated:

> You are placed in the job, sight unseen, everything is done through the computer. You just show up at a school, so it's like hit or miss. I got really lucky and got into a school that I love. Now, once they get you, the school is able to contact the temp company and ask if you can come back. BUT there's never any guarantee, every year you're wiped clean, you may or may

not have a job next year, you may or may not be in the same position you were in. I do not like that at all! I've worked in different capacities for the school over the last 20 years. So, I used to be hired by the school system. In that case, I would go to the school to interview and actually get to meet the principal and the teacher I would be working with. And they would kind of see if it was a good fit before they hired you.

The administrator survey additionally asked about PEPs pay scale. Sixty-three percent of administrators (n=22) indicated their PEP was paid hourly, while 37% (n=13) indicated they were paid salary. When asked about their PEPs income range, 66% of administrators (n=23) indicated it was "between $15,000 and $20,000 a year," while 20% (n=7) selected "between $10,000 and $15,000 a year," and 14% (n=5) indicated their PEPs income was "between $20,000 and $25,000 a year". Additionally, 94% of administrators (n=33) reported that their PEP was offered benefits through the job, while 6% (n=2) indicated that PEPs were not. Of those administrators who stated that they were offered benefits one administrator left this comment, "they have in the past, but most are being hired through a substitute supply entity".

Physical educators and PEPs were asked if they had ever been given a written job description of a PEP, and if they believed there should be a credentialing process for the position. Seventy-one percent of physical educators (n=24) indicated that they had not, while 29% (n=10) indicated that they had. When PEPs were asked if they had ever been provided a written job description, 70% (n=14) indicated that they had not been, while 30% (n=6) PEPs indicated that they had received one. Physical educators were asked if there should be a credentialing process for PEPs, 74% of physical educators (n=25) indicated that there should be and 26% (n=9) indicated that there should not be a credentialing process. Last, when PEPs were asked if there should be a credentialing process, 65% (n=13) indicated that there should be, however one explained that this was "only if it pays more". Thirty-five percent of PEPs (n=7) did not believe there should be such a process.

Training

Surveys included questions on whether training should be provided to PEPs, and if training was provided at their school. Ninety-seven percent of administrators (n=34) believed PEPs should go through some sort of training, while only one administrator did not. When physical educators were asked if PEPs should be provided training, 88% (n=30) said yes, while only 12% (n=4) indicated they should not. When PEPs were asked if they should receive training 65% (n=13) indicated that they should, while the other 35% (n=7) reported that they should not. When participants were asked if PEPs were provided training at their school, ninety-one percent of administrators (n=32) indicated that their PEPs at their school were provided training, and 9% (n=3) said PEPs were not. On the other hand, 82% of physical educators (n=28) indicated that they were not, while only 18% (n=6) stated that they were. One physical educator stated, "they are trained through hiring agency"; another stated that the training was "limited. It is more like on-the-job training". Similarly, only one PEP reported receiving any training for the job. The other 95% of PEPs (n=19) reported that they did not receive any training.

Of the administrators who said they provided training, only one (3%) specified that the training was "online", 55% (n=18) indicated that training was provided through "inservices", 30% (n=10) indicated that it was "on-the-job training", and 12% of administrators (n=4) selected "other". Of those who selected "other", two stated that training was mostly "on-the-job" combined with other formats, another called it "job embedded" training, and the last said that PD (professional development) was offered by their district.

All surveys queried participants on the best way to train PEPs. Fifty-one percent of administrators (n=18) indicated "on-the-job", while 37% (n=13) selected "inservice", and only 6% of administrators (n=2) selected "online program/outside source". The other two administrators selected "other" and left comments stating that a combination of some of the above would be best.

When physical educators were asked how they felt would be the best way to train PEPs, 65% (n=22) selected “on-the-job training”, 17% (n=6) selected “in-service,” 15% (n=5) selected “online program/outside source,” and one physical educator stated, “I think all the above are good options”. When PEPs were asked what type of training would be the most effective, 55% (n=11) preferred “on-the-job training”, 25% (n=5) preferred “inservice”, and 10% (n=2) preferred “online program/outside source”. The other two PEPs selected “other”, one explaining that all options would be great, with the other suggesting a combination of on-the-job and inservice.

Lastly, all surveys asked for participants perceptions regarding who should provide PEPs training. Forty-six percent of administrators (n=16) believed “the physical educators they worked with” should provide training, while 32% (n=11) thought “outside source, such as online training program or a physical education paraeducator specialist” would be best, and 11% (n=4) felt “administrators” would be best. The remaining four administrators selected “other” and left comments that a collaborative effort between some of the above options would be best. Similarly, 50% of physical educators (n=17) indicated that the “physical educator(s) they work with” would be best, 29% (n=10) selected “outside source such as physical education paraeducator specialist or online program,” while only 15% (n=5) selected “administrators,” and 6% (n=2) selected “other” noting that it should be a combination of some of the aforementioned formats. No PEPs felt that administrators or other paraeducators should deliver training. Similar to administrators and physical educators, 50% of PEPs (n=10) believed their training should be provided by the physical educators with whom they worked, while 45% (n=9) preferred it be provided by an outside source such as a PEP specialists or online program, and one PEP stated that training should be provided by “experienced physical educators and specialists”.

The follow-up interviews revealed all physical educators and PEPs suggested that PEP “training” was on-the-job. Mickey, a physical educator whose PEP was hired by a temp agency, did

not mention any training being provided by the temp agency, rather, he trained them through incorporating them and adding on more responsibilities as they went on. All physical educators agreed that this was the best form of training and that it should be provided by the physical educator with whom the PEP is working, as Sabrina explained, “As far as that goes, I feel like everybody's program is a little bit different. So, while she could probably benefit from some of the things that we go to like in service days, I prefer to show her what I need in my classroom. Because I'm going to be different than anybody else.” Physical educators commonly mentioned that other training would be beneficial as well, the most commonly preferred training topics were classroom/behavior management, and the overall goals and objectives of physical education and the course of study.

When asked about their training, PEPs commonly mentioned receiving different trainings like first aide and things provided to all staff. However, they commonly stated that they were not trained for PE. They eventually went on to explain their experiences with on-the-job training. Rae described his experience as being “thrown to the wolves”. Kady elaborated, “I think the things I've learned has been watching coach.” PEPs also believed that this was the most beneficial way to train, not being sure of how else they could be trained. PEPs also commonly mentioned a desire for more training, as Natalie stated, “I can use any training on anything! Because you can always better the program. Like I said, I haven't really had that much training in anything. Anything that I have to do, is just learned through reading and researching.” The most commonly mentioned areas that PEPs desired training in were behavior and discipline, followed by classroom management.

Perceptions and experiences regarding the role of PEPs

Administrators, physical educators, and PEPs were also asked about their perceptions and experiences regarding the job of PEPs and their roles within the school and physical education program. The administrator survey asked about the amount of time PEPs were supposed to be in school. Seventy-four percent of administrators (n=26) indicated that their PEPs were required to be

at school while students were not; however, this was reported to only be “at times”. Twenty-six percent of administrators (n=9) indicated that their PEPs were not required to be at school while the students were not. When physical educators were asked if their PEPs were required to be at school the same number of days that they were, 35% (n=12) stipulated they were; however, one stated that this was “only if they are hired via our school system.” Sixty-five percent of physical educators (n=12) indicated that their PEP was not required to be at school the same number of days as them. Sixty-five percent of PEPs (n=13) indicated that they were required to be at school the same number of days as their physical educator, while 35% of PEPs (n=7) indicated that they were not. All interview participants stated that the PEPs were not required to be there the same number of days as their physical educator.

The administrator survey asked if their PEPs were given responsibilities outside of physical education. Eighty percent of administrators (n=28) indicated that their PEPs were given responsibilities outside of physical education, which was commonly mentioned as car rider duty, hall duty, and bus duty, which was the “same as other school staff”. Twenty percent of administrators (n=7) denoted that their PEPs had no additional responsibilities outside of physical education, one of them elaborated, “ours chooses to drive a bus route for additional pay”.

The administrator survey also asked if PEPs at their school were required to be at faculty and staff meetings, 80% of administrators (n=28) indicated that they were not, and only 20% (n=7) indicated that their PEPs were required to be at faculty and staff meetings. In interviews, all physical educators indicated that their PEP was not required to attend faculty meetings, but those at the beginning of the year, the PEPs who were interviewed reported similarly. Although most participants agreed that PEPs are not required to be at meetings, many did see the benefits their attendance could bring. Sixty-nine percent of administrators (n=24) indicated that it would be beneficial for PEPs to attend faculty and staff meetings, while 31% (n=11) indicated that it would

not be beneficial. When administrators left comments on their answer selection, they mentioned the benefits of “some meetings”. Fifty percent of physical educators (n=17) thought that PEPs' attendance at faculty and staff meetings would be beneficial, although one commented “only some”, while the other 50% thought that it would not be beneficial. Sixty-five percent of PEPs (n=13) indicated that attending faculty and staff meetings would be beneficial, as one noted "in order to have first-hand knowledge of what is going on". Thirty-five percent (n=7) PEPs indicated that they did not see benefits of attending these meetings, as one elaborated, “info is handed down by the coach”. In interviews, several physical educators noted the benefits that attending faculty and staff meetings would provide their PEP. Rodney stated, “She's not involved in our faculty meetings, things of that nature. So, her interactions very limited with the rest of the staff.”

Physical educators were questioned about their perceptions of other faculty and teachers’ respect for their PEPs. The majority, 82% of physical educators (n=28) indicated that their PEP(s) were respected by faculty and staff, while 18% (n=6) felt that they were not. PEPs were also asked about their job as a PEP and their perceptions. When PEPs were asked if they felt respected by other faculty and staff, 95% (n=19) indicated that they were, as one refined, “I am respected as any other faculty”, while only one PEP felt that they were not respected by other faculty. All PEPs indicated that they felt respected by their physical educator(s).

In interviews physical educators discussed the other faculty and administrators’ perceptions of their PEPs, they commonly mentioned them being respected. However, they agreed that it was all dependent on the PEP, as Cade stated:

> It goes both ways, the one that I have right now is really, really strong, and you hear it, whether it's good or bad, the faculty sees through and they see if they're a hard worker, or if they're just a warm body not contributing.

Physical educators also mentioned that sometimes too much was put on their PEP by administration, as Sean stated:

> I think sometimes they ask him to do a little bit more than he should for what it is. I think of it as like a custodian, they're asked to do more than they really need to do, because they're down there on the bottom of the totem pole.

PEPs mentioned not being required to be at faculty meetings, and some linked how they felt they were perceived to their lack of involvement in things like faculty meetings, as Kady stated:

> I think they appreciate us, you know, like all of us assistants, but there's another place where I think we kind of fall through the cracks. Not that I really want to go to a faculty meeting, to be honest, per se. But, being asked to go to a faculty meeting or at least being kept into the loop of what's going on.

All PEPs who interviewed mentioned being respected for the most part by faculty and administration. PEPs like Rae were treated as faculty by all school workers, as they had a "team" environment at their school. Many PEPs mentioned that their respect from faculty and administration was earned by doing more than they were required to do, like coming in early and staying late. Natalie and Jacob took additional paid jobs as a bus driver and a breakfast worker which they felt increased their respect from faculty and administration. All PEPs mentioned that they were sometimes asked to do more than they should be. Natalie also commented on her administrations' perception of her stating, "they know I'm going to do what they tell me to do. I may not like it, but I'm going to do it". In interviews, physical educators and PEPs largely agreed that "good" PEPs were respected by faculty and administration, however they also believed they were sometimes over utilized.

Last, all surveys asked about how essential PEPs were to physical education program success. Eighty-five percent of physical educators (n=29) indicated that their PEPs were essential to

the success of their physical education program, while the other 15% of physical educators (n=5) indicated that they were not essential. In PEP and administrator surveys, all PEPs felt that their physical educator saw their role as essential to their physical education program, and all administrators reported that they believed their PEP was essential to the success of the physical education program. In interviews, all physical educators who interviewed agreed that their PEP was somewhat essential to their physical education programs success due to large class sizes. For veteran physical educators, like Mickey and Cade, they mentioned that they could do the job alone, but it would be much more difficult and less enjoyable for both them and the students. Other physical educators consistently mentioned an inability to do their job without their PEP. All PEPs mentioned being respected by their physical educators, and commonly mentioned affirmation for them as well. All PEPs felt that their job was essential to the success of the physical education program, which they all agreed was due to large class sizes. Jaquie elaborated on this as she replied, "I don't know if they could be successful without that support person, because there are just so many kids in a classroom now. Our numbers are just too high". All physical educators and PEPs noted resect for one another and a good working relationship, and everyone agreed that the job of the physical educator would be much more difficult without the PEPs presence.

PEPs Responsibilities in Physical Education

Who Should Determine PEPs' Responsibilities?

All surveys queried administrators, physical educators, and PEPs about who should determine the responsibilities of PEPs. Forty-three percent (n=15) administrators felt that they should be responsible, 31% (n=11) felt that school district officials should be responsible, 8% (n=3) felt that the state department of education should be responsible, 6% (n=2) felt that the physical educators that they worked with should be responsible, and 11% (n=4) administrators selected "other," leaving comments that it should be a "combination" or "collaborative effort" between the

aforementioned choices. Two of these administrators felt the collaboration should be between administrators and physical educators, and one felt it should be among administrators, school district faculty, and physical educators.

When physical educators were asked this question, 26% (n=9) felt that physical educators should be responsible, 23% (n=8) felt that administrators should be responsible, 23% (n=8) felt that the state department of education should be responsible, 15% (n=5) felt that school district officials should be responsible, and 12% (n=4) felt that it should be some type of combination of the aforementioned individuals. Two of whom stated that it should be all of the above, as one explained "to set some consistency across the state," and one suggested a combination of administrators and physical educators, and one felt it should be a combination of both administration and school district officials.

When PEPs were asked who should be responsible for determining their responsibilities, 35% (n=7) indicated administrators should be responsible, 30% (n=6) indicated that the state department of education should be responsible, 20% (n=4) felt that physical educators should be responsible, and three selected "other" and explained. Two PEPs felt that responsibilities should be determined by the administrators and physical educator, while another thought administration, physical educator(s), and school district officials should determine these together, and the other PEP felt it should be a combination of physical educators and the state department of education.

Perceptions of Responsibilities

Administrators were asked to select the responsibilities they deemed appropriate for PEPs (see Figure 1). Physical educators were asked to indicate if these same responsibilities were "not a responsibility", "rarely a responsibility", "sometimes my responsibility", or "primary responsibility" of their PEPs. PEPs were also asked to rank these same responsibilities as "not my

responsibility", "rarely my responsibility", "sometimes my responsibility", or "my primary responsibility". Please see Table 1.

Physical educators and PEPs elaborated more on their responsibilities in physical education during follow-up interviews. Brad, a physical educator commented on his PEPs' duties, as he explained: "Get equipment out when necessary, and then during class, like just kind of walk around and co-teach, I guess. Help out if you have an idea or something that would help, or if you want to try something." All physical educators agreed that their PEPs daily duties included: getting our/setting up equipment when necessary, although some PEPs had morning duties that conflicted with this in the morning. They also agreed that keeping students on task, walking around and monitoring behavior during instruction and taking care of small behavior issues, assisting with students' needs (like injuries, emotional support, and bathrooms for the younger elementary grades), and being the lead teacher when the PE teacher was absent. Although all of these responsibilities were mentioned by all physical educators, there were other duties mentioned by some physical educators as well as qualms with some of the aforementioned responsibilities. Seven of the physical educators expressed frustration with not being able to get a substitute when they were absent. Some of these were concerned that the PEP had to be the sole teacher of a class section to avoid class cross-contamination during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many expressed this frustration, the majority were confident in their PEPs ability to do the job alone, however, some did not believe it was necessarily enjoyable for the PEP. Many even stated that it was not enjoyable leading class alone by themselves due to large class sizes. Cade's PEP was also responsible for teaching two adapted physical education classes daily on her on. Charles mentioned that his PEP assisted in escorting students to and from physical education. Rodney asserted that he gave his PEP "all the feedback points and different cues for different skills and activities we're working on, so that she's able to adequately give them some feedback." Last, eleven of the twelve PE teachers

mentioned asking for the PEPs opinion of certain activities, being open to their ideas, and allowing them to have some input into what they were doing. Four of these physical educators further mentioned letting their PEP add in comments during instruction.

When PEPs commented on their daily duties in physical education, they all agreed on these responsibilities: monitoring students, keeping them on task, taking care of any small behavioral issues or injuries, and setting up/taking down equipment as their common duties. Rae commented that he and his physical educator shared all of the duties except grading, as they "worked as a team". Natalie even stated, "I do whatever I'm asked pretty much, whether it's technology or taking a group and, you know, doing their activities with them, their units or whatever, for that day. Pretty much the same thing the certified teachers do." Being the lead teacher when the coach was absent was highly discussed. They too expressed frustrations with the lack of substitutes. Only one of the six PEPs mentioned having a substitute every time. Three PEPs mentioned being responsible for teaching physical education classes on their own. Devan, the certified PEP, reported leading half of the physical education class in her own instruction in order to keep students separated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While she had no problem leading the class alone or teaching, she did express some frustration with it not being part of her job responsibilities, and not being paid to do such a thing. Kady also expressed some frustrations with being in charge of leading two adapted physical education classes alone, as she stated, "I don't mind it. But, I don't know if that's necessarily, I don't feel like I'm getting paid for that."

Figure 1

Responsibilities of PEPs Listed as Appropriate by Administrators

Note: *N*=35

Table 1

Perceptions of PEPs Responsibilities

Responsibilities	Extent of Responsibility According to PEPs and Physical Educators (%)								Administrators' Perceptions of Responsibility Appropriateness (%)
	Not		Rarely		Sometimes		Primary		
Doing clerical work and paperwork	40	44	10	24	40	32	10	0	23
Taking Attendance	55	68	5	6	35	26	5	0	46
Setting up/taking down and managing equipment	0	3	0	6	60	47	40	44	91
Attending faculty and staff meetings	55	64	25	15	20	15	0	6	31
Planning lessons	75	62	10	20	10	15	5	3	3
Contributing ideas for lesson planning	30	26	35	21	30	41	5	12	91
Assisting with instruction, practice, and feedback	0	6	5	9	50	44	45	41	91
Teaching when the physical educator is absent	0	9	10	9	30	29	60	53	63
Presenting or instructing new skills, games, and/or activities	10	41	45	12	40	41	5	6	43

Conducting assessments and fitness testing	20	17	5	15	55	53	20	15	60
Providing behavior management/ supervising students	5	0	0	0	45	35	50	65	83
Assisting students with disabilities	10	6	15	23	65	53	10	18	86
Attending to student needs (shoe tying, nurse, etc.)	5	0	10	6	40	50	45	44	74
Escorting students to and from physical education	30	21	25	15	25	32	20	32	63
Assist with locker rooms/ dressing out	85	67	5	6	5	15	5	12	26
Escorting students to bathroom/water	35	26	30	26	25	32	10	15	57

Note: Physical Educators *N* =34 (blue), PEPs *N* =20 (orange), Admin *N* =35

Discussion

The survey queried administrators, physical educators, and PEPs regarding their perceptions and experiences about PEPs hiring, training, and roles. Most of these findings are similar to other research involving special education paraeducators (SEPs) and physical educators, as well as those few studies on physical educators who had a PEP (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux and McCullick, 2011).

Hiring

The majority of administrators, physical educators, and PEPs believed that the reason for hiring PEPs was in part a way to mitigate student-to-teacher ratios in physical education yet differed in their perceptions about why this was important. The administrators referred to legal reasons, referring to issues of safety and liability. However, in follow-up interviews all physical educators reported the value of the PEP was essential to the success of their program, indicating the near impossibility of success with such large numbers of students. These statements further illustrate these participants' beliefs that the reason for hiring PEPs was highly bound to student-to-teacher ratios, or large class sizes. Physical educators have commonly reported large class sizes as barriers to providing effective physical education (Barroso et al., 2005; Gross, 2010; Gross & Buchanan, 2014; Rink et al., 2007). Large class sizes have also been found to have a negative impact on students' physical activity time (Skala et al., 2012). In previous studies, physical educators also reported being granted a PEP by their administrators as a way to alleviate the challenges of dealing with such large class sizes (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011).

While most PEPs were hired through the school system, participants from all job realms mentioned the trend of getting PEPs through an outside agency or temp service. Participants in follow-up interviews expressed qualms with hiring through an outside agency. One of those qualms mentioned by both Mickey, a physical educator, and Jaquie a PEP was not being offered benefits through the job. One administrator also reported this in the survey, stating that PEPs used to be

provided benefits through the job, but now most are being hired by an outside source. The outsourcing of PEPs was a way of reducing cost for the administrators, but led to many problems for the physical educators, who found such employees to be uninformed and unmotivated. It was also a problem for PEPs due the lack of benefits and lack of job security. These same concerns have been voiced by SEPs in research (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

Training

When participants were asked if PEPs were provided training for the job in their school, PEPs and physical educators indicated that they were not, while administrators said that PEPs were provided training. When physical educators and PEPs were asked about their training in interviews, they all agreed that there was no real training for the job and that it was more experience and learning as you go, which they would commonly call on-the-job training. Studies on SEPs have shown that SEPs are not trained (Dowing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000), or are improperly trained for their responsibilities (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009). SEPs have also reported "on-the-job" training as their primary form of training, followed by in-services. Additionally, SEPs reported having more content knowledge and ability to deliver instruction, the more years of experience they had (Carter et al., 2009).

In this study, physical educators and PEPs also thought was that on-the-job training was the most effective and preferred way to train. In a study by Hastie et al., (1999) physical educators reported that their PEPs had no official training, rather they learned to work with students in physical education through on-the-job experience. This indicates that physical educators and PEPs did not see inservices as training for the job, while administrators did. Exactly half of PEPs and physical educators believed physical educators should be responsible for training PEPs, while few administrators felt that was the best option. Physical educators commonly mentioned differences among physical educators and physical education programs as a reason for why they preferred the

on-the-job training. This indicates that administrators believe physical education programs are alike, while physical educators commonly mentioned how some physical educators were more "throw the ball out" teachers while others focused on standards. This explains while physical educators themselves believe they should train their own PEPs. Again, this points to a disconnect between administrators and their physical education programs and those who work in them. This same type of disconnect has been mentioned in SEP research (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; French, 2003).

Perceptions regarding the job of PEPs

When administrators were asked if PEPs were required to be at faculty and staff meetings, they indicated that they were required to be at some meetings like the beginning of the year meetings. Some administrators recognized PEPs as an integral part of their staff, while others just mentioned how their school day was over before meetings took place. The majority of PEPs thought that attending meetings would be beneficial so that they could know what was going on with the school firsthand as the majority saw themselves as a valuable part of the staff. PEPs commonly mentioned a disconnect between them and the rest of the school and made comments that their physical educator was their primary means of finding out what was going on. This has been mentioned in literature on SEPs, often linked to SEPs feeling a lack of respect or appreciation from school staff and administration (Downing et al., 2000; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). This indicates that some PEPs are aware of the disconnect that is between them in a supportive type role, and the rest of the staff who are more integral. These types of feelings have been linked to turnover and lack of retention in research on SEPs (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007).

Physical educators were split on if PEPs should attend meetings. Some indicated that it would be beneficial for them to interact with other staff, while others felt that PEPs were not paid enough to be asked to do anymore things. Physical educators often mentioned this type of consideration for their PEPs in interviews, many times noting how they were not paid what they

deserve and trying to find the balance of not asking too much from them. No administrators ever mentioned this type of concern for PEPs. This can be explained by isolation, in which many physical educators and PEPs noted how they rarely interacted with other faculty and staff. In a study by Lux and McCullick (2011) the physical educator mentioned cultivating an important relationship with her PEP which she reported helped reduce her feelings of isolation and lack of support from faculty and administration, by having "someone in her corner" (p. 367). Physical educators have commonly reported feelings of isolation and lack of support from administrators and other faculty in previous research (Gaudreault, Richards, & Woods, 2016). This has led to feelings of marginalization physical educators and their subject area (Richards, Gaudreault, & Woods, 2018), which has led to a low since of "mattering" in physical educators (Richards, Gaudreault, Starck, & Woods, 2018). All of these factors have been linked to feelings of burnout and stress in physical educators (Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018).

Further, physical educators in this study commonly mentioned that the best part of having a PEP was having another adult to go through the day with. This indicates that physical educators have much more actual knowledge of PEPs and their jobs than administrators, and much more respect and consideration for them as co-workers than those who rarely interact with them.

Almost all participants reported PEPs having duties outside of physical education like "car rider duty", "bus duty", and "hall duty" but explained that these were "voluntary duties" which were "same as rest of school personnel". One administrator stated that their PEP did not have any additional duties outside of physical education because she had an additional job with the school. All PEPs mentioned having extra duties outside of physical education, which were similar to those mentioned by administration but also included things administrators did not mention. PEPs also mentioned being utilized for other things like watching the office and answering phones and filling in or subbing for other teachers. Three PEPs also mentioned getting to school earlier than they were

supposed to in order to help their physical educators set up equipment. One physical educator, Aaron, even reported his PEP changing her work schedule and getting rid of her afternoon duty in order to arrive earlier to help him with equipment.

This shows that PEPs often go above and beyond on the duties they are assigned. Additionally, PEPs might not be "assigned" many extra duties, but they reported being commonly asked to do more for the school than they are paid to do. Physical educators commonly mentioned that they felt the school, primarily administration asked more of PEPs than they were necessarily paid for or hired to do. Physical educators working with PEPs in previous studies, also mentioned a lack of support from their administration (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011).

Despite the extra things asked of PEPs by administration, in interviews all PEPs and physical educators felt that the administration respected them (PEPs). PEPs and physical educators commonly linked that respect to all of the extra things PEPs did for the school. Indicating that respect as a supportive type personnel is earned through hard work. All PEPs linked their respect to doing more than they were required to for the school. Physical educators commonly mentioned not agreeing with how much their PEPs were asked to do.

All PEPs in interviews and in the survey felt that they were respected by their physical educator, commonly mentioning affection for them. Physical educators all reflected those feelings in their interviews. The physical educator who was studied by Lux and McCullick (2011) talked about her PEP with affection, reporting how their important relationship was for her, even stating that her PEP was a main source of counsel and support to get through the work day. PEPs all mentioned being respected by other faculty and staff, physical educators tended to believe they were not as respected as they should be, or at least not as much as other certified educators, and all PEPs and physical educators believed that any lack of respect came from limited interactions. This indicates that those faculty in the school who did not treat PEPS with as much respect as they

deserved, was likely due to their being unaware of what they were actually required to do throughout the school day, much less what it was like working in physical education. PEPs had less interactions with other faculty than their physical educators, and since PEPs all felt respected by their physical educator, they were commonly more unaware of the lack of respect they were receiving from other faculty.

Physical educators commonly mentioned being treated differently than those classroom teachers, as many mentioned not getting the same respect, and the issue of pulling kids from physical education for remedial things and stuff like that. In previous research, physical educators who worked with PEPs often reported marginalization, isolation, and limitations on the success of their program, which they attributed to administration (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick; 2011). This furthers the notion that physical educators are more susceptible to noticing any lack of respect, due to their more frequent encounters with other faculty, as well as their significantly more common longevity in their career field, when compared to the PEPs they worked with.

PEPs most commonly reported issues with respect or recognition were more directed toward the administration of their school district. As many stated a lack of acknowledgement or recognition, lack of communication, and a lack of value placed on them by district level officials. These concerns were stated by PEPs hired through a temp agency, as well as PEPs hired through the school or school district. This points to a considerable lack of communication between higher up administration and their “lower level” employees. Even though all administrators responded that PEPs were essential for the success of the physical education program, they were clearly disconnected from PEPs and their needs. This could be explained by PEPs' lack of attendance in faculty meetings. Assigning extra duties often is easier when the assignees are not present to say no. PEPs also reported not being in the communication loop when it came to memoranda such as email.

Responsibilities

The majority of physical educators and PEPs had never received a written job description of a PEP, which explains the variety of appropriate and primary responsibilities reported by all participants. PEPs most commonly thought that administrators, followed by the state department of education, then physical educators should determine their responsibilities, while physical educators thought they themselves should be responsible or at least included in the process. No PEPs felt that school district officials should be in charge, which goes with their common interview statements noting a lack of acknowledgement or respect from those officials. Physical educators commonly expressed a preference for their own on-the-job training, because of the situational nature of every physical educator's physical education program. In literature on SEPs, similar conclusions have been made about the situational nature of each special education program affecting the large variety in responsibilities of SEPs (Daniels & McBride, 2001). Conversely, administrators most commonly believed that they should be responsible for determining these responsibilities, and physical educators were the least commonly mentioned determiner of responsibilities. This is concerning due to their difference in reporting appropriate responsibilities, compared to those that physical educators and PEPs commonly reported as their primary responsibilities. This further indicates a disconnect between perceptions of administrators and that of their physical education programs.

Not all administrators felt that "teaching when the physical educator is absent" was an appropriate responsibility, yet in survey comments and interviews physical educators and PEPs not only preferred the PEP being the lead teacher in the physical educator's absence but reported that they were sometimes the only teacher due to their subs being pulled to sub for classrooms or not receiving a sub at all. This is a concerning example of administrators putting more on PEPs than even administrators themselves believed was necessarily appropriate.

This large variety in PEP responsibilities and the "appropriateness" of them, points to a disengagement between administrators and what is happening in their physical education programs.

For the most part physical educators and PEPs agreed on their responsibilities. However, the fact that physical educators and PEPs commonly agreed, but they were not in line with what administrators thought was most appropriate is more concerning, especially considering administrators and PEPs believed they should be responsible for determining the responsibilities of PEPs, and physical educators believed they should be responsible. In both previous studies on physical educators who work with PEPs (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011) all physical educators reported determining the duties of their PEP and how those duties should be performed, based on the individual needs of their physical education program. Additionally, the physical educators in these previous studies mentioned utilizing their PEP in different ways; some included them in all aspects of the program (Lux & McCullick, 2011), some split classes with their PEPs both teaching different lessons or monitoring different stations, and some used them as more of an assistant (Hastie et al., 1999).

Conclusions

There is a disconnect between administrators and physical education staff (teachers and PEPs) with regard to the realities of training needs of PEPs.

PEPs perceived a lack of communication with administration and relied on the physical educator for school- and district-level information. Physical educators acknowledged this disconnect as well, although they tended not to have any solutions for it, as they commonly struggled themselves with finding the right amount of responsibility to place on their PEP without asking too much of them.

When in climates perceived to be unsupportive, PEPs were overworked and underpaid for the jobs that they do. This was increasingly true due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When this is compounded with a lack of acknowledgement or respect, the turnover of the PEP position may be

greater. This is compounded by an even further disconnect between administration and PEPs who are hired through a temp agency.

Limitations

The participants in this study worked in a large variety of school sizes and grade level ranges. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many potential participants were unreachable, due to many school systems operating virtually. Also, since schools were operating virtually phone calls and emails to administrative assistants inquiring for these email addresses were rarely successful.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research on PEPs is needed. First, student perceptions should also be included, as they are role-sets of PEPs roles in physical education (Higgins & Buchanan, in progress). Second, researchers can extend this research by looking at other states, as well as national data. Third, further research should take into consideration school size, physical education class size, and school grade levels into analysis. I believe this will be more beneficial and present a clearer picture of PEPs responsibilities in physical education. Last, further research is needed on the hiring of PEPs by outside temp agencies.

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CHAPTER IV STUDY II

Socialization of Physical Education Paraeducators: Context, Preparation, and Role-Sets.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of physical educators and physical education paraeducators (PEPs) regarding the Roles of PEPs in physical education. Following an anonymous online survey, 12 physical educators and six PEPs took part in informal semi-structured virtual interviews on Zoom. Additionally, six more PEPs took part in face-to-face interviews who did not participate in the survey. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the perceptions and experiences of physical educators and PEPs working with or being a PEP. Role Socialization Theory (RST) was employed as a guiding lens. Findings showed that PEPs main role-sets are their physical educator and their students. PEPs are commonly attracted to their job because of the schedule, working with children, and the active nature of the job. Last, PEPs are socialized into their roles by the duties and expectations provided to them by their physical educator.

Introduction

Paraeducators are employed in schools to aide in the provision of education and educational services to students and their families by working parallel to or under the supervision of a certified teacher (National Education Association [NEA], 2015). There are many different types of paraeducators working in schools. The majority of paraeducators are hired as part of special education, others are hired as assistants for general classroom teachers. There is an abundance of literature on the special education paraeducators (SEP) who work in unison with their special educator and at times one-on-one with a student in an inclusive classroom setting (Biggs, Gilson, & Carter, 2018; Douglas, Chapin, & Nolan, 2016; Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003)

The type of paraeducator that is less common, and more diverse is that of the paraeducator who is dedicated solely to physical education, which this dissertation refers to as the PEP. PEPs are hired to work specifically in the physical education classroom alongside a certified physical educator. In some states such as Alabama, the practice of hiring PEPs has helped mitigate student-to-teacher ratios, while operating under budgeting restrictions (Hastie, Sanders, & Rowland, 1999). Student-to-teacher ratios are very important in physical education given the general nature of physical education and the large number of students who attend class together. Even though we know that this position exists and that it would seem beneficial, there is a considerable lack of information regarding the PEP position.

There have been no studies to date in the United States looking at the PEP position; however, four studies conducted in the United States have mentioned this position in the findings (Hannon, Destani, Williams, & Hill, 2013; Hall, Larson, Heinemann, & Brusseau, 2015; Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). In addition to the lack of empirical studies regarding the PEP position, there are no national or state level requirements or responsibilities established for this position in most states, including Alabama. Rather, this is left up to the school or district to determine, making it difficult to obtain information about the job.

Role Socialization theory (RST) is the product of its two parent theoretical frameworks, Occupational Socialization Theory (OST) (Templin & Schempp, 1989) and Role Theory (RT) (Turner, 2001). OST brings to this theoretical framework the examination of how persons are socialized into their roles, through their attraction and socialization into the profession and their socialization into the school context (Templin & Schempp, 1989). However, given that these roles are contextually constrained within the school and socially created by key stakeholders, OST does not capture the ways that physical educators navigate their roles, as they vary (Richards, 2015). This is where RT comes into play. RT brings to this theory the way that one's role is socially created,

how differing expectations affect that role, and how a person navigates through those differing expectations (Richards & Hemphill, 2017). Therefore, RST delves into: (a) how occupational roles are socially created and contextually constrained within schools, (b) how persons are recruited and socialized into those roles, and (c) how role-sets are manipulated by socialization and in what ways this shapes the persons' role as a member of the school (Richards, 2015, p.384). RST has become a common theoretical framework for understanding the roles of physical educators in recent years (Richards, Gaudreault, Starck, & Woods, 2018a; Richards, Gaudreault, & Woods, 2018b; Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018c; Richards, Washburn, & Hemphill, 2019; Wilson, Richards, Haegele, & Holland, 2020).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of physical educators and PEPs regarding the role of PEPs in physical education. The research questions are:

1. What are the perceptions of physical educators regarding the role of PEPs within physical education?
2. What are the perceptions of PEPs regarding their role within physical education?

Method

Design

This study employed a phenomenological design as the researcher was interested in revealing the "essence" of participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the phenomenon of PEPs' roles (Katsikikou & Liu, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were held with physical educators and PEPs who agreed to be interviewed. This is a common type of data collection for phenomenological studies in physical education (Bryan, McGubbin, & Van Der Mars, 2015). RST was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study, because the roles of PEPs are "socially constructed and contextually bound" (Richards, 2015, p.379).

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes RST as the theoretical framework, in order to determine the ways that PEPs are socialized into their roles, how their roles are socially created and constrained within the context of their physical education program, and how physical educators and PEPs are socialized into seeing the role of PEPs (Richards, 2015).

Recruitment Procedures

This study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board. Following this approval an informational flyer for the study was given to the Alabama Department of Education to include in their monthly physical education newsletter to all physical educators in the state (see Appendix F). Additionally, the researcher emailed administrators in 1,474 public schools in the state in order to locate those schools that employed PEPs. Once those schools were identified, the IRB approved recruitment email was sent to those administrators who were asked to forward the information to their employed physical educator(s) and PEP(s) (see Appendix G). The researcher then sent the same recruitment email to physical educators and PEPs whose email was publicly available and were working at those identified schools. It was during data collection that the COVID-19 pandemic began. Physical educators and PEPs who agreed to being interviewed were contacted, and semi-structured interviews were held face to face (pre-pandemic) or virtually and recorded on Zoom™ (during pandemic).

Participants

Participants who agreed to be interviewed were 12 certified physical educators and 12 PEPs, two of whom also held PE certification. All of the teachers and PEPs were employed in school systems throughout the state. However, one of the PEPs was employed through an outside “temp” agency.

The Participants - PEPs

With 20 years of experience as a PEP, Natalie was a "seasoned vet" working in a middle school. She stated, "When I first got the job, I wasn't experienced at all. I had no experience with children."

Kady, a retired veterinarian and governmental bovine inspector, was in her 3rd year as a PEP in a 3-5 school. Kady had been a lacrosse coach for 20 years and was still very active and loved being a role model for younger girls and boys alike.

Jacob was on his sixth year of being a PEP at the 3-5 school, with the same physical educator. He started being a PEP after subbing at that school and discovering his passion. Jacob became a PEP as he began working towards a degree in elementary education.

Rae was on his second year in the PEP position at a middle school. Rae was a former Army Sargent and group fitness instructor/personal trainer. Rae was hired for the PEP position and actually served as the sole physical educator, even though he was not certified, for three months while the school searched for a physical educator.

Jaquie a former behavioral specialist in special education for many years, decided to become a PEP for the pay raise. At the time of this interview Jaquie was in her 2nd year at a k-5 school. Since switching to the temp agency, Jaquie has experienced almost yearly pay reductions to the point where she now gets no benefits, sick leave, and now makes less than she used to with the school system.

Devan was a certified physical educator working as a PEP at a k-2 school for the past school year. She left her physical educator position in the hope of getting a faculty position in the school system in the town where she lived, significantly reducing her commute.

Camille had been a fitness professional, and now had three children of her own. She took the PEP position at the grade 2-3 school in order to have the same schedule as her children, as well as continue to be in an active job.

Peyton graduated with a bachelors degree and teacher certification in physical education. He was in his second year as a PEP in the same system, the one in which he wanted to acquire a teaching position. His current school was a grade k-2 school.

Hughes had just finished her undergraduate degree in exercise physiology but thought she might want to be a physical educator. She took the PEP position to see how she liked it and was in her first year at a k-1 school.

Journey was a special education paraprofessional for eight years when she became a PEP at a 3-5 school. She wanted the PEP position because it paid benefits, unlike her previous position which was through a temp agency.

Kayla played sports in high school and college and had a degree in early childhood education. Family moves and having a child with Autistic Spectrum Disorder resulted in her staying home, then taking a PEP job. She had been in the same 4-5 school with the same physical educator for seven years.

Bonita had a degree in recreation but had been a PEP in the same school system, under three different teachers, for 25 years. She remarked that she did not need the work but loved it and so continued working as a PEP.

Brittney was in her fifth year at a k-2 school. While her degree was in banking, she had been a fitness professional, and after her children started school, she became a PEP to have their schedule.

The Participants – Physical Educators

Aaron is a physical educator for the past three years, following his graduation from college, at his k-2nd grade school. Aaron's PEP had been at this school for 4 years prior to his arrival, totaling seven years as a PEP. Aaron's PEP did not agree to interview.

Rodney was a physical educator at a k-1st grade school, where he had been the sole physical educator for the three years following his graduation from college. Rodney worked with two PEPs since becoming a physical educator. His current PEP had been working with him for the past twoyears.

Charles was a physical educator at a 2nd-3rd grade school. Charles had previously worked as a PEP following his bachelors degree, and while getting a masters in physical education. Charles had been the physical educator at this school for two years. His current PEP was a certified physical educator hoping to put a foot in the door of what was a highly sought-after school district.

Ty was also a certified physical educator who had been the physical educator at a k-2 school for the past eight years. Ty got the position right out of college and inherited a PEP who had been at this school for 16 years. He attributed a lot to her for showing him the ropes.

Cherry, another physical educator, worked at a middle school with one PEP and two male physical educators. Typically, the male physical educators took the male students and she and her PEP (also a female) would take the female students.

Monica was a physical educator at a k-4 school, where she worked with another physical educator and two PEPs. Monica had been a physical educator for 24 years, and she and her PEP had been working together 22 years.

Cade has been the physical educator in the school system for 20 years. In his 20 years, Cade has worked with 10 different PEPs, six of whom were certified physical educators. He said the average lifespan of a PEP in his district is around two years.

Sabrina, a physical educator at a middle school, worked with one PEP and a male physical educator. Sabrina's current PEP had been with her going on five years, and she reported that her PEP had become her best friend.

Brad was beginning his first year as a physical educator at a k-5 grade school and had been a physical educator for three years prior at another school. Brad worked with two PEPs, one was a former substitute and the other had been a PEP at that school for three years at the time of the interview.

Sean received his bachelors degree in physical education and his masters in exercise science. Following his masters degree, he opened a gym and became a trainer/instructor for three years until getting the physical education job.

Mickey was an 18-year veteran physical educator at a k-5 school. He had worked with five PEPs over the years.

Kenzie had been a physical educator for 12 years, first at a high school before coming to the 3-5 school where she currently taught. She described her current PEP as her "best friend", adding that their families had known one another for years.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were held with all 24 of the participants. Five of the PEPs were interviewed face to face before the pandemic; however, after COVID-19 closed schools for in-person instruction, the rest of the interviews were done virtually through Zoom™. Interviews lasted from 30 - 80 minutes and were audio-recorded with a hand-held device. Two researchers and assistants conducted the face-to-face interviews, while only the primary researcher conducted the virtual interviews. Phenomenological studies in physical education commonly employ the use of semi-structured interviews (Bryan et al., 2015).

All interviews were conducted following an interview guide (see Appendix E). The interview guide for physical educators was comprised of 10 prompts. The first prompt invited participants to take the researcher through their school day and elaborated on their lived experiences working with a PEP. Other prompts addressed physical educators' perceptions of PEPs preparedness for the job,

their PEPs abilities, their PEPs role within physical education and the school climate as a whole, how their PEPs were perceived by other key-stakeholders in the school (including students), their relationship with their PEPs, challenges of working with PEPs, and their PEPs contributions to the success of their physical education programs.

There were 13 prompts for the PEP interviews. The first prompt invited PEPs to outline their average school day and explain what it was like to be a PEP. The remaining prompts addressed PEPs' lived experiences and perceptions regarding their role within physical education and the school, their duties and responsibilities, their preparedness for those responsibilities and roles they play, how key stakeholders perceived them within the school (including students), the importance of their job, and the challenges of their job.

Analytic Procedures

The researcher ensured credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by reflective journaling throughout the entirety of this research project, making note of any potential biases, preconceived notions, and personal experiences with the phenomena through the use of reflective journaling (Ortlipp, 2008). This was done through remaining mindful of her positionality as a female, certified physical educator, and doctoral candidate in physical education, and any biases that might bring to this research (Bourke, 2014; Carpenter, 2007). Additionally, another doctoral candidate served as a peer debriefer in order to offer a disinterested probe into the researcher's thoughts, challenging interpretations and facilitating self-awareness.

The researcher took part in the process of bracketing during the data collection and analysis of this study (Chan, Fung, & Chein, 2013). Through the process of bracketing, the researcher was able to separate her personal experiences with PEPs so that she could keep an open mindset, allowing unanticipated meanings to emerge in analysis (Giorgi, 2011; Keen 1975). The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, re-reading transcriptions and listening to interviews repeatedly

for a sense of the "whole" (Hycner, 1985). All participants were given pseudonyms. Then, a research assistant and the researcher together developed units of meaning (Giorgi, 2000). These units of meaning were then delineated to address the research questions (Hycner, 1985). These "units of meaning", still in raw form, were categorized under themes that relayed the "essence" of these perceptions and experiences (Moustakas, 1994) and then categorized again and again until a consensus was met between the researcher and the research assistant regarding the themes.

Findings

RST guided this study in order to discover and explain the ways in which PEPs' roles are socially created through socialization into the profession and school-context, how they are contextually bound within that school context, how this socialization influences role-sets perceptions of PEPs' roles, and how this impacts PEPs' roles in physical education and the school as a whole (Richards, 2015). The findings begin with eight themes discovered through analysis of the narrative data centered around these topics: being on the same page, longevity, training, value, qualities needed, physical educator's absence, physical educator's perceptions, and PEPs' perceptions. Themes further had up to five subthemes.

Being "on the Same Page"

When PEPs and physical educators were asked about their relationships with their physical education co-workers, their responses were situational and related to their amount of time working together, their personalities, ability to communicate, and the overall climate within their program and school culture. All physical educators mentioned how they "work well together", and or "have a good rapport" with their counterparts. Monica, a physical educator stated, "We have a great rapport. We communicate a lot." Mickey, a physical educator elaborated on this more, as he responded:

> Once we get a rapport going, we're both kind of open and can go back and forth with ideas or, you know, if they want to lead a class, if they want to do an activity. So, I'm pretty open with them and they get to the point where they'll tell me what they want to do. So, with all of them, it's been a pretty good relationship.

When talking about their relationships with their physical educators, all PEPs mentioned "working well together" or working as a "team". As Jacob, a PEP of six years stated, "We have a good working relationship, we collaborate a lot." Kady explained her relationship with her physical educator similarly, as she stated,

> I rely on him. He does a lot of great things for me. I think we're a really good team. To be honest, you know, I help remind him about things. We just kind of like pair off really well together. I think we work well together.

Following the stress that came from searching for a new PEP rendered, there was then the task of training and developing a positive relationship. Many physical educators referred to the challenges of getting to that point where they were "on the same page." Mickey discussed the challenges, as he stated:

> You know at first, it's a little bit interesting, cause you're not really sure how they're going, you know. But to see how they really interact with me and how they interact with the students. It does take a while. And I've got to a point with those that have stayed for a while, where you kind of think on the same page, you know. It takes a while to get there.

This building of the relationship between physical educators and PEPs was commonly discussed by physical educators as "it just takes time."

Longevity

"It's Nerve Wracking" – Ty (PE)

One of the biggest challenges for physical educators in regard to cultivating these successful PEP relationships was the short staying time of PEPs. As Cade, who had worked with 10 PEPs in his 20 years of teaching stated, “PEPs are hard to keep sometimes, so the average lifespan for a PEP is two years.” This was mentioned by all physical educators; however, it was stressed more by those who worked with three or more PEPs throughout their career. Ty, Kenzie, Mickey and Cade all mentioned this in detail. As Ty commented on what it was like to lose a PEP and get a new PEP, he replied “It’s nerve wracking because you don’t know what you’re gonna get.” Kenzie commented on this process, as she was aware she would be getting a new PEP this coming school year after six years with her current PEP. Kenzie stated,

> It comes with a lot of anxiety. Especially when you have ones that have done so well and do well with you. I've been really lucky with who I have currently, in that position, but it doesn't usually stay long. And you worry. Is it going to be for a year?

Kenzie’s situation was different, as because she was a female, her school preferred for her PEP to be a male. She commented more on this explaining that most males that take a PEP position are usually taking it waiting for a certified position to open up. This was a main reason that she had PEPs who did not stay very long. She continually referred to herself as “blessed” to have her current PEP who was also an elementary education major getting ready to graduate. She consistently referred to how unusual it was to be able to keep a PEP for that long, and how thankful she was for it and the benefits this longevity created. Kenzie continued, stating it was something she even brought up to the administration when hiring a new PEP, “see if they’re gonna be around a year or two, because it is a hard transition to go from one co-worker to a new one.”

Stepping-Stone Position

All physical educators from two school districts, which are close to a university with a Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program, mentioned the lack of longevity for the

PEP position as a challenge. Ty had worked with four PEPs, three of whom were certified, in his eight years of teaching, which he chalked up to working in such a desirable school district. Cade discussed the upside to this as there was always someone who wanted the job, when it became vacant.

Kenzie, Charles, and Rodney also discussed their experiences with this “stepping-stone” position. Kenzie had worked with two PEPs in her 12 years of teaching, only one of whom was certified. Charles himself had taken the job of a PEP before gaining his current physical educator position. For Charles, this stepping-stone aspect of the PEP job left him with knowledge of how great a program could be with a certified PEP. His concerns were more geared towards experiencing what it was like to work with a non-certified PEP, compared to his experience with a certified PEP. Charles stated, "I know he's eventually gonna have to find a certified position and I'm selfishly, not wanting that to happen."

Rodney has worked with two PEPs in his three years of teaching. Rodney’s first PEP was certified, and he discussed the benefits and downfalls of getting certified PEPs, Rodney stated:

> That [having a certified PEP] was really great, we would really collaborate on putting lessons together. He knew all the same cues and all the different behavior management skills and so that that was more of a cohesive effort. And then he, good for him, got a regular job around [a neighboring school district], and now he's- he's working. So, it's kind of the way it goes, unfortunately. But we worked really well together.

Devan, one of only two certified PEPs that agreed to participate, exemplified the benefits mentioned by physical educators. She showed an abundance of background knowledge of physical education. Such knowledge was not mentioned by any other PEPs, with the exception of Natalie, who has been a PEP for 20 years now. This is illustrative of how difficult it might be to be a physical educator and going from working with a similarly experienced physical educator to

someone who needed to be trained and educated by the physical educator with whom they worked. Devan, now a PEP, "took this position in hopes of getting moved to a certified position." Likewise, Peyton said, "I'm just waiting on a full-time position to open."

Longevity Creates Quality

For physical educators an abundance of value was placed on those PEPs who stayed in the position for multiple years. As with any position, experience increases merit in PEPs. Sabrina commented on this as she stated, "My PEP has been with me five years now, so she's very well versed." Aaron also explained how his PEP's experience over four years had benefitted her ability to do her job, as he stated: "She's got enough experience now that she can help facilitate easily." Monica commented on the best part of having her PEPs who had 10 and 22 years of experience. Monica stated, "They know now how I like classes managed; they know what a productive lesson should look like. I think the best thing is that they know when to intervene and when not to."

PEPs often mentioned how as time went on, they became more experienced, knowledgeable, and comfortable in their position, even taking on some responsibilities not necessarily listed in their job description. As Natalie said, "You know, just as your years go on and you do it, you become more seasoned with it, and you just learn so much." Kady discussed how she feels "fine" leading the class when she needs too, "especially after three years." Jacob mentioned that if he had not been a substitute for the year prior to becoming a PEP it would have "taken a little bit longer" to get used to leading and controlling the class.

"It's Really on the Job Training" -Sean (PE)

Another topic physical educators often brought up was the need for training PEPs. When Cherry was asked if her PEP was provided any training before beginning the job, Cherry replied, "*Of course not*!" All participants in this study stated that the physical education training was "on the

job". Cade confirmed this, stating "I see that as my responsibility". Sabrina took this further stating, "I think on the job training is best, because every PE teacher runs their program differently."

Although this training was the best form of training for all physical educators in this study, the majority of physical educators agreed that additional training would be beneficial. Physical educators mentioned that training in classroom management, behavior management, and the course of study would be helpful. Monica elaborated on the need for training on physical education and education in general, as she stated, "I think they know the goals and objectives of our program, but the overall umbrella of, how does physical education fit into the whole realm of education? And how does what we do impact them in the classroom?" Brad elaborated on this as well, as he remarked, "I think they should be able to get professional development, if I go to a conference, they should be able to go to."

All PEPs agreed that their training was "on-the-job". All PEPs stated that they received no official training from the school system or school. Rae stated, "it was a throw you to the wolves kind of thing". All PEPs agreed that such on-the-job-training was beneficial, as Kady stated: "I think the things I've learned have been from watching coach. I've learned so much just by observing him." Although this was a beneficial way to train PEPs, nearly all PEPs agreed that the best training for them would be on behavior management. For Natalie, she just wanted any type of training or professional development (PD), as she stated, "I can use any training on anything! Because you can always better the program. Like I said, I haven't really had that much training in anything." Kady mentioned that training on adapted PE would be very nice considering she was currently teaching two adapted PE classes alone. She explained:

> Adaptive PE, although to be honest I'm not really sure what you would train on for adaptive PE. You know what I mean? And maybe that's my ignorance, and …maybe that's why I do

need to be trained, because I see limitations, and I don't see what, maybe I should or shouldn't be doing with them or could be doing with them.

The Value of the Physical Education Paraeducator in Physical Education

"I Would Absolutely Lose My Mind Without Them"- Charles (PE)

When physical educators were asked how important the job of a PEP was in relation to the success of their physical education program, all physical educators linked their importance to class sizes. Charles stated, "I would absolutely lose my mind without them. Like, I don't think I could do my job without them". Veteran physical educators like Mickey stated that technically they could do it on their own, but it would not be as effective or enjoyable. Cade explained it like this, "I can make it work without them. I've done it, and you can have a successful program, but the stress level. I can tell you the kids appreciate having a good PEP, because I'm not as cranky."

Kenzie went on to list how the physical education program would look different noting an inability to carry out certain activities and lessons with just one person there to oversee all students. Kenzie stated, "I can't do what I do without somebody like him in there helping present what I want to do. It's a very vital role." Mickey elaborated on this further:

> I've done it, actually, all day by myself, you know, if I have to, but I just scrap whatever I had planned that day and put in something that is manageable for me to do my myself that day. You know, and sometimes the classes are so big, it's almost like that PEP is just another set of eyes to police the whole area.

For most physical educators, the need for an additional staff member was not just because of the number of students under their supervision, but also because of those situations that commonly arise in physical education such as injuries and behavioral issues. Aaron worded it this way, "Without her, it's just, it's hard to hand out band aids and teach and take care of kids and have eyes on all the kids at one time." Physical educators like Rodney also mentioned how taking students to

the bathroom would be impossible if he was there alone. Cherry, who had recently lost her PEP due to "repurposing" after the COVID-19 pandemic hit, took this a bit further stating: "Just even the simple thing of *me* being able to use the restroom in the middle class is something that I no longer have the option and ability to do. So, they're a critical piece just for basic functions."

Kenzie went so far as to mention the need for an additional PEP in her program with regard to safety. She stated:

> As much as him and I do a great job just the two of us it would always be beneficial to have, you know, a student-to-teacher ratio like it would be in the classroom. So, if I have three classes would be nice to have three [PEPs] so the kids can get the attention that they deserve.

"I Don't Know if They Could be Successful, the Numbers Are Just Too High"- Jaquie (PEP)

When asked how essential their job was in relation to the success of the physical education program, all PEPs linked the value of their job to large class sizes. Some mentioned this in relation to the job of the physical educator being way too difficult to do alone. Jacob touched on this, noting it was already difficult for two people. Jacob stated:

> I'd say it's very important. I mean, not just speaking for me, but the position is very important. Due to the fact that we have, you know, normal non-COVID times 70-75 kids in a class. It's hard enough to expect two people to do the job, then especially you couldn't do it with just one.

Natalie, a middle school PEP, took this a step further as she stated, "I can tell you this, they need another person down here. They need four people in this gym." Other PEPs linked their importance to the difficulty of large class sizes in terms of the effects it would have on the students. Kady stated, "I think kids would get lost in the shuffle, if you just have one teacher with that many kids." Jaquie acknowledged the difficulties the teacher would have, and then stated, "It's just

physically with the numbers I think impossible, and without the support person I don't think that you could help the other kids participate."

"It Really Matters What the Person Knows, and Who the Person is." -Brad (PE)

Several physical educators noted the benefits that working with an additional physical educator would give them in comparison to working with a PEP. These benefits related to sharing responsibilities and collaborating and sharing ideas with others who had more background knowledge and similar training. Charles stated:

> We could bring them together and like have PE classes at the same time. Basically, like with the fitness testing, like he puts in all his grades. I'll put in all my grades, that kind of thing. So, you'd be able to split the work, and we could collaborate and like mix classes and do the same activities. But at the end of the day, he's responsible for his, and I'm responsible for mine. That'd be more of my liking, I feel like.

Although mentioning these benefits, the majority of physical educators stated their unwillingness to give up their current PEP for an additional physical educator. Cade explained, "I think having an additional physical educator would be more beneficial and effective, because you got someone that has that training that you have." However, when Cade discussed his current PEP, he stated:

> She's probably the strongest PEP I've had in 20 years. I wouldn't trade her for another physical educator. But out of all the other; and it's funny because some of the PEPs I've had have been certified and I probably would have traded them for somebody else.

Many physical educators mentioned an unwillingness to let go of their current PEP, especially when they had been with them for a while. Almost all physical educators agreed that a "good" PEP is just as beneficial as a certified physical educator. Sean stated, "If you have a good one, it's just as beneficial as a certified."

While most physical educators did at some point or another acknowledged the “on paper” benefits of having an additional physical educator, only two newer physical educators (Brad and Charles) were adamant that an additional physical educator would be more beneficial for their program. Those who had worked with PEPs for the majority or entirety of their careers thought having a PEP was just as beneficial for their program than an additional physical educator. The two physical educators who worked with another physical educator and a PEP(s), thought that an additional physical educator would not be as beneficial, instead their program was perfect as is. As Sabrina stated, “With another physical educator, that’d be another person in charge, and I think that would cause problems with who is gonna take on that assistant type role?”

“I Need an Adult to Talk to and to Vent to.”- Sean (PE)

All physical educators at some point linked the value of the PEP to their own wellbeing mentally. In doing so their responses pointed towards a sense of marginalization they themselves faced. This was due to isolation either physically or in relation to their subject matter. Rodney expressed his gratitude of having his PEP as he stated, “Well I’m not as bored on my breaks all day. I have someone to talk to.” Ty expressed his need for that other adult there as well, as he stated, "You get caught in like elementary land, and you forget that there's real conversations out there and all that stuff." Mickey talked about the need to get along with the person you are working with as he stated: “It's the only adult that you're going to be with *all* day, every day, you know. So, it's cool to be able to have conversations when there's downtime, that's not about school, that you can kind of talk about.”

Physical educators also elaborated on this benefit of having a PEP, in relation to their job as a physical educator and its differences from the jobs of other educators and staff in the school. Cade commented on this, as he stated:

> Because we're unlike anybody else in the school. I see every single kid every single day. I'm the only person in the school that does that. So, it's nice to have somebody else to share that with, that can say, "oh yeah, we had this person today", or "this was going on, or this". So, it's nice to have another person in the same boat as me.

"We Stay Very Physically Active All Day" - Jaquie (PEP)

For physical educators and PEPs alike the most commonly discussed quality that needed to be possessed by anyone working in physical education was being physically fit. Mickey elaborated on his concerns when getting a new PEP, as he recounted:

> One thing that I'm always concerned about when I need to get a new aide is that you know that they're somewhat fit. Not only as an example to students, that's fine, but it's a pretty demanding job with the Alabama heat, and you're outside a lot, and you're on the feet all the time, and you're walking all the time. So that's one thing, is somebody that can actually handle the physicality of the job.

While being physically fit was a quality agreed upon by all physical educators, Sabrina summed up the other qualities that physical educators looked for in a PEP, as she described her current PEPs qualities that made her a great fit for the job. She explained:

> You *have to have initiative*, you have to be an outgoing sort, and not be afraid to talk to people. You have to be physically fit, you know, eat healthy and live an active lifestyle. You have to have a strong personality and be assertive. You have to be able to handle large crowds. She has all of those qualifications for sure.

Other qualities mentioned included being “an advocate for the kids” and the need for “the kids to be safe with this person” as Cade, Mickey, Sean, Kenzie, and Ty all mentioned. A personal attribute Cherry, Sabrina, Ty, Cade, and Monica deemed beneficial were their “mom instincts” as Cherry described it. Monica elaborated on it further as she noted what made her PEPs qualified for the job,

"Probably just them having children, were probably the biggest preparation for them. Them having their own kids that went through the school system."

PEPs also discussed the qualities a person needed to be a PEP, whether discussing what made them a good fit for the job or commenting on what kind of qualities were needed to do the job. The most common quality mentioned by these PEPs was being physically fit and/or having a deep understanding of the importance of living a healthy active lifestyle. For Kady this was mentioned not just in terms of being a role model for the girls, but also because of the physical demands of the job. Devan commented on the physical demands of the job, "So on average, I would say you're going to walk seven miles a day, that's staying inside the school all day, on an outside day I've clocked 10 miles." The other reason for bringing up being physically fit and enjoying physical activity was in relation to students. Kady explained:

> Not that I'm like, you know, like this super sporty person, but I do play sports and I enjoy sports. And I think it's being a role model for the girls, you can be an old lady and swim and play lacrosse. Fitness is an important thing to keep in your life, Your whole life.

Additional qualities needed were explained by Jacob, "You definitely need to be outgoing, energetic, and happy with whoever you're working with." Devan got a little more specific relating to physical education and class sizes, "There's a lot going on 24/7 if you lose your cool easily, this is not for you. You kind of have to be able to stay calm and cool and be able to get along with your physical educator."

Physical Educator's Absence

"If I Have to be Out She Steps In as The Lead Teacher" – Cade (PE)

All physical educators stated that in their absence the PEP became the lead teacher, and a sub would take on the role of the PEP. As Rodney stated, "Most of the time that sub has no experience in physical education. So, it's kind of Diana [his PEP] leading the class. And then, you

know, the substitute takes her role, as the PEP." Physical educators often connected experience, longevity, and value of the PEP position with their ability to be absent when sick and not worry the entire time. All physical educators expressed confidence in their PEPs ability to lead and control the class in their absence. Sean, elaborated on his confidence in her PEPs ability to run the class as he stated, "We've got our own systems, and he's just as comfortable running them as I am. So, it's good that he has that confidence and ability to do that."

A few physical educators, while being confident in their PEP's ability to lead and control the class, acknowledged a differing perception from students that might make the PEPs job during their absence more challenging. These physical educators all had PEPs with less than three years of experience. As Mickey stated, "It's just a different perspective from the students, you know, they've been taking direction from the PEP all the time, but never as like the main person. So, I don't think it's that fun for some of the PEPs."

All physical educators mentioned trying not to miss days, especially when they had a newer PEP. Mickey elaborated on this, as he stated, "At first, I always try not to miss days, but really when there is a new PEP, I would absolutely have to be really sick or some catastrophe for me to miss a day when they are new." Cade also commented on this as he compared the ease it has created in his life to have a PEP with experience. He stated:

> It's made the stress level of my life, night and day with the last PEPs to this PEP. I feel comfortable, leaving her alone, knowing that the kids aren't going to jump off the walls and hurt each other and end up in the nursing office or whatever, versus the last one where I was kind of like, alright, if I do take the day off what's, can I get a really good sub?

Cherry elaborated on how her PEPs experience and knowledge, left her confident when she had to be absent. Cherry also commented on the lack of concern from the administration, in her

absence, "as long as the kids were being managed, the admin really didn't care what happened in class."

"If We Get a Sub"- Natalie (PEP)

Over half of the physical educators in this study expressed frustrations with sometimes not getting a sub in their absence. Brad was frustrated on the complete cancelation of physical education in his absence because of a lack of subs in the entire school. Brad stated, "But most of the time when I'm absent the PEPs aren't even in PE, because if a sub doesn't show up then my PEPs will have to go be a sub in another classroom." Sabrina commented on how getting a sub was also hard for her, as she stated: "We're the last ones, if we have a sub and they need them in the classroom they're gonna pull my sub and just leave her [PEP] in there with the class." Aaron elaborated further on this problem with a lack of subs and leaving PEPs to lead classes alone, as he stated:

> I was in [COVID-19] quarantine for two weeks and never got a sub. Nobody ever picks it up. I could try to get a sub for next May and nobody would pick it up. So, they [administrators] always just let her run the class, and then try to get her some help if they can.

Physical educators were not the only ones who expressed a concern with the lack of substitutes for physical education. PEPs also expressed the need for substitutes in a physical educator's absence. While Kady was fine and comfortable leading and controlling the class alone, she also expressed the benefits of having a sub. She explained:

> So, they'll have a substitute, sometimes. Sometimes we don't have a sub, so I just lead the class as regular, we just continue whatever's happening. It's nice if we have a substitute more because if kids get hurt, you know, getting them up to the nurse or whatever. That's when we need someone there.

PEPs also commented on why it was easier for them to lead the class. As Jaquie stated, “I know all the students. I know how class is supposed to be ran. So, it’s just easier for me to take the lead.” Natalie took this further commenting on the complete lack of preparation most subs had in relation to physical education, as she stated, "If you have a sub that's just gonna sit there, it makes it a little more difficult, because you're not having any help from anybody else. Sometimes it’s easier to not have a sub honestly."

“I’m the Lead Teacher, and the Sub Will Just Kind of Assist” – Jacob (PEP)

All PEPs stated that they were the lead teacher in the physical educator’s absence. All PEPs reported that their physical educator was confident in their ability to lead and control the class in their absence. Additionally, all PEPs reported being confident leading and controlling the class while the physical educator was absent, although Brittany, Camille, Jaquie, and Kady confessed that in their first year such an incident was “nerve wracking”. Often the PEPs were more comfortable finding their own activities. Natalie talked about how she took complete control when the physical educators were absent leading whatever activity she wanted to do, as Natalie stated, “They have a sub folder, but I don’t ever look at it.” Likewise, Bonita explained her freedom as she stated, “I’ll say ‘I want to do this game or this game', or 'I want to do this skill', and I will basically teach the class’.” Brittney elaborated on a specific time where she led the activity, she was comfortable with, as she recalled:

> One time he left me with something to do that I was uncomfortable with; you know he was sick, and this was unplanned. And I was like, “umm instead of that, can I do this?” and he was like “Sure. That’s fine.”

For the PEPs with less years of experience, managing the classes while the physical educator was absent was sometimes a different story. Brittney said, “I don’t feel like they’ve tried to

run over me, I don't feel like they (children) say 'oh, coach is gone, we have a sub'. No, it's still me. It's still one of our faces in here." Brittney laughed and continued,

> But I feel like I have to be meaner, because in an ordinary day I'm the band-aide applier, the shoe tie-er, the hugger, the tooth puller... Like, I'm the mommy of the room. But when he's gone … If I need to write an office referral, I'll do that. If I need to put them in time out, I'll do that. If I need to send a note home, I'll do that. Whatever I need to do. I'm not the momma that uses 'you wait till your daddy gets home!'

Additionally, those less experienced PEPs at times mentioned specific classes that were more challenging. For Jaquie it was one of the older classes. Jaquie recounted, "He does know that there is that one class that occasionally we've had to intervene, physically. And I think he would rather not leave me with that class by myself, because they are some big boys."

Physical Educator Perceptions of PEPs in Physical Education

Daily Duties

Physical Educators were asked about their PEPs daily duties in their physical education program. These duties were related to the roles which they described their PEP taking. Ty and Charles, who currently worked with certified PEPs, had differing responses, due to the fact that their PEPs were currently filling the role of a physical educator due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they were certified physical educators. All other physical educators agreed on the following daily duties of their PEP: getting out/ setting up/ putting up equipment, walking around and monitoring students during instruction, helping with demonstrations when needed, monitoring students and keeping them on task during activities, taking care of minor behavior issues, injuries, and being the lead teacher in their absence.

There were a few other duties mentioned by some physical educators. Providing feedback was mentioned by Rodney, Brad, and Mickey. Adding additional information in the presentation of

lessons or sharing ideas related to lessons was mentioned by Brad, Rodney, Mickey, and Kenzie. Sabrina and Kenzie talked about transporting students to and from class.

Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic Kenzie and Cade's PEPs had additional duties, for both were responsible for teaching classes as well. Kenzie's PEP took one classroom every physical education class due to the small size of her activity room and the number of students that came to PE at a time (70-75). Last, Cade's PEP was responsible for teaching two adapted PE classes throughout the day.

"*Extension of Me"*

When asked about their PEPs role within their physical education program. Sabrina, Cherry, and Ty all used the phrase "extension of me" when describing the "assisting" role of their PEPs. Cherry remarked, "She was I would say, I could say, an extension of me. Yeah, an extension of me." Sabrina elaborated on this further, as she stated:

> She is a helper, but she is an extension of me. I mean the things that I don't see, she sees. She's VERY important for what we do. Without her, I could not function as efficiently as I do. I couldn't keep people under control the way I do. I couldn't work; if a student is having a problem with something, I couldn't give individual instruction when I need to do that. I mean we couldn't be successful without her.

"Co-Teacher/ Support Teacher"

When asked about their PEPs roles in physical education, Mickey, and Kenzie described their PEPs roles a little differently. They elaborated on their PEPs role within physical education by using the term "co-teacher" to describe the role of their PEPs. Mickey described the role this way, "A co-teacher, and really if you, if you're an aide and you've done it for years, you're really a lot like the teacher. You know? I mean, you're really a co-teacher."

"A Facilitator"

Aaron and Monica both described the PEPs Role within PE as a facilitator, noting their role in facilitating what was being done in physical education. Monica explained:

> I would say more a facilitator. Because I mean, you never know what's gonna happen in education. There are always things that pop up, you know, whether it be a student that just needs that extra attention and you're trying to teach three classes, and they just need that one-on-one. Or more, like I said earlier, equipment issues and we want to stay on task with teaching the lesson. Um, I would say more of a facilitator to help *me* become successful.

"A Major Role"

Both Sean and Charles elaborated on their PEPs role within physical education in relation to the amount of responsibility they gave their PEPs. Sean explained:

> He's got a major role. I think he's, like I was saying earlier, if he's not here, it's, it's not as smooth of a class. I really let him take full, full responsibility of our warm-up and cool down exercises, and things like that. That's something he really enjoys, so I'd say that's a major role for him.

Charles described the role of a PEP in physical education in general. For him, the role of a PEP was the same as his minus grading, as he explained:

> Honestly what it is, is a cheaper way of like having an uncertified position, but essentially, it's covering the same role as a PE teacher. They're there for the same job, it's just not certified. So, you have that one certified position that's taken the responsibility of all 60 students, but both people are doing the same job, you just have that one person whose name goes on the role and like checks everybody off for their physical fitness and gives them the grades and everything like that. But at the end of the day both- both adults are responsible for the class.

Physical Educators Perceptions of How Students View Their PEP

Physical educators were asked about their students' perceptions of their PEP. All physical educators agreed that their students respected and liked their PEPs. All physical educators also mentioned how their students called them "Coach". Sabrina explained, "The kids ask, 'where is Coach K?', when she's out. They don't see her as another aide, they see her as the same as me." Despite this universal love for the PEPs and referring to them as "Coach", physical educators' opinions of their students' perceptions differed. The majority of physical educators (Aaron, Ty, Kenzie, Brad, Sabrina, Charles, and Sean) stated that their students saw no difference between them and their PEP. Aaron explained, "I think they respect her. She's pretty much a teacher to them." Ty, Kenzie, Brad, and Sean attributed this to the way they presented their PEPs to the students. Kenzie explained why her students did not see the PEP as any different than her, as she stated:

> I think it's the way that I presented him to them, from the very beginning and like we're both your PE teachers, you know you'll hear me talk more, but you know you can reach out to him. Just like you can reach out to me. He can talk to you, just like I can, you will respect him the way you respect me. So, it's all the way that I presented him. When you're in our classroom, I always say Coach Benton, and I always say this is what *we've* come up with. I'm always presenting it as him and I, and I think that as long as I, or whoever, does that with the class and letting the kids know that we're both equal, they'll respect both of us the same. It's *our* class, it's what *we* do.

The rest of the physical educators, who used their PEP as more of an assistant themselves, noted that their students did perceive themselves and their PEPs a bit differently. Monica attributed this difference to the age of the students, as she stated:

> I believe that it depends on the age of the kids. I think the younger ones really look at us as the same. I mean, they like calling us coach. So, we're all coach to them. I think as the kids

> get older, they start to realize okay, you know, this, this is more of a lead coach and this is maybe an assistant.

Another reason for this difference in student perceptions was longevity. Mickey commented on this, as he stated:

> Just like I described them earlier, a co-teacher. Just like they do with any teacher after a certain amount of time. They just see her as an authority figure, a compassionate figure, just a teacher, they look up to, or not necessarily, not all of them feel that way, some of them are like "Oh my God, there's Coach Richmond again." An adversary. I think the PEPs earn the same respect like any other teacher, especially with any kind of longevity.

For Cade and Rodney, it was due to their authoritative voice and persona. Rodney explained:

> There is a slight difference between me and her, *and they love her.* I just think it's more of the authoritative position that she lacks. So, they don't expect her to come down on them or kind of get them back in line, so to speak. So, I think it's a good relationship she has with the kids. I think it helps a lot of times, like if I have to kind of be a little harsher on a kid, that she can kind of be that comforting presence behind me. So, I think it's good and she definitely helps. It's just, it's a very different dynamic between the two of us.

PEPs Perceptions of their role in Physical Education

Daily Duties

When discussing their daily duties in physical education, PEPs mentioned "setting up" equipment or activities, being the "lead" teacher when the physical educator was absent, and "monitoring" students making sure they are "on task" and "behavior management". Jaquie, Natalie, and Kady also mentioned "greeting students" as they came in. Jaquie elaborated:

> So as the classes come in, we'll stand at the door, and I'll greet them. I'm still trying to remember everybody's names, so I try to just go over their names as they come through the

door, and you know, give them a little sparkle as they come in. Make sure they know that we are happy they are here.

PEPs spoke about how they handle behavior problems. Hughes stated, “I didn’t realize how bad it was for some kids… I have seen some kids have to be literally picked up and carried out and I had never seen anything to that extreme”. A majority of the PEPs stated that in situations where the behavior was extreme, the physical educator was typically the one to handle the behavior issue. Elementary PEPs also mentioned taking care of injuries and taking students to the restroom for those younger grades. Rae and Camille stated that they were in charge of leading the warmup activities or exercises. Kady and Journey both stated that sometimes they would deliver the instructions to the students. Journey commented, “Sometimes the PE teacher takes the lead and teaches. Sometimes the PE teacher lets me take the lead and teach. So, we kind of share the responsibility so it’s not so much on one person”. Jacob, Natalie, and Kady all discussed facilitating whatever activity was being done. Natalie described this, as she stated, “I do whatever I'm asked pretty much, whether it's technology or taking a group and, you know facilitating, doing their activities with them, their units or whatever, for that day. Pretty much the same thing the certified teachers do.” Additionally, due to COVID-19 pandemic, Kady, Jacob, and Devan were responsible for leading classes on their own. Jacob elaborated on his situation, as he stated:

> Pre-covid we got three classroom classes at a time, me and Coach Scott. We only divided up if it was an activity that had to be divided up, but majority of the time we were together. She was leading the lesson and I was facilitating. Now, I'm teaching a class, she's teaching a class, and then we have two instructional aids that are combined teaching a class. They do a modified version of what we’ve done before. We come together as much as possible. Like today, I take my class into the art room, she's got hers in the activity room, and the other aides will use the music room.

PEP Perceptions of Physical Education Stakeholders Perceptions of them

PEPs explained how they were perceived by their physical educators. Jacob, Rae, Journey, Devan, and Kayla all felt that their physical educators saw them as an equal or a peer. Journey commented, “Oh yeah, he treats me as very equal to him.” Rae elaborated on this further, as he remarked: “He looks at me as a coach. If he didn’t, I wouldn’t do the things I do.” Natalie felt that her physical educators had confidence in her, as she stated, “It’s pretty much if I want to do something, I can do it.” Jaquie stated, that her physical educator saw her as a “valuable asset” as she explained: “That’s again one of the reasons I want to come to work every day. You know it’s really a team aspect.” Kady elaborated on her physical educator’s perception of her as she stated:

> Oh, Coach? Yeah. I think coach, and I mean we get along great. Like I say, I'm kind of his like "work wife". You know, so I think he realizes it, and I rely on him like he does a lot of great things for me. I think we're a really good team. To be honest, you know, I help remind him about things. And I think he recognizes that.

The overall belief of the PEPs was the lead P.E. teacher had ample confidence in their ability to teach the classes. They all agreed they had a good working relationship with the lead PE teacher.

All PEPs commented on how they felt they were perceived by their students. Rae who worked with middle school students stated, “They see me as a coach, they don’t know I’m a PEP.” Natalie who worked with middle school age students, made this comment: “They call me coach, they make comments like, well, you're a teacher. And I'm like, Well, no, not really. I'm not a certified teacher. And they're like, you're not? And I’m like, no, sorry.” Natalie continued, “They don't really know, some of them know I’m not a certified teacher, but they call me coach.”

In the primary schools with very young children several PEPs said many children did not know there was a difference between the lead teacher and the PEP. Jacob explained how the students perceived him in relation to how the physical educator perceived him as he stated:

> I'm Coach Benton. Again, that's probably because she does a good job, so we balance out roles, and she's definitely the one that that everything falls on if something is needed, but we both share the responsibilities as much as we can. So, I'm sure as far as the students see it. They don't know any different.

Brittney similarly stated that the students did not see a difference between her and the physical educator, as she continued:

> Because some of them even call me Coach Summers, but I've never asked anyone to call me coach, because I've never coached anything, so that would be kind of dumb. She went on to say the students followed her directions as well as they do the physical educator's.

Kady and Jaquie both explained the way the students saw them in relation to crazy or funny things they did or made the students do. Jaquie bought a school mascot costume, a frog, and would wear it around on special days, like the first day of school. Jaquie stated that the students perceived her as "the crazy mascot lady". Kady explained that her students probably saw her as "the crazy local grandma", as she explained:

> Sometimes I wonder what they do think of me, to be honest, because sometimes I'm crazy. And they look at me like I'm crazy, you know. I have them hop down the hall and only step on the red lines as they're going to their class in the morning. Hopefully, it's the kind of mom grandma who loves sports and loves them. You know, because sometimes, they need that. I think that just that extra person that's not so focused on teaching them the curriculum that they actually have time to spend time with them.

PEP Perceptions of their Roles Within Physical Education

When asked about their roles within physical education, PEPs responses varied greatly. Natalie described her role in physical education as, “One who gets involved and gets out there with them. And just plays with them.” Kady described her role in physical education, as she stated:

> My ideal in my head is that I'm making kids’ lives better. You know, like being a different person that's there that has different experiences that really loves physical education thinks it's important and tries to get them enthusiastic and show them that they have the abilities, and they can do stuff. So that's my ideal, and then my job description is to, I feel like I'm just like a second, even though I'm an assist, I feel like I'm a secondary teacher, you know.

Jaquie commented on her role in physical education as she stated, “Well, I am here specifically to support my coach, you know. And that is basically my role.” Jacob described his role within physical education as he stated “My role is hard. I would say, a facilitator.” Rae described his role in physical education as he replied, “I feel my role is a coach, a PE teacher, I don’t feel any higher or lower than him being certified.” Devan the certified PEP explained her role within physical education as she replied, “A PE teacher. Especially now with COVID-19, If it weren’t for me, those classes would be all together.”

Discussion

Findings showed that physical educators and PEPs report that a great working relationship takes time to cultivate, which is a concern for most physical educators as they reported PEPs not typically staying very long. This is exacerbated in schools where PEPs are commonly certified physical educators waiting to get into the school system and get a physical educator job. All participants agreed that the longer PEPs were in the PEP position and the more experience and knowledge they acquired the more valuable they became, sometimes to the extent of being like another certified physical educator. All participants agreed that there was no official training for the position; instead it was more so on-the-job and came from experience and observations, which all

participants agreed was a good way to train PEPs. All participants linked the value of PEPs to large class sizes and the difficulty it would create for one person. Physical educators also linked their PEPs value to having another adult to go through the day with. All participants agreed that being physically fit was a quality needed to perform the duties of a PEP. All participants reported that the PEP was the primary teacher when the physical educator was absent. Typically, daily physical education duties for PEPs included managing equipment, behavior, monitoring students, keeping them on task, and taking care of injuries. Physical educators saw their PEPs role as an extension of them, a co-teacher or a facilitator, while PEPs commonly reported their role in relation to assisting the physical educator and students. Most physical educators and PEPs believe that students perceived their PEP as another physical educator and there was no difference between them. PEPs all mentioned their physical educator valuing them, as most even reported they felt they were treated as a peer or an equal by their physical educator.

The participants' interview responses regarding the contextual aspect of their jobs evidenced the appropriateness of Role Socialization Theory (RST) as the theoretical framework for this study. The three primary tenets of RST critical to this study are (a) the ways in which the job roles of the PEP are socially constructed by other players in the setting and limited by contextual elements; (b) the appeal of and preparation for the PEP position, and (c) how the PEP is socialized into the job role by the other players' "role-sets" (Richards, 2015) perceptions of the PEP as a team member.

Social Construction of PEPs Job Roles and the Limits of Context

The two "role-sets" who were the most influential on PEPs' roles were the physical educator and the students (Richards, Templin, & Gaudreault, 2013). When PEPs were asked about the best part of their job, the responses were heavily focused on the "students" or "kids." All PEPs indicated that their primary reason for coming to school every day was the students. The second most common concern expressed by PEPs was inappropriate duties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and

a disconnect or lack of consideration for the position from the school district level faculty, which was expressed by all PEPs who reported splitting classes with their physical educator and teaching alone. Similar findings have been reported regarding special education paraeducators (SEPs) who felt untrained and unqualified to be performing the job of a teacher (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). This disconnect is further evidenced by the physical educators' responses related to being isolated or marginalized. If a physical educator shows evidence of being isolated from the rest of the school staff, then it follows that their coworker would also be isolated from most school staff as well; perhaps even more so as PEPs did not attend faculty meetings. In other research, physical educators have commonly reported feelings of marginalization and isolation (Richards et al., 2018a; Richards et al., 2018b; Wilson et al., 2020). Additionally, the majority of PEPs and physical educators mentioned that substitute teachers often were not procured when the physical educator was absent. This points to a lack of value placed on those physical education programs from the school as a whole. Previous research has shown a lack of value placed on physical education by administrators and classroom teachers (Richards et al., 2018a; Richards et al., 2018b; Richards et al., 2018c). Other research has shown a lack of value placed on physical education by parents and students (Graham, 2008; Sheehy, 2006; Tannehill et al., 1994). Research has also shown a strong connection between the perceptions and value placed on physical education by administrators, classroom teachers, and students to feelings of marginalization and perceived mattering of physical educators (Richards, Gaudreault, & Woods, 2016; Richards et al., 2019).

Therefore, according to these participants, physical educators and students are the primary role-sets for a PEP regarding their role within physical education (Richards, 2015). This means that these role-sets are primarily responsible for the way their roles are socially constructed and contextually bound within their physical education program.

While PEPs were primarily connected to the way they were perceived by their students, they also provided evidence of their roles within physical education being socially constructed by the physical educators' perceptions. All physical educators' perceptions were indicative to how the PEPs described their role within their physical education program. All PEPs felt that their physical educators were confident in them and respected them, notions mirrored by physical educators.

Research has commonly shown that large class sizes hinder the provision of effective physical education (Gross, 2010; Gross & Buchanan, 2014; Kirkham-King et al., 2017; Skala et al., 2012; Stroot, Collier, O'Sullivan, & England, 1994). Physical educators linked the value of their PEPs to the great number of students in their physical education classes. In previous research, physical educators also linked the need and value of their PEPs to the large class sizes that they taught (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). When PEPs were asked how important their job was, all PEPs elaborated on their importance by discussing the size of their classes. They related this by stating the amount of difficulty this would create for physical educators, and the negative effect it would have on students if the PEP job was non-existent. How physical educators described their students' perceptions of their PEPs was closely tied to their own perceptions of their PEP's role in physical education, further evidence of PEPs roles being socially constructed by physical educators and students. These conclusions further stipulate that PEPs roles are heavily focused on the services they provide these primary role-sets (Richards, 2015). This finding is similar to those of studies on physical educators mattering and marginalization (Richards et al., 2018a; Richards et al., 2019).

The PEPs who were older females and had three years or less experience as a PEP in physical education, felt that their students perceived them as more of an assistant figure. This perspective was identical to those physical educators' perceptions of their roles, as well as to the PE teachers' opinions of students' perceptions. The roles of PEPs who were certified or described their

role as a "teacher" were closely linked to their physical educators' perceptions of their roles. Those certified PEPs had differing perceptions of their role within physical education, then those PEPs who were not certified physical educators. The gender of the PEP played a large part in their own perceptions of their roles and their opinions of their students' perceptions. Physical educators with opposite sex PEPs commonly attributed their sex to their role within physical education. Following that, physical educators and PEPs commonly made statements indicating how their situation was different from physical educators and PEPs in other physical education programs. These commonalities provide evidence of these PEPs roles contextually bound by their physical educators' perceptions, their sex, and their certification status.

The Appeal of and Preparation for the PEP Position

PEPs also discussed their reason for taking the job. All PEPs expressed that working with children and being physically active all day fit their personalities and made the job appealing to them. Having the same work hours as their school age children was a common reason for the PEPs who were mothers or fathers. For the PEPs who had retired from another career their reasoning for being attracted to the job was the schedule. These schedule benefits were perceived by PEPs who were not currently parents to school age children as having summers off and getting to do something they enjoyed every day. For certified PEPs what attracted them to the job was the opportunity it created for them to get their foot in the door in the school system in which they wished to work, or it provided them with even more experience when they were unable to find a physical educator job. The schedule, being a positive influence in children's lives, promoting lifelong physical activity, and the opportunity this job created for certified physical educators were all aspects that attracted these PEPs to the job (Richards, 2015).

All PEPs explained that there was no official training for the job. All PEPs explained that the training for the job was on-the-job. Literature on SEPs has also shown that their training was

provided primarily "on-the-job" (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012), and literature on PEPs has also shown that this was the only form of training provided, and that it was provided by the physical educators with whom those PEPs worked (Hastie et al., 1999; Lux & McCullick, 2011). PEPs also commonly related their own personal experiences to their preparation for the job. Those PEPs who had children, and their physical educators, being parent was the best preparation for the job as a PEP. Rae attributed his experience as a retired army sergeant, a fitness instructor, and a behavioral aide in special education to his preparation for the job. Jacob mentioned his year of being a substitute teacher to his preparation to the job. Jaquie attributed her preparation to her experience working in special education, and even stated, “this is like retirement for me! I love it” when describing how well this experience prepared her. Those PEPs who were former coaches or fitness instructors all related that experience to their preparation for the job. Kady even went as far to connect her experiences as a veterinarian, stating that children, like animals are likely to misbehave when wanting, but not getting, attention.

Though their experiences varied, all PEPs attributed to their preparation for their job as a PEP to those experiences. PEPs also all attributed observing the physical educator and getting experience through their “on-the-job training” to their preparation for the role of a PEP in physical education. This indicates that these PEPs lived experiences prior to and during the beginning of their career as a PEP were highly responsible for preparing these PEPs for their role as a PEP in physical education (Richards et al., 2018c).

PEPs Role-sets as Socializing Agents

PEPs were socialized into their roles in physical education through the duties and expectations of them provided by their physical educator. As Cade explained, “I just spend a few weeks in the beginning kind of walking them through and adding in you know responsibilities as we go along.” This continual addition of duties in their beginning phases of the PEPs job,

indicated that these duties and expectations the physical educators had played a big role in socializing them into their roles in physical education (Richards, 2015). Additionally, all participants made statements about the importance of creating relationships with their counterparts in relation to them being their primary source of adult interaction during the school day. In a study by Lux and McCullick (2011) the physical educator also stressed the importance of the physical educator PEP relationship in relation to feelings of marginalization and isolation. PEPs also brought up experiences they had of helping students better themselves and helping them grow and get better at certain skills as the best part of their job. Which indicates that students' needs were responsible for the value they placed on their role. These statements were suggestive of the students' needs being a socializing agent in PEPs perceptions of their roles (Richards, 2015).

Physical educators' views of their PEPs role in physical education were influenced by their socialization into their own position within the school climate as well as their experiences in their own jobs. Physical educators who commonly worked with certified physical educators talked about the benefits this job provided newly graduated physical educators as well as the benefits having a certified PEP provided. All physical educators who had worked with a certified PEP, verbally expressed the benefits that having an additional certified physical educator provided their program. Those who had worked with both certified PEPs and PEPs with no longevity or background knowledge in physical education commonly referred to their role as more of an assisting role. Coincidentally, physical educators commonly expressed that students perceived PEPs who were given more of an assistant type role as more of an assistant. Physical educators who expressed marginalization of their subject or themselves in relation to other educators in the school, commonly expressed more gratitude for a PEP. This is in line with previous research on PEPS (Lux & McCullick, 2011). PEPs commonly mentioned their role in the relation of services they provided the physical educator and students. In previous research physical educators have also related their

role to the services they provide classroom teachers and students, which can sometimes be relayed in contradictory messages between role-sets (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2018a; Richards et al., 2018c).

Conclusion

From these PEPs' and physical educators' perceptions and lived experiences it is clear that the PEP's role within physical education is primarily defined by the physical educator and students. Those roles varied based off the perceived of their physical educator, the physical educator's role, and the students' perceptions of their PEPs. PEP's attraction to the job varied based off their own lived experiences. PEP's background and prior experience were highly associated with the way PEPs were prepared for their role as a PEP, and their physical educator's perception of their roles. Physical educator's perceptions of their PEP's roles were also commonly linked to the reason their PEP was attracted to the job. The socialization of PEPs into their roles was highly influenced by their own lived experiences prior to their job as a PEP, their duties and responsibilities placed on them by their physical educator, as well as the needs of their students. This indicates that PEP's main role-sets are those with whom they spend their workdays.

Limitations

All physical educators and PEPs in this study were employed in public schools in the state of Alabama. The results may not transfer to results found in other states, or outside the U.S. The COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly impacted our nation's educational system, hit during the time the study was being conducted. Thus, recruitment of physical educators and PEPs for this study was impacted considerably by this pandemic. Some school systems were operating completely remote at the time, which made acquiring contact information for these participants problematic. Therefore, this sample of participants represents volunteers from those whom I was actually able to contact.

Implications for further research

Research needs to be conducted on students' perceptions of the roles of PEPs, as well as those other key stakeholders of school contexts, such as administrators, faculty, and district level staff to get a better picture of how marginalization and isolation also affect the role of PEPs in general as well as in physical education. Observations of physical education programs with a PEP would also be beneficial in capturing a better picture of how their duties and students' needs highly influence the roles of PEPs in physical education. This research should also be conducted in other states who hire PEPs, as states have varying standards for the field of physical education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY

Administrator Perceptions of Physical Education Paraeducators Qualtrics Survey

1. You are invited to participate in a research study to explore physical educator, administrator, and physical education paraeducator experiences and perceptions of the job of physical education paraeducators. This study is being conducted by Ashleigh Higgins, under the direction of Dr. Alice Buchanan in the Auburn University School of Kinesiology. You were chosen as a prospective participant because you are an administrator employed in a public school in Alabama where a physical education paraeducator is also employed, and you are aged 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? Shall you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an online survey, that will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

Are their any risks or discomforts? A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk, only Ashleigh Higgins or Dr. Alice Buchanan will collect all data from surveys All data will be stored on Ashleigh Higgins' password protected encrypted computer.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in the study you will have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the roles physical education paraeducators play in the school, and in physical education. Due to this being the first study regarding the job of physical education paraeducators, your experiences and perceptions of the job can shed light on and help others become knowledgeable about the employment and roles of physical education paraeducators. I/We do not guarantee that you will receive any or all of these benefits.

Will you receive any compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Are there any costs? No costs are associated with your participation in this study.

Should you change your mind about participating you can withdraw from the study at any

point, as long as your data are identifiable. Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, any of your data will be removed. This decision to participate, not participate, or stop participating will not jeopardize your relationship with Auburn University, the School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins, or Dr. Alice Buchanan.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be presented at a national or international conference, and may be published in a professional journal.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Ashleigh Higgins akh0048@auburn.edu .

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board through email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu or by phone at (334)-844-5966.

AFTER READING THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF SELECTING FROM TWO ANSWER CHOICES BELOW.

YOU MAY CHOOSE “YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY”, OR “NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY”.

YOU MAY MAKE THE DECISION BELOW. BY SELECTING “YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY” BELOW INDICATES YOUR

WILLINGNESS TO ONLY PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY. YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO BEGIN THE SURVEY AT THAT TIME. SELECTING "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY" INDICATES THAT YOU DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE AT ALL AND DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT THIS STUDY. IF YOU SELECT "NO I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY" YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

A. "Yes, I will participate in the online Qualtrics survey"

B. "No, I do not wish to participate in this study"

2. Select the age range that best fits you

a. 29 years of age or younger

b. 30 – 40 years of age

c. 41 – 50 years of age

d. 51 – 60 years of age

e. 61 or more years of age

3. Indicate your sex.

a. Male

b. Female

c. I prefer not to answer

4. Select the level of education that fits you best.

a. Bachelor's Degree

b. Master's Degree

c. Doctorate

5. Indicate the number of years you have been in education administration.

a. 1 - 3 years

b. 4 – 6 years

c. 7 – 9 years

d. 10 or more years

6. What grade levels are taught at your current school? _____

7. How many students per years are typically enrolled in your school? _____

8. How many physical education teachers are currently working in your school (including adaptive physical educators if they are employed for your school only)

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4 or more

9. How many physical education paraeducators are currently working in your school?

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3 or more

10. What is the reason for the hiring of physical education paraeducators? (Select all that apply)

a. Cost effective solution to budgeting restrictions

b. Meet student-to-teacher ratios

c. Other

Comments: _____

11. What are the required qualifications for the position of physical education paraeducator? (Select all that apply)

a. High school diploma or GED

b. Some college

c. College Degree

d. Degree in physical education

f. Teaching experience in physical education

g. Experience with sport or coaching

h. Other experience as a paraeducator

i. Background check

i. Other

Comments: _____

12. Who is responsible for the hiring of physical education paraeducator(s) in your school?

a. Administrators

b. School district level employees

c. Outside source

Comments: _____

13. Are physical education paraeducators required to be present for staff/faculty meetings?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

14. Do you believe that physical education paraeducators presence at faculty and staff meetings would be beneficial or is beneficial?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

15. What is the physical education paraeducator(s) pay schedule?

a. Hourly

b. Salary

Comments: _____

Are physical education paraeducator(s) given responsibilities outside of physical education(bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)

A. Yes

B. no

Comments_____

16. Should physical education paraeducators go through some sort of training for the job?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

17. What would be the most effective way to train paraeducators?

a. Inservice

b. Online program/outside source

c. On the job training

d. Other

Comments: _____

18. Are physical education paraeducator(s) at your school provided training?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

19. If yes, how is that training provided?

a. On the job training

b. Inservice

c. Online program/

d. Other

Comments: _____

20. Who should provide physical education paraeducator training?

a. Administrators

b. The physical educators they work with

c. Other paraeducators

d. Outside source such as a physical education paraeducator specialists or online program

Comments: _____

21. Who should determine the responsibilities of physical education paraeducators?

a. State department of education

b. School district level employees

c. Administrators

d. Physical Educator(s)

Comments: _____

22. What do you believe are appropriate responsibilities for physical education paraeducators?

(Select all that apply)

a. Doing clerical and paper work

b. Taking attendance

c. Setting up/taking down, managing equipment

d. Attending faculty and staff meetings

e. Contributing ideas for lesson planning

f. Planning lessons

g. Contribute ideas for lesson planning

h. Assisting with instruction, practice, feedback

i. Teaching when the physical educator is absent

j. Presenting or instructing new skills, games, and/or activities

k. Conducting assessments and fitness testing

l. Providing behavior management/ Supervising students

m. Assisting students with disabilities

n. Attending to student needs (shoe tying, taking students to the nurse, etc.)

o. Escorting students to and from physical education

p. Assisting with locker rooms/ dressing out

q. Escorting students to bathrooms/water

Comments: _____

23. What is the income range for a physical education paraeducator in your school?

a. Less than $10,000 a year

b. Between $10,000 and $15,000 a year

c. Between $15,000 and $20,000 a year

d. Between $20,000 and $25,000 a year

e. Greater than $30,000 a year

Comments: _____

24. Does the physical education paraeducator have the option of benefits through the job?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

25. Are physical education paraeducator(s) required to be at school when students are

not inschool?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments:_____

26. Are the physical education paraeducator(s) essential to the success of your school's physical education program?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

APPENDIX B: PHYSICAL EDUCATOR SURVEY

Physical Educators' Perceptions of Physical Education Paraeducators Qualtrics Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore physical educator, administrator, and physical education paraeducator experiences and perceptions of the job of physical education paraeducators. This study is being conducted by Ashleigh Higgins, under the direction of Dr. Alice Buchanan in the Auburn University School of Kinesiology. You were chosenas a prospective participant because you are a physical educator employed in a public school in Alabama where a physical education paraeducator is also employed, and you are aged 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? Shall you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an online survey, that will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete. Upon completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to participate in an interview, lasting around 30 to 60 minutes. These interviews will be held virtually on zoom and recorded by a handheld tape recorder, not connected to the internet. These interviews will be at a time anddate convenient for you. ***THE LAST QUESTION ON THIS SURVEY WILL ASK IF YOU ARE WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW. ***

Are there any risks or discomforts? A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk, only Ashleigh Higgins or Dr. Alice Buchanan will collect all data from surveys and interviews. They will replace your name with a unique identifier. In addition, all identifiableinformation contained in interview audio recordings will be removed during transcription. The audio recording device will not be connected to the Internet and transcription will occur immediately following the interview. All transcribed data will be stored on Ashleigh Higgins' password protected encrypted computer.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in the study you will have the opportunity to share your experiences working with a physical education paraeducator. You will also have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the roles physical education paraeducators play in the school, and in physical education. Due to this being the first study regarding the job of physical education paraeducators, your experiences and perceptions of the job can shed light on and help others become knowledgeable about the employment and roles of physical education paraeducators. I/We do not guarantee that you will receive any or all of these benefits.

Will you receive any compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Are there any costs? No costs are associated with your participation in this study.

Should you change your mind about participating you can withdraw from the study at any point, as long as your data are identifiable. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to only complete the survey, and decline to interview. If you choose to withdraw, any of your data will be removed. This decision to participate, not participate, or stop participating will not jeopardize your relationship with Auburn University, the School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins,or Dr. Alice Buchanan.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in this study will remain confidential.Information obtained through your participation may be presented at a national or international conference, and may be published in a professional journal.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Ashleigh Higgins akh0048@auburn.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board

through email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu or by phone at (334)-844-5966.

AFTER READING THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TOPARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF SELECTING "YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY", OR "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY". SELECTING "YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY" BELOW, INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY. IF YOU SELECT THIS OPTION YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO PROCEDE THROUGH THE SURVEY. BY SELECTING "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY" AND TYPING YOUR NAME IN THE SPACE BELOW, INDICATES THAT YOU DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE AT ALL AND DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT THIS STUDY. IF YOU SELECT THIS OPTION YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY.

A. "Yes, I will participate in the online qualtrics survey"

B. "No, I do not wish to participate in this study"

2. Select the age range that best fits you

A. 29 years of age or younger

B. 30 – 40 years of age

C. 41 – 50 years of age

D. 51 – 60 years of age

E. 61 or more years of age

3. Indicate your sex.

A. Male

B. Female

C. I prefer not to answer

4. Select the level of education that fits you best.

A. Bachelor's Degree

B. Master's Degree

C. Doctorate

5. Indicate the number of years you have been in physical education.

A. 1 – 3 years

B. 4 – 6 years

C. 7 – 9 years

D. 10 or more years

6. What grade levels are taught at your current school? _____

7. On average how many students on average are in a physical education class?

a. 40 students or less

b. 41 – 75 students

c. 76 – 110 students

d. 110 students or more

8. How many physical education teachers are currently working in your school (including adaptive physical educators if they are employed for your school only)

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3 or more

9. How many physical education paraeducators are currently working in your school?

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3 or more

10. How long have you been working with your current physical education paraeducator?

a. 1 year

b. 2 years

c. 3 years

d. 4 or more years

11. What is the reason for the hiring of physical education paraeducators? (Select all that apply)

a. Cost effective solution to budgeting restrictions

b. Meet student-to-teacher ratios

c. Other

Comments: _____

12. What are the required qualifications for the position of physical education paraeducator? (Select all that apply)

a. High school diploma or GED

b. Some college

c. College Degree

d. Degree in physical education

f. Teaching experience in physical education

g. Experience with sport or coaching

h. Other experience as a paraeducator

i. Background check

i. Other

Comments: _____

13. Who is responsible for the hiring of physical education paraeducator(s) in your school?

A. Administrators

B. School district level employees

C. Outside source

D. Comments: _____

14 Should physical education paraeducators be present for staff/faculty meetings?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

15 Are physical education paraeducator(s) required to be at school the same amount of days as you?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments:_____

16 Do you feel that the physical education paraeducator(s) are respected by other teachersand faculty?

a. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

17 Are the physical education paraeducator(s) essential to the success of your school's physical education program?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

18 Have you ever been provided with a written job description for the job of a physicaleducation paraeducator?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

19 Should there be a credentialing process for the job of physical education paraeducators?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

20 Are physical education paraeducator(s) at your school provided training?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

21 Should physical education paraeducators be provided training for the job?

a. Yes

b. No

Comments: _____

22 What would be the most effective way to train paraeducators?

a. Inservice

b. Online program/outside source

c. On the job training

d. Other

Comments: _____

23 Who should provide physical education paraeducator training?

a. Administrators

b. The physical educators they work with

c. Other paraeducators

d. Outside source such as a physical education paraeducator specialists or online program

Comments: _____

24 Who should determine the responsibilities of physical education paraeducators?

a. State department of education

b. School district level employees

c. Administrators

d. Physical Educator(s)

Comments: _____

Indicate whether each of the following physical education paraeducator responsibilities are nota responsibility, rarely a responsibility, sometimes a responsibility, or primary responsibility, for your physical education paraeducator(s).

25 Doing clerical and paper work

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

26 Taking attendance

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

27 Setting up/taking down, managing equipment

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

28 Attending faculty and staff meetings

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

29 Contributing ideas for lesson planning

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

30 Planning lessons

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

31 Contribute ideas for lesson planning

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

32 Assisting with instruction, practice, feedback

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

33 Teaching when the physical educator is absent

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

34 Presenting or instructing new skills, games, and/or activities

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

35 Conducting assessments and fitness testing

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

36 Providing behavior management/ Supervising students

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

37 Assisting students with disabilities

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

38 Attending to student needs (shoe tying, taking students to the nurse, etc.)

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

39 Escorting students to and from physical education

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

40 Assisting with locker rooms/ dressing out

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

41 Escorting students to bathrooms/water

a. Not a responsibility

b. Rarely a responsibility

c. Sometimes a responsibility

d. Primary responsibility

Comments:_____

42 Thank you for completing our survey. You now have the option to be contacted for a possible interview regarding the roles of physical education paraeducators. Below is the information on what the interviews will entail.

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore physical educator, administrator, and physical education paraeducator experiences and perceptions of the job of physical education paraeducators. This study is being conducted by Ashleigh Higgins, under the direction of Dr. Alice Buchanan in the Auburn University School of Kinesiology. You were chosen as a prospective participant because you are a physical educator employed in a public school in Alabama where a physical education paraeducator is also employed, and you are aged 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? Upon completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to leave your contact information to be contacted about an interview. If you leave your contact information, Alice Buchanan or Ashleigh Higgins will contact you about scheduling a potential interview, and provide any additional information for you. The interviews will be held virtually and privately on Zoom, lasting around 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be done at a time and date convenient for you. During the interview, you will be asked questions regarding

your experiences working with a physical education paraeducator, as well as your perceptions about the roles of physical education paraeducators.

Are there any risks or discomforts? A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk, only Ashleigh Higgins or Dr. Alice Buchanan will collect all data from surveys and interviews. They will replace your name with a unique identifier. All interviews will be held virtually through private meetings on Zoom. In addition, all identifiable information contained in interview audio recordings will be removed during transcription. The handheld tape recorder will not be connected to the Internet and transcription will occur immediately following the interview. All transcribed data will be stored on Ashleigh Higgins' password protected encrypted computer.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in the study you will have the opportunity to share your experiences working with a physical education paraeducator. You will also have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the roles physical education paraeducators play in the school, and in physical education. Due to this being the first study regarding the job of physical education paraeducators, your experiences and perceptions of the job can shed light on and help others become knowledgeable about the employment and roles of physical education paraeducators. I/We do not guarantee that you will receive any or all of these benefits.

Will you receive any compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Are there any costs? No costs are associated with your participation in this study.

Should you change your mind about participating you can withdraw from the study at any point, as long as your data are identifiable. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to only complete the survey, and decline to interview. If you choose to withdraw, any of your data

will be removed. This decision to participate, not participate, or stop participating will not jeopardize your relationship with Auburn University, the School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins, or Dr. Alice Buchanan.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be presented at a national or international conference, and may be published in a professional journal.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Ashleigh Higgins akh004 8@auburn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board through email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu or by phone at (334)- 844-5966.

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE SELECT ANSWER CHOICE **A.** "YES I AM WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW" AND LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IN THE COMMENT BOX BELOW ANSWER CHOICE A. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE SELECT ANSWER CHOICE **B**. "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW".

A. "Yes, I am willing to be contacted about an interview" Comments:

_____

B. "No, I do not wish to be contacted about an interview."

APPENDIX C: PHYSICAL EDUCATION PARAEDUCATOR SURVEY

Physical Education Paraeducator Perceptions Qualtrics Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore physical educator, administrator, and physical education paraeducator experiences and perceptions of the job of physical education paraeducators. This study is being conducted by Ashleigh Higgins, under the direction of Dr. Alice Buchanan in the Auburn University School of Kinesiology. You were chosenas a prospective participant because you are a physical education paraeducator employed in a public school in Alabama, and you are aged 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? Shall you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an online survey, that will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete. Upon completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to participate in an interview, lasting around 30 to 60 minutes. These interviews will be held virtually on zoom and recorded by a handheld tape recorder not connected to the internet. These interviews will be at a time anddate convenient for you. ***THE LAST QUESTION ON THIS SURVEY WILL ASK IF YOU ARE WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW. ***

Are there any risks or discomforts? A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk, only Ashleigh Higgins or Dr. Alice Buchanan will collect all data from surveys and interviews. They will replace your name with a unique identifier. In addition, all identifiableinformation contained in interview audio recordings will be removed during transcription. The audio recording device will not be connected to the Internet and transcription will occur immediately following the interview. All transcribed data will be stored on Ashleigh Higgins' password protected encrypted computer.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in the study you will have the opportunity to share your experiences working with a physical education paraeducator. You will also have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the roles physical education paraeducators play in the school, and in physical education. Due to this being the first study regarding the job of physical education paraeducators, your experiences and perceptions of thejob can shed light on and help others become knowledgeable about the employment and roles of physical education paraeducators. I/We do not guarantee that you will receive any or all of these benefits.

Will you receive any compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Are there any costs? No costs are associated with your participation in this study.

Should you change your mind about participating you can withdraw from the study at any point, as long as your data are identifiable. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to only complete the survey, and decline to interview. If you choose to withdraw, any of your data will be removed. This decision to participate, not participate, or stop participating will not jeopardize your relationship with Auburn University, the School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins, or Dr. Alice Buchanan.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be presented at a national or international conference, and may be published in a professional journal.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Ashleigh Higgins akh0048@auburn.edu .

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board through email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu or by phone at (334)-844-5966.

AFTER READING THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF SELECTING "YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY", OR "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY". SELECTING "YES, I WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY" BELOW, INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE QUALTRICS SURVEY. IF YOU SELECT THIS OPTION YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO PROCEDE THROUGH THE SURVEY. BY SELECTING "NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY" AND TYPING YOUR NAME IN THE SPACE BELOW, INDICATES THAT YOU DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE AT ALL AND DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT THIS STUDY. IF YOU SELECT THIS OPTION YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY.

A. "Yes, I will participate in the online qualtrics survey"

B. "No, I do not wish to participate in this study"

2. Select the age range that best fits you

A. 29 years of age or younger

B. 30 – 40 years of age

C. 41 – 50 years of age

D. 51 – 60 years of age

E. 61 or more years of age

3. Indicate your sex.

A. Male

B. Female

C. I prefer not to answer

4. Select the level of education that fits you best.

A. High School Diploma or GED

B. Some college

C. Bachelor's Degree

D. Master's Degree or Doctorate

E. Other

5. Indicate the number of years you have been a paraeducator.

A. 1 – 3 years

B. 4 – 6 years

C. 7 – 9 years

D. 10 or more years

6. What grade levels are taught at your current school? _____

7. On average how many students on average are in a physical education class?

A. 40 students or less

B. 41 – 75 students

C. 76 – 110 students

D. 110 students or more

8.How many physical education teachers are currently working in your school (including adaptive physical educators if they are employed for your school only)

A. 1

B. 2

C. 3 or more

9. How many physical education paraeducators are currently working in your school, including you?

A. 1

B. 2

C. 3 or more

10. How long have you been working with your current physical educator?

A. 1 year

B. 2 years

C. 3 years

D. 4 or more years

11. What is the reason for the hiring of physical education paraeducators? (Select all that apply)

A. Cost effective solution to budgeting restrictions

B. Meet student-to-teacher ratios

C. Other

Comments: _____

12. What are the required qualifications for the position of physical education paraeducator? (Select all that apply)

A. High school diploma or GED

B. Some college

C. College Degree

D. Degree in physical education

E. Teaching experience in physical education

F. Experience with sport or coaching

G. Other experience as a paraeducator

H. Background check

I. Other

Comments: _____

13. Who is responsible for the hiring of physical education paraeducator(s) in your school?

A. Administrators

B. School district level employees

C. Outside source

Comments: _____

14. Should physical education paraeducators be present for staff/faculty meetings?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

15. Are you required to be at school the same amount of days as the physical educator?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments:_____

16. Do you feel respected by other teachers and faculty?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

17. Do you feel respected by the physical education teacher(s)?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

18. Do your physical education teachers see physical education paraeducator(s) as essential tothe success of your school's physical education program?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

19. Have you ever been provided with a written job description for the job of a physicaleducation paraeducator?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

20. Should there be a credentialing process for the job of physical education paraeducators?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

21. Were you provided training for the job?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

22. Should physical education paraeducators be provided training for the job?

A. Yes

B. No

Comments: _____

23. What would be the most effective way to be trained?

A. Inservice

B. Online program/outside source

C. On the job training

D. Other

Comments: _____

24. Who should provide physical education paraeducator training?

A. Administrators

B. The physical educators they work with

C. Other paraeducators

D. Outside source such as a physical education paraeducator specialists or online program

Comments: _____

25. Who should determine the responsibilities of physical education paraeducators?

A. State department of education

B. School district level employees

C. Administrators

D. Physical Educator(s)

Comments: _____

Indicate whether each of the following responsibilities are not your responsibility, rarely your responsibility, sometimes your responsibility, or your primary responsibility, for your physical education paraeducator(s).

26. Doing clerical and paper work

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

27. Taking attendance

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

28. Setting up/taking down, managing equipment

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

29. Attending faculty and staff meetings

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

30. Contributing ideas for lesson planning

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

31. Planning lessons

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

32. Contribute ideas for lesson planning

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

33. Assisting with instruction, practice, feedback

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

34. Teaching when the physical educator is absent

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

35. Presenting or instructing new skills, games, and/or activities

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

36. Conducting assessments and fitness testing

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

37. Providing behavior management/ Supervising students

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

38. Assisting students with disabilities

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

39. Attending to student needs (shoe tying, taking students to the nurse, etc.)

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:_____

40. Escorting students to and from physical education

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

41. Assisting with locker rooms/ dressing out

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

42. Escorting students to bathrooms/water

A. Not my responsibility

B. Rarely my responsibility

C. Sometimes my responsibility

D. My primary responsibility

Comments:___

43. Thank you for completing our survey. You now have the option to be contacted for apossible interview regarding the roles of physical education paraeducators. Below is theinformation on what the interviews will entail.

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore physical educator, administrator, and physical education paraeducator experiences and perceptions of the job of physical education paraeducators. This study is being conducted by Ashleigh Higgins, under the directionof Dr. Alice Buchanan in the Auburn University School of Kinesiology. You were chosen as a prospective participant because you are a physical educator employed in a public school in

Alabama where a physical education paraeducator is also employed, and you are aged 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? Upon completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to leave your contact information to be contacted about an interview. If you leave your contact information, Alice Buchanan or Ashleigh Higgins will contact you about scheduling a potential interview, and provide any additional information for you. The interviews will be held virtually and privately on Zoom, lasting around 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be done ata time and date convenient for you. During the interview, you will be asked questions regarding your experiences working as a physical education paraeducator, as well as your perceptions about the roles of physical education paraeducators.

Are there any risks or discomforts? A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk, only Ashleigh Higgins or Dr. Alice Buchanan will collect all data from surveys and interviews. They will replace your name with a unique identifier. All interviews will be held virtually through private meetings on Zoom. In addition, all identifiable information contained in interview audio recordings will be removed during transcription. The handheld tape recorder will not be connected to the Internet and transcription will occur immediately following the interview. All transcribed data will be stored on Ashleigh Higgins' password protected encrypted computer.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in the study you will have the opportunity to share your experiences working with a physical education paraeducator. You will also have the opportunity to share your perceptions of the roles physical education paraeducators play in the school, and in physical education. Due to this being the first study regarding the job of physical education paraeducators, your experiences and perceptions of the job can shed light

on and help others become knowledgeable about the employment androles of physical education paraeducators. I/We do not guarantee that you will receive any orall of these benefits.

Will you receive any compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Are there any costs? No costs are associated with your participation in this study.

Should you change your mind about participating you can withdraw from the study at any point, as long as your data are identifiable. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to only complete the survey, and decline to interview. If you choose to withdraw, any of your data will be removed. This decision to participate, not participate, or stop participating will not jeopardize your relationship with Auburn University, the School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins, or Dr. Alice Buchanan.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in this study will remain confidential.Information obtained through your participation may be presented at a national or international conference, and may be published in a professional journal.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Ashleigh Higgins akh004 8@auburn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board through email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu or by phone at (334)- 844-5966.IF YOU ARE WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE SELECT ANSWER CHOICE **A.** "YES I AM WILLING TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW" AND LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IN THE COMMENT BOX BELOW ANSWER CHOICE A. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN

INTERVIEW, PLEASE SELECT ANSWER CHOICE **B**. “NO, I DONOT WISH TO BE CONTACTED ABOUT AN INTERVIEW”.

A. “Yes, I am willing to be contacted about an interview.” Comments:_____

B. “No, I do not wish to be contacted about an interview.”

APPENDIX D: VERBAL CONSENT TO INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Verbal Consent to Interview Script

"Hello, I am Ashleigh Higgins, and I am a doctoral candidate at Auburn University School ofKinesiology. I am contacting you today because you stated on the online survey entitled _____(Physical Educator perceptions of Physical Education Paraeducator's roles, or PhysicalEducation Paraeducators Perceptions of Their Roles) that you were willing to be contacted about participating in an interview with me. I will remind you that The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from April 28, 2020 to -------

Protocol #20-162 EP2004, Higgins."

"If you choose to participate in the interview, the interview will last 30 to 60 minutes. During the interview, I will ask you questions regarding your experiences working with, or being a Physical Education Paraeducator, as well as your perceptions about the roles of physical education paraeducators."

"Do you have any questions about the interview?"

"Are you still willing to participate in the

interview?"

If participant states "yes", turn on the tape recorder and record that consent.

"I will now turn on the tape recorder and record your consent to being interviewed.""Are you still willing to participate in the interview?"

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Physical Educator

Please take me through your day. What is your average day like working with a PEP?

What are the daily duties of your PEP in physical education? What does that entail?

Do you feel that your PEP was adequately trained for this job?

Do you feel that your PEP was adequately experienced for this job?

Are there any areas you wish your PEP had more knowledge or training in?

How do you feel about your PEP(s) ability to lead the class? Control the class? Do you feel comfortable doing these things?

How would you describe the PEPs role within physical education? Within the school?How do you think the PEP is perceived by your students?

How do you think the PEP is perceived by other faculty/ administration? Are they treated differently than you?

How essential is your PEP to the success of your physical education program? How would you describe your relationship with your PEP?

What is the most challenging part of working with a PEP?

Do you feel that having a PEP is more beneficial than having an additional physicaleducation teacher?

Physical Education Paraeducator

Please take me through your day. What is your average day like working in physicaleducation?

What are your daily duties in physical education? What does that entail?

Do you feel that these duties are appropriate?

Do you feel that you were adequately trained for this job? Why/why not?

In what ways were you experienced for this job?

Are there any areas that receiving more training in would be beneficial for you?

How confident are you in your ability to lead the class? Control the class? Why/why not?

How confident do you feel your physical educator is in your ability to lead the class? Controlthe class? Tell me more about that.

How would you describe your role within physical education?

How are you perceived by your students? By the physical educator?

How would you describe your relationship with your physical educator?

How important do you feel your job is in relation to the success of the physical education program? Tell me more about that.

What is the most challenging part of your job? Best part?

How would you describe your role within the school? How are you perceived by other faculty/administration? Are you treated any differently than the PE teacher? Than otherteachers or support staff?

APPENDIX F: STUDY FLYER

Study of Physical Educator, Physical Education Paraeducator, & Administrator perceptions of the job of Physical Education Paraeducators

Information about the Study

Physical education paraeducators, also known as aides or assistants, have become a common presence in physical education programs, especially in the state of Alabama. Though theyare commonly hired to assist in physical education, there have been no research studies conducted on the practice of hiring physical education paraeducators, their roles, responsibilities, or utilization. Therefore, the intention of this study is to explore administrator, physical educator, and physical education paraeducator perceptions and experiences regarding the job of physical education paraeducators. This is important because there are no studies of this kind in the United States. Additionally, this information could help shed light on the incorporation of physical education paraeducators in physical education, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

Who is conducting the study?

A doctoral candidate with the Auburn University School of Kinesiology, Ashleigh Higgins, under thedirection of Dr. Alice Buchanan. **The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from April 28, 2020 to Protocol #20-162 EP2004, Higgins**

Who can participate?

1. Administrators currently employed at a public school in the state of Alabama where a physicaleducation paraeducator is employed.
2. Physical educators currently employed at a public school in the state of Alabama, who

workwith a physical education paraeducator.

3. Physical education paraeducators currently employed at a public school in the state ofAlabama.

What will be involved? As part of this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey which will take approximately 10 - 20 minutes. If you are a physical educator or physical education paraeducator you will also be asked to participate in an interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. You may choose to only participate in the survey, or to be contacted about a possiblevirtual interview, via the last question of the online survey.

Your participation in this study could shed light on the roles, responsibilities, hiring practices, andutilization of physical education paraeducators.

If you would like to be provided more information please contact Ashleigh Higgins at akh0048@auburn.edu to ask her questions, or to get an information letter.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Ashleigh Higgins by email at akh0048@auburn.edu or by phone (334)398-0669, or Dr. Alice Buchanan by email at buchaa2@auburn.edu.

If you meet the criteria to participate listed above you may use to following appropriate link to seean informed consent page and choose to participate or not participate in this study. If you choose to participate you will proceed to the survey.

Physical Educator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eWfaFfHJ0Xu

3cEt

Physical Education Paraeducator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9oQW1iTZ1DJ

yB6Z

Administrator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0GpdVBEGD

OQqgt

Thank you for your time and consideration.

APPENDIX G: EMAIL INVITE FOR STUDY

Email Invitation for Qualtrics Online Survey

Dear_____,

My name is Ashleigh Higgins, I am a doctoral candidate at Auburn University School of Kinesiology. I am emailing to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to discover the perceptions of the roles of physical education paraeducators. You may participate in this study if you are:

- an administrator in an Alabama public school that has a physical educationparaeducator.
- a physical educator who works with a physical education paraeducator in an Alabama public school
- a physical education paraeducator employed in an Alabama public school.

As part of this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which will take approximately 10 minutes for administrators, and 15-20 minutes for physical educators, and physical education paraeducators. If you are a physical educator or physical education paraeducator, the last question of this survey will ask if you would like to be contacted about a following virtual interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Additional information about interviews will be provided in the last question of the survey.

A potential risk in this study is confidentiality. To minimize this risk I will collect all survey and interview data and replace your name with a unique identifier. All interview data will be recorded on an audio recording device that is not connected to the Internet. All interview data will be transcribed verbatim immediately following the interview by me, and your name

will be replaced with a pseudonym. The transcribed data will be stored on my password protected encrypted computer.

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from April 28, 2020 to --------Protocol #20-162 EP2004, Higgins

If you would like any more information about this study, an information letter can be obtained by emailing me, Ashleigh Higgins at akh0048@auburn.edu. If you have any questions about this study, please email me at akh0048@auburn.edu or Dr. Alice Buchanan, at buchaa2@auburn.edu.

The surveys can be found by using the appropriate following link.

Physical Educator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eWfaFfHJ0Xu3cEt

Physical Education Paraeducator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9oQW1iTZ1DJyB6

Administrator Survey:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0GpdVBEGDSOQgt

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ashleigh K. Higgins