

## Using Secondary Teachers for Frontline Recruitment: The Lost Link for Recruitment

Cate A. Egan PhD<sup>1\*</sup>, Grace Goc Karp PhD<sup>2</sup>, Karie Orendorff PhD<sup>3</sup>, Robert Daniel Michael PhD<sup>3</sup>, Daniel Campbell PhD<sup>1</sup>, Nicole Weinman MED<sup>1</sup>, and Steven Gram, MED<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

There has been a steady decline of students enrolled in physical education teacher education (PETE) programs. The purpose of this study was identify the extent to which Idaho middle and high school physical education teachers recruit students into PETE programs. A 30 question electronic survey was developed and sent to a convenient sample (n=173) physical education teachers in the state of Idaho using publicly available email lists. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using Qualtrics™ and Microsoft Excel software. The results showed that only 22% (n = 34) recruit for enrollment into PETE programs and 72% (n = 113) do not recruit. The most popular methods of recruitment include the use of mentors (n = 14; 41%), teacher certification programs (n = 10; 29%), websites (n = 8; 24%), speakers (n = 8; 24%), handouts (n = 4; 12%), program flyers (n = 4; 12%), degrees (n = 3; 9%) and other (n = 7; 21%). There is limited knowledge about the recruitment of middle and high school students into PETE programs; coupled with the decline in students entering PETE programs, there is a need to better understand recruitment practices. Continued research on recruitment strategies is warranted.

**Keywords:** PETE recruitment, secondary physical education teachers, physical education, PETE

### 1. Introduction

Four-year institutions of higher learning are facing a decline in overall enrollment (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019). In tandem with decreased enrollment, there is a steady decline in high school students entering the fields of teacher education (King, 2018). Similarly, following national trends, there has been a steady decline of students enrolled in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs, and several PETE programs have been eliminated or face elimination on college campuses (Woods & Ayers, 2019). There is a dire need to address recruitment and admission challenges in PETE programs, which has important implications for filling the teacher pipeline, teacher quality, and ultimately K-12 student learning (SHAPE America & National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education [NAKHE], 2018).

In a recent *Journal of Teaching Physical Education* monograph, PETE recruitment and retention was explored from the lens of PETE program coordinators (Woods & Ayers, 2019). The monograph covers an exploratory study examining PETE programs recruitment and retention in the United States (Woods & Ayers, 2019). The study comes from the perspectives of PETE program coordinators via a survey and follow up interviews. In one chapter of this monologue, Richards and Templin (2019) discuss how inter-generation socialization (e.g., poor programs and teaching produce future poor programs and teaching) is a mechanism for our field reproducing itself, and propose that recruitment practices should focus on disrupting the cycle of poor physical education programs and poor teaching.

One way recruitment of potential PETE students is conceptualized is through passive recruitment where students have some sort of positive experience in physical education or sport and/or have some type of limited encouragement to enter into a PETE program (Curtner-Smith, 2017).

<sup>1</sup> University of Idaho 875 Perimeter Drive, Moscow, Idaho 83844

<sup>2</sup> Montana State University Culbertson Hall, 100, Bozeman, MT 59717

<sup>3</sup> Longwood University 201 High Street, Farmville, VA 23909

\*Corresponding Author: [eganca@uidaho.edu](mailto:eganca@uidaho.edu), (p) 770 639-3953 (f) 208-885-5929

Richards and Templin (2019) argue that because of the current numbers in PETE programs this passive approach is limiting and leaves recruitment to chance. Furthermore, research examining the use of PETE coordinators as recruiters found that PETE program coordinators report major barriers to recruitment including a lack of training and no workload responsibility dedicated to the practice of recruitment in secondary schools (Ayers & Woods, 2019). However, PETE program coordinators did report a willingness to work with high school physical education teachers in recruitment practices (Ayers & Woods, 2019). This shows promise in terms of engaging more than one stakeholder (e.g., PETE program directors) into the recruitment discussion. Furthermore, practicing physical educators can take on a form of active recruitment (Richards & Templin, 2019) by identifying and recruiting highly qualified students into the field (Bulger et al., 2015). High school teachers can serve as recruiters by providing high quality physical education that provides a solid model for what physical education should be, and this may help to combat the negative cycle of poor physical education programming (Richards & Templin, 2019). In tandem with providing a quality physical education program, teachers can provide active recruitment strategies such as providing job shadowing opportunities, discussing PETE programs, and having conversations with potential students (Woods et al., 2016).

When discussing recruitment, it is essential to also examine student motivation and what drives students to enter different career fields. Four major motivations for entering a career field include (a) helping motivation, (b) career motivation, (c) interest or intrinsic motivation and (d) loafing motivation (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). The helping motivation describes people who want to work with people and benefit society. Teaching by nature benefits society and should be fore fronted in recruitment strategies to ensure we target students with helping motivation. Career motivation is most easily defined by persons striving for external success which lies in both extrinsic (external awards; Deci & Ryan, 2002) and achievement motivation (achieving compared to reference group; Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). Many people from sporting backgrounds may be motivated by extrinsic and achievement motivation. Interest motivation describes people who may derive/expect enjoyment from the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Similar to career motivation, interest motivation may also apply to those with sporting backgrounds. Finally, loafing motivation is related to those who choose a degree based off the notion that is the easiest way to reach one's personal goals. Students with loafing motivation may not be the target for a recruitment strategy, as it may lend itself to someone entering our programs just to be a coach and would be the antithesis (disrupting cycle of poor teaching) of what Richards & Templin (2019) discussed about breaking the current cycle of failing physical education programming. Examining and targeting student motivations for entering fields should be considered when recruiting.

With numbers in programs declining and teacher shortages increasing we must start considering options for recruitment especially in the West and Midwest regions. These two regions are predicted to see the greatest declines in PETE programs (SHAPE America & NAKHE Joint Task Force, 2018). Some of the key recommendations to combat the decline in PETE recruitment include (a) promoting the profession with high school students and physical education teachers and (b) as university employees engaging in active recruitment efforts with high school students (SHAPE & NAKHE, 2018). The monograph, provided a solid framework for pushing research and discussing recruitment in PETE. However, in service physical education teachers perspectives on recruitment were not explored. Secondary physical education teachers may be key stakeholders (e.g., serve as the frontline) of recruitment efforts in K-12 schools. As a university in the western region of the United States we felt it necessary to examine the recruitment practices of secondary school physical education teachers in the state of Idaho. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the extent to which middle and high school physical education teachers recruit students into programs. The specific research questions were (a) why they do or do not recruit? (b) how they recruit and with whom?, (c) the types of resources used for recruitment?, and (d) the types of resources desired for recruitment.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants and Setting

Idaho physical education teachers identified from publicly made available lists ( $n = 158$ ; 48% response rate) that consented to participate in the study included middle school teachers ( $n = 66$ ; 42%), high school ( $n = 63$ ; 40%), combination (e.g., K-8, middle and high, Jr High) ( $n = 19$ ; 29%), and no response ( $n = 9$ ; 14%). The average years teaching experience were 10+ years ( $n = 105$ ; 66%), 5-10 years ( $n = 26$ ; 16%), 3-4 years ( $n = 11$ ; 7%), and 1-2 years ( $n = 7$ ; 4%). Respondents worked in a school population with less than 4,999 people ( $n = 47$ ; 30%), 5,000 - 9,999 people ( $n = 21$ ; 13%), 10,000 - 19,999 ( $n = 13$ ; 8%), 20,000 - 50,000 ( $n = 29$ ; 18%), and over 50,000 ( $n = 40$ ; 25%). The levels of education reported were Bachelor's degree ( $n = 82$ ; 52%), Graduate ( $n = 55$ ; 35%), and working on a graduate degree ( $n = 12$ ; 8%).

Classification of school reported were 1A division 1 (n = 11; 7%), 1A division 2 (n = 5; 3%), 2A (n = 14; 9%), 3A (n = 24; 15%), 4A (n = 34; 22%), 5A (n = 33; 21%), and no classification (i.e., middle or elementary) (n = 28; 18%; See Table 1).

**Table 1. Demographics**

Features	N	%
Level taught		
Middle	66	42
High	63	40
Combo	19	29
No response	9	14
Average years taught		
1-2	7	4
3-4	11	7
5-10	26	16
10+	105	66
School size		
< 4,999	47	30
5,000-9,999	21	13
10,000-19,999	13	8
20,000-50,000	29	18
50,000+	40	25
Degree earned		
Bachelors	82	52
Graduate Completed	55	35
Graduate In Process	12	8
School Classification		
1A Division 1	11	7
1A Division 2	5	3
2A	14	9
3A	24	15
4A	34	22
5A	33	21
No classification	28	18

*Note.* Available data in 159 completed surveys.

## 2.2 Instrumentation

A 30-question electronic survey was developed and sent to a panel of five experts that consisted of graduate physical education students and PETE faculty to determine its content validity. The survey software Qualtrics™ (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) also provided survey feedback about survey questions and length. Based on feedback, several minor revisions were made, which included, changing the number of text boxes and overall survey length. Once revised, the survey was sent to a convenient sample of ( $N = 328$ ) of all secondary physical education teachers listed on school districts websites in the state of Idaho. Sample questions included: (a) to what extent are you as a physical educator, involved in the recruitment of students to choose a career path in Physical Education? (b) If you do not recruit students into the profession, please explain why below (e.g., never occurred to me, not enough time, etc.), (c) what resources do you use to recruit?, and (d) If resources were provided to you to aid in the recruitment of students, which resources would you find most helpful?

The survey consisted of 30 questions (20 multiple-choice, 6 short-answer, 2 rank order, and 2 Likert-scale) and was organized into five sections: (a) demographics, (b) dispositions (c) recruitment strategies, (d) recruitment resources, and (e) other. Demographic questions included items regarding the teacher's grade-level, size of the community, number of years teaching, and the highest level of education achieved. Questions referring to dispositions examined why someone chose to enter the profession. Recruitment questions addressed the participant's involvement in the recruitment process and strategies that were used. Questions about recruitment resource availability and type were included.

### 2.3 Survey Administration

After IRB approval was obtained, the survey links were sent out via email three times between May and October. Emails were obtained from publicly available school and district websites. A survey link (via QR code) was also posted at the SHAPE Western District conference (Boise, Idaho) in June, 2018 for Idaho physical education teachers. Physical education teachers were informed that the average time to complete the survey was approximately 8 minutes. Two additional follow-up emails were sent out in November. The surveys were administered via survey software Qualtrics™. The online survey allowed participants to answer the survey anonymously. The collection period ended in November.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed and descriptive statistics were calculated using Qualtrics™ and Microsoft Excel software. Descriptive statistics were analyzed in Excel while statistical mining was performed in Qualtrics including performing a Chi-Squared test to examine for possible relationships between respondent characteristics and behaviors. Data are presented as raw scores and percentages as a complement to the qualitative analysis performed on the open-ended questions. Open-ended responses were qualitatively analyzed to inductively identify commonalities and common themes that emerged. The coded data was placed into categories and co-authors discussed themes that were emerging. The co-authors performed a content analysis by confirming the themes through the identification of supporting examples from participant responses and verifying the percentages for each theme (Patton, 2014).

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Dispositions

Participants were asked about their reasons for choosing a profession in physical education profession. The reasons participants chose included the desire to coach ( $n = 115$ ; 73%), desire to teach ( $n = 102$ ; 65%), positive influence from their physical education teacher ( $n = 52$ ; 33%), summers off ( $n = 45$ ; 28%), stay in school environment ( $n = 32$ ; 20%), parents ( $n = 16$ ; 10%), and other ( $n = 27$ ; 17%). Some of the common themes that emerged from the other responses included: influenced by others (e.g., college professors, family members were physical education teachers, coaches, working with kids, wanting to give back, and schedule was conducive to starting a family). Participants were asked to rank the reasons they chose to enter the profession (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Why did you choose to enter the profession?**

Recruit	Unimportant		Slightly important		Moderately important		Important		Very important	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
I want to help other people	0	0	0	2	0	9	9	38	25	64
I wanted to serve society	0	5	0	11	3	26	16	48	11	22
I wanted to make the world a better place	0	0	0	8	4	19	10	51	19	34
The degree seemed easy to pass	20	66	8	25	5	15	0	5	0	2
I knew that I would manage the degree without doing too much work	21	81	9	20	3	7	0	3	0	2
It was the easiest option for me	23	85	5	15	4	9	1	3	0	1
I am not concerned with other people	22	86	2	9	6	11	0	4	2	2
It is fascinating subject to study	1	3	0	7	10	31	13	48	10	23
For me it was very important to study a degree that I enjoy	0	1	0	0	1	4	9	30	24	78
I wanted to know more about the subject	1	4	2	7	9	30	13	44	9	28
It provides me with a secure career options	0	4	4	12	8	25	13	48	8	24
I wanted a well-paid job	8	34	6	31	12	27	7	18	1	3
It is very competitive, and I am an achiever	4	25	3	14	16	34	6	30	5	8

*Note.* Participants answer each category based on a Likert-type ranking.

### 3.2 Recruitment Strategies and Process

The results showed that only 22% ( $n = 34$ ) recruit for enrollment into PETE programs and 72% ( $n = 113$ ) do not recruit (high school (49), middle school (48), both (13), and K-12 (3)). The reasons teachers reported for not recruiting ( $n = 113$ ; 76.9%) were: (a) it never occurred to them ( $n = 38$ ; 34%), (b) the low pay of the profession ( $n = 11$ ; 10%), (c) lack of time ( $n = 8$ ; 7%) and (d) they do not actively recruit but if a student asks a question they will answer ( $n = 6$ ; 5%). See Figure 1. Of the teachers that actively recruit for PETE, 85% ( $n = 29$ ) have been teacher 10 or more years and 41% ( $n = 14$ ) have or are pursuing a graduate degree. When discussing physical education with students, the topics covered are benefit of the job ( $n = 28$ ; 82%), working with youth ( $n = 28$ ; 82%), service to society ( $n = 17$ ; 50%), compatibility with personality ( $n = 17$ ; 50%), interpersonal desires ( $n = 11$ ; 32%), time compatibility ( $n = 9$ ; 26%), money ( $n = 7$ ; 21%), and other (e.g., coaching) ( $n = 1$ ; 3%; See Figure 2).

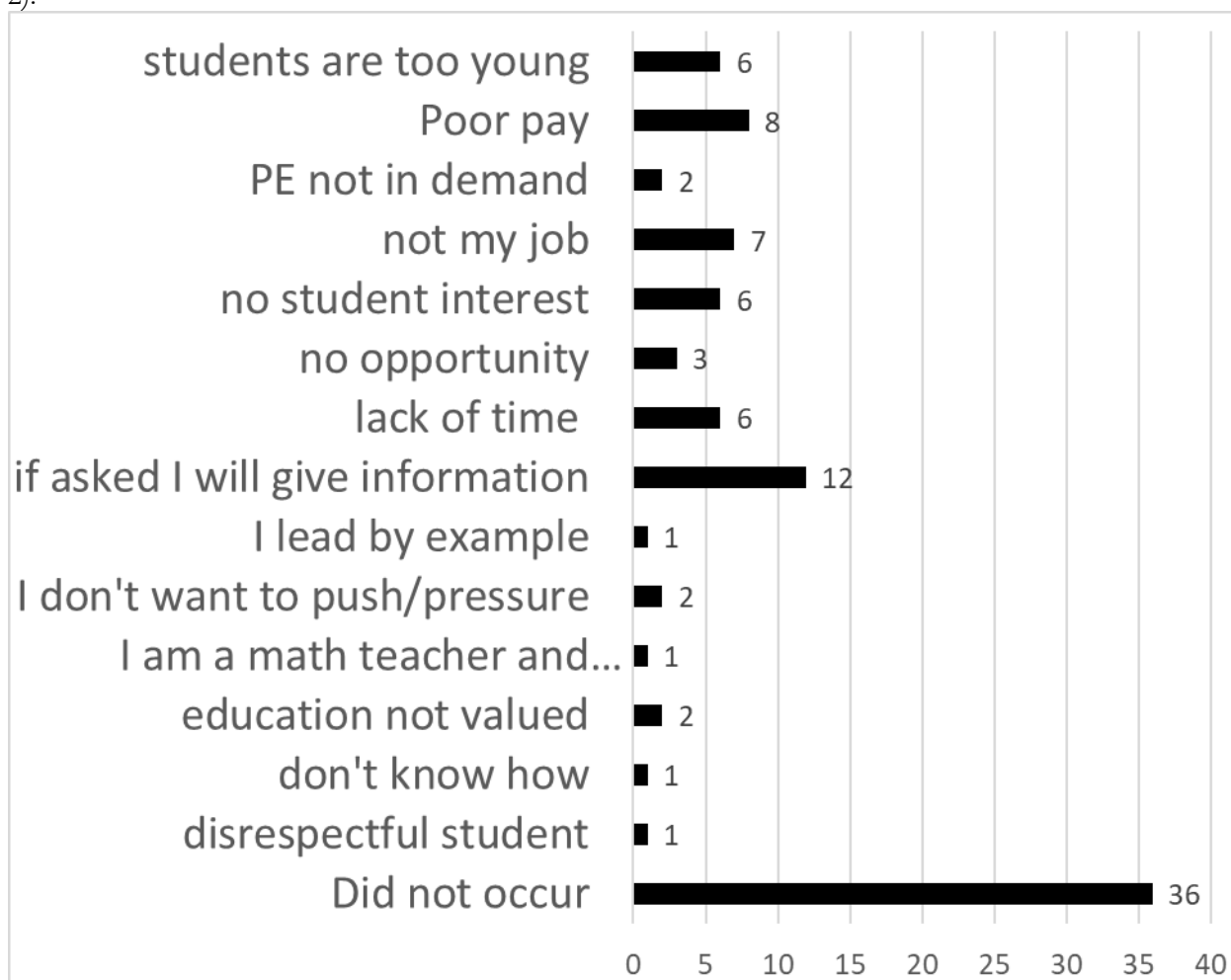


Figure 1: Reasons why I do not recruit

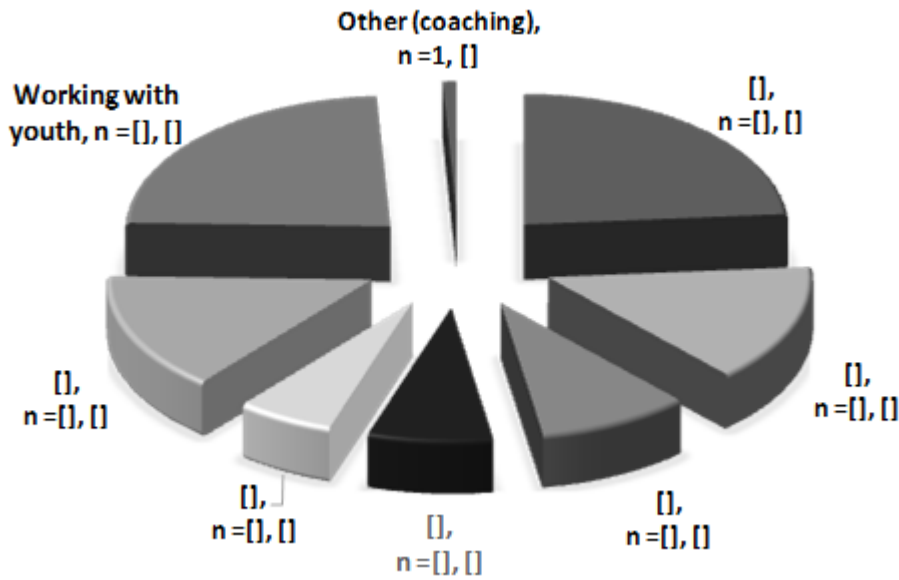


Figure 2: What do you talk about with your students

Teachers indicated that the most common students that are approached for recruitment were: anyone who approached the teacher ( $n = 9$ ; 26%), those with skills in physical activity or athletics ( $n = 8$ ; 24%), those with skills in teaching and organization ( $n = 6$ ; 18%), all students ( $n = 4$ ; 12%), and other (e.g., coaching) ( $n = 3$ ; 9%). The qualities that a teachers looks for when discussing PETE were responsibility ( $n = 27$ ; 79%), good leader ( $n = 26$ ; 76%), interest in coaching ( $n = 22$ ; 65%), good communicator ( $n = 22$ ; 65%), good organizer and manager ( $n = 19$ ; 56%), natural teacher ( $n = 19$ ; 56%), and other ( $n = 3$ ; 9%).

3.3 Resources

The most popular methods of recruitment include the use of mentors ( $n = 14$ ; 41%), teacher certification programs ( $n = 10$ ; 29%), websites ( $n = 8$ ; 24%), speakers ( $n = 8$ ; 24%), handouts ( $n = 4$ ; 12%), program flyers ( $n = 4$ ; 12%), degrees ( $n = 3$ ; 9%) and other ( $n = 7$ ; 21%). Respondents also indicated that they desire testimonials, blogs, practicum students, webinars, downloadable presentations, and posters to aid in their recruitment efforts, See Figure 3.

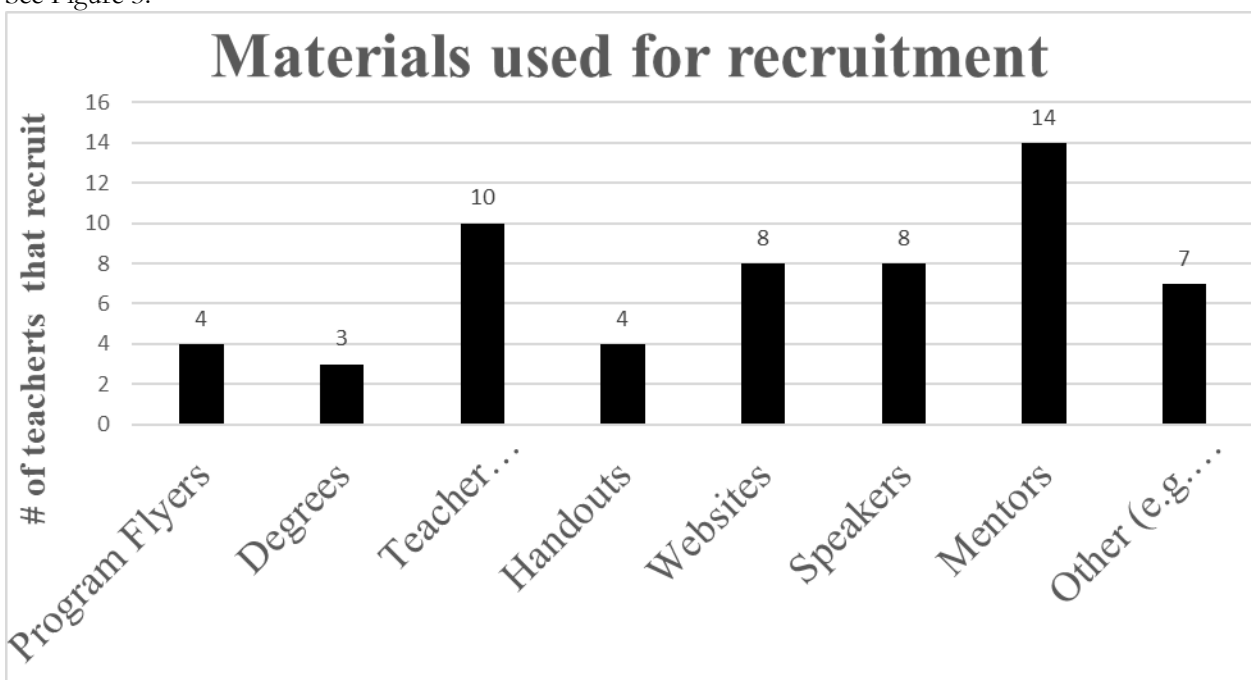


Figure 3: Types of resources used and desired

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to identify the extent to which middle and high school physical education teachers recruit high school students into PETE programs. We examined how and why teachers recruit, who is recruiting, the types of resources used for recruitment, and the types of resources desired for recruitment.

We found that the majority of teachers 72% ( $n = 113$ ) do not recruit in the state of Idaho. However, the number one reasons (34%) teachers indicated that they did not recruit is also indicated that it had never occurred to them to recruit. This result is promising as it shows that perhaps with knowledge and resources teachers will be willing to recruit. On the other hand, 22% ( $n = 34$ ) said they would recruit, and as previous research suggests, PETE program coordinators are willing to work with high school teachers (Ayers & Wood, 2019); this shows promise as a future option for recruitment efforts. However, both PETE program coordinators, and physical educators reported a lack of knowledge about recruitment strategies and some similar barriers which need to be taken into account (Ayers & Wood, 2019). SHAPE America and NAKHE (2018) recommend both national organizations and state organizations provide up to date information on teacher recruitment and the demand for teacher educators in their state. Perhaps, additionally resources (e.g., how to recruit webinar) could also be provided on the state/national webpages.

These teachers reported using the following resources currently; mentoring students, promoting teacher education programs, websites, speakers, handouts, and program flyers. The teachers also indicated that they would like to include testimonials, blogs, practicum students, webinars, downloadable presentations, and posters. Testimonials could be video-recorded clips of current students talking about their experiences in college, and why they choose their major. Blogs could be similar but would need to be monitored. Webinars and downloadable presentations should include pertinent information. When examining the recruitment of teachers to rural schools, Maranto and Shuls (2013) found that websites should be used because they are the primary way someone from the outside learns about a new thing (Maranto & Shuls, 2013). These websites should include information about public service, freedom (innovation), advancement, professional growth, teamwork, results driven, and salary (Maranto & Shuls, 2013). While websites were not requested by the teachers, these critical areas mentioned in the article, can be applied to the materials that were requested. For example, on downloadable presentations and in testimonials.

As indicated, secondary physical education teachers, would also like to use practicum students as a recruitment tool into the profession. Using practicum students as possible recruiters could be appealing to students who fall into the intrinsic or interest motivation. Our profession needs teachers who derive enjoyment from activity and would like to promote activity (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Practicum experiences (including student teaching) allow PETE students the opportunity to transfer teaching skills into practice within a controlled context and under supervision (Iaochite, & Costa Filho, 2016). Additionally, practicum students can discuss their PETE programs to secondary students during their practicum experiences, in the hopes of making the option of pursuing a career in physical education more appealing. While the practicum experience is advantageous for the PETE student, exposing high school students to the PETE field and discussing their experiences in PETE programs could be advantageous to the profession. Using the practicum students as promoters of the profession may help encourage students to consider becoming a physical education teacher as their career choice. Secondary students may feel more comfortable interacting with and asking questions about PETE with practicum students (Briggs, 2013).

The teachers identified characteristics both intrinsic and extrinsic that not only motivated them into the profession but appears to motivate students into the profession. Additionally, these similar characteristics were what teachers identified as what they looked for in students when recruiting them into the profession. Despite the possible negative influences on physical education through the recruitment of students with extrinsic motivations, e.g., loafing motivation, it appears important for all stakeholders to address the relationship of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of recruitment in our profession for both the recruiter and the student.

There are limitations to every study and one limitation to this study was that it was only conducted with schools in Idaho. Future studies could include different regions of the United States or even possibly a state-by-state study. Additionally, this study is limited to self-report data and potential response bias and also relies almost entirely on secondary physical educator's perceptions ( $n = 3$  K-12 teachers). Future survey studies could include the perceptions of elementary teachers, secondary age students and practicum students

## 5. Conclusion

Although we are seeing declining numbers in PETE programs (Woods & Ayers, 2019) there are physical education jobs available and we need highly qualified people to fill them. We need to attempt to break the cycle of poor programs and teaching in physical education and model quality physical education programming (Richards & Templin, 2019). Furthermore, we should be engaging physical education teachers in recruitment alongside PETE programs (Ayers & Woods, 2019; Woods et al., 2016). Recruiting early (e.g., secondary education physical education programs) and by informing secondary students that there is a teacher shortage and there will be jobs upon graduation could help bolster PETE and the profession at the same time (SHAPE America & NAKHE, 2018). PETE programs and state organizations should examine ways to identify strong physical education programs and teachers and provide these programs with resources for recruitment (e.g., practicum students, webinars, posters).

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