

## **STUDENT TEACHING PLACEMENT POLICY**

The semester (16 weeks) spent student teaching is the capstone experience for students in the University of Wyoming (UW) physical education teacher education (PETE) program and represents an opportunity to hone technical skills for teaching, to experience the contextual nature of a school and its political climate, and to develop a professional reputation that will aid in earning a full-time teaching position upon completion. Since professional preparation of students is our focus, the decision regarding which cooperating teachers that student teachers are placed with is paramount. Because the PETE program is a K-12 licensure program, it is necessary to place student teachers at both the elementary (Kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade) and secondary (6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) levels, thus placement decisions involve in most cases, two cooperating teachers.

As a UW PETE faculty, we prioritize cooperating teachers who (a) consistently demonstrate best teaching practices, (b) have mentorship experience with a record of effectiveness, and (c) are highly familiar with the quality standards of the UW PETE program. It is the cooperating teachers described above who tend to provide the best student teaching experience for UW PETE pre-service teachers. The decision about all placements are made through a consensus of the PETE faculty, and are based on the following numbered priorities and bullet-point rationales:

### **Priority #1 – Capability, experience, and professionalism of the cooperating teacher.**

- The cooperating teacher's reputation for delivering quality physical education instruction is of crucial importance, as decades of research indicates that pre-service teachers must be exposed to an exemplary professional role model in order to develop high-quality and sustainable teaching skills, behaviors, and dispositions (Richards et al., 2014). Cooperating teachers' reputation can be confirmed in a variety of ways, including PETE faculty observation, performance/interactions at professional development events, and observations from colleagues and supervisors.
- The cooperating teacher's experience and demonstrated effectiveness in providing mentorship is also a priority, as pre-service teachers need strong guidance through a reflective cycle of their teaching decisions, performance, and student responses to develop long-term teaching effectiveness (Graham et al., 2020). This reflective cycle is foundational to and begun early in the UW PETE program, and cooperating teachers must be familiar with effective mentorship strategies used by UW PETE faculty and have the leadership capabilities to steer pre-service teachers toward long-term reflective practice.
- Since the UW PETE program relies on the use of systematic observation as a tool to ensure pre-service teachers utilize best practices, it is critical that cooperating teachers are trained in and have experience with the instruments utilized in the PETE program. These include the following systematic observation instruments: (a) Qualitative Dimensions of Task Presentation, Lesson Introduction, Lesson Closure (QDITC), (b) Academic Learning Time – Physical Education (ALT-PE; (Silverman et al., 1991)), (c) Feedback & Names Form, (d) Teacher Position & Function Form, Hamrick Demonstration Form, and (e) Professional Behaviors & Dispositions Evaluation Form (Byra & Coulon, 1994).

### **Priority #2 – Geographic location of the cooperating school district.**

- The location of the school district is important because the UW PETE faculty, who also possess research, service, and additional on-campus teaching commitments, are charged with providing all on-site evaluation and visitations. Due to the vast distances between school districts in Wyoming, a good deal of travel is required to provide the minimum of two site-visits to the roughly 15 pre-service teachers (30 site-visits total) placed each Spring semester.
- Another rationale for considering geographic location is that according to [UW's land-grant mission](#), the university should expand intellectual and economic opportunities to communities across the state. For this reason, it is important to engage teachers in many Wyoming locales and the UW PETE faculty seek to develop collaborations with teachers in as many Wyoming school districts as possible.

- To make the travel to site-visits for the UW PETE faculty more feasible, a three-year rotation between the northern (Cody, Powell, Sheridan, Gillette), central (Lander, Riverton, Thermopolis, Casper), and southern (Green River, Rock Springs, Rawlins, Cheyenne) regions of the state is scheduled in advance. This rotation is necessary for the coordination of site visits in combination with the coverage of teaching, research, and service job requirements for the PETE site supervisor.
- Since the UW PETE program operates multiple laboratory field experiences within Laramie area schools for pre-service teachers in three prior semesters, student teaching placement in Laramie is limited and only pre-service teachers with special circumstances are placed in Laramie (See Priority #3)

### **Priority #3 – Pre-service teachers’ needs and preferences.**

- Since the choice of school district where placement will occur is pre-determined by the regional rotation (See Priority #2), pre-service teachers are only able to voice their preference for placement within the parameters of the pre-selected districts and the cooperating teachers identified in corresponding districts in the semester leading up to student teaching. Preferences are taken into consideration, but no guarantees are made that pre-service teachers will be placed in their first choice of locations. It is important to note that when pairing pre-service teachers’ preferences with a cooperating teacher and/or location, the strongest possible educational and mentoring experience is of most importance (See Priority #1).
- Some students may be placed in Laramie if they possess special circumstances that would make their placement outside of Laramie detrimental to their success. These special circumstances are typically limited to the pre-service teacher being married to and living with a spouse in Laramie, being on full athletic or other academic scholarship that would require the student to live in Laramie to fulfill, or in rare instances where significant circumstances are considered. The nature of the need for special placement is collectively determined by the PETE faculty.
- The hometown and graduating high school of pre-service teachers is considered in the placement decision, such that students are not placed in their hometowns. Despite some pre-service teachers desiring a hometown placement for the sake of convenient living arrangements or desire to work in their home school district(s), it is more beneficial for pre-service teachers to not be placed in their hometown because the previous relationships they have developed there may influence their ability to meet the expectations of the UW PETE program. Additionally, it is more beneficial for pre-service teachers to establish a professional reputation in a district where they do not already have relationships (i.e. hometown), as this demonstrates that they have developed the professional capabilities that will benefit them in any location.
- It is acknowledged that pre-service teachers may face some financial hardship in relocating to a different city/town for the four months of their student teaching and that some Wyoming (and occasional out of state) locations are more easily inhabited than others. For this reason, the UW PETE faculty work directly with the Division of Kinesiology & Health to offer internship stipends that offset a part of the costs that may be incurred with relocation. Additionally, pre-service teachers are placed in locations with at least one other pre-service teacher so that living costs may be shared (if acceptable to all parties). UW PETE faculty also advise students well in advance of student teaching where they will be placed and can confirm to their Laramie landlords that they are required to leave for internship, thus helping to release them from lease obligations.

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Graham, G., Holt/Hale, S. A., Parker, M., Hall, T., & Patton, K. (2020). *Children moving: A reflective approach to teaching physical education* (10th ed.). McGraw Hill.

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