

# *The Field Experience Journal*

*Volume 10 Fall 2012*

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**Cover:** *The Man in the Maze*

The Man in the Maze is a type of unicursal labyrinth, represented in the basket making and silversmithing of the American Southwest, especially among the Tohono O'odham nation, characterized by seven concentric circles.

The twin themes of Life and Choice are commonly depicted in this type of labyrinth. The "Man in the Maze" was originally created as an illustration of the emergence story by the Tohono O'odham or Papago Indians of Southern Arizona.

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## ***Submission Guidelines:***

1. Manuscripts should be no more than 15 pages of narrative (excluding references, tables, and appendices), using the latest APA style, and double-spaced on one side of 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper with justified margins.
2. Manuscripts must be submitted electronically via email attachment to [kim.creasy@sru.edu](mailto:kim.creasy@sru.edu) containing name, position, place of employment, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, and a 2-3 sentence description of background and experience for each author. The title of the article should also appear on page 1 of the manuscript, but do not include the author(s) name(s).
3. Pages should be numbered consecutively including the bibliography, but the author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.
4. Charts or illustrative material will be accepted if space permits. Such materials must be camera-ready. Photographs will usually not be used unless they are black and white and of high quality.
5. Authors are expected to take full responsibility for the accuracy of the content in their articles, including references, quotations, tables, and figures. The editor reserves the right to edit articles accepted for publication.
6. Authors of manuscripts accepted for publication are expected to make a presentation about their article at the next National Student Teaching Supervision Conference.
7. There is no remuneration for articles accepted for publication, but each author will be mailed a complimentary copy of the journal. There is no fee for the review of the manuscript.

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## From the Editor

Dear Readers of *The Field Experience Journal*:

The first submission included in this edition of *The Field Experience Journal* comes from Darra Pace, Elfreda Blue, and Stephen Hernandez of Hofstra University. Their study addresses the overrepresentation of minorities in public education's special education classrooms and the impact culturally competent teacher preparation programs may have to meet the needs of a diverse learning population.

Kimberly Triplett and Lindsey Nicholson of Mississippi State University and the public school system of Meridian, Mississippi focus on programs being utilized in school settings to prevent bullying as a part of the curriculum.

"Using Instructional to Facilitate Reflection, Integration, and Transition during the Senior Year Experience" is an article shared by Emily M. Jones and Sean M. Bulger of West Virginia University. This selection describes the challenges associated with managing capstone courses in teacher preparation and the related technology solutions.

Greg Gibbs of St. Bonaventure University shares his experiences and thoughts on the frequency of opportunities for higher order thinking through a hybrid delivery of course material as compared to the traditional classroom setting.

This edition's final article titled: "Untie My Hands and Give Me a Voice: A Beginning Teacher's View of Teaching" comes from Sylvia Grace James of the Meridian Public Schools and Janet F. McCarra of Mississippi State University-Meridian Campus. This entry shares the perspectives of a new professional concerning the problems encountered during the first two years of teaching relating to high stakes testing, paperwork, and the lack of consistency within a school district concerning methods of instruction.

Finally, my thanks to those who have contributed their manuscripts for our consideration and to our reviewers for their time and expertise.

Kim L. Creasy

**Student Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Roles in Instruction and  
Recommendations for Student Placement**

*Darra Pace, Elfreda Blue, and Stephen Hernandez*

*Hofstra University*

The issue of overrepresentation of minorities in special education has been a problem since integration of all children in the public schools in the 1960s (Dunn, 1966; Mehan, Hartweck, & Miehl, 1986; Ferri & Connor, 2005). This long standing civil rights issue actually dates back to the nineteenth century and the legal barriers erected to deny African American students their educational rights. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision led to the long awaited desegregation of public school. Two decades later the continuing fight for educational rights resulted in the acceptance of students with disabilities in the public schools. What was hailed as another step to equity in education ironically created a situation that negatively affected African American students. As a result of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (HLPL 94-142), African American males in particular were referred, classified and placed in special education settings at a disproportionate rate (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, Chung, 2008). In addition many of those students found themselves in the more segregated special education classrooms. What was cheered as an educational advancement for all students has resulted in a new type of segregation for African American students.

The disproportionate referral, classification, and placement of African American students into special education classes documents the failure of the education system. The overrepresentation of African Americans is particularly evident in classes for students with intellectual disabilities and serious emotional behavioral disorders. Both of these classifications

involve a large degree of human judgment, bringing to the fore the role of cultural influences in what is considered academically and behaviorally acceptable. Reliance upon human judgment and cultural norms demonstrate the complexity of the issue and the need to examine just what changes can be made to begin to address the problem.

Students receiving special education services academically fall behind their typically achieving peers year after year (Hocutt, 1996; Donahue & Zigmond, 1990). They have limited or no access to general education curriculum--the very content they need in order to progress through school (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002). As a result, prospects of declassification are extremely limited (Carlson & Reavy, 2000).

### **Addressing Concerns**

Although the teacher is not solely responsible for over referral, classification, and representation, teacher judgment in determining student candidacy for special education carries great weight. Recommendations for and service delivery are primarily, and in some cases exclusively, that of the classroom teacher. Consequently, the role of teachers in disproportionate overrepresentation of African American students in special education cannot be underestimated. One important way to address the concerns about over-representation in special education for students of color is to ensure that educators are culturally competent. According to the United States Office of Special Education Programs:

Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991).

Cultural competence integrates and transforms knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes which when employed in appropriate cultural settings increases the quality of services and results in better outcomes (Davis, 1997).

Diller and Moule (2005) look specifically at cultural competence within the context of the classroom:

Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (p.15).

Two important realities in education are: the influence of culture on student learning and the influence of culture on the teacher's instruction and interaction with students (Gay, 2002). Educators are shaped by their own cultural environments--past and present—which they have little or no ability to control or shape. According to Cartlege and Kourea (2008):

teachers need a keen awareness of their own culture as well as that of their students, particularly in judging social skills and behaviors. For self-understanding, teachers need to recognize their own ethnocentrism and bias and realize that their worldview is not universal nor are their cultural norms absolute. ”

The National Educational Association (2006) articulated the ethical importance of valuing diversity and embracing the diversity of today's student population. The NEA brief (2006) affirms the significance of the cultural perspective of intellectual and social functioning in learning and teaching success.

Hammell (2006) explains that much of what we deem “acceptable” or “deviant” intellectual functioning and behavior evolves from the values and norms of the majority population within society. If this dominant group determines that certain cultural patterns of behavior are inappropriate, and even stereotypic of one group, students from that group run an increased chance of being identified as outside of the norm. This disregards the fact that values and traditions vary according to cultural and ethnic groups. In the extreme it denies the fact that no one group has total ownership of specific values or behaviors.

Culturally competent teachers’ practice is informed by a deeper understanding of the influence of culture on learning. Cultural competence enables teachers to appreciate the importance of social construction and the influence of culture in education. (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004).

### **Need for Cultural Competence Curriculum in Teacher Preparation**

In an effort to remediate current educational problems, teacher education programs are being examined with an eye toward change to identify missing elements and areas for improvement (Sawchuk, 2010). Change to teacher preparation programs hold great possibility for diminishing the over-representation of students of color in special education. Cultural competence and effective teaching may be two foundational solutions, which can make significant contributions toward remediating this issue (Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Durán, & Riley, 2005).

Currently, only one-third of US state education departments require that teacher candidates: a) study some aspect of cultural diversity in their core preparation courses; and/or b) a teaching practicum in a culturally diverse setting (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2008). Nine states have specific state standards relative to



cultural knowledge or cultural competence: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, and South Dakota. In other states, cultural knowledge or competence is infused into history or foreign language standards, thereby diminishing their importance as content essential to teacher preparation. What is missing in state education standards and teacher preparation across all states is the requirement that teachers effectively use and incorporate cultural competence and knowledge into teaching diverse students (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 2008).

National and regional organizations responsible for setting the bar in quality teacher education are reshaping policy, which governs teacher preparation around the issue of cultural competence. For instance, Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 2011) seeks to align within teacher-licensing systems and teacher preparation programs the need for skills and knowledge to ensure cultural competence of pre-service teachers. This is evidenced through INTASC Standard II: “The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive environments that enable each learner to meet high standards” (INTASC Standards, 2011; p.11).

Teacher preparation programs need a “cohesive and comprehensive multicultural curricula” (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, and Richards, 2006; p.4) that embeds the principles of cultural competence into effective teaching. Individuals who matriculate through such programs should emerge as culturally competent educators, committed change agents who are dedicated to effective teaching with specific attention to the needs of individual students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Without preparation in cultural competence and effective teaching, novice teachers enter the profession, bereft of specific instructional interventions and practice. Without the proper education teachers can continue to bring erroneous notions about culturally diverse learners which

translate into a perpetuation of over-referral, classification, and representation of African American males to receive special education services.

### **Research Questions**

The over-representation of African-American males in special education has plagued the field of special education for more than four decades. This study sought to expand our knowledge on factors that contribute to over-representation, and to examine how future educators apply cultural knowledge in teaching a student with learning challenges.

Research Questions:

- 1) Is there is significant difference in student teachers' responses, relative to teacher role by cultural competence?
- 2) Is there a significant difference in student teachers' responses relative to student need for special education services by cultural competence?

### **Methodology**

Participants

The sample population for this study was drawn from the spring 2010 student teachers in all programs at a private university located in metropolitan New York City. Two hundred student teachers were invited to participate in the study. Of the 200, 149 agreed to participate. The sample population was comprised of graduate and undergraduate students who are, young, female, Caucasian, and middle class. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2009), teachers are primarily female, with 97.8% teaching at the preschool and kindergarten level, 54.9% at secondary level, 49.2% at post-secondary schools, with 86% in special education. Data also reports that 81% of the national teaching force is Caucasian. Therefore our sample mirrors the current teacher population.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Graduate</b>
<b>Age (n=132)</b>	50	61
21-30	1	8
31-40	0	9
41-50	0	4
Over 50		
<b>Race (n=123)</b>	0	4
African American	3	3
Hispanic	1	3
Mixed	3	3
Other	38	67
White		
<b>Gender (n=137)</b>	41	59
Female	10	27
Male		
<b>SES (n=138)</b>	0	1
Poverty	0	11
Working Class	30	41
Middle Class	21	30
Upper Middle Class	0	4
Affluent		

### Instruments

The two instruments—the case study and the Multicultural Competence Survey (MCS)—were used in this study to assess cultural competence of student teachers at the end of their teacher education program. Together, they provide a clear picture into how cultural competence informs pre-service teachers’ recommendations for students in need of academic and social support and their perceptions of their role in ensuring that students receive the support they need. What follows is an overview of each.

### Case Study

The case study instrument was comprised of a case study and answer form. Two versions of the case study were developed for this study. Form A reported in the first sentence “Joe is an African American boy...”. The first sentence in Form B reported, “Joe is a Caucasian boy...”. The case study presents background and referral information for Joe Brown, an eight-year old male student in second grade (Overton, 2000; pp. 489-492). Information reported in the case study is based on data collected from two instruments, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children III and the Woodcock-Johnson—Revised Tests of Achievement, Standard and Supplemental Batteries and three batteries: Test of Word Finding, Classroom Observation, the Teacher Report Form on Child Behavior Checklist. An interpretation of results, which followed, explained intellectual ability, academic performance levels across the curriculum.

The answer form comprises four items eliciting information about recommendations for Joe and the best educational environment for Joe. The form presented one yes/no item, which asks whether Joe should receive special education services. Respondents who answer yes are asked to: a) state the type of disability Joe has, and b) state the teacher’s role in meeting Joe’s educational needs. The case study provides an avenue for investigating the extent to which participants would apply cultural competence as “teacher” of the student presented in the case study.

### **Multicultural Competence Survey**

The Multicultural Competence Survey (MCS) sought to measure student teachers’ beliefs about their own knowledge about how African American students learn and their own preparation for teaching this population. The MCS is an 18 item Likert-scale instrument revised from the California Brief Multicultural Competency Scale by Gamst, Dana, Der-Karabetian, Aragon, Arellano, Morrow & Martenson (2004). The MCS score represents the numerical sum of responses

to survey items, thereby measuring the cultural competence of participants. For further information on the MCS, see Pace & Blue (2012).

### **Data Collection**

Researchers met with supervisors across the teacher education curriculum (elementary education, secondary education, special education, physical and health education, and dance). Background was given on the study and the protocols for data collection were explained. The consent forms, the surveys, and case studies to be completed during the student teacher seminars were distributed to supervisors along with guidelines for insuring that student teacher participation was voluntary and confidential. After questions about the nature of the research and the responsibilities of the supervisors were answered, materials were distributed. Student teacher supervisors administered the survey and returned the completed forms to the designated location.

### **Research Design**

To investigate the extent to which participants demonstrate cultural competence, researchers drew upon case study and MCS score data. The researchers sought to investigate whether cultural understanding influenced student teachers' educational decision making. Of the 149 participants, 56% (n=83) received the case study, which presented Joe as an African American student; 44% (n=66) received the case study, which presented him as a Caucasian student. Responses to case study items (open-ended format) were coded and categorized. Descriptive statistics were run to examine student teachers' views about the role of the teacher in providing academic support. A 3 x 5 univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for two variables (role of teacher & special education placement) by MCS score to determine whether there is a significant difference in participant recommendations by MCS score.

### **Results**

## Role of Classroom Teacher

When asked about the teacher's a role in providing academic support, 71% (n=107) of participants offered no response or stated no specific teacher role; only 14% (n= 22) of participants articulated a specific role for the teacher. Seven percent (n=11) stated that the role as emotional support; the other seven percent (n=11) stated the role in terms of instruction, strategy, or management plan). Thirteen percent (n=20) of participants outsourced the student to related personnel.

## Responses by Cultural Competence

To investigate differences in responses by cultural competence, a 3 x 5 univariate analysis of variance statistical test was run to determine whether there was a significant difference in between subjects factors: 1) role of the teacher and 2) need for special education by participants' MCS score.

Results of tests of between subject effects for teacher role:  $F=(4, 129)=3.024, p=.020$ . Nineteen percent of participants with the highest MCS score suggested a specific instructional, teaching, or management role for the classroom teacher of the student in the case study (Table 2). Conversely, 19% of participants with the lowest MCS score suggested an outsourcing role for the classroom teacher—referring the student to another education professional for support. More than 65% of high, low, and middle scorers offered no response or articulated no role in addressing the academic and social needs of the student in the case study.

Results of tests of between subject effects for need for special education:  $F=(2, 129)=.595, p=.553$  yielded no significant difference in participant recommendation by MCS score.

Table 2. *Role of Teacher by Multicultural Competency Score*

### **Role of the Teacher**

### **Multicultural Competency (MCS) Score**

	27-45 (n=16)	46-56 (n=93)	57-68 (n=21)
No response; no role	68% (n=11)	74% (n=69)	67% (n=14)
Instr/teach/mgmt	6% (n=1)	4% (n=4)	19% (n=14)
Social/emotional	6% (n=1)	7% (n=6)	10% (n=2)
Outsourcing to other education professional	19% (n=3)	15% (n=14)	5% (n=1)

### Discussion

The importance of culture in teaching has become increasingly evident. Today's classroom context is comprised of students whose cultural and socioeconomic identifiers differ drastically. Student teachers bring to their preparation at least eighteen years of internalized beliefs, values, and attitudes about culture. Without cultural competency curriculum as part of teacher preparation, there is no understanding of the influence of culture on teachers and learning.

The results of the cultural competency survey revealed a lack of self-knowledge and a lack of understanding about the influence of culture on teaching and learning. This limited appreciation effects dispositions and an understanding that individual cultures create specific values and beliefs. The fact that student teachers are ready to enter the work force and teach in today's diverse classroom settings, without being challenged to recognize their own ethnocentrism and limited world view, is alarming (Pace & Blue, in 2012).

Case study was an effective way to investigate whether differences in student teachers' cultural competence was reflected in their assertions about 1) the teacher's role in providing academic intervention for a student in need of support and 2) the student's need for special education placement. The fact that 67% or more of graduating student teachers were unable to

articulate the teacher's role in meeting student needs raises great concern. This inability to communicate professional responsibility and evidence-based practices suggests major gaps in teacher preparation programs.

One possible explanation for this result could be that our sample was inexperienced and therefore anxious in completing the case study. This may have interfered with their ability to retrieve appropriate responses, which reflect their existing knowledge about pedagogy and practice. Another explanation is the absence of or passive implementation of cultural competence and culturally responsive instruction curriculum. Without cultural competency curriculum playing a key role in teacher preparation, teachers have no understanding of the influence of culture and cultural competence on teaching and learning. Their embedded notions often translate into a myopic view of what is valuable and important in teaching and learning. As educators plan and implement pedagogy in diverse learning environments, there is a heightened need for a more expansive and inclusive understating of culture and its role in the educational context.

Teacher preparation curriculum, which infuses cultural competency passively, shortchanges both teachers and students. According to Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran (2004) teachers cannot be effective in the classroom with a limited understanding of culture. Their judgments are biased and the impact on school age children can be dramatic. Ignorance of the importance of culture can become dangerous particularly when teachers impose personal values on others. That combined with a disregard for the beliefs and attitudes of students in their classes contributes to ineffective instruction (Gaye, 2002).

This study has opened the door for reexamination of teacher preparation programs and their relevance to today's classroom. Klinger, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tat, Duran, & Riley, (2005) state, "A fundamental assumption of our approach is that culture matters—we believe that



disproportionate representation is due in part to the inadequate attention to culture by researchers and practitioners”(p.19). Findings of this study underscore the need to reexamine how teacher preparation programs assess student teachers’ cultural competence before they enter the classroom. Results of this study suggest that the MCS (Blue & Pace, in press) is a viable measure of student teachers’ cultural competence and how they perceive the role of the classroom teacher. Incorporation of this measure in teacher preparation programs can be extremely useful.

The fact that most departments of education at the state level do not legally mandate this preparation at this point does not mean it is unnecessary. The application of cultural competence facilitates teachers’ use of evidence-based instructional strategies that draw upon the cultural knowledge of students and teachers. The pragmatics of the application of cultural competence plays out in culturally responsive strategies. Without skills in these areas, cultural competence may produce good intentions without concrete results.

### **Conclusion**

By preparing culturally competent teaching professionals, teacher preparation programs equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to more effectively meet the needs of a diverse student population. The absence of cultural competence in teacher education curriculum has already affected working teachers and threatens to negatively impact new teachers. According to Nieto (2000), "... novices put into practice what they themselves have been subjected to and perpetuate policies and approaches that may be harmful to many of their students” (p. 185). Without preparation in cultural competence and culturally responsive instruction, teacher education programs will continue to under prepare pre-service teachers for twenty-first century classrooms.

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**Elfreda Blue** is the program director for childhood special education programs at Hofstra University. Her research interests include teacher preparation, universal design for learning, and literacy for diverse students with special needs.

**Stephen Hernandez** is the Director of Early Childhood Special Education at Hofstra University. His research interests include pre-service teacher preparation for collaborative engagements, the development of a collaborative culture within schools and the management of challenging behaviors in early childhood settings.

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## **The Effects of Using Bully Prevention Programs in Low-Socioeconomic Schools**

*Kimberly Triplett and Lindsey Nicholson*

*Mississippi State University-Meridian and Parkview Elementary School*

### **Introduction**

Bullying is a growing problem in the United States and seems to only get worse as the years go on. The terms and ways of bullying have changed over the past ten years and new ways of being bullied are evolving daily. It can be difficult to identify who are the bullies, who are the victims, and who are the bystanders. There are also many new ways and programs to prevent bullying. Schools are coming together to eradicate bullying and are sharing ideas that have worked for their students. Schools are making bully prevention programs part of their curriculum to prevent bullying. Many students suffer from being bullied and some never get away from the pain it has caused them.

### **What is Bullying?**

#### Personal Experience

A girl named Lily is in the fourth grade. She is taller than most of the kids in her grade and is skinnier than most of the girls in her grade. She is a straight A student and wears glasses and braces. Lily gets on the school bus after school to go home. She sits towards the back of the bus with the rest of her friends. Matthew is an older boy who lives close to Lily. He sits behind her on the bus. He begins to call her names like “four-eyes”, “metal mouth”, and “nerd”. Lily has not said anything to provoke Matthew’s behavior. Lily is hurt by these words and her eyes begin to fill up with tears. She says nothing to the boy because she just wants him to leave her alone. The year goes on and Matthew finally stops teasing Lily. Many people have gone through this same situation and often times, their parents tell them it is part of growing up. The reality is that this is not part of growing up and these words are very hurtful and often unforgettable, no matter how old a person may get.

Bullying is an act of physical or psychological aggression towards a group or individual with intent to cause harm (Rock, Hammond, & Rasmussen, 2004). Bullies can be anywhere and

everywhere. They can be at schools, playgrounds, on the buses, at the park, and anywhere else children are in contact with each other. Bullying occurs in many schools in the hallways, bathrooms, classrooms, playgrounds, and in the lunchroom (Huber, 2010).

There are many different types of bullying which include, but are not limited to, cyber bullying, verbal bullying, and physical bullying. Cyber bullying occurs when a bully is harassing an individual or group over the Internet (Graham, 2010). Bullies attack others on Internet sites, posting harmful comments or videos about that individual (Graham, 2010). Cyber-bullying allows the bully to display the hurtful comments to many more people in a faster time frame (Graham, 2010). Verbal bullying can be anything that is said to or about the victim (Graham, 2010). Teasing, name-calling, racial slurs, and spreading rumors are all examples of verbal bullying (Graham, 2010). Physical bullying is anything that includes an individual harming another individual with physical contact. This type of bullying may include hitting; tripping a student; vandalizing personal items; kicking; punching; putting something over the victim's face so he/she cannot see what is being done to him/her; and pulling hair (Flynt & Morton, n.d.).

Some students do not realize that the name-calling or what is considered just playing around with each other is a form of bullying. It may not be considered the worst kind of bullying, but bullying is bullying. An interview was conducted with a teacher that deals with students being victimized and the bullies on a daily basis.

I would have never thought that so many students are being bullied every day. I had to deal with bullying when I was in school, but it was nothing like what it is today. Children can be so cruel to each other that it hurts my feelings for the student being bullied. Most of the comments that I hear from the students are comments that criticize the way a student

looks. I also hear a lot of students say hurtful things over something small, like accidentally running into another student's desk. A lot of the students are so defensive with one another that there is no room for playfulness or even just simple accidents that may happen. They just come at them full speed and it is not necessary in most cases (L. Brewer, personal communication, March 8, 2011).

Studies have shown that 50 percent of elementary students, who have been bullied were bullied by someone older than them (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). "Thirty-nine percent of the students reported that they had been bullied at some time during their school years, 20 percent stated that they had bullied other, and of these, 13 percent reported being both bullies and victims" (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007, p. 752). According to Frisen's study, almost half of the children surveyed had been bullied. That is a tremendous amount of students being bullied on a daily basis. The type of bullying was not specified, so it could have been verbal, physical, social, or cyber-bullying. "The National Education Association estimates 160,000 children miss school every day because of fear or intimidation by other students" (Huber, 2010, p. 14).

### **Who are the Bullies?**

Bullies can be anyone that is harmful to individuals. Bullies usually do not suffer the same aggressive behavior as victims do (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). Bullies are usually the popular kids in the class and usually have many friends (Graham, 2010). Bullies see themselves in a positive light and have high self-esteem (Graham 2010). Other students see this confidence and want to be like the bullies; therefore it encourages bullies to continue their torment. There is an agreement that bullying children and adolescents share many of the characteristics of generally more aggressive children and adolescents, including hot temperament, a less fortunate family

background, and a view of relationships that values aggression and bullying as a means of achieving power and influence in a tough peer environment (Frisen, Jonsson & Persson, 2007, p. 750). Bullies need the power of bullying to feel a sense of superiority in their lives because they do not have any other sense of superiority. They feel they need to hurt others to make themselves feel better about them.

Bullies can be students you would never consider to be the harmful kind. Many times, the bullies may be the quiet ones.

We had an incident where a child brought a weapon to school with intent to harm another student. They were in the same class and the teacher noticed there was a little tension between them, but we all thought nothing of it. It wasn't until the next day that the victim came to us telling us that a particular student threatened her. We then investigated the matter and found the weapon. The student who was the bully was an outgoing student and I would have never thought she would do something like that (S. Smith, personal communication, March 9, 2011).

Years ago, bullies were known to be the children no one liked or the larger children of the class. No one wanted to be associated with the bullies of the class and would just ignore them and all the harassment they did to others. Now, the tables have turned and the bullies are the popular students, who are the most likeable people in the class. More and more students want to be like the bullies and be their friends. It is so important to kids today that they "fit in" with the cool crowd and will do anything and everything to accomplish that task. Bullies tend to be "proactive and thus gain dominance in many situations" (Rock, Hammond, & Rasmussen, 2004, p. 346). Bullies do



not usually give the victims a chance to avoid the situation before making harassments towards that student.

It used to be mostly boys that would be the bullies in school, but now it is becoming more common in girls. “Some research suggests that physical expressions of bullying are more common among boys, whereas relational aggression is more frequent among girls” (Holt, Finkelhor & Kantor, 2007). Girls are becoming more and more intimidating than what they used to be. Girls can say hurtful things to other girls that can ruin their reputation or even lives and cause a great deal of pain. With girls, the pain stays in place and sometimes they may never get over the hurt. Boys tend to resolve the issue relatively quick, but not always (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007).

A study was done to reveal who was being rejected and unaccepted more between girls and boys. The study was conducted on boy victims and bullies and girl victims and bullies. The results are as followed:

We found that victims of male bullies were indeed rejected by boys only and that male bullies were never low on acceptance. Thus, as expected, boys seem to choose their victims so as to minimize loss of affection. Girls victimized by girls were rejected and unaccepted by girls, as goal-framing theory had predicted. However, girls who bullied boys lost acceptance and were more rejected by both genders (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Munniksmma, & Dijkstra, 2010, p. 484).

This study proves that there is a difference between the way girls and boys act towards the bullies and victims. Girls who are the bullies of both genders are rejected by both genders.

### **Who are the Victims?**

Students who are being bullied are usually the unpopular students. Students pinpoint who they want to bully and go after that student from the very beginning of the school year. Most of your victims are students who are different in some ways such as appearance, social class level, intelligence, height, and weight. Other victims are students that may have some sort of disability such as learning disabilities, diabetes, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, children who stutter, medical conditions that affect a child's appearance, hemiplegic, and obesity (Flynt & Morton, n.d.).

One of the misconceptions about bullying is that most adults see these actions not harmful to the students and think it is a part of growing up (Graham, 2010). Many parents tell their children that being "picked on" is part of growing up and that it builds character and makes you develop better as an adult. This is not true. "Research clearly shows that bullying experiences increase the vulnerabilities of children, rather than making them more resilient. Victims are often disliked or rejected by their peers and feel depressed, anxious, and lonely" (Graham, 2010, p. 67). If the other students take note that the bully is harassing a student, then they do not want anything to do with the victim because they want to fit in with the popular crowd. Students do not like to be associated with the victims because they want to fit in or they are scared the bully may come after them next.

Many bullying situations involve more than just the bully and the victim. There are usually some people standing around when the action is going on. These people who are witnesses to the bullying are called bystanders. "In most bullying incidents, at least four other peers were present as either bystanders, assistants to bullies, reinforcers, or defenders of victims" (Graham, 2010, p. 68). A lot of times peers do not want to get involved with the bullying incident because they do not want the bully to come after them and they are not sure what the bully may be capable of at the time. A lot of times, just the presence of others to watch the bullying take place is enough to

meet the approval of the bully because they get satisfaction knowing others are watching and too fearful to say anything to the bully.

One myth of victims is that once you are a victim, you're always a victim (Graham, 2010). This is always not the case. Sometimes, the victims are so hurt and damaged from being bullied they become the person who is bullying. They feel a sense of gaining the power back they had lost. Also, some just want to get revenge on their peers that were bullying them. They want others to experience the hurt and pain they experienced during the whole process. It is almost like they have the "an eye for an eye" mindset.

Most victims suffer tremendously when they have been bullied. Some suffer physically, social, psychologically, and academically. Victims usually "lack the interpersonal skills needed to develop friendships that protect them against victimization" (Rock, Hammond, & Rasmussen, 2004, p. 226). In most cases, victims limit themselves to become friends with those other students who are victims of bullying as well. Many people think that victims initiate the bullying themselves. They think victims may say or do things to the bullies that imply confrontation. Some believe that victims have some control over why they are being bullied.

### **What are Schools doing to Prevent Bullying?**

Many bully influences are from outside the school and the number of increasing violent behaviors coming from younger children is alarming (Allison, 2004). Many students see older siblings teasing other students and because the younger children want to be like their big brother or big sister, they imitate their same actions. These influences are hard to control especially if they are outside the school. This makes it difficult for teachers and principals to prevent bullying within the school. Many precautions and prevention programs have been implemented in schools over

the past few years to help prevent bullying from even occurring at school. These programs also help teach students how to deal with bullying if it does occur at school.

The most important thing that needs to be done first before anything is to contact the parents of the bully and the victim (Bardick & Bernes, 2008). Parents sometimes do not even know what is going on with their child and they need to be informed so they can help solve the problems that have occurred. A lot of times, the parents do even know their child is being bullied because their child may be embarrassed to tell their parents and may keep their feelings inside. Also, some parents do not know their child is the one that is the bully. Some parents would have put a stop to their child being the bully long before any major problems had occurred, but they had no idea that anything like that was going on at school.

The importance of having bully prevention programs in place is to make the students feel safe at school (Bennett, 2009). Many students, especially low socio-economic students need the security of feeling safe at school because that may be the only place they feel safe in their life. Most schools have adopted a zero tolerance policy for bullying. The problem with that is that some teachers do not know the exact terms of bullying and some incidents may be over looked because of lack of knowledge on the teachers' part (Graham, 2010). Many schools do their best to help prevent bullying, but a lot of times what seems to be harmless comments, evolve into bullying and nothing is done about it due to the lack of training on understanding and preventing bullying.

Studies have shown that things that helped prevent bullying were simple things such as a caring teacher that would engage in activities with the students, and having extracurricular activities that the students can be deeply involved (Bennett, 2009). Some schools have taught teachers to sympathize with the victim more and not show as much attention to the bully. This is a technique that helps the students to understand just because someone is causing harm to another

student does not mean they deserve all the attention. In fact, they should not get any attention other than being punished for what they have done to the other student.

### **What are some of the Bully Prevention Programs being used?**

A study was done to evaluate if the schools that have implemented new bully prevention policies were having less bullying problems. The study showed that the increase in supervision in some places led to the decrease in other places. The teachers focused on more of the bigger issues of bullying and less attention on the smaller issues of bullying (Smith, Smith, Osborn, & Samara, 2008). If teachers focused on preventing the smaller bullying issues, then there would not be as many bigger bullying issues to control and deal with. Also, some students may feel neglected if they are left to fend for themselves, which may lead to the student feeling unimportant and not worthy of being helped with their problems which may lead to psychological problems.

The technology society has become increasingly available and is more advanced and much faster than it used to be. Students are gaining access to many technological devices that many parents, teachers, and principals are not familiar with which makes it difficult for them to monitor the children when using those devices. If parents, teachers, and principals had the proper training on these new technological devices before allowing the children to have them, then this would decrease cyber-bullying.

One of the reasons schools is having trouble implementing bully prevention programs in the schools is the inconsistency with the curriculum in the United States. Many states have their own curriculums and even some districts within those states have their own curriculums. Some would even say that each classroom may have their own curriculum which makes it hard for the principals to be consistent with enforcing the bullying prevention program (Stein, 2001). For many districts, the students move around to different schools within the district. If the entire state, much

less the entire district had a consistency with preventing bullying, then students would know the policies in advance and may not try to provoke any type of harassment towards other students.

As one of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in schools, safety and belongingness is listed as one of those needs for children. Many schools are focusing on physical safety; there is a greater need for schools to become intimately involved in ensuring emotional safety. An important but often overlooked factor that influences students' successes in school is their perceptions of school safety and their feelings of "belongingness" or connectedness to others at their school (Glew et al, 2005). A study by Wilson (2004) found that youth who are aggressively victimized and perpetrate violent behavior are less likely to feel connected to others at their school. Similarly, Brockenbrough, Cornell, and Loper (2002) found that students who are victimized and feel unsafe at school are at an increased risk of bringing weapons to school. Despite the importance of perceptions of a positive school climate, few studies have examined children's perceptions of safety and belongingness in relation to their statuses as a victim, bully, or bully/victim across school types (O'Brenan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009, p. 102)

"We no longer have the luxury of ignoring what has been an ugly part of our common culture and a painful part of growing up for most American children" (Sanchez, Robertson, Lewis, Rosenbluth, & Bohman, 2001, p. 158). Most teachers and principals can identify the bullies, victims, and the ones who "manipulate friendships" (Estell, Farmer, Irvin, Cowther, & Akos, 2008, p. 141). This makes it easier for the teachers to pinpoint any abnormal behavior from these students and report any signs of bullying immediately so action can be taken to prevent any future problems. However, some schools do not have the time or professional development opportunities to teach the teachers how to look for signs of bullying and do not report small forms of bullying due to lack a of knowledge.

One of the many bully prevention programs that is offered to schools is the Bully Proof Program. This program offers parent letters and pre and post assessments to give to the students to evaluate their prior knowledge of bullying. The program provides students with a plethora of opportunities to gain information about being bullied, being the victim, or being the bystander. It also offers role playing activities about different scenarios the students may encounter (E. Compton, personal communication, March 11, 2011). It is a really good program to use, but it is hard to incorporate on a daily basis because of the lack of time due to testing and the other roles most teachers assume (E. Compton, personal communication, March 11, 2011).

### **The Study**

The study was done using *The Bully Proof Kit*, which is a program that offers different materials that can be used to inform students about bullying and ways to prevent bullying. The study was conducted on 25 fifth grade students in a low socio-economic public school over a four week period. There were twenty-four African-American students and one Native-American student and their ages ranged from ten years old to twelve years old. There were students that had a higher academic record than others and students with a lower academic record than others. There were several different cultural backgrounds among the students which ranged from both parents living together and working to students living with relatives other than their parents, and even no one working at home.

The study was introduced to the students through a pre assessment that was provided by the bully prevention program used in the study. The results of the pre assessment showed the students knew what bullying was but were not sure about how to prevent or handle situations when bullying may occur. Based on the results of the pre assessment, the study focused on preventing bullying and what to do when someone is being bullied. The students were introduced to several

different ways to prevent bullying such as ignoring the bully, walking away from the situation, or just listen to the bully but make no comments to the bully. During the discussions with the students on what to do when someone is trying to bully you, the students found it difficult to just ignore the bully or to walk away. So the students wrote about the times when it was hard for them to ignore the bully and placed it in a box. The purpose for writing the situation on paper and not verbalizing it within a group was to protect the victims from the possible bullies that may be within the class. Most of the students wrote situations that occurred in the classroom. These situations included someone walking by them and knocking things off their desk; tripping them as they get up to walk around the room; verbal rude comments made about them or a family member; and yelling rude comments so the entire class can hear. All of these situations occur within a classroom, and as a teacher, it is difficult to prevent these things from happening.

As a class, it was discussed what can be done when these things happen to them. The first thing is to ignore the bully. If it continues, then tell an adult. In situations where the victim is being tripped or things are being knocked off their desk, the victim can say something to blame it on themselves so the bully has no reason to respond with a rude comment. For instance, if the bully knocks off something on the victim's desk, the victim can say "I am sorry, I did not mean for my stuff to get in your way". This type of comment shows the bully that the victim is not afraid of the bully, but does not want to make the situation worse by confronting the bully in a negative way. Students must learn to confront with kind words because negative words will escalate the situation.

The students also participated in different situations using role play. In each situation, one person was the bully, one person was the victim, and two or three people were the bystanders. There were different scenarios the students role played. One scenario was when the victim was being bullied in front of a crowd. The bully was calling the victim ugly names and being hit and



pushed around. This scenario was easy for the students to decide on what the appropriate way to handle the situation. Another scenario was when the bully said an ugly comment to the victim and the victim told the bully to stop. When the bully replied with another rude comment like “What are you going to do about it?” or “I wish you would say that to my face!”, the students did not exactly know how to handle the situation. Most of the bystanders laughed at the rude comments, which gives the bully the power they want. It was discussed that as bystanders they could tell the bully to stop and since there are more people on the victim’s side than the bully’s side, then the bully would back down. The major thing for the bystanders to do in this situation was not to laugh when the rude comments were being made and eventually the bully would stop.

At the end of the four week period, the students completed a post assessment. The results of the post assessment showed they knew more than they did when they first started the program, but there was still work that needed to be done. The students know what to do in “big” situations, but when it is the “small” forms of bullying that occur regularly, they do not always know what to do or how to handle the situation.

### **Conclusion**

The bully prevention programs that are being used to help students during bullying situations are good programs to be used within the schools as a part of their curriculum. Bullying is becoming more and more common every year and harder and harder to prevent it from occurring. Students need support and guidance on how to prevent bullying and what to do when it occurs. Bully prevention programs should be implemented on a daily basis and need to begin at the beginning of the school year.

The program that was used in the study is a great program and offers many resources for the parents, teachers, and students to use to gain knowledge about bullying. The study lasted for a four week period and there were some noticeable improvement in the students, but it was concluded it would have had a greater impact on the students if it had been implemented every day throughout the school year. Implementing the prevention program at the beginning of the school year and throughout the school year would give the students consistent interventions of ways to prevent bullying. Schools could use the program as part of the curriculum in Character Education classes or as bell ringers in each homeroom class. Students that are transitioning from being a young child to adolescence need more support and information on bullying. The resources are there, stakeholders, parents, and educators must give the knowledge to our children.

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**Using Instructional Technology to Facilitate Reflection, Integration, and Transition**

**During the Senior Year Experience**

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The senior year experience represents a critical developmental period as students prepare to make the difficult transition from college to the world of work (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1997). In addition to the usual social and academic pressures associated with college life, students

completing their academic plans of study are faced with a number of immediate challenges such as searching for full-time employment and starting a job in an unfamiliar setting, relocating to a different geographic region and city if necessary, managing personal finances and re-paying outstanding student debt, applying knowledge, skills, and abilities in an authentic work environment, continuing their education and development beyond the college classroom, and establishing professional and productive relationships with new colleagues. It has been argued that academic programs on college and university campuses share some responsibility in preparing seniors to meet these significant transitional challenges (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1997). In fact, the long-term relationship between a college or university and its graduates is at least partially dependent on how effectively these transitional needs are met during the senior year experience. The purpose of this paper is to describe the challenges associated with the management of capstone courses in teacher education and related technology-based solutions. The paper includes recommendations for using technology to facilitate the student teaching process, such as website development and course management, teacher candidate blogs, software for gathering information and multi-user collaboration, electronic portfolios, and technology-based action research projects.

### **Learning Outcomes for the Senior Year Experience**

Numerous academic programs across a wide range of disciplines have elected to formally address transitional concerns and to establish more meaningful relationships with graduating students through the planning, implementation, and evaluation of required capstone courses that serve as the focal point of the senior year experience (Henscheid, 2000). Capstone courses are primarily intended to help seniors make sense of the undergraduate curriculum and are often integrative, product-oriented, and credit-bearing experiences required during the final semester of the program of study (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1997). Following the completion of a capstone

course, students should be able to: (a) integrate and bring successful closure to the undergraduate curriculum, (b) reflect on the significance of the college experience and their professional readiness, and (c) transition to post-college life in a successful manner (Cuseo, 1997). In the related literature, capstone courses have been found to incorporate a range of instructional formats and learning activities including alumni networking, leadership training, service learning, educational travel, portfolio development, research presentations, major group or individual projects, comprehensive exams, and so forth (Henscheid, 2000).

### **Instructional Challenges in Student Teaching**

Within most teacher education programs, the student teaching internship represents the defining feature of the senior year experience and is considered to be the most critical component (Banville, 2002). The student teaching internship affords teacher candidates a number of important benefits including opportunities for career exploration, resume building, occupational socialization, professional networking, and application of content in authentic settings. Unfortunately, school-based contexts have been found to present multiple challenges to effective teacher candidate achievement regarding the previously described learning outcomes of integration and closure, self-reflection, and transition (see Table 1). A multitude of underlying individual, social, and environmental factors contribute to these difficulties including inadequate teacher candidate preparation, limited knowledge and supervisory skills among cooperating teachers, lack of intentionality in pairing student teachers and cooperating teachers, restricted time spent in the placement, lack of systematic observation and accountability, minimal training for cooperating teachers and lack of communication with the sponsoring college or university (Banville, 2002; Ramsey & Bulger, 2011).

Table 1

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## *Learning Outcomes and Instructional Challenges in Student Teaching*

Learning outcomes	Instructional challenges in student teaching
Integration and successful closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrating subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge</li><li>• Thinking more critically about planning, instruction, management, and assessment of student learning</li></ul>
Meaningful self-reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determining one's professional readiness and making sense of past experiences</li><li>• Managing feelings of isolation and disconnection from the college or university program</li></ul>
Transition to post-college life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing familiarity with school workplaces and the related facilitators and barriers to effective teaching</li><li>• Preparing for the employment process including the development of job application materials</li></ul>

### **Technology-Based Solutions in Student Teaching**

In a direct response to these instructional challenges, teacher education faculty within a large public university developed a senior seminar to complement the existing student teaching requirements completed during the last semester of study. The student teaching placement represents the final academic requirement for teacher candidates and consists of 8-week placements at both the elementary and middle/secondary levels. The goal of the student teaching placement is to provide teacher candidates with an opportunity to apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities developed throughout their undergraduate education. The involved teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor work together to establish a teaching-learning environment based on the principles of experiential education.

The associated senior seminar was developed to facilitate teacher candidate progress regarding the previously described learning outcomes and instructional challenges. The primary purpose of the seminar is to ensure that the student teaching experience is well-articulated with the undergraduate experience. In addition to the already established student teaching responsibilities

(i.e., daily attendance at each placement, unit and lesson planning, demonstration of effective student and teacher behaviors, classroom management, assessment of student learning, periodic observations and conferences with university supervisors), the teacher candidates attend weekly seminar meetings and complete several major assignments focused on the stated learning outcomes (see Table 2). Given the relatively infrequent face-to-face-contact with teacher candidates during the student teaching semester, faculty members rely on a number of instructional technologies to facilitate learning. From a course management perspective, for example, all resources for teacher candidates, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers are centralized on a program website that includes key information pertaining to the program’s conceptual framework, key terminology, policies and procedures, curriculum models, evaluation forms, and program updates. Furthermore, a web-based data management system is used to collect all student teaching evaluation results and to provide performance-related feedback.

Table 2

*Learning Outcomes, Seminar Content, and Major Assignments*

Learning outcomes	Seminar content	Major assignments
Integration and successful closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation to student teaching</li> <li>• Action research in schools</li> <li>• Basic functions of teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poster presentation based on action research project using instructional technology in schools</li> </ul>
Meaningful self-reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication</li> <li>• Continuing education</li> <li>• Work-life balance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective journaling based on past experiences and assigned course readings</li> </ul>
Transition to post-college life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job application materials</li> <li>• Job interview preparation</li> <li>• Socialization factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informational interview of school administrator focused on transition</li> <li>• Mock job interview including cover letter, resume, and teaching portfolio</li> </ul>



The conceptual framework used to underpin the development and integration of instructional technologies into the senior seminar was the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). TPACK builds upon Lee Shulman's (1986) discussion of pedagogical content knowledge by introducing technological knowledge as a new interacting construct to the previously established perspective on teacher knowledge. Mishra and Koehler (2006) argue that TPACK requires teachers to acknowledge the interactions and relationships among subject matter, instructional strategies, and available technologies as they negotiate the integration of technology in teaching and learning settings. Considering the instructional challenges that arise during student teaching, TPACK served as a guide for teacher education faculty to identify technology-based solutions to enrich the seminar content, align with the employed pedagogical strategies, and enhance the learning experience of teacher candidates. The following sections of this paper describe the associated teaching-learning activities, technology-based solutions, and assessment strategies employed within the context of this senior seminar.

### **Integration and Closure**

The senior year experience is conceptually important because it can be used to bring coherence and closure to the undergraduate curriculum (Cuseo, 1997). The senior seminar affords faculty members a unique opportunity to help teacher candidates make the types of meaningful connections across content areas that are often overlooked as students make progress through their academic programs of study. A high degree of knowledge integration and synthesis, however, is not likely to occur without a significant investment of discretionary time and effort from both the teacher candidate and supporting faculty engaged in the senior year experience.

Within the senior seminar, teacher candidates are required to demonstrate their capacity to integrate what they have learned and to think critically about the cyclical process of planning, managing, teaching, assessing, and reflecting through completion of a technology-based action research project. Action research is defined as “a process where teachers in the field take an active role in answering important questions about what works and what does not work” (Mohr, Haley, & Mohr, 2003, p. 31). The proposed benefits of action research include validation of various approaches to teaching, increased focus on student learning, empowerment of individuals to answer questions about their own teaching, and purposeful cooperation between university professors and classroom teachers.

The action research project requires the teacher candidates to plan and implement a series of lessons that incorporate learner use of a pre-assigned instructional technology during student teaching. Technology assignments are made at the conclusion of a discipline-specific technology course and focus on introducing instructional technologies that can be used to enhance teaching effectiveness, document student learning, and promote professionalism and teacher advocacy. While the projects vary considerably based on the specific school context, all teacher candidates must meet designated criteria that are assessed through a series of formative written project updates and a summative conference poster presentation (see Table 3). Most teacher candidates have limited background teaching with instructional technology and the assignment challenges them to draw from a range of previous courses and experiences throughout each phase of the project. This assignment has proven to be valuable because it forces the teacher candidates to extend their approach to the cyclical process of planning, managing, teaching, assessing, and reflecting by integrating their knowledge of technology into their instructional practices (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Furthermore, the development of an effective poster necessitates that the teacher candidates

invest considerable effort determining the best format for graphically displaying their student learning data and interpreting their findings verbally to peers and teacher education faculty during the conference-style presentation session. In a very brief period of time, the action research project has emerged as one of the “rites of passage” of the senior year experience within the involved teacher education program.

Table 3

*Action Research Project Overview*

Project phase	Related tasks	Poster presentation
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider functions of technology</li> <li>• Consult with cooperating teacher</li> <li>• Determine goals and action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose statement</li> <li>• Setting and participants</li> <li>• Content standards to be addressed</li> </ul>
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the action plan</li> <li>• Organize for data collection</li> <li>• Collect student learning data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project overview and activities</li> <li>• Management of technology</li> <li>• Data collection procedures</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze student learning data</li> <li>• Interpret the results</li> <li>• Prepare results for dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of results</li> <li>• Discussion/conclusions</li> <li>• Future recommendations</li> </ul>

**Self-Reflection**

The importance of reflective practice has long been emphasized in the field of education for helping students to establish a more complete understanding of their own decision-making processes and the resultant actions taken (Meeteer, 2011). Teacher educators have used journal writing in various formats to facilitate reflective learning among teacher candidates for many years (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999; Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer 2002; Hume, 2009; LaBosky, 1993; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). The related literature indicates that journals can be used to effectively structure the reflective process, but faculty members need to establish clear

guidelines, share examples of quality responses, assess using a rating scale or rubric that differentiates levels of performance, and provide regular feedback focused on increased reflectivity (Meeteer, 2011).

In preparation for their student teaching placements, teacher candidates develop a blog that serves as a mechanism for reflecting and sharing professional knowledge and experiences with peers. A blog is a personal website that houses public or private information regarding a particular topic organized in reverse chronological order (Boulos, Maramba, & Wheeler, 2006). Blogs are used as online journals to engage people in information sharing, discussion, and reflection often acquiring a network, or groupings of virtual followers, within a community of practice (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Boulos et al. (2006) reported that standard blog features include ease of posting, archives of older posts, use of multiple media sources, links to related websites, and use of unique web addresses for each post.

The student teacher blogs employed within the senior seminar are developed under the direction of a university faculty member during a discipline-specific technology course using publicly accessed software. The blogging software allows teacher candidates to incorporate various applications and to integrate multiple forms of interactive media and tools including photos, videos, audio files, and web links (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). The blogs are enabled for public viewing and allow comments so that other teacher candidates in the program can follow student teacher progress. Teacher candidates engaged in their initial school-based field placements at an earlier point in the program of study subscribe and follow the blogs of selected student teachers. The resultant communication has proved valuable in that this informal peer mentorship has: (a) provided a meaningful advance organizer and class discussion topic prior to student teaching, (b) allowed for professionally focused cross-cohort interaction, (c) increased accountability for quality

reflection and writing, and (d) fostered a greater sense of community and connection among student teachers. It is worth noting that there is a high degree of variability among teacher candidates regarding their comfort level and proficiency using this type of software so it is imperative that faculty provide general guidelines and instructions regarding the development of a well-designed blog, a skill set that is certainly transferable to work in the schools.

A structured approach to journal writing is also employed in which teacher candidates are provided with periodic journal questions or prompts to guide self-reflection. These situational or behavioral-based questions are experiential in focus and aligned with the weekly seminar content (see Table 4). When responding to the behavioral-based questions, the teacher candidates are asked to describe the specific situation or problem, their actions taken in response, and the resultant outcomes (including what was learned and how they might respond differently to a similar situation in the future). From a transitional perspective, it is critical that teacher candidates develop the capacity to synthesize and communicate their knowledge, skills, and abilities and the related practical experiences that highlight those qualifications. Within education, many employers use behavioral-based questioning during the employment process because past performance is generally considered to be the best predictor of future performance and it is perceived to provide a more objective set of facts regarding professional readiness (Society for Human Resource Management, 2006).

Table 4

*Behavioral-based Journal Questions*

Qualifications	Sample behavioral-based questions
Communication	Provide an example of a time when you had to communicate with another person who may not have personally liked you and/or agreed with your point-of-view. How was the difference of opinion resolved?

Problem solving	Give me an example of when you had to solve a complex problem in one of your field placements. What steps did you follow to solve the problem? What was the outcome?
Management	Describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult student who did not want to follow directions. Were you able to get them to do what was needed? If not, what would you do differently to make the situation successful?
Self-reflection	How would your cooperating teacher or university supervisor describe you? What specific example(s) would support their recommendation?

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### **Transition**

Teacher induction has been defined as the “time period or phase of professional development beginning with entry into the teaching profession and ending when a teacher has developed veteran status” (Mohr & Townsend, 2001, p. 9). While the length of induction varies considerably based on the unique characteristics of the individual and contextual constraints present in the school environment, this time period often proves very difficult for novice teachers due to their numerous competing responsibilities and a variety of related problems common to the school workplace, such as limited knowledge of school culture, lack of support systems, inappropriate peer influence, reality shock, isolation, marginalization, workload and role conflict, and eventually de-professionalization (Mohr & Townsend, 2001; Senne, 2004).

Within the senior seminar being described, faculty members made the intentional decision to commit a considerable amount of curricular space to transitional concerns associated with the induction period including successful navigation of the employment process in the schools and avoidance of the numerous pitfalls commonly encountered by beginning teachers (Mohr & Townsend, 2001; Senne, 2004). Toward this end, teacher candidates complete two sequential interview experiences, an informational interview with a school principal and mock job interview with a teacher education faculty member.

The informational interview requires the teacher candidate to schedule a meeting with a school administrator at their student teaching placement site, ask a series of questions related to transitioning into the schools, write a descriptive narrative of the interview including their personal reactions, and verbally share their results with other student teachers in small group discussion format. As a preliminary interview experience, the intent is to provide the teacher candidates with a low stress situation in which they can interact with a school administrator, practice their interpersonal communication skills, and gather information regarding the challenges that they are expecting to encounter in the next several months. While the teacher candidates are provided with some discretion regarding the elective questions they pose, a series of scripted questions provide the framework for the informational interview, written report, and resultant small group discussion (see Table 5).

The teacher candidates share their informational interview findings with their instructor and peers using a wiki, a website that allows users to collaboratively make additions, revisions, or deletions to content using a web browser. While both wikis and blogs have been used for a similar period of time and share the same free and easy publishing capabilities, wikis are (a) designed for collaborative authoring rather than personal use, (b) organized by topic rather than reverse chronological order, (c) provided with feedback through public editing rather than reader comment, (d) focused on sharing information about a particular topic as opposed to spontaneous thoughts, and (e) intended to be modified and enhanced by the group (Parker & Chao, 2007). This portion of the assignment, which remains in the initial phases of implementation, requires the teacher candidates to integrate and synthesize informational interview findings using a collaborative approach which is thought to afford a number of important benefits including

enhanced peer interaction, sharing of knowledge among a community of learners, catalyst for discussion of issues, and higher levels of student engagement.

Table 5

*Informational Interview Questions*

Question focus	Sample informational interview questions
Ideal educational program	What would your ideal school-based physical education and physical activity program look like?
Family and community outreach	What is your best advice for beginning teachers seeking to engage families and other community members in school-related activities?
Transitional issues in schools	What key transitional challenges are commonly encountered by beginning teachers?
Mentorship and support	How are beginning teachers mentored and supported in your school?
Professional development	What recommendations can you provide regarding continuing professional development for beginning teachers?

As a follow-up assignment to the informational interview, the students prepare for and complete a mock job interview for a teaching position within the schools. Multiple seminar meetings are committed to related topics of discussion such as the employment process in schools, preparation of job application materials, interview preparation and format, and sample interview questions from school principals. As part of the mock job interview, teacher candidates are expected to communicate their qualifications using both written (electronic versions of cover letters, resumes, and teaching portfolios) and verbal communication skills (performance in formal interview settings). The job application materials are developed across multiple semesters within the program and modified for use during the mock job interview. An electronic portfolio, which is organized by national standards for beginning teachers, incorporates a biographical statement, teaching philosophy, cover letter and resume, sample work products and reflective statements, and copies of various supporting artifacts (i.e., certifications, performance evaluations, awards and



recognitions). The electronic portfolio forces teacher candidates to take responsibility for creating a personal collection of artifacts that showcase key skills and accomplishments for prospective and potential employers (Hewett, 2005).

All job application materials are reviewed by the assigned faculty member in advance of the individually scheduled meeting which consists of a (a) pre-interview conference to discuss the process, (b) mock job interview including scripted closed, open, and behavioral-based questions, and (c) post-interview debriefing focused on performance-related strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for improvement. The interviews are recorded digitally, edited, and shared with the entire group of teacher candidates in order to pinpoint exemplary responses. The use of digital video to reinforce the basic guidelines and recommendations for interviewing has proved particularly useful from the course instructor perspective. There is evidence that this type of structured interview coaching can positively influence an interviewee's performance through the application of discrete strategies (Bulger, Lindauer, & Jacobson, 2007; Hindle, 2000; Mauer, Solamon, & Troxtel, 1998; Mauer, Solamon, Andrews, & Troxtel, 2001).

### **Course Evaluation**

After several semesters of pilot-testing, the senior seminar was implemented across successive semesters with five cohorts of teacher candidates completing student teaching. At the conclusion of each semester, the enrolled teacher candidates were invited to provide feedback using the electronic Student Evaluation of Instruction (eSEI), a web-based questionnaire that measures student satisfaction and solicits feedback regarding the quality of instruction. Measured variables across the cohorts included instructor communication and organizational skills, teacher–student interaction, instructor availability, fairness of grading and exams, global student ratings,

among others. The collected data are analyzed using an advanced statistical procedure comparing results across courses within the college and across the university.

Outcomes on select evaluation variables representing the 63 teacher candidates across five pilot-tested cohorts reveal that students had generally positive views of the senior seminar: 92% indicated the course as always well organized, 84% found student responsibilities to always be defined, and 84% felt the course was always helpful in developing new skills. Moreover, on standard variables asked of students across the university (e.g., preparedness and organization of instructor, fairness of tests and/or assignments, and usefulness of performance related feedback) these teacher candidates rated the senior experience at or above 80% of the university norms. Interpretation of the quantitative data alongside anonymous student comments indicate effective course management and design, meaningful learning tasks and assignments, and positive impact on student learning. Across the student teaching cohorts, teacher candidate comments acknowledged the authenticity and transferability of the senior seminar learning tasks and assignments to the "real world" and the impending experiences they would be soon encountering. Teacher candidates reported learning valuable new skills and acquiring knowledge they would be able to apply in the transition to post-college life (e.g., looking for jobs, applying and interviewing for teaching positions, and dealing with the transitional issues upon entering the workplace). These sentiments are evidenced by the following student comments:

*"Projects were relevant to things we will have to do when looking for a job after graduation."*

*"Very good class to end my college career with, and get ready to enter the real world."*

*"[The course] helped me get ready to deal with the issues I will face when I get out of school. I am more confident now than I was in the beginning of the year."*

## Summary

Recognizing that the senior year experience represents a critical phase for teacher candidates as they prepare to transition from college to the workforce (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1997), this paper has provided an overview of a senior seminar that utilizes instructional technology to facilitate the student teaching experience. The use of instructional technologies within the described senior year experience has afforded both the teacher education faculty and teacher candidates strategies to address the instructional challenges typically faced within student teaching. Table 6 provides key lessons learned regarding the use of specific instructional technologies following several semesters of implementation.

Table 6

*Lessons Learned from Technology-based Senior Seminar Assignments*

Technology-based assignments	Recommendations
Technology Action Research Project - Various instructional technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ample time for brainstorming and peer/instructor feedback</li> <li>• Utilize cooperating teacher knowledge and experience to plan and execute project</li> <li>• Schedule project progress updates</li> <li>• Align outcome measures and data representation with content standards</li> </ul>
Reflective journaling - Blogging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish behavioral-based prompts to guide reflection posts</li> <li>• Monitor blog cross-cohort interactions</li> <li>• Promote social connections and networking with peers and alumni</li> </ul>

Informational interview - Wiki  
Mock job interview - Cover letter,  
resume, and electronic teaching  
portfolio

- Establish protocols for editing and information and document sharing on Wiki
  - Require sources to be cited and tagged on Wiki pages
  - Provide sample artifacts and portfolio templates
- 

From a more global perspective, the authors can offer three general recommendations related to the design and management of a technology-infused senior seminar aligning with the previously described TPACK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). First, consider the functions and capabilities of available technology to determine how it could meaningfully enhance student learning and help meet instructional objectives. In doing so, ensure the focus of the assignment is not the technology itself, but rather the technology supplements and enriches the learning tasks. Second, be aware of how instructional practices and pedagogical strategies may change as a result of using certain technologies. For example, technology-based assignments using a Wiki to synthesize research findings and generate group consensus related to a particular topic, may influence student interactions with one another and the content and require a new creative approaches to group discussion. Third and finally, invest time in pilot testing and troubleshooting the technology prior to implementation. This can reduce frustration and unnecessary distractions from the purpose of the assignment/learning tasks and ensure the technology's capabilities can assist in teacher candidate's meeting of lesson and course objectives.

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### **Opportunities for Higher Order Thinking through a Hybrid Delivery Format**

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Back in 1956 Benjamin Bloom theorized that there were levels of cognitive thinking that formed taxonomy. Higher order thinking included cognitive concepts of analysis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). He theorized that when students were engaged in these types of thought processes that they were more likely to master and retain the concepts.



Figure 1: Bloom's Taxonomy (Pohl, 2000)

Bloom's taxonomy has been used for years at the K-12 levels of schooling for curriculum design, classroom activity, and assignment development. At the higher education level we tend to assume that students are all adults, they have been significantly good learners since they find themselves now in college or graduate school. The above diagram represents the latest version of Bloom's 1956 taxonomy of cognitive thought processes (Pohl, 2000).

The taxonomy implies that the lower level of "remembering" is the most common level and lowest level of cognitive processing in our teaching/learning situations, and as you go up the taxonomy the cognitive processes are more complex and usually less used in classroom situations. Therefore the top level of "creating" may be typically used the least in teaching learning situations than the levels below. This is a higher level cognitive process, it requires different intellectual and cognitive processes than mere "remembering". It is Bloom's theory that the more you engage higher order thinking skills the more likely a student will retain the information and overall, the more cognitive processes that are involved the greater the likelihood that a student will master that information.



All our students are post masters degree students in a certification program. So it can be safely assumed that they know how to assimilate information, concepts and thus the curriculum itself. This certainly has found itself to be true over many years of graduate program review and course development.

However, we have found that when we recently shifted the delivery format to a hybrid model with some face-to-face class meetings and some on-line work we have now come to realize that students' potentials are challenged in a new and different way. Most of our students are able to read texts, listen to lectures and write papers based upon their consumption of new information. We have found that the on-line format has allowed our more competent learners to engage in higher order thinking on a more regular basis and go beyond the typical, traditional class format and curriculum delivery. More of our students are engaged in classroom dialogue, have more of an active relationship in the comparing and contrasting of their new and old knowledge, are better able to apply knowledge, and are able to synthesize new knowledge and concepts with their previous knowledge to actually create new knowledge. They are moving from consumers of knowledge into producers of new knowledge. This is exciting to them as students and truly enriches the curriculum and classroom for us as professors.

The on-line classroom on a weekly basis requires students to post answers and/or dialogues about issues. They must interact with their peer classmates (usually twenty or so students) as they compile their own answers and comments. They must compare and contrast their own knowledge within these posts. In a traditional classroom setting a week can easily go by when a student does not actively participate in class without much notice from a professor. In the on-line format they are required to post an answer each and every week and they must respond to critics of their posts as well. This type of intellectual dialogue is far richer than sitting in class. The anonymity of the

on-line format also changes the general comments as well. Although the students do know each other and their name appears on the post is less intimidating for many than face-to-face dialogues. You must defend your posts and base your posts on cited sources as well. Many students certainly take time and craft their answers carefully each week, taking time to research their points and be able to critic others as well as defend their own. On a weekly basis this seldom occurs in the traditional classroom setting to the great degree it does in the on-line format.

It does make for more work for the professor and the student. The student cannot comment week by week without reading the text, doing some level of research to cite in their answers, and generally support a point of view. We truly have found it to engage students at higher levels of cognition than traditional classroom dialogue formats.

Students quickly realize they cannot fail to do the reading for the week and be credible as they need to respond. We see it in new students to the program the very first week of assignments, after that they quickly realize the drill and step up their studies. We consistently hear from students at student evaluation time, how they have learned more from this class than others or they learned more than they thought they would at the class onset, etc. Much of this we believe is the engagement level and the attention to the opportunities for higher order thinking activities throughout this format.

Generally, our curriculum has been the same over time, it is only this format that has changed and we have seen a change in the students' thoughts on what they learned and a change in our comprehensive exam data as well. They have scored higher on these exams than past groups and we attribute it much to the format rather than any change in content. The curriculum is delved into much deeper through the course of weekly on-line postings – there are usually about twenty students per class and we usually get anywhere from 60-100 posts per week regarding one

assignment. The fact that students go back and forth multiple times to defend their positions or critique others gets at curriculum points to a much finer degree than any 50 minute in class discussion allows.

The face-to-face time within our hybrid format also helps fill a need for person-to-person connection and puts faces to on-line posts, etc. The remains the typical in-class professor student dialogue in these sessions as well as allowing students to actively present papers, presentations, projects to their peer group rather than just place them in an on-line forum or some on-line drop box. We have found this balance serves our student body well.

Our typical assignments ask students to read a text, do some research and support a point of view. In this process we ask them to bring into the dialogue elements of their own work situations. This constantly and consistently makes them compare and contrast information, apply their new concepts, and often times synthesize new information into their previous knowledge base or with the knowledge base brought to the table by other students or the text(s) themselves. This pushes the students to think according to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

The papers and presentations that are assigned throughout the coursework, in addition to the weekly dialogues, benefit greatly from this increase in intellectual activity. Concepts are more fully developed, more fully explored, and we believe, more fully understood by students through the myriad of dialogues they have had and the many opportunities they have had to engage with the knowledge in more complex ways. We firmly believe that mastery of the information has increased manifold through this hybrid format and students are more likely to create new knowledge through this type of delivery system than be mere consumers of knowledge.

It is only through the creation of new knowledge that we will be able to "think outside the box" and come up with new solutions to the complex problems of tomorrow in our field. This

appears to manifest itself in the individual's performance in their chosen field after having taken our courses; something that is difficult to measure at this time. The measure that we can and do use is the comprehensive exam data that our program contains. Our students are showing a greater degree of mastery of the subject matter within this exam over than past few years, a greater repertoire of solutions to particular case studies, as well as a greater ability to see several sides of a situation and come up with an appropriate plan of solution based upon a synthesis of their own knowledge and new knowledge gained through the coursework.

We were hesitant when the first hybrid on-line course was put into reality several years ago, not wanting to lose control of the learning situation moving from the classroom to on-line. Our fears have certainly been allayed through a look at our own data. Students are much more conversant on the topics, concepts, and knowledge we are imparting than they once were.

It does require additional work from professors. We believe that it does require more preparation than a typical traditional face-to-face class each week, giving a lecture or some other type of presentation of material. The curriculum is clearly more vibrant, more active, and more real to all involved in this kind of delivery mode.

Students often times make links between concepts and knowledge that were not fully explored in the original curriculum intent. These types of synthesis provide for the creation of new connections, new knowledge, and often help the professors explore new avenues of intellectual thought and direction as well. More than once we have had to research a student's on-line response to see if their information was credible and the connection they made appropriate. This seldom happens in an in-class dialogue.

Overall, the hybrid format allows for greater intellectual diversity and curiosity than a typical traditional format. The students become more producers of new knowledge than simply

consumers of knowledge. The students are more engaged at the higher levels of thinking (creating, evaluating, analyzing) than in prior class structures. The truly outstanding student, the truly capable student has a much more likelihood of challenging themselves to reach greater heights of learning than in other formats. That is exemplified regularly, the outstanding student has an unlimited opportunity to move forward, something often squelched by the structure of a regular fifty minute face-to-face class session. Often times we give students little time to “think” before they are expected to answer, usually less than ten seconds in a face-to-face class. The on-line format allows them much “think time” and time to research and craft their answers and form their own rebuttals and supports.

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## **Untie My Hands and Give Me a Voice: A Beginning Teacher's View of Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

A beginning teacher describes three major problems she encountered during her first two years of teaching: (a) emphasis on high stakes testing, (b) overwhelming amount of tier paperwork, and (c) inconsistency within the school district concerning methods of instruction.

The research on teacher retention continues to grow. As accountability increases and state departments use testing results to grade schools and then label them, classroom teachers feel overwhelmed. They are quick to relate how powerless they feel to make informed decisions about how they teach. Their voices are silenced with threats of losing jobs due to test scores. Gabriel, Day, and Allington (2011) reported that teachers felt supported, trusted, and valued as professionals when they were allowed to engage in individual and group decision-making.

The following paper was written by a graduate student who began her teaching career as she continued her education. Throughout her coursework for a master's degree and then a specialist's degree, she related her experiences and frustrations as a beginning teacher. Obviously, she was a dedicated teacher, a risk-taker, and a seeker of good teaching strategies. Here is her story:

As a first year teacher, I was optimistic and enthusiastic. I wanted nothing more than to teach my students and watch them grow intellectually. During my undergraduate years we were assigned several projects and asked to read many professional books. However, after only one week in my own classroom, I realized that all of my college training had been centered on a fantasy world in which teachers are respected and given the freedom to do what they feel is best for their students. "Teachers enter the profession with high hopes of imparting knowledge and developing thinking skills. Many surprises await them when they are alone for the first time in a classroom (Walker, 2004)." I spent my first year realizing my hands were tied in almost every aspect. My second year was spent trying to fight and change the system in order to teach the way I knew my students would learn.

Throughout my first two years of teaching I ran into three major issues. First, and foremost, the Mississippi MCT2 takes top priority. Principals and lead teachers focus more of their time and energy in the tested grades, and even feel that this is where the best teachers should be placed to ensure optimal test results. Second, in order to ensure accountability, teachers are bombarded with paperwork to prove they are doing what a good teacher does naturally. This is especially true in the area of tier interventions and tier paperwork. Third, there is a contradiction between what schools say they want and what they are willing to help you do. Most principals will say how they hate using reading kits such as Harcourt, and they prefer teachers pull library books and other materials to teach reading. They provide you with all of the basal series resources one could even need and tell you not to use it. However, they provide almost no other resources that would aid in teaching the way they prefer.

Assessment should serve as a guide to instruction. Assessment should never become the curriculum. Unfortunately, the popularity of standardized tests has caused many schools to focus on the state assessment as their sole means of teaching children. “Since the signing into law by President Bush in 2002 of the No Child Left Behind Act, testing of pupils has dramatically increased (Rapple, 2004)” Everything that occurs during a school year revolves around a standardized test. According to Walters (2004), high stakes testing is the fifth most common reason why teachers leave the profession. During my second year teaching, I began to truly see just how much emphasis is placed on standardized test scores. First, my principal rarely came into my classroom, and the few times the lead teacher came in were to do quick



observations of my reading program. This continued to be the case even after I talked with them both and requested that they visit my room more often, especially during times other than reading, such as math or science. My requests fell on deaf ears, and they continued to focus their time and energy on the tested grades.

In our school district, kindergarten and first grades are given teacher assistants. However, in order to improve test scores, our assistants were taken out of the room at specific times during the day to sit in a tested classroom and tutor students who scored minimal or basic. Also, during the month our state test was administered, my assistant was pulled all day for nearly four weeks. This was frustrating because my class was very close to scoring advanced on one of our tested math strands. I had planned several in depth math lessons to bring my students' math achievement up. However, my school administration felt that my assistant would better serve the school by pulling up another class' test scores. Also, my administration had the belief that the strongest teachers should be placed in the tested grades to ensure strong test scores. This is a direct contradiction to my beliefs. I expressed my concerns that strong teachers are equally needed in the lower grades to build a strong reading and math foundation. If a student has a weak teacher in kindergarten, first, and second grades, then that student has been set up for failure. Even if the student's third grade teacher is exemplary, that teacher is still not going to be able to catch the student up on three years of school.

Another frustrating element I encountered during my first two years as an educator was the overwhelming amount of tier paperwork. A recent study found that:

Increased paperwork and additional nonteaching demands were ranked

second by both groups as reasons for leaving the profession. A study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that one fifth of a teacher's day-and his energy and ingenuity-is spent at jobs which could be performed by nonprofessionals or by automated devices. (Tye & O'Brien, 2002)

The tier process came about as a result of No Child Left Behind and is in place to ensure that struggling students receive the help they need. However, the majority of the paperwork is redundant and unnecessary. For instance, we were required to fill out two and tier three paperwork describing the activities we were going to use. Then we had to include our tier two and three strategies in our lesson plans. That meant that we had to write down our tier two and three activities twice, which was unnecessary. Spending extra time with struggling students and scaffolding them is something that a good teacher does naturally and should not be required to spend countless hours completing irrelevant paperwork to prove that. According to Mississippi state policies, a student on tier three is required to meet with an interventionist. Typically, this meeting takes place for thirty minutes daily. However, because of MCT2, the interventionist for my school spent most of his time working with third, fourth, and fifth grade students to bring them up academically and thus improve test scores.

Lastly, there was a tremendous gap between what my school system wanted concerning instruction and what they allowed us to do. Teachers possessed an immeasurable supply of resources to use during reading. However,

we were told that these resources were off limits and that it was preferred if reading were taught a different way. We were never given any resources or materials to help aid in teaching reading the way the school district wanted. We were promised leveled readers and more items to use in reading centers; however, we received them very late in the year instead of early on so they could be utilized during crucial parts of the school year.

Throughout my first two years of teaching, there was much inconsistency within the school and district. I firmly believe that inconsistency breeds chaos and thus hinders student learning and achievement. There is too much emphasis on standardized test scores and the majority of resources and help from administrators go towards the tested grades. The tier process procedure for Mississippi should be revised to be more teacher friendly and less redundant.

What can we as educators learn from this beginning teacher's experiences? She is only one teacher. We need to ask more beginning teachers what they think and what they see as solutions to problems in retaining teachers. Then we should listen. Edwin Markham wrote this short poem called "Outwitted":

He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him In!

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