The Field Experience Journal

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

The Man in the Maze has been adopted by many groups of people because of its symbolism of life's cycles and eternal motion, and also of the choices we are confronted with. The right choices lead us to a point of harmony with all things, no matter how hard or long the road taken.

The O'odham began employing the man-in-the-maze pattern in their basketry in the early 1900s. The motif has come to serve as an icon for the O'odham people. The human-like figure is the O'odham Elder Brother, I'itoi.

The Field Experience Journal

Submission Guidelines:

1. Manuscripts should be no more than 20 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@unco.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 Field Experience Conference held at the University of Northern Colorado.
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:*

This edition of *The Field Experience Journal* begins with a submission for Drs. Philip Patterson and Ute Kaden of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This entry, "Logistics of Direct Clinical Supervision in Remote and Isolated Rural Areas", adds to the body of research regarding high quality experiences for teacher candidates utilizing direct clinical supervision in remote and isolated rural areas.

Dr. Jody Piro and Dr. Sarah McMahan of Texas Woman's University in their submission titled, "Mentoring in a Field Experience", explored the perspectives of a cohort of teacher candidates participating in an alternative field setting. Drs. Piro and McMahan based this study on the premise that an alternative field experience may foster in teacher candidates a greater involvement with their mentors as well as development of classroom management and instructional strategies.

"Reflection on the Processes and Benefits of Co-teaching in Clinical Practice" is a submission from Dr. Martha Michael of Capital University. Dr. Michael provides a qualitative study using hermeneutics to evaluate for theme discovery. Dr. Michael examines the results from teacher candidates regarding their belief in the value of the co-teaching experience and their effect on student learning.

Dr. Tina Selvaggi and Dr. Sally Winterton, of West Chester University of Pennsylvania, discuss methods for student teaching supervisors to ease the anxiousness of teacher candidates prior to their student teaching placements in "Jitters Keeping You Awake? Pondering Student Teaching Is…".

Our final article in this edition was prepared by the University of South Alabama's Dr. Andrea Kent and Dr. Rebecca Giles. This submission, "The Influential Role of Field Experiences in a Dual Certification Teacher Preparation Program", shares the field experiences that became an essential component to a program that leads to certification in both elementary and special education.

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

Logistics of Direct Clinical Supervision in Remote and Isolated Rural Areas

Philip P. Patterson and Ute Kaden

University of Alaska Fairbanks

The significance of high-quality field experiences in teacher education is well documented (Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Zeichner, 2012). Direct clinical supervision plays a unique and important role in preparing and supporting student teachers during field experiences (Baum, Powers-Costello, VanScoy, Miller, & James, 2011; Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2012). This importance is realized when supervising faculty recognizes that meaningful supervision occurs in the organizational, sociocultural, and political context of schools' locations. Supervision should be viewed as the effective blending of empirical, phenomenological, behavioral, and developmental perspectives emphasizing professional relationships between supervisor, teacher, and stakeholders (Adewui, 2008; Goldhammer, 1969). Nowhere is this confluence of variables more obvious than when conducting direct clinical supervision in remote and isolated rural schools.

For purposes of this paper, direct clinical supervision is defined as a series of in-person, supervised field experiences in Pre K-12 classrooms (including student teaching), which occur as a sequenced integral part of a teacher preparation program prior to a candidate becoming a certificated teacher. Additionally, supervising faculty is defined as all persons who were assigned by a teacher preparation program to provide supervision and evaluation of student teaching field experiences (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008).

When many college and university faculty visualize doing direct supervision of student teachers in rural settings, they imagine schools in quaint small towns or those surrounded by

agricultural fields and undeveloped plots of land. There are, however, supervisors who work with student teachers in extremely remote and isolated rural areas. Reaching such settings could involve driving many hours each way, possibly taking up the better part of an entire work day. Accessing some remote areas may require taking planes or boats in order to reach them because of vast distances or because the towns and villages in which the schools are located are not on road systems. Such locations and the difficult, costly modes of transportation to access them often require that supervisors stay overnight.

Typically, remote and isolated rural schools are located in the most sparsely populated states such as Alaska, Wyoming, and Montana (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012). They can, however, exist in more populous states such as California or Texas where residents can be disbursed over vast and diverse geographic landscapes. They also can exist in countries having immense territories such as Canada and Australia (Kline, White, & Lock, 2013; Slack, Bourne, & Gertler, 2003). For purposes of this paper, remote and isolated rural areas are those located in sparsely populated communities, which are considerable distances away from other communities, especially metropolitan centers (Slack, et al., 2003). It is not unusual for indigenous people and other minority groups to populate communities in remote and isolated rural areas.

Current research regarding direct clinical supervision in rural settings is scant. Research or even mention of direct clinical supervision in remote and isolated rural areas is extremely rare (Yarrow, Ballantyne, Hansford, Herschell, & Millwater, 1999). Based on extrapolated literature concerning typical rural schools and the authors' personnel experiences, this article will identify basic logistical issues, practices, and nuances to be considered when conducting direct clinical supervision of student teachers that are placed in remote and isolated rural schools.

The Context of Teaching and Supervising in Remote and Isolated Rural Schools

Student teachers are placed in schools located in remote and isolated rural areas for a variety of reasons. Some student teachers request placement in specific schools, as they are located in the students' hometowns, thus affording them proximity to family, friends, and housing. Other student teachers may not be specific in their requests but indicate a desire for a remote and isolated setting because they plan on working in such environments when hired as fully certified teachers. Moreover, some teacher preparation programs may encourage students to have diverse experiences that include working in remote and isolated rural school settings. Finally, student teachers may be placed in such settings because they already have an offer of future employment or a school in a remote and isolated rural setting may already employ them.

There are several advantages of doing student teaching in remote and isolated rural areas (Kline, et al., 2013). Oftentimes, such settings allow student teachers the opportunity to interact and learn from cultures other than their own. Furthermore, because classroom population sizes are typically smaller, such settings can better foster positive teacher-student relationships. Those smaller enrollments can result in student teachers better able to focus on individual student needs, particularly when compared to their counterparts working in over-crowded urban schools (Barley, 2009; Eppley, 2009; Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagómez, 2012).

Aside from being geographically isolated, schools in remote rural and isolated areas can be unique in several other ways (Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, & Salgado, 2005). For example, classrooms in such schools often attempt to meet the needs of students in multiple grade levels and who are of multiple ages. Grade combined classrooms occur in urban areas as well, however, the number of grades and ages addressed in classrooms located in remote and isolated rural schools can be even more expansive (Monk, 2007).

Another unique aspect of schools located in remote and isolated rural settings is that general education teachers more commonly attempt to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. Students with disabilities, those who are gifted, those with language differences, and those who are at-risk are much more likely to be fully integrated into general education classrooms. This inclusion could be the result of a shortage in specialized personnel, limited financial resources (Monk, 2007), or an inclusive educational philosophy.

With the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (PL 107-110), and the implementation of common standards, it might be anticipated that school curriculums are relatively homogeneous. Such an assumption is false, especially in remote and isolated areas where local communities and indigenous people can have a strong influence on what is taught. In such settings, teachers might be expected to address cultural or indigenous knowledge and standards, possibly making the curriculum appear different than typically observed in traditional student teaching settings (Barnhardt, 2005).

Another unique aspect of some schools located in remote and isolated rural areas is that they often utilize different instructional materials. Some schools can even experience a shortage of materials (Faircloth, 2009; Fry & Anderson, 2011). As such, teachers in remote and isolated schools implement the practices of having students share textbooks; utilize alternative materials; employ supplemental materials; and use dated equipment. Conversely, some schools may rival their urban counterparts in having up-to-date technology as well as textbooks and resource availability. These inequities can be due to a variety of factors including obstacles in shipping merchandize, communication challenges with publishers and distributors, local school curriculum priorities, and financial resources.

Local communities influence remote and isolated rural schools in unique ways. In these

areas, schools frequently exceed the single role of education facility, often functioning as places where people meet, interact, and strengthen their social networks. Schools can become community halls or sports centers where a variety of events take place (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2010). Community and family members can be more visible within such schools when compared to schools in traditional settings. There are also schools that have contentious relationships with communities, resulting in isolation for teachers and an overall negative climate (McDermott, Scacciaferro, Visker, & Cox, 2012).

Supervising and observing student teachers who are placed in remote and isolated rural schools is in many aspects similar to supervising those placed in traditional settings. Supervisors will conduct pre and post observation meetings with the student teacher, examine the planning process, observe and analyze the teaching and learning process, and provide feedback and support (Goethals, Howard, & Sanders, 2004). Yet, supervisors need to be aware of the distinctive characteristics and sociocultural context of schools and the communities in which they are located.

To optimize the supervision and support provided when conducting direct observations, supervisors must understand the unique aspects of teaching in remote and isolated rural areas. Rural teachers often need to do more extensive planning than their urban or suburban colleagues in order to meet the needs of their very diverse student populations. Consequently, they may also have to do more multi-tasking within the classroom; simultaneously supervising and teaching groups and individual students. Supervisors may also have to accept that the curriculum in these settings may, at first, appear to be unaligned with the curriculums of typical school settings. This could well be due to local influences and the desire to address cultural beliefs and knowledge. Additionally, supervisors need to accept that materials such as textbooks and realia are different

from what they typically see used in other settings. Finally, supervisors should be aware of the relationships and influences that local communities have upon schools. Often times, these relationships strongly affect a school's climate and overall effectiveness (Beesley, Atwill, Blair, & Barley, 2010; Lock, 2008; Wenger et al., 2012).

Planning Before the Observation

Forms of transportation, meals, sleeping arrangements, and other activities should be identified well in advance of conducting observations. Travel to remote and isolated rural areas can be problematic. Aside from the expense, transportation and weather can sometimes be unpredictable. If driving, there may be minimal access to gas stations and automobile repair services. Additionally, road conditions can be poor. If taking aircraft or boats, scheduling is often sporadic, making access limited. Transportation to such areas can be severely impacted by inclement weather resulting in road closures, canceled or diverted flights, or terminated boat trips.

Well before going to remote and isolated rural areas, supervisors should develop detailed itineraries. These itineraries should not only include typical information such as departure and arrival times, but might also include maps, important contact telephone numbers or email addresses, and a list of alternative lodgings and emergency services that are available along the way. Such itineraries should be shared with a university representative and someone at the school site in the event that the possible whereabouts of the supervisor is sought.

There are many other details to be considered before supervisors leave to do direct clinical observation in remote and isolated rural areas. Supervisors who drive will want to take special care that their automobiles are in good working condition. If driving, it's best to bring along an operable spare tire, flares and an emergency kit. If flying or boating it's wise to make

prearrangements for being picked up from the dock or airport. Because of accessibility issues, supervisors in rural and isolated areas may want to consider purchasing medical transportation insurance in the event of an emergency.

Whether driving, flying, or boating, supervisors who need to stay overnight should pack lightly and efficiently. Ideally, a single suitcase or backpack containing a change of clothes and toiletries will suffice. A sleeping bag should be included, depending on the sleeping arrangements, which could be in the school library. Supervisors should consider bringing along snacks, utensils, and even a heating element for hot water. Bringing along a small logbook or electronic tablet to take quick notes during the visitation is recommended. Supervisors who wish to bring along their cell phones should verify connectivity issues, as these may be problematic in remote and isolated rural areas. Bringing along small gifts, such as fruit or candy, to be distributed to the stakeholders or students for their anticipated hospitality is advisable.

Just as with supervising in traditional locations, it is critical for purposes of collaboration and contextual understanding that supervisors research the specific schools and communities that they visit. Information regarding community characteristics, average class size, school performance data, and student demographics can help supervisors better understand what they are going to observe. Such research can often be done by Internet searches, by collaborating with colleagues who have previously visited the school, and by communicating with the student teacher, supervising teacher and principal.

As with all observations, supervisors have to establish the goals and objectives well before their arrivals. Stakeholders, including the student teacher, collaborating teacher, and principal, need to be apprised of the parameters of the observations, including what is to be observed, the length of the observations, the observation times, and the performance expectations

of the student teacher. Ultimately, a well-organized agenda of activities is desirable. Such preplanning not only helps in optimizing the supervisor's time on-site but also clarifies expectations.

During the Visit

Although an informal or formal agenda may have been established prior to the visitation, one of the first activities to conduct upon arrival at the school is to verify the accuracy and feasibility of the proposed schedule. The initially planned schedule may need to be modified due to absences, new activities, or other unexpected occurrences. Verification of the proposed agenda can be done when meeting the principal, cooperating teacher, and student teacher.

Having face-time to meet with the key stakeholders is advisable. Meeting with them on a one-on-one basis may better foster collaboration. Such meetings allow individuals to be more forthcoming about accomplishments, challenges, or other issues impacting the student teacher. One critical point to discuss in such meetings is the student teacher's ability to adapt to the local community. Community integration can be an important factor related to teacher efficacy and retention (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2010).

A tour of the entire school plant would be desirable in order to have a better understanding of the working conditions under which the student teacher operates. It will give the supervisor an opportunity to see other classrooms, meet other teachers, note the availability of instructional materials, and observe student engagement. It allows the supervisor to ascertain the school's overall atmosphere and tone.

A tour of the community is always recommended. Such tours give supervisors the opportunity to meet community members, to identify the availability of resources beyond the school, and to verify demographic characteristics of the community. As a sign of support and

respect toward the local community, supervisors want to consider purchasing souvenirs or sundry items from local vendors during such tours.

Supervisors will want to plan on availing themselves to students and other community members as information agents of their colleges or universities. Those living in remote and isolated rural areas can feel marginalized from higher education recruitment and information dissemination (Rodriguez, Rodriguez, & Davis, 2006). Clinical direct supervision provides an opportunity to do direct face-to-face marketing by informing students and parents of entry requirements, expectations, and college life. Supervisors can act as advisors to in-service teachers and paraprofessionals regarding professional development activities, degree requirements, and additional certification opportunities. Supervisors should plan on bringing brochures, flyers, give-away promotional items, and contact telephone numbers or email addresses of college or university resource personnel.

After the Visit

Direct Clinical supervision in remote and isolated rural areas can be very invigorating due to the amount of planning, traveling, networking, and the actual observation activities. Because of these multiple experiences, it is important that upon returning supervisors allot themselves time to reflect on what they observed. Considerations for analysis include: the overall performance of the student teacher; the accuracy of oral and written evaluations; the sufficiency and quality of suggestions and directives; the adequacy of on-site support; the unique characteristics of the school that may impact the student teacher; and the student teacher's ability to successfully integrate into the school and community. Based on observation analysis, supervisors are able to act upon any incongruences identified.

To sustain relationships and networks that were established during the visitation,

supervisors should communicate with stakeholders upon their return. Communication can include emails or telephone calls following up on issues addressed during the visit. They can also include handwritten *thank you* notes to the principal, the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, or others for their hospitality.

It is imperative that supervisors follow up on requests and offers of resources or information made during visitations. For example, student teachers might be sent articles on certain instructional practices that were discussed in the post observation conference; principals might be mailed brochures to share with parents and students concerning university enrollment; and the supervising teacher might be given a book on supervision of student teachers. To sustain and further develop relationships it is important for supervisors to be reliable, to show interest in the school, and to act in a timely manner on any promises made.

Finally, developing a timeline for progress reports, future communications and observation will aid stakeholders and most importantly student teachers in accomplishing goals and objectives. Timelines may be based on university policies; the student teacher's needed level of support; and information exchanged with stakeholders during the visitation. Effective, supportive on-going communication is essential for successful student teaching experiences and for maintaining collaborative relationships (Levine, 2011; Zeichner, 2012).

Conclusion

Children in remote and isolated rural schools deserve an effective and supported teacher workforce that not only knows how to teach but also understands how children learn and live in the cultural context of their communities (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Eppley & Corbett, 2012; Eppley, 2009; Kelly, 2009; White, 2008). Teacher education programs should carefully plan for teacher supervision in remote and isolated rural areas (Howley & Howley, 2005;

Steadman & Brown, 2011). In this paper, a variety of strategies are shared that have been found to be efficient for planning, conducting, and evaluating remote and isolated rural school supervision. It is emphasized that with the necessary planning a direct remote supervising visit can be highly effective in providing the much needed personal contact between supervisor and student teacher. Well-planned direct supervision helps to establish trust and sustainable partnerships between the university supervisor and local education stakeholders (Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994; Zeichner, 2009).

Although a variety of technologies exist to augment or replace direct clinical supervision (Alger & Kopcha, 2009; Miller & Carney, 2009; Plonczak, 2010) of student teachers, many colleges and universities value on-site visitations. Combinations of technology guided distance supervision models and direct supervision visits to support student teachers may be needed to offset high travel costs and to provide frequent feedback. More research is needed to evaluate the strength and the shortcomings of both models to inform the teacher education community.

To accurately evaluate and support student teachers placed in remote and isolated rural schools, however, supervisors need to have a clear understanding of the unique environmental, procedural, and community factors that may guide and impact teachers' performances. Researching the school and community, efficiently planning for the visitations and observations, participating in on-going communications and collaborations with stakeholders as well as honest reflections help in developing this needed understanding.

In summary, establishing contextual understanding and an appropriate supervision focus are essential for a productive and trusting supervisory relationship (Levine, 2011; Pajak, 2001). Such understanding and focus allows for guidance, while avoiding standardized judgment. Being consciously aware of one's own feelings, knowledge, and goals toward teaching in a remote and

isolated rural community are essential for the supervisor.

The key to success as a clinical supervisor in remote and isolated areas is to understand the rural, cultural, and socioeconomic context of the school community and how this context influences the overall work conditions and teacher expectations. Only then can one accurately determine the course of action that is needed to further the emergence of the teacher's unique professional style and identity as well as strengthen local stakeholder and administrative support for teacher education. When a trusting professional relationship has been established, the supervisor's capacity to evaluate, guide, and provide support, determines real success. If supervisors fail to provide place relevant direct supervision that validates teaching and teacher education in the cultural and socioeconomic context, supervision will ultimately prove deadening for student teachers' professional development and student achievement. Supervising in remote and isolated rural areas is a learning process and an adventure.

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Mentoring in a Field Experience

Sarah McMahan and Jody S. Piro

Texas Woman's University

Abstract

This study explored the perspectives of pre-service teacher candidates in their senior year prior to student teaching who participated in a cohort field experience. Participants shared a field experience setting concurrently with a blocked curriculum and two common professors for their classes. The context under study was based upon the premise that students participating in an alternative field experience may experience heightened involvement with mentoring from the mentor-teachers in the shared field experience. The results suggest that the assigned mentor-teacher relationship as well as the rotation of mentor-teachers positively provided a significant impact on the participants' practical knowledge of teaching in real-life settings, including the development of classroom management and instructional strategies. Furthermore, participants reflected upon their own future role as mentors in their professional careers.

Introduction

For years, teacher educators and educational researchers have been studying best practices for new educators. Teacher preparation institutions have commenced rethinking the structure of educational methods courses and field experiences as a way to improve pre-service teacher education (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006; Dewey, 1938; Maistre & Pare, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). In preparing pre-service teachers to transition into effective teachers, teacher educators have advocated that students learn by doing. Therefore, pre-service students need experiences situated in schools and classrooms to connect the theory of learning to the actual practicing of teaching (Washburn-Moses, Kopp, & Hettersimer, 2012). One avenue to bridge theory to practice is to enhance authentic field experiences and mentoring relationships that actively engage students in the realities of school contexts.

Changing the infrastructure of field experiences alone is not sufficient to prepare 21st century pre-service teachers for the complexity and reality of today's classrooms. Rich mentoring experiences within the field experience are required. Research conducted for more than 20 years suggests that mentoring programs play an integral role in the development and support of beginning teachers (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Mullen, 2002; Orland, 2001; Sorensen, 2012). The mentoring relationships that develop within the framework of structured field experiences provide the support needed for pre-service teachers to prepare for their roles as educators.

Mentoring within the context of field experiences is beneficial for successful transitioning into a sustainable career in the teaching profession. Research from Ingersoll (2001) and Moon (2007) indicated that when teachers leave the profession, it is within the first five years of teaching. Consequently, it is fundamental for mentoring relationships in field

experiences and student teaching placements to incorporate strategies and techniques to support commitment to the teaching profession. It is essential to evaluate both the mentoring strategies and skills acquired within field experiences and the effect the transfer of skills has on pre-service teachers' perceptions of confidence and identity for their future roles as teacher. This article documents a study that investigated the perceptions of pre-service teachers in a cohort field experience prior to student teaching regarding the mentoring they received from an assigned mentor and from a rotation of mentor-teachers.

Theoretical Background

Across the United States, clinical based field experiences are a vital component to teacher preparation (AACTE, 2010). Field experiences hours – from early field experiences and practicum experiences in student teaching– are critical components of learning to teach. Zeichner (2010) echoed the notion of importance of practical experiences:

> The aim of practical experiences during preparation for teaching should be educative: it should help interns understand the full scope of the role of the teacher; it should foster the intern's capacity to learn from future experiences, and accomplish the central task of teaching – helping pupils to learn (p.215).

Over a century ago, John Dewey (1904) proposed the laboratory experience model. It may be inferred from the experiential component of the Dewian model for learning that pre-service teachers may benefit from having abundant opportunities to connect theory into practice. Bryan and Abell (1999) affirmed that "construction of knowledge requires experience" (p.121). Field experiences provide for observation, reflection, and practical classroom experience. Furthermore, field experiences prepare the pre-service teacher by providing professional scaffolding from the mentor-teacher. The mentor-teacher guides pre-service teachers to make

a successful transition from a student-orientation to a teacher-orientation. Mentor-teachers in field experiences are instrumental for pre-service teachers to develop the skills they need to teach, and they often set the tone for an individual's experience in fieldwork (Weasmer &Woods, 2003). Mentor-teachers also serve as clinical partners in the classroom and help shape and coach the pre-service teacher in crafting the expertise of teaching. Mentoring contributes to the overall professional growth and identity of pre-service teachers, as well as assisting them to construct new knowledge about teaching and learning (Cornell, 2003; Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000).

A major benefit of classroom mentors is that they offer expertise in specific areas of the curriculum (Pan, et al., 2000). Mentoring within the field experience setting provides vital development for pre-service teachers' personal understanding of pedagogy specific to their content area (Feiman-Nemser, 1998). Working with another teacher who specializes in the same content area enables the pre-service student to learn student learning strategies and techniques that will support specific skills within content areas. Cochran et al. (1993) and Ball, Thames and Phelps (2008) documented the significance of pedagogical content knowledge. Additional studies suggested that student teachers often move closer to the attitudes and behaviors of their specific mentor teacher by the end of the teaching experience (e.g., Mullen, 2002; Zeichner, 1980).

The mentoring relationship between pre-service teacher and mentor-teacher plays a key role in cultivating pre-service teachers' knowledge, skill, confidence, and critical reflection in learning to teach (Bullough, 2005; Hobson, et al., 2009; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2007). Mentors also serve as catalysts for change through their influence on the pre-service teacher. Mentors model behaviors that pre-service teachers attempt to exhibit (Wanberg, Welsh, &

Kammeryer-Muller, 2007; Wang, et al., 2009). Wang, et al. (2009) asserted that the more time that is spent with the mentor, the greater the likelihood that pre-service students will receive positive benefits from the relationship. Mentees who believe they benefited from the learning experience feel obligated to "give back" by serving as a mentor for someone in the future (Ragins & Scandura, 1999).

Benefits are also awarded to the mentor and students within the classroom where mentoring occurs. Some benefits to mentor-teachers include: improved self-reflection, lack of isolation and increased confidence (McIntyre & Hagger, 1996; Simpson, Hastings & Hill, 2007; Bodoczky & Malderez, 1997). Wepner and Mobley (1998) concurred that the addition of another teacher within the classroom allowed for individualized instruction that is not always possible when a teacher works alone with a roomful of students.

There is a disconnection between theory and application in teacher education and meaningful field experiences have been suggested to alleviate this gap (Zeichner, 2010). Mentoring, as part of the field experience, is beneficial for transitioning pre-service teachers' theoretical knowledge into practice (Mullen, 2002). Therefore, rich field experiences with effective mentoring relationships may bridge the theory to practice divide.

Method

This study was designed to understand the perceptions of a cohort of pre-service teachers in a common field experience setting. A professor-researcher stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) grounded the inquiry. The research question was exploratory in nature: What were the perspectives of the participants regarding the mentoring process in a cohort field experience?

Context of the Field Experience

In an attempt to provide more authentic and diverse field experiences with rich mentoring relationships, the professor-researchers established a collaborative partnership with a local rural school. The school-university partnership resulted in a cohort arrangement where pre-service students conducted their field experiences in a common school site working with an assigned mentor-teacher and a rotation of mentor-teachers. The mentor-mentee relationship was a key focus for the cohort field experience.

The school site selected for the cohort field experience was an intermediate (grades 3-5) school in a rural context outside of a suburban town that contained two public universities. In the year of study, the student population was 325 students. Approximately 72% of the students were designated Caucasian, 22% were Hispanic, and the remaining students were designated as other. Over half of the student body was deemed "at risk," and almost half of the students were designated "economically disadvantaged".

Participants in this study were co-registered for two classes that housed the common field experience placement. One professor-researcher taught Instruction and Assessment and one taught Classroom Management. Participants met in a blocked time from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for both classes consecutively. Participants self-selected by registering for the cohort section instead of the traditional sections where individual students were placed at varied schools for their field experience with no common field experiences or instructors. Unlike the traditional sections, participants were blocked for sequential courses on the same day, had two instructors that collaborated on instructional and field experience decisions, and experienced several mentor teachers during their required field requirement, rather than the traditional placement in one classroom. In addition, the cohort courses were both held in the university classroom and on the

site school campus. The structured cohort field experiences allowed every participant to engage in coaching with a variety of mentors at the third, fourth, and fifth grade levels as well as with mentors teaching special education and "specials" classes.

In the study cohort, each participant was placed with a selected mentor teacher for 15 of the required 30 field experience hours. Additionally, participants rotated through a sequence of four different mentor teachers for the remaining 15 hours. The mentor teachers did not receive any formal training; instead, they were briefed by their instructional leader to engage the pre-service teachers in their classroom activities.

Participants

Students in two sections of two courses in teacher education comprised a cohort, for a total of 50 participants, who engaged in a pilot field experience in the fall 2012 and spring 2013 semesters. There were 48 female participants and 2 male participants. All participants were in the first semester of their senior year in a teacher education program prior to the semester of being eligible for student teaching. All participants were identified as early childhood through eighth grade in their certification areas. Areas of specialty included English as a Second Language, Bilingual, Special Education, fourth through eighth grade generalist, and fourth through eighth grade math education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected following the conclusion of two semesters in the 2012-2013 academic years for a cross-sectional approach. This study involved a data-collection system consisting of survey interview questions within the electronic learning platform of Blackboard. Interviews maintained a standardized, open-ended interview protocol of ten questions (McMillan

& Schumacher, 2010). Interview questions were developed from the study questions and focused on the nature of the participants' perceptions of mentoring.

An inductive approach to coding the data was used with a framework originally formed by the interview questions (Hatch, 2002). Following multiple readings, categories emerged based upon common themes regarding the mentoring process within the clinical experience. The participants' own words were used to supplement analysis of the themes. Exact quotes are used except where noted with brackets. Trustworthiness was added by member-checking at multiple intervals of the data analysis.

Limitations and Next Steps

This study has several limitations. First, it explored a pilot study of one year of archival data from a new field experience at one institution, and thus, generalizability is limited. This research was an initial inquiry into the alternative cohort field experience in teacher education which focused on mentoring as an integral component of the field experience. Subsequent studies will likely utilize a quasi-experimental design to understand the alternative field experience as an intervention for effective mentoring.

Results

In an exemplary teacher education field experience, students learn from the mentoring and coaching efforts of their mentor-teachers. Participants in the study were immersed in a common field experience setting, and each had an assigned mentor-teacher. Additionally, each participant was assigned to a rotation of common mentor-teachers. Their perspectives of the mentoring experience in the field experience were coded into three themes: the assigned mentor teacher, the rotation of mentor-teaching, and the prospect of becoming a mentor in the future.

Perspectives of the Assigned Mentor-Teacher

The assigned mentor-teacher made a large impact on the experiences of the participants. Participants responded that the mentoring relationship with the mentor teacher promoted knowledge through modeling and providing a true praxis experience. Tiffany stated that she learned professional ethics from her mentor-teacher. "I gained valuable amounts of information from my mentoring teacher about how to operate in a classroom, conduct myself as a profession [al], and treat everyone in the school building with respect and dignity." Thomas agreed that his mentor-teacher assisted him "by modeling what characteristics are needed to become a professional educator." Patti stated that her classroom management skills would be improved as a result of her mentor-teacher relationship. She "was very organized, clear, and concise with her students. I believe that her classroom ran so smoothly was because of her rules, procedures, and interventions."

The importance of the clinical experience itself in becoming a professional was evident to many participants. Their relationship with their mentor-teacher evidenced the importance of the practical component of becoming a professional teacher. Elizabeth commented that "from teaching classes to afterschool duty and from team meetings to parent meetings, this was a healthy exposure to what the daily 'life' of a teacher is really like." Samantha expanded that this clinical experience was more valuable than the traditional clinical field experience where she would not have been able to participate fully in the classroom. "I was pleasantly surprised at the fact I would have the opportunity to [experience] hands on teaching during my field experience." The deep immersion of the field experience was evident in Maria's comment regarding her mentor-teacher. [She] "directly stated that if [she] had received this kind of experience during her own training the first few years would have been smoother and she could have become better

a teacher sooner." Amy perceived that the mentor relationship allowed her to conceptualize herself as a future teacher. Her mentor-teacher assisted her in "decid[ing] what kind of teacher I want to be. Do I want to be more like her? Less like her? What can I change about myself to make sure my students are excelling in my classroom?"

Danielle summed up her experience in the study setting by reflecting upon her own expectations for future clinical experiences and her own responsibilities to initiate active participation in teaching activities. She stated:

> My perception of the mentoring experience now is that my mentors should be doing the mentoring instead of placing me in a corner to observe. I feel that after this experience I have a greater expectation of what my mentor teachers need to be doing, and how they should incorporate me into their classrooms. In addition, I feel that I need to communicate better during mentoring experiences and allow my mentors to know that I am available to help and I need to take greater initiative.

Sandra also commented that her experience with her mentor teacher in the cohort field experience impacted her confidence for her future clinical experiences. Initially, she felt "fear towards my future mentor teacher during student teaching. What if we don't get along?" She felt reassured that the relationship she would have with her future mentor teacher "will be comfortable as a result of the cohort field experience. I understand they were once in my position and want to help me just as much as I want to help them."

Perspectives of Rotations between Mentor-Teachers

The cohort provided the participants with an assigned base mentor-teacher. In addition, each participant rotated between teachers in the clinical setting, expanding their clinical experience to more than one mentor-teacher. Participants responded favorably to the rotations

and increased exposure to multiple styles of teaching and classroom management, varying preventions and interventions, and different grade levels and subject areas taught.

Sara said, "I was able to observe several teachers with very different teaching strategies; the rotations were very insightful." Laura followed up with a similar position. "This placement really allowed us to be able to experience so many more teaching styles and classroom management than a regular placement. We are able to take parts of different classrooms and develop our own styles and management plans." Joanne concurred. "Having different teachers to look at allowed me to understand that there are different teaching styles and that I must pick the one that feels good to me."

Nona contrasted the non-cohort, traditional field experience with her experience in the field experience of the study:

> Having a base mentor teacher was very helpful for me because I was able to really get to know one staff member at [the school] on a professional and personal level. But unlike non-cohort members I was able to observe a handful of different teachers, subjects, and grade levels. Being in a non-cohort experience just doesn't have those advantages because you are only placed with a single teacher.

Tamika agreed, but expanded on how the rotations between mentor-teachers additionally provided experience into undesirable teaching behaviors. She stated that the rotation of mentor teachers was "a great opportunity that showed me a great variety of teaching styles, attitudes and management plans; some that I will take with me and some that are example[s] of what I do not want to do in my classroom." Lauren further established the perspective of the pros and cons of viewing teachers who varied in their practice. "No two teachers do everything exactly the same…I will be able to [borrow] some of these interventions, procedures, rules, questioning

strategies, assignments, and more for my future classroom." Amy preferred the alternative cohort experience to the traditional experience. She suggested that in the traditional field experience, she would have observed only, but in the cohort field experience, "several of my [mentor] teachers allowed me to assist during lessons and even teach the class."

The experience of being required to participate in many classrooms rather than the traditional one mentor-teacher classroom expanded one participant's conception of her own professional path and her options for grade level options. She suggested that having multiple mentors and going into multiple grades impacted her greatly. "These are not the grades that I want[ed] to teach; however, if I was offer a job [there], I feel that I can teach them. This experience helped me see these grades in a new light."

Perspectives of Becoming the Mentor

The mentor-teacher relationship resulted in a reflective stance with several participants as they considered the next step in their own professional careers, becoming a mentor themselves. The importance of educators coaching future teachers was evident from participant responses. Tammy stated, "I enjoyed the [mentor-mentee] experience and it has made me want to be able to mentor either a student who is considering becoming a teacher or a student teacher in the future." Nona's reflection concerned the time and effort involved in mentoring. "I see what may be asked of me one day in my future and I will be sure to remember this very positive experience I had." Dan agreed. "I have a new perception of how much it takes to welcome so many students into their classrooms each time we went to [the field experience setting]."

Participants further reflected upon the full experience of mentoring based upon their experiences in the study setting and their own expectations for mentoring in student-teaching,

including their own responsibility for creating a positive mentor-mentee relationship. Heather stated:

> I would love to mentor a student teacher, because I think that I want to return the positive experiences that I have had with my mentor teachers. I would love to share with students the mistakes that I would make as a first year teacher, as my mentor teachers have explained to me. Also, I think it would be a positive experience to watch that student-teacher grow, and just work with somebody who has a passion to help students.

Nona realized, "that if I am ever a mentor teacher it is important to really interact and get to know the person you are mentoring." Tammy summarized her experience with a pay-it-forward response. "I want to return the positive experiences that I have had with my mentor teachers. I would love to share with students the mistakes that I would make as a first year teacher."

Discussion of the Results

We found that participants' valued both the assigned mentor-teacher relationship along with the rotation of mentor-teachers in a common field experience cohort. Additionally, participants reflected on the impact of the experience on their own future conceptions of professional teaching. The impact of the assigned mentor teacher was significant. Participants noted the impact of the mentor on their own professional growth and identity and reported that they learned professional behaviors and professional expectations. The mentoring relationship assisted participants in examining their beliefs, skills, and attitudes towards teaching. The field experience promoted reconceptualization of participants' professional identities as teachers. Participants perceived their mentor-teacher as positively impacting their confidence about teaching as a professional choice. Participants additionally reported more confidence regarding taking the initiative for improved clinical field placements for their future student teaching.

The assignment to a sequence of varied mentors also impacted participants' perceptions of the field experience. The rotations increased their participants' experiences of the workings of the school setting by providing opportunities to engage in varied activities–such as lunch, transitions, specials, etc.,–that may not have been experienced in the more traditional field experience. Participants expressed that being exposed to different teaching styles, management styles, and teaching personalities through the rotation of mentors had positive effects on their own professional choices for the future.

The value of the mentoring relationships was clear in that it impacted participants' formation of identity as future teachers. Several expressed their intention to reciprocate the learning opportunity for pre-service teachers. Through the mentoring process of the field experience, the participants' own conceptions of themselves as professional educators increased their desire to serve as future mentors.

Implications for Teacher Education

Teaching is complex profession that requires competency in pedagogical knowledge. To reach that competency, pre-service teachers require a substantive amount of practice in instructional delivery prior to the becoming a professional educator. Similar to the medical model of training, the field experience component of teacher education embodies a clinical component of curricula that spans early field experiences, pre-student teaching field experiences, and then the capstone experience of student teaching. In teacher education, mentors–in tandem with teacher educators in the university setting–may form a powerful partnership with pre-service teachers that bridge the theory to practice divide. Thus, field experiences with rich mentoring may foster the developmental shift from pre-service teacher to new educator.

The connection between the classroom and the field in teacher education is essential, and mentoring is a significant factor for creating meaningful field experiences. Zeichner (2010) bemoaned the outcomes of non-structured field experiences in traditional settings where teacher educators hope for the best in their students' field experience placements. He recommended the creation of a "third space" (p. 486), where universities and classrooms provide hybridized spaces for learning that go beyond the theory/practice and the university/school setting binaries of many field-based placements in teacher education. Zeichner's suggestions are of particular note to this study. When teacher educators recognize the value of the mentorship relationship for their students' learning, this hybrid form of learning provides a more equal and real-world partnership between universities and the area schools that house their clinical pre-service teachers.

This research highlighted the significance of the mentoring relationship on pre-service teacher development and identity. As suggested by Mullen (2002), this research also suggested that the mentor and the overall mentoring experience provided a significant impact on the pre-service teachers' practical knowledge of teaching in real-life settings, including the development of classroom management and instructional strategies. While methods coursework provides pre-service teachers the theoretical foundations of teaching, field experiences with rich mentoring relationships may structure the transfer of that knowledge into the classroom. As evidenced by participant responses, clinical mentors significantly impact mentees' conceptions of how to properly devise a classroom climate and environment for student learning (Wanberg, Welsh, & Kammeryer-Muller, 2007, Wang, et al., 2009). The role of mentorship on pre-service teachers' confidence, sense of identity as teachers, and conceptions of effective daily interactions with students is considerable. Additionally, the relationship between mentor and mentee may foster a service orientation toward future service as a mentor for pre-service teachers. The burden of

responsibility to develop better relationships with clinical schools resides with the teacher education institutions. Teacher preparation programs must nurture valuable mentoring relationships for their pre-service teachers in field experience placements.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the perceptions of pre-service students in a common cohort field experience regarding their mentoring relationships. We found that that the mentoring relationship developed between the pre-service teacher and various mentors assisted in developing and strengthening participants' professional growth and identities and provided meaningful insights into the daily practices of the classroom. Mentoring additionally assisted pre-service teachers to understand professional responsibilities and expectations. Participants further reported an increased desire to become mentors in their own professional careers. Providing rich field experiences with meaningful mentoring relationships may result in better prepared pre-service teachers which may bridge the theory to practice divide in teacher preparation.

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Reflection of the Processes and Benefits of Co-teaching in Clinical Practice

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Abstract

A qualitative study using hermeneutics as the evaluative approach for theme discovery, demonstrated that when student teachers were asked to focus on student outcomes as a common goal, increased efficacy in terms of feelings of competence occurred through this willingness to collaborate in a middle school setting. A short survey was implemented to determine the level of knowledge and experience of each teacher candidate co-teacher prior to their student co-teaching. Results indicate that the majority of the 22 candidate co-teachers believed they had valuable professional growth, and that co-teaching assisted students' learning.

Current literature regarding instruction in a co-taught classroom is mostly about K-12 situations and does not focus on any co-teaching models other than the co-teaching between general and special educators. There is a lack of literature about co-teaching that occurs in clinical field work that involves co-planning and co-delivering content in a mixed ability class and then co-evaluating instruction with regards to student learning is lacking. What *is* available in the literature demonstrates that co-teaching is more likely to demonstrate the general education curriculum and support the development of critical thinking skills in students, more than instruction that is delivered by one teacher only (Walsh & Jones, 2004). Further studies indicate that the process of co-teaching is complex and cannot be captured in pre-service teachers' learning about the logistics and components of the process, and that it must be experienced (Friend, M., Cook, L., Harley-Chamberlain, D. & Shamberger, C. , 2010).

This study sought to illuminate the development of 22 teacher education candidates' belief in their own professional growth and competence. Twenty-two student -teachers were selected to co-teach in five Ohio districts. Their charge as co-teachers was to co-plan, co-teach and co-evaluate during the seven weeks of clinical field work of the semester in which they co-taught. These eleven student-teacher teams were selected and placed with co-teaching cooperating teacher teams. One teacher in each team represented a middle school content (e.g. Middle childhood math) and one teacher in each team represented special education as an intervention specialist. These pairs of students were charged with learning effective processes and procedures from the modeling and coaching of their co-teaching cooperating teachers. A training specific to the philosophy and nuts and bolts of co-teaching was held prior to their seven week experience when all 4 in each school team (2 in the student-teaching team and 2 in the cooperating co-teaching team) were given ways to build rapport, time to get to know each

other and how to organize to evaluate student products. They all were required to write in provided journals throughout their experience about the processes of co-planning, co-implementing and co-evaluating effective instruction in terms of student learning. The student-teachers were also administered a short pre survey and post survey about their beliefs concerning co-teaching.

K-12 Co-teaching

Co-teaching is a model of content delivery that addresses Universal Design for Learning in the classroom because it is an approach benefiting all students through the use of two teachers. In a study of over 600 educators, collaboration was the only variable predicting positive attitudes toward inclusion among general and special educators (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). In co-taught, collaborative classrooms, it can be argued that classroom practices are established such that all children (and 'adults') feel as if they are members of the community, not visitors or persons to be simply tolerated (Arguelles, Hughes, & Schumm, 2000; Cook & Friend, 1995; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003).

Murawski & Swanson (2001) reported that effective co-teaching models entail variables such as common planning time, flexibility, risk-taking, defined roles and responsibilities, compatibility, communication skills, and administrative support. As there is little research about co-teaching in relationship to student learning outcomes, there is a need to study these listed common variables in relationship to student outcomes.

In one study, Dieker (2001) examined nine secondary school teams teaching students with disabilities. The researcher reported the following characteristics as reflective of effective co-teaching situations: creating a positive learning climate, providing instruction that focuses

on active learning, setting and maintaining high expectations, allocating time to plan for the co-teaching process, and finding creative ways to evaluate student progress.

One of the most pervasive studies of co-teaching was a meta-analysis conducted by Murawski and Swanson (2001). These researchers synthesized 89 data-based articles about co-teaching between general and special education personnel. However, only six published articles provided sufficient quantitative information for an analysis. Factors such as effect sizes and dependent measures varied widely. The researchers concluded that there is a need for further research to substantiate the effectiveness of co-teaching for students with disabilities in the general-education classrooms.

Despite the limited research findings, there seems to be a consensus on a few factors that are critical to an effective co-teaching situation, regardless of the model used, and students involved. That is, there is not a 'specific' co-teaching model that should be used; rather, the tenets of a beneficial co-teaching situation seem to be:

- Willingness of the two teachers to collaborate and the use of an effective schedule for planning and meeting.
- Orientation for all students in the classroom (and, perhaps, the School); such orientation would include a discussion (e.g., behaviors; attitudes) of students in general-education classrooms and those with 'special-education' labels.
- Support of administrative leaders in the school and district
- Involvement of the parents and other educational agencies
- An engaged Individualized Education Plan Team
- A physical classroom/school environment conducive to full participation of students, including the use of individualized instruction or practices

- Use of differentiated education practices
- High expectations for all students

In general, in a co-teaching situation, instructional responsibility is shared, albeit each of the two teachers' level of participation will vary. Both teachers work primarily in a single classroom or workspace. Both teachers teach from the required curriculum and have 'ownership' (accountability & responsibility) of all students in the classroom. The teachers pool their resources, share ideas, and provide instruction that ultimately meets the needs of each child in the classroom (Bauer, Michael, & Paul, 2006).

The focus on student learning in co-teaching has been studied and reported by few researchers. While the current research regarding the effect of co-teaching on student learning is limited, as it is difficult to tease out from other factors, positive improvement in ability for 1) co-designing differentiated content delivery using universal design principles and 2) reflective practice between colleagues as a means of professional development, has been reported (Michael & Miller, 2010). One longitudinal study that was completed recently, showed significant statistical improvements in reading and math proficiency over a 4 year period in co-taught classes compared with classes that were not co-taught (Bacharach, Heck & Dahlberg, 2010). Another study in Arkansas compared grades of students in co-taught classes with those who were not in co-taught classes through a longitudinal lens. This comprehensive look at co-teaching as a district-wide approach demonstrated valued models for replication (Pearl, C., Dieker, L.A., Kirkpatrick, R.M. 2012). Furthermore, proficiency scores from one high school in Marietta where co-teaching was the selected approach, showed significantly different and beneficial scores than those of similar schools of the surrounding region where co-teaching was not used. (B. Bauer, personal conversation, Spring, 2005).

New teachers who recently graduate from teacher education programs find that they are expected to collaborate with other educators in the K-12 settings in which they find themselves. Employers seek individuals that are "team players" and those that share and work well towards common goals with others. Many new teachers have not experienced deliberately designed collaboration such as the practice of co-teaching in their teacher education programs, and therefore are not prepared to face the sometimes overwhelming and unfamiliar task of collaboration. Collaboration that is deliberately designed would, in effect, be a sanctioned approach in a school setting that encouraged collaborating teachers to co-plan, co-teach and co-evaluate their instructional practice in terms of student learning and at set times during the day or week. In turn, if teacher education candidates do experience deliberately designed collaboration in their teacher education programs, they may become new teachers prepared to collaboratively teach all K-12 students to learn in inclusive environments.

Co-teaching is a valued approach in Ohio, and the Ohio Department of Education has funded several grants to support co-teaching in clinical field work. This study was part of one of these grants funded over two years to Capital University in Columbus, Ohio.

As a qualitative study, the focus is on the findings of themes described by student teachers who used journaling about their co-experiences to document the co-planning, co-implementing and co-evaluating of the student learning in their classrooms. This approach has been used before in Australia, where teacher attitude change was documented. While the researchers did not focus on student outcomes, the teachers who actively engaged in reflection on their own teaching within a co-teaching situation, had patterns of thought and beliefs changed (Beamish, Bryer, & Davies, 2006).

The results of this qualitative study regarding pre-service co-teaching demonstrate that the student teachers' reflection on the thought process and beliefs brought to the collaborative process, changed due to their teaching practice and that focusing on student outcomes as the common goal in co-planning, co-implementing and co-evaluating teaching, was beneficial.

Methods

In three semesters, eleven pairs (22) of selected co-student teachers used journaling to elaborate on their experiences concerning the process of co-teaching during their seven weeks of clinical field placement. In these journals they reflected upon this process with the ultimate focus of student learning in mind, under the headings of 'planning for instruction', 'implementation of instruction' and 'evaluation of instruction'. Journals were read for coding purposes and themes that emerged were color-coded and grouped and prioritized by frequency of theme.

The emerging themes were documented in terms of the areas of 'planning for instruction', 'implementation of instruction' and 'evaluation of instruction'. The reported themes for this study needed to be mentioned and discussed at least 3 times by three different co-teachers.

Themes from Planning Instruction:

1. Common time for planning was sometimes usurped and it was described as detrimental to effective planning.
2. Both teachers must be dedicated to the use of time for planning and *plan together*, not just share what has been already laid out to teach.
3. The content co-teacher must demonstrate respect for the intervention specialist's role and knowledge of how to help all students learn.

4. Both must have the basic content knowledge of shared language for the content being taught.
5. The intervention specialist had to study the content being planned and relearn from partner or in first instructional periods during the day.
6. Definitions had to be agreed upon prior to instruction.

Implementation of Instruction

1. Division of parts of planned instruction are decisions to be made during planning, not during instruction for most effective learning to occur.
2. Both teachers need to be seen as having ultimate authority and assert this authority as needed.
3. Both teachers must have proximity to all students to provide assistance/scaffolding for all students.
4. Both teachers must have apparent parity and share the delivery of content equally.
5. Assessment must be built into the instruction for immediate feedback from each of the two teachers and to help with continued planning.
6. All co-teachers reported that the students in their classrooms were not divided out by who was on an IEP or not, but rather who needed assistance.
7. Since the co-teaching that occurred was only for 7 weeks, student teachers indicated that their experience, though too short, helped them to become better professionals in terms of communication.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Instruction via Student Learning

1. Both teachers must feel that instruction was effective before summative evaluations are delivered.

2. Extra instruction needs to be delivered before summative evaluations.
3. Student learning is not always defined by summative means, but can be shaped during instruction.
4. Student learning can be evaluated during effective instruction that includes formative evaluation methods.
5. Evaluation of student learning was deemed to be an area of growth by all student teachers and confirmed by cooperating teachers and university supervisors.
6. All co-student teachers thought/felt that co-teaching was an effective means to increase the learning of all students.
7. All co-student teachers thought/felt that co-teaching was excellent professional development and very helpful to have another to 'bounce' ideas off of another on a regular basis.
8. A majority of co-student teachers felt more competent in teaching as a result of being paired for co-teaching as student teachers.

In addition to the journaling, each of the 22 selected co-student teachers filled out a pre- and post-survey regarding their beliefs about their own knowledge of co-teaching and the perceived benefits to them and the students. The pre-survey was administered at the first meeting of all selected co-teacher teams during each of the three semesters the project was funded. They had not been in the classroom as a student teacher yet in each of the semesters, and had been given no information about co-teaching other than a brief overview of the project.

On these surveys the student teachers indicated that there was an increase in belief regarding two statements on the survey about the benefits of co-teaching for themselves and students, by their selections. In the pre-survey, the statement: "I believe that co-teaching is beneficial for

the learning of students", received only 60% (13/22) of the students selecting an "agree" or "strongly agree" that this was a true statement about themselves. On the post survey 20 of 22 or (99%) of co-student teachers believed that this was a true statement about themselves and 2 of 22 indicated that this was a "neutral" statement for them.

For the other statement, "I believe that co-teaching helps me to become a better teacher and professional" the pre survey indicated that only 4 of the 22 (18%) answered with an agree or strongly agree, and for the post survey 18 of 22 (81%) indicated that this was true by selecting "agree" or "strongly agree".

Conclusion and Discussion

Due to the necessity for educators to collaborate in schools to increase student achievement, there has been an increased interest in the co-teaching approach, with a need for it to be experienced in pre-service programs. Though complex, and a process that must develop overtime, co-teaching has proven to be effective for professional development (Friend, Cook, Hurley Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010).

This study, though limited by time and geography, illustrates a positive move toward the common focus or goal during the co-planning, co-instructing and co-evaluating stages of student learning, and provides a look at a model for other teacher education programs seeking to train candidates to co-teach. As there is a dearth of literature available regarding co-teaching in pre-service programs, this will help to show that co-teaching is perceived by candidates who have experienced it to be effective, when the focus is on student learning and achievement.

The results of this study also indicate that student teachers believed they developed as professionals and collaborators when the ultimate goal was student achievement and learning. Of the 22 student teachers, most indicated they believed that co-teaching was beneficial to student

learning and to their growth as practitioners. In addition, these co-student teachers offered new and more specific items believed necessary to accomplishing the instructional tasks of co-planning, co-implementing, and co-evaluating their instruction than were found in current literature by using student learning outcomes as a focus.

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Jitters Keeping You Awake? Ponder Student Teaching Is…

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Abstract

Teacher candidates are often nervous and anxious about their student teaching experience. In order to ease these nerves, teacher candidates were asked to complete a pre student teaching questionnaire about their feelings toward this important step in their teaching careers. Near the conclusion of student teaching they were asked to complete a similar post student teaching questionnaire. The themes from the pre and post questionnaires are examined and discussed in the article.

The Background

The student teaching semester is a long awaited event for teacher candidates. They are often excited and anxious about the experience and suffer from jitters waiting to meet their class and begin teaching. Greer & Greer (1992) report the highest risk for stress and burn-out may come at the beginning of an educator's career during pre-service field experiences.

In an effort to calm our teacher candidates' jitters and to learn their feelings regarding their upcoming student teaching experience, we, as university supervisors, had our teacher candidates complete a "Student teaching is . . ." questionnaire prior to their first day in the classroom. A similar questionnaire was completed at the end of the student teaching experience. The questionnaire was in the form of open-ended statements that teacher candidates completed about their feeling or reactions. These statements included: "Everyone thinks that student teaching . . ."; "Some teachers want student teachers . . ."; and "University supervisors should . . . ". Teacher candidates completed a pre-questionnaire (Appendix A) at the beginning of the spring 2010 semester and a post-questionnaire (Appendix B) at the end of the spring 2010 semester. Teacher candidates who participated in this experience were placed in six different school districts in Southeast Pennsylvania. Their grade levels ranged from kindergarten through grade 5 with a total of 20 teacher candidates.

The Questionnaire

The first statement teacher candidates were asked to complete was "Student teaching is…. The response most repeated was that student teaching was the culmination of a four year journey. When asked to complete the statement "Student teaching was…" after their student teaching experience, most teacher candidates agreed that this was the most important experience of teacher preparation and this experience is a necessary component of becoming a teacher.

Next, teacher candidates were asked "Every time I hear student teaching I…." Excited, nervous, motivated, and anxious were the feelings most mentioned by teacher candidates before their student teaching experience. After student teaching, teacher candidates answered this prompt with statements regarding how much they had learned as a result of student teaching or about the people they met during student teaching.

Another statement, "Everyone thinks student teaching is…" asked about others' perceptions of the experience of student teaching. Teacher candidates agreed in both the pre and post questionnaire that although many people may think student teaching is "easy", it's really not an easy experience at all.

When asked how they perceived student teaching in the statement, "I think student teaching will be…" most teacher candidates agreed that it would be rewarding yet challenging. After student teaching, teacher candidates answered this prompt by stressing that student teaching was an invaluable experience that will never be forgotten and that it is important preparation for having their own classrooms.

In the prompt "Hopefully student teaching will…" a large number of teacher candidates responded with the hope that student teaching would confirm their career choices. As supervisors, we were surprised by this theme. It is widely assumed that by the time teacher candidates are student teaching, they know they want to become teachers. This is a concern since teacher candidates participate in more field experiences than they ever had before. It is important for advisors and supervisors to monitor teacher candidates' career goals and offer guidance as needed. After completing student teaching, teacher candidates finished this statement with the hope that student teaching was meaningful for all involved and that the experience would help them get a teaching position.

In order to ascertain what teacher candidates expected of themselves, the prompt "Student teachers should…" was included in the questionnaire. Before student teaching, teacher candidates believed their role was to learn and make teaching their own. After student teaching, teacher candidates saw their role as someone who is positive, humorous, patient, flexible, dedicated, professional, tired, excited, and motivated. These descriptors indicate that teacher candidates better understand the many roles of teachers and the importance of being many things to many constituents. The teacher candidates moved from being students learning about education to realizing the importance of the many roles they will fulfill as a practicing teacher.

To understand teacher candidates' beliefs about the expectations of their cooperating teachers, they were asked to complete the statement" Most teachers want student teachers…" Teacher candidates agreed that cooperating teachers would expect them to write a lot of lesson plans and do busywork. As we reviewed the pre-student teachers' responses, we were surprised to see the term busywork and wondered how teacher candidates define this term. After the student teaching experience, many teacher candidates still thought their cooperating teachers expected them to do busywork, but many also mentioned the need to have high expectations. Again, it was important to discuss the definition of busywork and the importance of preparing teacher candidates for the paperwork, copying, reports, and other work that they may have considered busywork.

Teacher candidates develop a working relationship with both their cooperating teachers and their university supervisors. They were asked, "University supervisors should..." to determine their beliefs about the relationship they would have with their supervisors. Before student teaching, almost all of the teacher candidates agreed that supervisors should be supportive, provide constructive feedback, and guide the teacher candidate. After student

teaching, the teacher candidates still believed the university supervisor should provide constructive feedback and they added the need for supervisors to be understanding.

The last statement on the questionnaire was, "I'm glad that…". Before student teaching, most teacher candidates commented on liking their cooperative teacher, being glad that they finally got to student teaching, and that they were in the yearlong Kennett Experience. After student teaching, teacher candidates in the Kennett Experience mentioned its value and most agreed that they were sad to leave but happy to move on with the rest of their career. The "Kennett Experience" is a yearlong experience in which the teacher candidates are assigned to the same classroom for six hour reading practicum course in the fall semester and remain in that classroom for the student teaching semester in the spring.

Discussion

It is interesting to note some powerful quotes and comments from the pre and post questionnaires. One teacher candidate said student teaching would be a "sneak peak of the next 35 years of my life." Another student said when she thought about student teaching she would "get butterflies and begin to smile…" Teacher candidates agreed that student teaching is a time that will "make you or break you" and that it was "a combination of an interview, audition, and training camp." Many teacher candidates expressed hope that the student teaching experience would "be a positive beginning to the next chapter in my life," and described their role as "stranger at the beginning and asset at the end. "They agreed that it is important "to work as collaborative professionals with cooperating teachers" and they suggested that supervisors "tell future students teachers what an amazing experience they will have!" One last comment seems to summarize the entire student teaching experience, "I have never really known the true definition

of ‘bittersweet’ until now. I am heartbroken to leave this place; I know they have prepared me so much!”

Conclusions

As a result of these pre and post student teaching questionnaires about teacher candidates’ feelings towards student teaching, much discussion and evaluation of themes occurred. In the future it is important to ease teacher candidates’ nerves with the information gained from these questionnaires. Based on the themes, professors of pre-service teachers should continually affirm the career choices of future teacher candidates, especially after the completion of field experience courses. The perception of busywork should also be clarified prior to student teaching and should be discussed during student teaching as well. It is also necessary for teacher candidates to understand the reasons for the various responsibilities teachers fulfill on a regular basis. A teacher is not only responsible for teaching; s/he is responsible for many more aspects of curriculum, instruction and assessment. These emerging themes can serve to “ease the jitters” and prepare future teacher candidates for the many aspects of being a teacher in the twenty-first century.

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The Influential Role of Field Experiences in a Dual Certification Teacher Preparation Program

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Abstract

Significant field experiences became an essential component in a recently redesigned undergraduate program leading to candidates' eligibility for state teaching certification in both general elementary and special education, collaborative teaching (K-6). This study investigated K-6 Teacher Education candidates' perceptions of the program's field component regarding its effectiveness in preparing them to teach all students. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were calculated for responses to multiple choice survey items, while responses to open-ended questions on the survey and in focus groups were analyzed to identify, examine, and interpret patterns and themes relevant to the research questions. Data revealed candidates' positive perceptions regarding their preparedness to educate a diverse population of students largely as a result of their extensive field experiences.

Research on professional development schools and urban teacher residencies indicates new teachers prepared in these intensive clinically-based programs have greater teacher efficacy and higher retention rates (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). Pre-service teachers must develop the skills and strategies necessary to ensure that all students performing at all levels achieve success in the classroom (Cooper, et al, 2008; Gay, 2002) by gaining experience in actual classrooms. Thus *intense, significant* field experiences became an essential component in a recently redesigned undergraduate program leading to candidates' eligibility for state teaching certification in both Elementary and Collaborative Teaching (K-6). For the purpose of this study, the terms *intense*, *significant* as associated with field experiences are correlated with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, formerly NCATE) expectations of field experiences (2013). These expectations include colleges of education and school partners working collaboratively to design and implement field experiences that structure opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach all children. These experiences should be extensive and intensive, to allow candidates the opportunities to demonstrate competence as teachers. CAEP also specifies that all candidates should participate in field experiences that include students that are diverse in terms of academic abilities, ethnicities, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. An examination of data from teacher candidates within this program revealed positive perceptions regarding their preparedness to educate a diverse population of students largely as a result of their extensive field experiences.

Colleges of education must consider the reality that today's classrooms are filled with students who have an array of learning skills, academic abilities, physical challenges, and cultural variations. Advocating a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching does not work (Stotsky,

2006) because a classroom full of "regular" students simply does not exist. Teacher candidates must be provided with the information that is most crucial for contributing to their potential as highly effective teachers (Imig & Imig, 2006), which is the knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach students with different needs (Cooper, Kurtts, Baber, & Vlaeecorsa, 2008; Richards, 2010) in inclusive classrooms.

Simply defined, inclusion is placing students with special needs in a general classroom setting to receive their academic instruction (Tilton, 1996). Research reveals that many teachers have a negative attitude toward inclusion (Snyder, Garriot, & Aylor, 2001) possibly resulting from their perception of having inadequate or nonexistent preparation for teaching in an inclusive setting (Cipkin, & Rizza, 2000; Snyder, Garriot, & Aylor, 2001). While it is vital for teachers to be positive and confident in their ability to facilitate success for their students (Beacham & Rouse, 2012), many teachers have not obtained the prior knowledge and experience necessary to successfully incorporate inclusive elements into regularly planned lessons. Teacher preparation programs must focus efforts on ensuring new teachers are adequately prepared to work collaboratively to create inclusive environments where all learners thrive (Cipkin & Rizza, 2000).

For beginning teachers to be successful, pre-service teachers must experience a wide range of learning opportunities during their preparation program to avoid feeling underprepared to manage their classroom when they begin teaching (Kuster, Bain, Milbrandt, & Newton, 2010). Particular concern must be placed on preparing educators who understand the diagnostic terminologies of various special needs categories and the wide range of abilities that each special needs student exhibits (Gerber & Guay, 2006). Bain and Hasio (2011) found that authentic experiences in classrooms with special needs students helped pre-service teachers examine their

own belief system about working with these students. These pre-service teachers were also better prepared to work with diverse groups of students by being flexible and patient as well as able to differentiate instruction for students learning at different levels and rates.

Some universities (i.e., Central Michigan) are redesigning coursework to focus on inclusion. While this is undeniably a step in the right direction, a connection must also be made to the required fieldwork. The role of field experiences is critical in preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms (Kent, Giles & Hibberts, 2013; O'Brian, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007). Coupling relevant course content with field experiences focused on working with special needs students results in a more positive attitude regarding teaching in an inclusive setting (Avramids, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000; Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994).

Some programs attempt to improve their field experiences while focusing on more clock hours in the field, and in some cases, including financial compensation for candidates field work. For example, National Louis University Master of Arts in Teaching Secondary Education candidates participating in the Urban Scholar Teacher Education Partnership (USTEP) start student teaching from day one of their graduate program and complete a full-year of total immersion with no prior teaching experience. Similar urban teacher residency programs, such as Chicago's Academy for Urban School Leadership and the Boston Teacher Residency, provide financial compensation to teacher candidates (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2008). The iTeachAZ program at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College requires a full-year senior residency whereby undergraduate candidates spend four days per week in school classrooms, attending pedagogy classes one day per week. Though not employing a full year of student teaching, the K-6 Teacher Education program is unique in using a tiered approach that

employs a gradual release model, with the candidates spending more than 1000 hours of field time in the same school, under the tutelage of a university supervisor, mentor teachers, and instructional support staff (Kent, Giles, Hibberts, 2013).

Pre-service teachers need opportunities to practice differentiating instruction in order to master the task of teaching to the unique capabilities of every child (Bain & Hasio, 2011). A study (Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011) showing significantly higher self-efficacy for teacher candidates with increased experience with special needs students is particularly revealing since teachers' self-efficacy has been linked to student achievement, motivation, and students' own self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Thus, suggesting that preparing pre-service teachers to meet the needs of all students hinges upon the quality and opportunities of their field experiences (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Gentry, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of the field components effectiveness of the new program in preparing them to teach all students.

Specifically, the research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What is the relationship between university coursework during the first two semesters of intensive field experience and classroom practice in special education and general education?
2. What are candidates' perceptions with respect to the role of a teacher, the challenges of teaching, meeting the needs of a diverse population of students, and differentiating instruction?

The K- 6 Program

Program implementation began with a pilot group of 23 K-6 teacher education candidates completing a program leading to a Bachelor of Science degree and eligibility for dual

certification in Elementary and Collaborative Teaching (K-6). Having achieved status as a teacher candidate (see Table 1 for Candidacy Requirements), participants completed two semesters of methods courses (see Table 2 for Program Progression), and an intensive three-semester sequence of field experiences totaling nearly 1,000 clock hours in an assigned partner school. Eighteen partner elementary schools in two local districts were determined through joint selection by university and public school personnel based on the quality of the school's administrators, the capacity of the school faculty to mentor new teachers, and the diversity of students at the school.

Each semester K-6 candidates were assigned both a special education and general education cooperating teacher within their partner school. For each of the first two semesters, during their methods' courses prior to student teaching, candidates spent between 200-250 hours split through various configurations between general and special education settings. The split placement continued during their final semester of student teaching when they logged approximately 525 classroom hours including an opening school experience. Every semester candidates completed scaffolded teaching experiences under the direction and supervision of their cooperating teachers and their university supervisor. In addition, other school personnel, such as instructional coaches, school counselors, and media specialists, all played various roles in using their subject matter expertise in mentoring the candidates.

The supervisor was a university faculty member designated to serve as liaison between the school and university while assuming responsibility for the supervision of all candidates within the school, regardless of the candidates' placement in the program. The traditional role of the university supervisor changed significantly to embrace a model of tiered supervision. The supervisors routinely adopted the role of mentor, coach, and evaluator as they regularly engaged

in: 1) conferencing with, observing, and evaluating candidates, 2) demonstrating instructional practice through model teaching, 3) collaborating with the cooperating teachers, and 4) communicating with the school administration to ensure that the candidates, cooperating teachers, and elementary students' needs were being met. Through their consistent presence, supervisors established secure, long-term relationships with both school personnel and candidates becoming a known commodity at the school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Tier II and Tier III: Methods

Data consisted of candidates' comments during a focus group discussion and survey responses. After the first semester of field experience (known as Tier II), 23 K-6 teacher education candidates serving as participants completed the *Tier II Field Survey,* an 9-item electronic survey including 6 selected response and 3 open-response items. (See Appendix A for survey questions and raw data.) In effort to tailor the question to this program, questions for the survey were written by the Director of Field Services with input and review from field supervisors and the K-6 program coordinator. The items addressed grade-level information about the candidates, information regarding their cooperating teachers and the amount of time candidates spent in inclusive versus self-contained special education environments, candidates perceptions of their impact on student learning and development, and the overall correlation between course and field work.

The candidates also participated in a focus group meeting facilitated by field supervisors and the Director of Field Services. The focus groups were implemented in effort to gain more detailed information and insight regarding participants' experiences. Considering group size large enough to facilitate rich discussion, yet small enough to include all participants in the

discussions, there were four groups, with six participants in three of the groups and five participants in the fourth group. The groups met one time during two consecutive semesters for approximately 60 minutes each session. The focus groups' facilitated discussions centered on the challenges and triumphs experienced in the field. After the second semester of field experience (known as Tier III), participants engaged in a second focus group meeting, again facilitated by the field supervisors and director of field services. The purpose of this focus group meeting was to again discuss strengths and challenges the candidates had experienced relating to the field, application of theory and practice, and how they were working to solve problems that arose. (See Appendix B for a listing of the focus group questions.)

Tier IV: Student Teachers

After completing the program, participants completed a 16-item, *Tier IV Student Teaching,* electronic survey. Four of the items were logistical, and 12 items (10 multiple choice and 2 open response) addressed the connection between theory taught at the university and expected classroom practice, the role of the cooperating teachers and their university supervisor, reading efficacy, and two items related to the candidates' preparedness to teach a diverse population of students.

Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were calculated for responses to multiple-choice items, while responses to open-ended questions on the survey and in the focus groups were analyzed to identify, examine, and interpret patterns and themes relevant to the research questions.

Results

Tier II Survey Results

The data revealed that the teacher education candidates perceived the strongest relationship

between coursework and their field experiences in special and general education to exist between the course, *Classroom Management*. The content of this course included behavioral management and organization strategies for working with all learners. Of those that chose to respond to the question (n=21), 58% (n=11) reported the course to be highly correlated, and 42% (n=8) reported the course to be somewhat correlated. The *Foundations of Teaching Reading* course, which also encompassed both special and general education standards, was highly correlated to the field experience as reported by 48% (n = 10) of the respondents.

Qualitative Data: Tier II and Tier III

The patterns in the focus group data and open-ended questions from participants during both semesters (Tier II and Tier III) revealed that K-6 teacher education candidates perceived the role of a teacher to be centered on meeting the academic needs of the elementary students and serving as a role model for the students as well as providing support, guidance, and structure for the students. Participants identified the following areas during focus group meetings as presenting challenges when teaching:

1) classroom management-

"Some challenges of teaching for me would be spreading myself out for every individual student, and classroom management."

"Having classroom and behavioral management in the classroom."

"Being an effective and positive teacher."

2) student motivation-

"I see motivating the students to learn as the greatest challenge of teaching."

"As I am trying to meet the learning needs of all the different levels in my class, it was difficult to keep all students excited and motivated to learn." and

3) differentiating instruction-

"All students are different, so all students learn differently."

"One of the biggest challenges is trying to reach all of your students' needs while still covering the information necessary for the curriculum."

"Trying to teach on so many different levels at one time."

Participant comments on the open-ended survey items also revealed the candidates' perceptions of teaching a diverse population of students included a fear of the unknown, especially at the beginning of the program. For example, one candidate stated "This was my first time being in the field, and I was scared to begin with. But, once I was placed at B Elementary my apprehensions were gone. This school was beyond amazing, in my opinion. I loved this particular school because it was all about learning for all students!" while another remarked, "I believe that the challenges of teaching a diverse group of students are great. We have the responsibility of not only teaching children academically but also teaching them to be responsible citizens. We also have to make sure that their physical needs are taken care of. If a child's needs are not being met at home then it is hard to be able to reach them to teach them what they need to learn in order to achieve their full learning potential."

Candidates indicated that an initial recognition of the distinct differences between themselves and some of their elementary students in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status caused uneasiness. Candidates identified interaction with these students during field

experiences and support of cooperating teachers as contributing to their increased comfort levels in working with these students as they learned more about the culture of the students they taught, which allowed them to identify similarities despite obvious differences. The candidates also expressed concerns about the vast number and varying types of disabilities and their personal teaching ability to meet all of the needs present, specifically in self-contained special education classrooms. As one candidate stated in a focus group, "I don't know how my teachers (general and special education teachers) do what they do. I watch them teach students from very different backgrounds, with very different ability levels, with little or no support from home. But somehow, all of the students are learning. I can only hope to be able to be as good as they are one day!"

The patterns in the qualitative data obtained from both focus group and survey responses revealed that the candidates' perceptions of differentiating instruction are as follows: 1) it is necessary for both general education and special education students; 2) it must be determined on a case-by-case basis, 3) it is overwhelming and a daunting task because there is a wide range of abilities to consider, and 4) individualized education plans dictate how instruction is differentiated for special education students while classroom assessments guide the instruction for general education students. Candidates indicated that they gained confidence in their ability to differentiate instruction for general education students and high incident special education students over the course of their program but recognized that their ability remained limited, especially for students with low incident disabilities.

Tier IV Survey

Of the 23 participants responding to the survey, 91% (n = 21) reported that they felt very prepared to teach reading, while only 48% (n = 11) felt very prepared to teach social studies.

Seventy percent (n = 16) reported being placed in a school with students of different socio-economic status than themselves, and 48% (n = 11) reported completing their field experience primarily with students of different ethnic background than themselves. Of the 15 responses to the open-ended question asking participants to comment on whether or not they were prepared to meet the needs of these students, five candidates reported that the coursework did not prepare them for teaching diverse students. All five qualified their responses by saying that they learned how to meet the needs of diverse student populations while in the field, and eight additional students reported that both the coursework coupled with field experiences helped prepare them for teaching students unlike themselves.

Open-response survey data revealed that the biggest challenges candidates faced upon entering the program was learning how to handle course assignments and field requirements with responsibilities outside of the program. However, candidates felt more able to manage time and balance tasks during their second and third semesters. The candidates also revealed anxiety over being prepared to meet the demands of the classroom, both in an inclusive setting and in self-contained special education classrooms. Though they gained more confidence as the program progressed, they felt that there were constantly new obstacles to face in meeting the needs of all students. Having completed the program, some candidates still questioned their own ability to successfully differentiate instruction and skill as a teacher in general since they were now more aware of the demands of teaching in an inclusive setting.

Discussion

An examination of the data revealed that despite candidates' initial concerns regarding their abilities to meet the needs of a diverse student population, intense field experiences allowed the pre-service teachers to overcome their doubts by facing their fears. It is not surprising that

participants cited classroom management as an area of concern, since it is commonly recognized as one of the biggest challenges for all novice teachers (Manna, 2009). Clement (2002) believes pre-service teachers attribute their lack of preparation in these areas to a lack of related coursework or having impractical, theoretical coursework. "As teacher educators strive to increase the knowledge base of teaching and teacher education, attention has to be directed to the creation of effective courses in classroom management" (p. 48). Since participants identified their classroom management course as having the strongest relationship between coursework and field experiences, it would appear that the K-6 Teacher Education has a solid foundation on which to make improvements. Similarly, candidates' struggle with differentiating instruction was not an entirely unanticipated result, as they were purposely required to plan instruction for a wide range of special education students.

The supportive context of university faculty, cooperating teachers, clinical supervisors, school administrators, and other school personnel made a critical difference throughout the candidates' program. Thompson and Ross (2000) and Reynolds (2000) noted the link between theory and practice in partnership teacher preparation as key to preparing successful teaching professionals. Reynolds' (2000) study found that "professional partnerships are an excellent way to prepare prospective teachers" (p. 13) while several studies have noted that university supervisors appear to provide emotional support needed for candidates to acclimate to the initial hurdles encountered in student teaching (Caires, Almeida, & Martins, 2010; Caires & Almeida, 2007). We found that extensive early field experiences allowed this acclimation to occur prior to the final student teaching semester. Additionally, candidates in this study cited support from cooperating teachers as a contributing factor in becoming accustomed to working with students

whose backgrounds were different from their own. Candidates who felt their coursework did not prepare them for classroom challenges reported that their time in the field was most beneficial.

Prior to student teaching, candidates expressed anxiety over managing the demands of coursework and field requirements along with meeting daily challenges of differentiating instruction, and balancing life outside of school. However, during the student teaching semester, candidates reported being better able to manage their time and balance the demands of school and home. Candidates' ability to successfully handle perceived obstacles may be at least partially credited to the established relationship that existed between them and their university supervisor. Asplin and Marks (2013) found that a previous working relationship led to student teachers viewing their supervisors as more knowledgeable and made them more willing to take and apply advice given by their university supervisor, as well as establishing an increased positive personal relationship with the supervisor. These findings led them to conclude that that some type of faculty consistency in a program that builds rapport is beneficial for student teachers. While university instructors and cooperating teachers changed as candidates progressed through the program, the university supervisor remained a constant, consistent ally.

Candidates also had a very realistic view of the challenges facing teachers in classrooms today. There were highs and lows presented in the focus group data regarding overall teaching efficacy that can be attributed to the demanding schedule placed on the pre-service teachers, the notion of being "scared" to teach special education, and being faced with the realities of the challenges that both general education and special education teachers face on a daily basis. Haverback and Parault (2011) speculate that it may be beneficial for pre-service teachers to have a more realistic sense of what they will be able to accomplish as they begin their careers in order to have a better understanding of what they still need to know. Preparation in classroom

management and differentiating instruction were two areas that were revealed as strong areas of the program, which are typically areas of weakness in many teacher preparation programs.

The intense program also resulted in a demanding schedule for the participants. Unlike many college students, the participants in this program were required to spend approximately 40 hours a week for three semesters in university classes or field placements. Time spent planning, preparing, and completing course assignments and classroom lessons were estimated at an additional 10-20 hours per week. Though this schedule closely resembled the schedule of an actual teacher, it was often difficult for the candidates to manage their program responsibilities with other work and family commitments. Time management, however, is an essential skill for pre-service teachers to practice since the time-consuming nature of teaching is a common complaint among both elementary and secondary teachers (Marston, Brunetti, & Courtney, 2005).

Limitations

As in all studies, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. In this study, participants were a convenience sample of the first group of candidates that were part of this new program. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalizable to all teacher education programs. Also, the small sample size limits the generalizability to other programs as well. Further, the primary means of data collection was self-report. We recognize that the self‐reporting nature of surveys and interviews is a limitation in that what participants believe they are doing and what they actually are doing may not correspond; thus, candidate responses could have potentially misrepresented their actual actions. In addition, evaluation tools that have been nationally normed with validity and reliability, such as the Marzano's iObserve and Danielson's framework, should be considered for obtaining candidate data so that claims can be

made from the results. A lack of anonymity during focus groups could further impede comprehensive and accurate data collection. Finally, the data collected could not accurately encompass the totality of the candidates' field experiences.

Further Research

Though research supports that quality field experiences play a critical role in learning to teach (Maloch, Fline, & Flint, 2003), Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy (2004) cautions that there is little research available in the literature that describes the actual components of effective field experiences. Likewise, this research did not identify specific field elements that were beneficial to the pre-service teacher candidates. Therefore, further research should be conducted to determine the specific field elements that contribute to preparing candidates for teaching in inclusive settings.

This research revealed the impact of overall field experiences on teacher preparation, specifically for inclusive classrooms. Follow up research should be conducted focusing more on the impact of the program on specific disabilities, differentiating between high-incidence and low-incidence special education students. Additional research should be conducted on the programmatic impact of teacher candidates on student achievement.

Finally, authors of this study contend that additional research should be done to further substantiate the assertions made by the pre-service candidates, including evaluating supervisor and mentor teacher perceptions of the candidates, their progression through the program, and ultimately, the candidates' impact on student achievement.

Implications

Federal mandates, such as IDEA (2004) and NCLB, have directed state education departments and local LEAs to address the pedagogical needs of special education students in

least restrictive environments (Loiacono & Valenti, 2010). However, one of the most problematic and stressful challenges facing public school administrators and teachers today is to provide an appropriate education by teachers well-prepared to use evidenced-based instructional strategies, for students with moderate and severe disabilities, alongside non-disabled students in general education inclusive classrooms (Goodman & Williams, 2007). In addition, to the increasing number of students identified with special education needs, there simply are not enough new teachers graduating in the area of special education. Therefore, there is a compelling need to improve the *preparation* of special education and general education teachers who are required to teach all students in inclusive classrooms (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Downing & Pekham-Hardin, 2007; Wigle & Wilcox).

The National Research Council (2001) as well as experienced and new general education teachers have reported that they lack adequate preparation to teach children with moderate to severe disabilities in general classrooms, and 61% of these teachers have advocated for the proper training and tools to competently co-teach all students in the inclusive settings (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Downing, Spencer, & Cavallaro, 2004). As a result, many universities are beginning to carefully scrutinize their teacher preparation programs in an attempt better prepare prospective teachers for inclusive classrooms (Van Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma, & Rouse, 2007).

Though inclusion has been a part of schools for nearly two decades, the number of students with diagnosed disabilities has increased, and research has continued to report the lack of preparation of teachers to meet the needs of all students. The future success of educating students classified with disabilities, as well as non-disabled students that have varying ability levels, is contingent upon how well prepared educators are in the pedagogies of differentiating

instruction. Teacher preparation programs must be willing to design and implement innovations to traditional programs so that all educators are able to meet these challenges. As colleges of education attempt to design the innovations, it is imperative that they consider the important role of field experiences in shaping the attitudes and abilities of pre-service teachers regarding inclusion.

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Table 1 K-6 Teacher Education Candidacy Requirements

Hours:
60 semester hours (48 must be in General Education)

GPA Requirements:
2.50 Minimum Overall GPA
2.75 Minimum Program GPA
2.75 Minimum Professional Studies GPA
2.75 Minimum Teaching Field GPA
*No grade below a "C" will be accepted in Professional Studies or Teaching Field courses.

Course Requirements:
General Studies

1. 12 semesters hours in each of the four areas: English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Science with a grade of C or better
2. CA 110, EH 101, and EH 102,

Professional Studies
EDF 315 & EPY 351, EDM 310, and EPY 355 including the ePortfolio assessment in these courses

Test Requirements:

1. College of Education Reading Test. (Exempt for second degree students and for students with official documentation of ACT Reading score of 20 or higher.)
2. AECTP – Satisfactory performance on all parts (Math, Reading, Writing) of the Alabama Educator Certification Testing Program.
3. Praxis II- Elementary Content Knowledge (Test Codes 0014 or 5014).

Other requirements:
Proof of clear SDE fingerprinting/background check and professional liability insurance.
Completion of the *Dispositions Survey* and a signed teacher Candidacy application form.
Completion of a satisfactory departmental interview with your assigned advisor.
Recommendation of advisor, department chairperson and the Candidacy Committee.
Sufficient physical ability and emotional stability to perform as a teacher.

Table 2 K-6 Teacher Education Program Progression

	Courses	Field Experience
Tier 1 (18 hours) Pre-Candidacy	Microcomputing Systems in Education Education in a Diverse Society Human Growth and Development Evaluation of Teach and Learning Health and Movement Education Arts in the Elementary Classroom	20 hours
Tier 2 (17 hours) Introductory Methods	K-6 Education Foundations of Reading Instruction Teaching Social Studies Learning and Behavioral Disorders Behavioral Management Classroom Management 1(1 hr.) Field Experience (1 cr. hr.)	200 hours
Tier 3 (17 hours) Advanced Methods	Teaching Mathematics Teaching Science Teaching Reading Partnerships in Special Education Intellectual and Physical Disabilities Classroom Management 2 (1 hr.) Field Experience (1 hr.)	250 hours
Tier 4 (12 hours) Internship	Student Teaching EEC (6 hrs.) Student Teaching Collaborative K-6 (6 hrs.)	525 hours

Appendix A
Tier II Survey Questions and Raw Data

What was your general education placement grade level Tier 2.

Grade Level	Response Percent	Response Count
K	18.2%	4
1	18.2%	4
2	9.1%	2
3	31.8%	7
4	18.2%	4
5	4.5%	1

Did you have a full time special education teacher in your general education class?

Yes	4.5%	1
No	95.5%	21

Did you have a full time special education aide in your general education class?

Full-time	4.5%	1
Part-time	22.7%	5
None	72.7%	16

Overall, I would rate:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Can't Judge	Response Count
My Teacher	50%	40.9%	4.5%	4.5%	0	22
My School	59.1%	36.4%	4.5%	0%	0	22
My Students	77.3%	18.2%	4.5%	0%	0	22
My Principal	59.7%	18.2%	18.2%	0%	1	22
My University Supervisor	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%	0%	0	22

How much impact did you have on:

	Great Impact	Some Impact	Neutral	No Impact	Response Count
Students' Learning	18.2%	81.8%	0%	0%	22
Students' Social Development	18.2%	81.8%	0%	0%	22

Overall, I would rate the correlation between my University courses and my school experiences as:

Course	Highly Correlated	Somewhat Correlated	Fairly Correlated	Poorly Correlated	Response Count
EDU 300	57.9%	42.1%	0%	0%	19
EDU313	42.1%	47.4%	10.5%	0%	19
EDU 330	47.6%	33.3%	0%	19.0%	21
EDU 336	31.6%	42.1%	21.1%	5.3%	19
EDU 346	45.0%	45.0%	5.0%	5.0%	20

The open ended questions were as follows:

What do you believe are the challenges of teaching?

What do you believe is the role of a teacher?

What other comments would you like to make about your placement? (i.e. What was extremely beneficial? What was your best experience? What might have been done to improve your field experience or your University courses?)

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

Engagement Question

1. Who was your favorite teacher in elementary school and why?

Exploration Questions

2. What do you see as the role of the teacher?
3. What has been beneficial/helpful in your field experience thus far?
4. What has been your best experience in the field thus far?
5. What improvements would you suggest for your field experience?
6. What courses do you think linked most closely with your field experience?
7. What improvements would you suggest in connecting your coursework to your field experience?
8. What do you believe are the challenges of teaching?

Exit Question

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about specific things you found helpful or challenging in your field experience thus far?