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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 from Marsha Prophet Daria and Bonnie Lee Rabe of Western Connecticut State University and Post University. Their submission, titled "P^2E^2: An Interdisciplinary Way of Learning" describes how the Partnership for Preparation of Elementary Educators was developed in response to local, state, and federal standards.

Drs. Ray Francis and Mark E. Deschaine's article, "Improving Pre-Service Mentoring through the Implementation of Process Improvement Guidelines" provides supervisors working in clinical settings with insight into effective steps to ensure that teacher candidates are well prepared and ready to meet the challenge of being a classroom teacher.

"Empowering Pre-Service Teachers to Address Diverse Populations through Targeted, Authentic Internship Experiences" presents a mixed-methods study focusing on diverse experiences. Authors Heather D. Kindall, Angela Elsass, and Tracey Crowe of the University of Arkansas examine positive impacts on their internship experiences.

In the final article of this edition, Metropolitan State University of Denver's Kathleen Carroll Luttenegger and Kathryn Young look at the language secondary pre-service teachers use to describe their students in a field placement setting in "Words Matter: Looking Closely at the Language Secondary Pre-Service Teachers Use in Describing Students in their Field Placements".

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

P^2E^2: An Interdisciplinary Way of Learning

Marsha Prophet Daria and Bonnie Lee Rabe

Western Connecticut State University and Post University

The Partnership for Preparation of Elementary Educators (P^2E^2) was developed in response to local, state, and federal standards and feedback from public school partners. With emphasis on the Common Core State Standards and STEM, the P^2E^2 teacher education program at (University name) ready's elementary education pre-service teachers to meet the academic needs of today's youth. Over the years, as with many other pre-service programs across the nation only minor changes had been made to the program which reflected alterations in courses and curriculum. "In order to effect systemic change in educator preparation, federal, state, and philanthropic investments should be made in higher education to address chronic shortage areas, recruit and retain diverse candidates and clinical preparation" (AACTE, 2013). The challenge was to design an elementary education program that would represent a dramatic shift in teacher training while maintaining the integrity of the major and reflect the direction of our accrediting body in shifting to more of a medical clinical model. P^2E^2 is an interdisciplinary program that focuses on math, literacy and science. It incorporates current research in the field for best practices in learning and teaching, inquiry, and pedagogical strategies, while addressing the change to competency based learning. Public school administrators, specialists, classroom teachers and representatives from (University name) School of Arts and Sciences and Visual and Performing Arts met monthly for a year to discuss and design the program. These types of university partnerships promote school improvement and shared decision making at all levels (Hackmann D. & Schmitt, D. 1995). After receiving feedback from the (WC) Superintendents

Association, (University name) pre-service teachers who returned from doing their student teaching and recent graduates in the field, it was decided that mathematics would be the lead content for the P^2E^2 program.

Background

(University name) is a liberal arts institution located in the southwest corner of the state. It has a strong interdisciplinary program and promotes research, scholarship and a rich and diverse cultural environment. As of fall 2014 there were 4,422 full time students and 1,530 part time students. Women comprised 50.9% of the entering class (394 of 774), and members of traditionally-underrepresented groups comprised 28.6% of the entering class (221 of the 774) (University Facts and Figures, 2014).

The Education and Educational Psychology Department is housed in the School of Professional Studies. The School of Professional Studies is a multidisciplinary professional education school that places student learning first, integrates theory with practice, prepares competent beginning professionals, and contributes to the education, health, and social welfare of the greater community (University Home Page, 2015). Redesigning the teacher education program to prepare teacher candidates for the changing needs of students was essential in this process.

The elementary education faculty includes professors and practicing teachers, specialists and principals who teach math, language arts, science, social studies, and special education. With a national emphasis on science and math proficiency (Lee, 2004) teacher preparation programs are focusing on these areas and including best practices for working with diverse learners. Having public school personnel from the field teach in the program allows for a shared

vision, and active and open communication between partners (Lefever-Davis S., Johnson, C., & Pearman, C. 2007).

Meeting the Needs of the Workforce and Local Communities

In November 2009, (B Public Schools), one of the partner districts, hosted two focus groups: one with new teachers in their first or second year and the other with mentor teachers working with them. The conversations were transcribed analyzed, and coded. Results from these focus groups, in part formed the next steps. Program coordinators hosted focus groups with school partners once a month for a year to learn how well university pre-service teachers were being trained to meet the expectations of a classroom teacher in neighboring school districts. Superintendents and key school faculty provided suggestions, helped to develop the field/clinical experiences, and ensured we were meeting the needs of the districts.

Designing P^2E^2

Routine meetings were also held with the School of Arts and Sciences and School of Visual and Performing Arts faculty to get their feedback on courses, content and scheduling. Course territorial issues, scheduling and credit load were issues during the planning process. However, faculty from these schools helped to develop content courses specific to the needs of future elementary teaches that reflect alignment with Standards expectations. P^2E^2 is a cohort model. It provides clinical experiences throughout the program and a full year of student teaching residency. Since P^2E^2 will be initiated in fall 2015, the education department will maintain two program tracks until all students who were admitted under the original program have graduated. Under the original program, students are required to choose a concentrated study while completing their general education course requirements.

P^2E^2 is an interdisciplinary progressive, field and clinical embedded model with opportunities in a diverse urban environment and demographically changing setting. These field and clinical experiences contribute to a continuum of acquired knowledge, skills and dispositions that are assessed by both the partner school districts and university faculty. The program is deeply rooted in research and is pragmatic.

The use of technology and technological applications are incorporated throughout the program, linking teacher candidates and in turn, their students, with the broader world. Pre-service teachers use "best practices," to connect standards with the latest strategies and methodologies. They also maintain a high level of rigor, explore action research, and are sensitive to cultural competencies as well as other multicultural issues.

P^2E^2 Program Courses

Some of the courses from the original program remain a part of the new P^2E^2. Six hours of American History from the original program stayed the same, coupled with courses in anthropology, biology, children's literature, communication, and Health Promotion & Exercise Sciences. Additionally, Introduction to Education, Foundations of Literacy I, II, III, Special Education, science, and social studies method courses also remained.

Mathematics, literacy, science, history and social studies form an interdisciplinary core of pedagogical studies. Selecting mathematics as the lead content for the P^2E^2 program, students take 21- hours in math, a total of 18 hours in Literacy, 8 hours in STEM 1 and 2, six hours in Inquiry and Assessment, and three hours each in Educational Psychology, Teaching Writing, multicultural education and digital literacy. A First Year Experience course for Education Majors and a course entitled, *Integrating the Emerging Literacies Across Elementary Content* was also added. Pre-service teachers in both tracks will complete a Capstone project and presentation that

will demonstrate how theory becomes practice. Pre-service teachers also reflect on personal growth as an educator.

Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes that give direction to P^2E^2 represents a compilation of course requirements, pedagogy ideas and input from faculty across content areas as well as public school superintendents, building administrators, classroom teachers and specialists. Student learning outcomes for P^2E^2 along with assessment methodologies to be used in measuring outcomes are listed below. Pre-service teachers will:

1. demonstrate the connection of content with pedagogy in developmentally appropriate lesson design for elementary level.
2. demonstrate leadership in the conceptualization, initiation, assessment, and redesign of curricular and educational initiatives.
3. demonstrate the innovative use of web based instructional and information technology in the classroom.
4. demonstrate differentiated instruction in effectively working with a range of students of varying backgrounds and abilities.
5. demonstrate knowledge of the education and development of exceptional, gifted, talented and disabled students in a regular classroom.
6. accurately assess and analyze student learning, reflecting on the adjustments for both instruction and assessment.
7. demonstrate the ability to be both a consumer and a producer of educational research through the use of inquiry, critical analysis and synthesis in the investigation and implementation of action based research.

8. demonstrate the construction of meaning in the collaborative cohort setting.

Remaining Challenges

Although P^2E^2 is a unique program, it does present a few challenges. It leaves no room for pre- service teachers to add electives to their program. Also, transfer students coming into the program with courses that may not be scheduled to be taken until later on will have to deviate from the cohort during those classes. These issues are dealt with individually, as they arise.

Conclusion

The Partnership for Preparation of Elementary Educators (P^2E^2) at (University name) recognizes the changing needs in teacher education training. It is designed to give pre- service teachers opportunities that are current and reflective in today's classrooms.

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Improving Pre-Service Mentoring Through the Implementation of Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs)

Ray Francis and Mark E. Deschaine

Central Michigan University

Introduction

The area of the teaching profession known as field experience supervision, student teaching supervision, or clinical supervision, has existed as an essential part of the preparation of teachers for decades. The supervision process has enjoyed relative freedom from the oversight and imposition of standards and regulations perceived throughout much of the rest of the teacher preparation process. Faculty have essentially been able to work cooperatively with their public school counterparts to formulate appropriate programs designed to facilitate the growth and development of student teachers into novice teachers, through a very natural and ongoing processes.

However, as the song lyrics go "times they are a changing" (Dylan, 1964), and we must take effective steps to ensure our students, the future teachers of America, are well prepared and ready to meet the challenge of being a classroom teacher. At present, most involved in this training sequence are relying on an unsystematic set of processes and activities to guide and inform our future teacher's growth and development. With changes in expectations at a national level, we need to be more proactive and systematic about our actions in the supervision of our future teachers. Often an informal, or non-standardized process is being used to inculcate teacher candidates. The Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs) provide an alternative to the traditional supervision experience that allows for greater collaboration, extension of cooperative

experiences, transparent communication between stakeholders, mentoring and supervision of instructional settings, and establishes a more effective and robust student teaching process than prior practices.

Based upon a national movement to more clinically based experiences, the traditional "supervision triad" (with a supervision team of college faculty, public school faculty, and teacher candidate/college student teacher) is in need of a more complete process to promote effective growth and development of teacher candidates, to better support them as they transition from their teacher preparation programs into their capstone clinical experiences. It is in this significant updating of the "supervision triad" process that the field experience can be an effective and meaningful experience for all members of the team.

With changes in accountability, accreditation, state and regional teacher certification requirements, combined with the addition of an increased emphasis on candidate performance, our collective programs must approach supervision of field experiences from a more deliberate and strategic perspective. The traditional supervision process of planning the field experience, having the field experience, checking for compliance, then acting to revise situations found to be in deficit does not take into account the full complexity of the regulatory and accountability structures that currently exist, or are being demanded of teacher training programs. The authors are proposing an enhanced strategic approach, one that more effectively addresses the ongoing processes required in a more robust field supervision program.

These two additional steps, Preparation and Prioritization, would provide for a more effective and efficient process for supervision in teacher preparation programs. These two aspects greatly complement the traditional features of the "supervision tryiad" through the

inclusion of elements found in the Quality Control Model (Deming, 1950), which, in turn have been transformed it into Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs) advocated by the authors.

Development of the Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs)

The Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs) emerged from a variety of research and best-practice sources, the professional expertise and practical experience of the authors, and from an identified need for a well-organized cohesive process to enable field supervision to address the needs imposed through the increased regulation of teaching. From many perspectives it is apparent that field supervision is in need of an enhanced strategic plan. The PIGs were established after a careful consideration of author established in the field of change and systems management.

One example, Deming (1950) established cycles such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) or the "Deming Cycle" as it became known. Improvement processes became popular through the 1980's and 1990's with the advent of Total Quality Management (Ishikawa, 1985), and Continuous Improvement (Lillrank, 1989). However, there was little transfer from these models into education, and particularly into field supervision of candidates. Other authors focused on bringing total quality improvement (TQI) initiatives into junior-senior college classrooms. However, because the process of infusing TQI into instruction through field of supervision has received relatively little attention (Hansen, 1993), with no effective changes in the traditional processes being realized.

The PIGs evolved from these earlier works in strategic planning, as well as work in reflection (Schon, 1983), the IER Model (Francis, 1993), developing constructivist teachers (Yager, 2000), Problem Based Learning (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997), clinical supervision in education (Stengelhofen, 2013), Professional Learning Communities (Hord,

1997), banking (Reid, 2001), Total Quality Management (Dahlgaard, Kristensen, & Kanji, 1995), Co-Teaching (Friend & Cook, 2014), Perspectives of Needs Assessments (Weisberg, et al, 2009), and the Developmental Democratic Planning Model (Hess, Johnson & Reynolds, 2014).

The PIGs are a 5-stage process, intended to provide individuals involved in the supervision of field experiences a framework to effectively address and engage in the supervision *process*. Through an emphasis on reflective and recursive collegial interactions, the Process Improvement Guidelines provide an effective structure to address current and future accreditation and accountability issues, provide sufficient communication and feedback for candidates engaged in field experiences and/or student teaching, and establish an effective and positive environment for the candidate to grow and develop as a novice teacher.

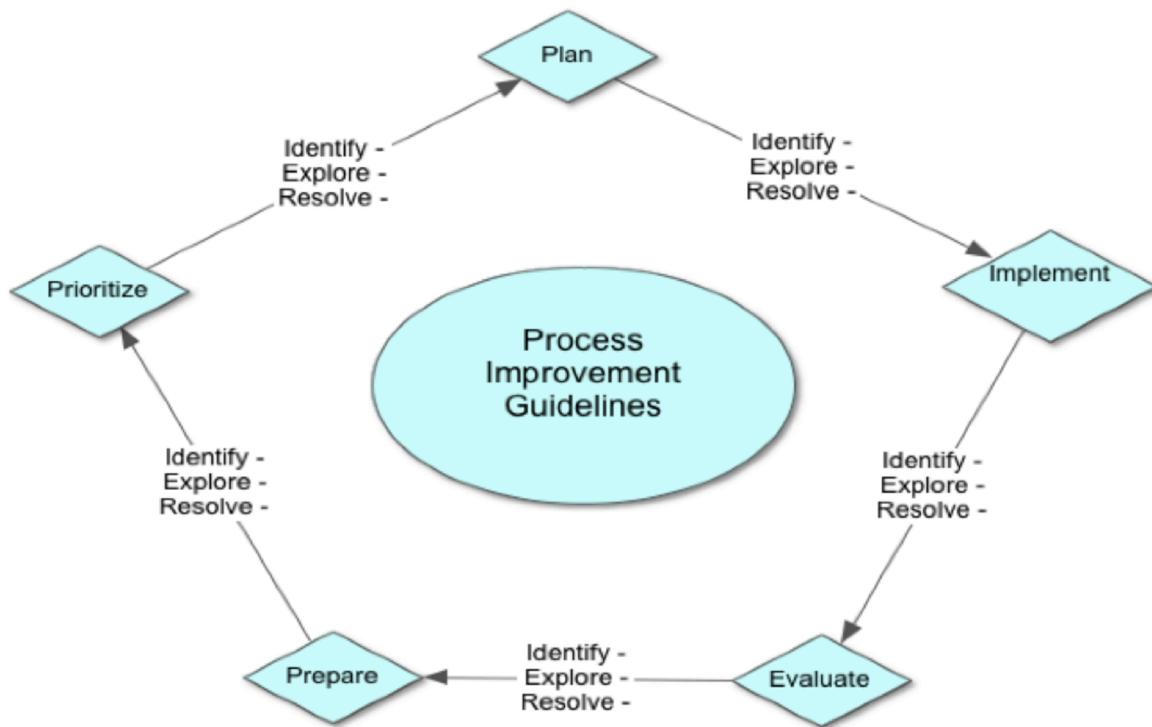
The authors advocate a move away from the traditional evaluation and assessment supervision process, which is often based upon and evaluated through an emphasis on lesson planning, classroom observation, and instructional delivery. We propose a more collaborative strategic approach for these *products*, to include an enhanced *process* where all stakeholders or participants engaged in the creation of a plan for growth and development of teacher candidates. This change in approach follows an enhanced collaborative and formative approach to supervision, and allows for both the individualization of the supervision process and the accountability needed to promote success in the classroom.

The Process Improvement Guidelines

Each stage of the process aligns to provide specific results and when successfully completed, leads to the next level. In addition, within each stage of the model, an ongoing reflective process has been established to provide participants with the support, feedback,

knowledge management, and guidance necessary to move forward in the process. The 5 stages of the PIG include Prepare, Prioritize, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate. These five stages, connected through the IER Reflective Model (Francis, 1993) process provide the opportunity for effective development of the pre-service teacher in the student teaching experience.

Diagram 1: Five (5) stages of the PIG with the IER Reflective Model



Each stage involved in the PIG provides a unique and impactful opportunity for those involved in the field supervision process to participate in an effective manner, and contribute to the overall growth and development from a team perspective. Teams that collaborate have been shown to be far more effective in implementation (Giang, 2015) than separate and individual processes. The rest of this paper will further explore the Process Improvement Guidelines, and

will provide the discourse necessary to assist the reader in identifying ways the guidelines fit within enhanced expectations for field work supervision.

Prepare

Prepare for the Field Supervision Process. The Preparation stage is more than just getting ready for the field experience. Preparation, as an overt activity, allows all individuals involved in the field supervision process to identify their strengths and make the most of their potential contributions to the field supervision process. In the Preparation stage, all participants take the time to reflect, and to appropriately get organized to the point that enables them to be part of the team to build the roadmap needed for candidate success in the classroom (Wilkin & Altchuld, 1995). In the Preparation phase, candidates and supervisors should be aware of the parameters and district limitations related to instruction (Mathers & Lane, 2009). All members involved explore the field supervision process as a differentiated activity for the candidate, not "just another" student teacher with the same talents and strengths as past candidates (Kane, McCaffrey, Miller, & Staiger, 2013). Members included in this group may include at a minimum the college supervisor, the student teacher, and the classroom teacher. However, other college faculty such as content specialists and methods specialists could be included as well. At the school level, the building level administrator could be included. And, for the student teacher, a selection of peers utilized for a peer review process could be included to participate in the preparation of the student teacher for their student teaching experience.

The Preparation stage must meet several identified needs for the supervision team, including the identification of goals and objectives for the teacher candidate in terms of observable and measurable expectations (Boyd, et al., 2014). The process must also allow for the development of a self-assessment of each individual's potential contributions to the process

(Goldhaber, Liddle, & Thieblod, 2013), and the clarification of the role each individual will play in the field supervision process (Laurillard, 2013). Each individual should identify potential and preferred communication strategies, frequencies, and schedules (Bahr, et al., 2014), as well as preferred feedback loops for all participants (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). The team should identify the tentative candidate implementation and delivery schedule for the curriculum for the candidate including what ideas, content, and concepts will be taught, how they might be taught, and when these items might be taught. In addition, individuals and the supervision team should identify potential and preferred strategies for reflective practice (Liakopoulou, 2012) that will be used throughout the field experience process.

Activities appropriate for the Prepare stage of the process include the college supervisor interviewing the student teacher to establish an effective fit for the classroom-based experience. The student teacher should visit the host teacher's classroom and interact with the students to serve as a possible introduction to the site, and as an interview by the host teacher to get familiar with the student teacher. Other common forms of activities at the Prepare level include: an orientation process by the college supervisor for both the host teacher and the student teacher, a review of the school and classroom websites and social media to become familiar with the school. This also helps to acclimate the student teacher to the behavioral expectations and instructional practices at the school.

Preparation is often an overlooked feature, and processes that exist without its inclusion do so at the detriment of the organization. Preparation done in a reflective way, that encourages stakeholder participation at all level, provides organizations a necessary and needed snapshot of salient issues that need to be attended to in future steps of the process. Although not intended, or always a result, the Preparation phase often results in baseline data collection that has never been

made available to the team before. Teams committed to the development and implementation of quality field experiences have a great deal of information and data available to them when the preparation phase is completed appropriately.

Prioritize

Prioritize for the Field Supervision Process. In order to be effective the supervision team must identify and set priorities (Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 2006). These identified priorities should flow from the Preparation stage and provide guidance to the supervision team as they identify those areas requiring the greatest attention (Smith, et al., 2007) necessary to ensure a common understanding between the college faculty, classroom teacher, and candidate (Raymond, 2007). Prioritization provides an opportunity for a cultural shift (Weber & Mitchell, 2006), one that allows for greater appreciation of the talents and professional skills of all members of the supervision team. The shift in practice is intentional, and results in a movement away from a "teacher-centric" model to a more cooperative, collaborative, and collegial model, one that is inclusive and engaging with common understandings and priorities across stakeholders.

The priorities become an identified set of expectations that typically exceed those experienced during the normal student teaching experience. This is accomplished by identifying specific areas where the student teacher will be focused to help differentiate the experience for all stakeholders involved. We often think of differentiated needs only in terms of the students. On the contrary: we have the opportunity in the Prioritization phase to look at all aspects of the experience to build into the program events, initiatives and supports that are necessary for all participants and stakeholders to get more robust and cohesive supports. In addition, it aids the college supervisor and classroom teacher by clearly identifying priorities and expectations for the ongoing performance assessment of the student teacher. After all, when all is said and done with

the field experience process, it is the student teacher who must have learned, performed, and demonstrated growth as an educator (Sexton, 2008). Identifying and prioritizing the supports necessary for all stakeholders involved enhances the potential that the student will ultimately get those opportunities to demonstrate growth.

Activities appropriate for the Prioritize stage include the development of expectations and priorities by all members of the team, combined with a collegial discussion that allows individuals to come to a common understanding of the priorities established. These priorities can, and probably will be revised over time as the college supervisor and host teacher, in consultation with the student teacher, identify strengths and areas for growth. Collegial and mutual identification of priorities can also serve as the foundation for formative, and eventually summative evaluations.

Plan

Quite often, planning is the first step that many practitioners and authors describe when talking about quality improvement initiatives (Bushell, 1992): Benneyan & Chute (1993) and Bocean (2011) contend it is an essential initial step. Typically, teams jump to identifying the "what" and "how" of the intervention without taking the time to fully prepare for and prioritize the activities involved in the field experience. The authors of this work contend that in order for a plan to be most effective in meeting the multiple demands of the many factors involved in the field experience, solid preparation and prioritization is necessary for teams to develop appropriate and holistic plans. To be most effective, the organizations and individuals responsible for the field experience should be committed to establishing a "planning culture" (Hess, Johnson & Reynolds, 2014) where there is an "organizational commitment to ongoing planning and continuous improvement" (p. 3).

The guidelines presented by the authors provide an effective framework for problem solving within the field experience. This includes the Planning phases and roughly follows the format articulated by Bocean (2011). The supervision team must take the time to define the parameters for the field experience to determine the levels and types of learning by the student teacher. The role of each member of the team should be stated and clarified for a consensus understanding.

An important part of the Planning process involves the delineation of responsibilities for all members of the team. This includes accountability checks intentionally embedded into the process at regular and recurring intervals. Identification and allocation of available resources also takes place during the Planning phase to insure that all processes, projects and operations that occur during the field experience have the supports necessary to help insure the success of the participants.

Once all aspects of the field experience are articulated, utilizing the content obtained during the Prepare and Prioritize stages, development of extensive and specific plans for the individuals and systems involved in the field experience. The authors suggest that planning needs to be inclusive enough to consider as many different systems and factors as are involved in the experience, with all of the identified and articulated individual needs being specifically addressed. When this is complete, it is time to move forward.

Examples of activities for the Plan stage include the development of a differentiated timeline to allow the student teacher the maximum opportunity for growth and success. The team could identify a clear strategy for transparent and inclusive communication to share information among the team, and not just for specific individuals. A general timeline can be established early

in the experience, and intentionally revisited as prioritized objectives are met, or demonstrate a need for focused attention.

Implementation

According the Brush et al. (2001) in the traditional fieldwork model "methods faculty worked with field-based mentors to provide hands-on teaching experiences to pre-service teachers in authentic settings" (p.18). That forms the basis of the Implementation phase of the field experience: the time when the student, faculty and mentor teacher are actually engaging in the field experience. Sounds easy, right? Well, not actually.

The authors contend that during the Implementation stage of the field experience, all members involved in the program not only need to perform their assigned tasks, they need to be reflective and deliberative in their actions, and this requires that they take and expend the resources and energies necessary to implement their tasks with fidelity. According to Elmuti, Kathawala and Wayland (1992), Deming focused on motivating individuals to perform their best by allowing them the flexibility to "use their brains" and that would in turn, improve their performance. The idea of "using their brains" refers to encouraging individuals within an organization to meet, discuss, collaborate, and develop new processes and refine existing ones. It was through the engagement and participation that members of an organization became more effective and improved performance.

At first, the participants in the Implementation stage of the field experience take the specified actions based upon the previous steps. Information provided from the previous three stages form the basis for the implementation of the plan. In addition, formative assessment activities built into the experience at the Planning phase help insure that all of the participants with an assigned task in the field experience are meeting their specified roles and responsibilities

according the plans and expectations established during the preparation, prioritizing, and planning stage of the Process Improvement Guideline sequence.

Evaluate

The focus of the Evaluation stage is to explore the effectiveness of the process to meet all of the participant needs: it is not exclusively concentrating on the success (or lack thereof) for the student involved in the field experience. The focus here is much broader, it is systemic, and more inclusive in scope. In order to be effective, any intervention must become more responsive to the needs of the participants and stakeholders, and this is determined through an evaluation of the effectiveness of the process to meet identified needs.

It is at this stage where the actions and activities of those involved in the field experience are evaluated to be a success, or less than such. Traditionally, that is where most experiences end, by judging the values of the experience for those involved. If the individuals met the criterion of the experience as demonstrated by their activities, it was assumed that they would have achieved the goals and that acceptable skills were gained. Zeichner (1984) cautions that the success of field based experiences need to be judged on criteria not based solely on the goals from instructional plans. We agree, and propose that the Evaluation stage is much more expansive than looking at the achievement of individuals: it goes much deeper to look at more than just individual task completion data to determine program effectiveness. It demands members of the team look to their own activities as well as those of the student teacher to ensure the learning experience has been effective and meaningful in nature.

The authors propose that the Evaluation stage provides accountability on a much broader scale. The Evaluation stage provides an opportunity for the individuals to introspectively consider the level to which they adhered to the integrity of the process spelled out at each of the

proceeding four steps. There might be individual success, but that success might have occurred due to good fortune, or through hard work: one will never know without a systems level assessment and introspection. The alignment of the many working parts of the systems involved in the field experience are considered at this stage, with the team taking the time to not only celebrate success, but to plan for new strategies to be incorporated in the next field experience sequence.

Conclusion

According to Elmuti, Kathawala and Wayland (1992) “Ultimately, it is the collective efforts of workers who either perform or fail to perform their jobs that counts” (p. 42). However, there is more involved in the student teaching process than just looking at the performance of individual participants in their collective roles and responsibilities. We believe that adherence to the stages of the Process Improvement Guidelines (PIGs) is necessary for groups, individuals and programs provides the supports necessary to increase the likelihood of having a successful field experience for all involved. This active engagement with the PIGs and the connected reflective process will benefit all members of the supervision triad, or supervision team, and have a great impact on the PreK-12 students connected to the student teaching experience.

The Five Stages of the PIGs for Teacher Education Field Experiences provide the team with a developmentally sequenced series of junctures that intentionally are designed to allow participants to be reflective and recursive as they methodically ponder the impact their efforts are having on their performance.

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Empowering Pre-Service Teachers to Address Diverse Populations through Targeted, Authentic Internship Experiences

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Abstract

Teacher education programs are under close scrutiny as the educational climate in the U.S. shifts. This, coupled with the ever-changing diversity of today's classrooms, requires teacher education programs to provide more targeted and authentic experiences. The teacher education programs in this mixed-methods study offer a yearlong, heavily supported internship in public schools targeted to provide diverse experiences. This experience was found to have a positive impact on shaping the early career goals of the elementary pre-service teachers in this study due to the support offered during the internship experience, the amount of time spent in authentic settings, and the diversity presented throughout the internship.

Keywords: mixed methods study; elementary pre-service teachers; teacher education; internship experiences; diversity

Many factors deeply affect student performance, yet recent research supports that one of the greatest influences upon student learning is the effectiveness of their teacher (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). This has led to a heightened awareness of the need for quality classroom teachers, which in turn has stimulated interest in teacher preparation programs and whether these programs are equipping pre-service teacher candidates to enter the education workforce with the experiences needed for success.

Teacher educators are faced with the question of what experiences need to be targeted within teacher preparation programs to assist pre-service teacher candidates to enter their career feeling prepared, confident, and supported enough to effectively prepare students for the 21st century.

Review of Literature

Literature was reviewed in the topic areas of current educational environment and the means by which pre-service teacher preparation programs are delivered in order to frame the current study.

Current Educational Environment and Factors Influencing Teacher Change

In 2011, the U.S. Secretary of Education released President Obama's plan for teacher education reform stating that graduates from many teacher preparation programs are leaving these programs unprepared for success in the classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Levine's (2006) research supports this claim emphasizing that our nation's teacher education programs are not preparing pre-service teacher candidates for their responsibilities in the classroom. His research also supports the findings from the Schools and Staffing Survey of the National Center for Education Statistics which indicates that only 20 percent of teachers felt adept at selecting and adapting curriculum materials, confident in managing their classroom and

the many discipline situations that arise, and continually assessing students during their inaugural year of teaching (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010).

Economic, racial, and linguistic diversity is exponentially increasing in 21st century schools and classrooms (Kauchak & Eggen, 2005). The expected number of students of color is on the rise, and nearly 45% of all students currently qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. Recent statistics highlight the need to develop instruction that meets the requirements of all students, and prepare educators to meet these challenges. Classroom teachers need to be effective in "adapting teaching strategies and techniques to meet the unique needs of each student" (Morrison, 2008, p. 360).

Teacher Preparation Programs

Pre-service teachers must understand that effective teaching is more than using strategies, best practices, good classroom management, or certain instructional materials; it involves understanding the theories and beliefs of education and how they are interwoven with the above mentioned facets and applied to practical teaching experiences. Hammerness (2006) and Zeichner & Liston (1990) suggest that teacher educators should continuously reflect on a program's effectiveness in training pre-service teacher candidates in these areas. Capella-Santana (2003) states that clinical experiences should provide opportunities to work with children of diverse backgrounds. The clinical experience must incorporate instruction that is guided by assessment data, and designed for meeting the diverse needs of the students in that individual classroom.

Further, research has shown that in many cases, five-year teacher preparation programs produce more qualified entry-level teachers than the traditional four-year programs (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2000). There is evidence that the clinical/student teaching

experience provides pre-service teacher candidates with multiple opportunities to learn and practice their teaching skills which results in reducing their anxiety as a first-year classroom teacher (Rice 2003). This points to a central theme that the clinical experiences of teacher candidates should be a major focus and the culmination of their formal education.

Method

A mixed methods approach of research was used during this study employing quantitative as well as qualitative methods of inquiry to ensure the "most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 129). The quantitative data were collected through a researcher-created survey (refer to Appendix) given to pre-service teacher candidates during their final semester of a teacher education program and mentor teacher survey data submitted by teachers at the conclusion of their time working with these same pre-service teacher candidates. The qualitative data collected were written responses to open-ended questions on the same researcher-created survey and mentor teacher survey and meeting minutes recorded during exit interviews with pre-service teacher candidates. The two sets of data were collected concurrently, however the analysis was done separately. Following the initial analysis, the thematic qualitative data were compared with the findings in the quantitative analysis using a concurrent triangulation method (Creswell, 2009) to answer the following research questions:

(1) In what ways do the targeted internship experiences provided influence early career goals of elementary pre-service candidates?

(2) In what ways are the pre-service teacher candidates best prepared to enter the teaching field? From candidates' point of view? From public school partners' point of view?

Sample

The population of the study was a convenience sample, and involved pre-service teacher candidates within two initial Prekindergarten through fourth grade teacher licensure programs at a large research-focused university in the mid-south: (1) the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSE) program, and (2) the Master of Arts in Teaching in Childhood Education (MAT) program.

Program descriptions. Both the BSE and the MAT are initial teacher preparation programs with the goal of licensing graduates to teach in Prekindergarten through fourth grade classrooms (P-4). Candidates may elect to add additional areas of licensure to their program with additional coursework, such as Special Education (SPED), English as a Second Language (ESL), or grades 5 and 6. The yearlong internship experience allows elementary pre-service teacher candidates to make further application of theoretical principles of teaching and learning that have been formulated during an undergraduate studies program, and is the focus of the current study.

During the course of the internship year, candidates are assigned three different grade level rotations lasting between 7 and 18 weeks in their assigned school. Each rotation is divided into two integrated phases: observation/participation, and teaching. Candidates gradually assume teaching responsibility until their solo teaching assignment for each rotation.

Pre-service teacher candidates. Data were collected from pre-service teacher candidates in the BSE (n=46) and the MAT (n=18) programs during the final semester of their internship experience. The candidates were asked to voluntarily complete an anonymous survey (Appendix) addressing the impact the internship experience may have had in shaping their future

career goals as well as their perceived strengths and weaknesses in teaching diverse populations of students.

Within the studied group, three participants were males and 61 participants were females. Three of the participants self-reported their ethnicity as Hispanic, two reported being Native American, one reported Other, 55 reported Caucasian, one reported African American, and two did not report. Within this group of participants, 44 reported that they were between the ages of 20-24, 13 reported being between 25-29, three reported being between 30-34, and four reported the age category of 40+. Participants electing to add specialization in this research group included 17 ESL, 12 SPED, and 29 grades 5 and 6. One detail to note is that participants who elect to pursue a specialization are placed in a school whose population will allow the pre-service teacher to gain experience within that specialization.

Partnership schools. The public elementary schools that partner with the university are chosen in part because of the diversity of students and experiences they can offer the pre-service teacher candidates. The types of diversity represented include up to 85% non-English speaking individuals, large populations of students with special needs, and up to 94% free and reduced lunch participants.

Data Collection

In April, several sources of data were collected in an effort to triangulate the information. First, elementary pre-service teacher candidates were asked to complete a researcher-created survey including Likert and open-ended response items about the impact the internship experience had upon their future career goals and how prepared they felt to enter a diverse teaching field. Second, prior to graduation each year the Curriculum and Instruction Department Head meets with each group of pre-service teachers and conducts a group exit interview.

Finally, the Field Placement Office at the college sends a survey to each mentor teacher at the conclusion of internship, which allows the mentors to evaluate the program and offer input on strengths and weaknesses. The results from these sources were analyzed for trends and themes.

Analysis

Quantitative data were collated and qualified to determine the factors that both pre-service teachers and mentor teachers indicated were the strongest in preparation to enter a diverse teaching career. Data were factor analyzed and these factors then became themes that were compared to the subsequent themes from the qualitative analysis (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

Qualitative data sources were analyzed inductively (Patton, 2002) through a process that began with a collaborative component for open coding (Creswell, 2007). For open coding, each researcher read through the open-response items and interview data, noting potential understandings of the data source. Following this process and a discussion of initial understandings, the research team returned to the entirety of the data set and noted 20 open codes as they emerged and were confirmed with data excerpts.

Once finished with the open coding process, axial coding took on a collaborative effort as the researchers read through each open code description, independently grouped them into categories, and then compared understandings of them. This process allowed the researchers to take 20 open codes and reduce them into four themes, constructs of the open codes that contributed to the team's understanding (see Table 1) of them: (a) *Experiences that Influenced Preparation,* (b) *Experiences that Hindered Preparation,* (c) *Experiences that Influenced Career Goals/Choices*, and (d) *Program Outcomes.*

The final phase of analysis came when the quantitative factor analysis was directly compared to the qualitative coding process. Influences upon pre-service teachers were reported.

Table 1. *Sample Data Excerpts, Open Codes, and Study Themes*

Theme	Code	Sample Data Excerpts
Experiences that Influenced Preparation	Clinical Experiences	• Teaching lessons everyday • Variety of placements during internship • "Through the year-long internship we were able to test out the things that we had learning in class and develop them." • "there is no greater experience for interns than experience in the classroom with veteran teachers and students; also, as mentors, it helps to be reminded of best practices as we model for our interns - and the students can't help but benefit from that" (MENTOR)
	Effective Courses	• Action Research • Case Study • Curriculum Design
	Research Based Information	• Professors used it more than mentor teachers
	Differentiation	• "My SPED students push me to differentiate my classroom further."
	Outside Experiences	• Family…mothers are teachers… • "A lot of life experiences"
Experiences that Hindered Preparation	Improvements	• "They need additional classroom management experience/knowledge as well as some special education background with instruction modifications and adaptations." (MENTOR) • More technology • Use of formal and formative assessments
	Ineffective Professors	• Not understanding the demands of the program (professors outside CHED) • "the endorsement faculty members don't understand what the CHED MAT program is - they aren't working with the students"
	Ineffective Courses	• Classroom Management (some) • ESL • SPED
	Choice of Mentor Teachers	• Mentor evaluation system

	Communication	• Clarity of advising • "Lack of communication between liaison and mentor teachers" (MENTOR)
	Expectations	• Depends on instructor and liaison
	Student Life	• university student vs. public school person • Calendar
Experiences that Influenced Career Goals/Choices	Building Relationships with Families	• "I want to work in partnership with parents and families in order to create the most meaningful learning experiences possible to then connect further within the community " • Love the parent involvement aspect of internship school
	Diversity	• "I'd love to have a diverse classroom with all types of learners. I believe diversity provides an enriching classroom environment." • "I believe that working with diverse students in my internship experience led me to want to work with a wide variety of students with a variety of needs." • "Low SES/poverty/CLD students because I want to serve as a positive role model and use the strategies learned"
	Internship Classroom	• "I would love to work with a diverse student population. Through internship, I had the privilege to work with a wonderful group of students. I love being able to help the students in poverty and from diverse populations. The students are eager to succeed and I love learning from them just as much as they love learning from me." • "My experience at [*internship school*] made me love SPED students. I know my time spent in the autism resource room played a huge part in my increased interest of SPED students."
	Life experiences	• "I would like to work with Hispanic American students whose parents speak Spanish and understand the Hispanic culture. I feel like this is where I could make the biggest difference as I come from that culture and am bilingual" • "I have always wanted to work with students that need the extra help. My mom was a SPED teacher and that made me want to teach and help students that need it"

Findings

In this study, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed separately until the final phase of the analysis. This analysis method allowed the researchers to compare both data sets and note the convergence and the difference between the two, allowing each to strengthen and support the other (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative Findings

The responses to the Likert items on the researcher-created survey were quantified to determine preparedness of pre-service teachers based on the collective experiences of the group. The researchers noted that overall the pre-service teachers surveyed viewed themselves as prepared to enter the teaching field.

Pre-service teachers were asked to respond on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all prepared and 5 being very prepared, how they judged their level of preparedness in response to 11 different items. The pre-service teachers (n=64) reported feeling most prepared to "teach concepts, knowledge, and skills in ways that enable students to learn" and "understand how different students in your classroom are learning (means of 4.78 and 4.75 respectively). They indicated that they felt most unprepared to "identify and obtain materials and use community resources to create a multicultural curriculum", "identify and address special learning needs and/or difficulties", and "teach in ways that support new English Language learners" (means of 4.38, 4.30, and 4.0 respectively).

In addition to areas of preparedness, pre-service teachers were asked to rank influences upon their career goals from 1-8 with a score of 8 indicating the most influential factor. Researchers noted the most influential factor within this group was "internship school environment" with "coursework taken during internship" and "university liaison" being the

second and third most influential factors, far above “coursework prior to internship”, “endorsement coursework prior to and during internship”, “family”, “outside work experiences”, and “other”.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data were collected in the form of open-ended response items from the researcher created survey, open-ended response items from the mentor teacher survey created by the Field Placement Office, and the pre-service teacher responses to the exit interviews. The findings for each of the themes are summarized below.

Experiences that influenced preparation. The researchers discovered that many factors were perceived as influencing the preparation of the pre-service teacher participants. Pre-service teachers discussed the influence of the *clinical experiences* by stating, “Through the yearlong internship we were able to test out the things that we had learned in class and develop them.” Mentors discussed the impact of the internship year saying, “there is no greater experience for interns than experience in the classroom with veteran teachers and students; also, as mentors, it helps to be reminded of best practices as we model for our interns - and the students can't help but benefit from that.” Throughout all the data sources, both pre-service teachers and mentors reiterated the value in the yearlong internship experience.

Other influences on teacher preparation were the *coursework*, both before and during the internship experience, the *research based information* provided, several *outside experiences* such as growing up in a family of educators and study abroad experiences, and the constant incorporation of *differentiation* into the coursework as well as being modeled in the internship classroom. The vast majority of effective courses mentioned were those that the pre-service teachers took during the internship year. These courses were designed to enhance the internship

experience and the required assignments were practical applications of the knowledge from the courses using students within the internship placements. Differentiation was also a component that was embedded throughout coursework and continued into practical experience within each internship classroom.

Experiences that hindered preparation. Seven open codes led to the theme of *Experiences that Hindered Preparation.* The most prevalent open code was suggested areas for *improvements*, followed by *ineffective professors* and *ineffective courses*, then *communication*, *student life*, *expectations*, and *ineffective choice of mentor teachers*.

Pre-service teachers and mentors reported areas for program improvements such as more math, science, and social studies pedagogy courses, more instruction on and experience with educational technology, internship placements specifically in their targeted endorsement areas, and more use of formal and formative assessments throughout the program.

Ineffective professors and courses were reported often with the most commonly mentioned courses and professors being in the ESL and SPED endorsement areas. Pre-service teachers mentioned they desired more "real ESL courses" and "the endorsement faculty members don't understand what the CHED program is - they aren't working with the students."

Other areas noted as a hindrance to preparation were the ineffective choice of mentor teachers which could be corrected by a more robust mentor evaluation system, communication issues such as advising cloudiness and lack of communication between instructors, liaisons, interns, and schools depending on the individual, expectations that are at times unclear, and the demands of the year-long internship interfering with student life. Pre-service teachers often asked, "[Am I] a student at [the university] or a part of [elementary school]?"

Experiences that influenced career goals/choices. This theme was by far the largest theme in the data set. It encompassed only four open codes but they held the vast majority of the data excerpts. *Diversity* was determined to be the largest factor influencing these pre-service teachers' future career goals, followed by their *internship classroom* factors, *life experiences*, and *building relationships with families*.

According to this group of pre-service teachers, desiring to serve a diverse population was high on the list of factors they will be looking for in future employment. "I enjoy being in a diverse school with many different influences of culture, religion, beliefs, and socio-economic levels," reported one pre-service teacher. Others reported, "I'd love to have a diverse classroom with all types of learners. I believe diversity provides an enriching classroom environment," and "I believe that working with diverse students in my internship experience led me to want to work with a wide variety of students with a variety of needs." Other pre-service teachers requested that more on the subject of diversity be integrated into their coursework. They desired to learn how to better meet the needs of all diverse learners, including Gifted and Talented (GT) students.

Although the ESL and SPED courses were listed under the code *Experiences that Hindered Preparation*, many pre-service teachers stated their desire to work with ESL or SPED students because they were earning an additional certification in this area. "I would like to work with students of a young age group with a big difference in cultures and backgrounds. I will have my ESL endorsement when I graduate so I would like to work with ESL students," reported one pre-service teacher. Another mentioned they would like to work with "low SES/poverty/CLD students because I want to serve as a positive role model and use the strategies learned."

While the open code *diversity* addressed a broad topic, the open code *internship classroom* addressed those influences that came directly from working with the students in their placements and the mentor teacher in those rooms. These mentors, the environment in their classroom, and the students the pre-service teachers worked with over the course of their yearlong internship had a large impact on these pre-service teachers' vision for their own future as an educator. "My experience at [*internship school*] made me love [students with special needs]. I know my time spent in the autism resource room played a huge part in my increased interest of SPED students" stated one pre-service teacher. Another participant stated,

> I would love to work with a diverse student population. Through internship, I had the privilege to work with a wonderful group of students. I love being able to help the students in poverty and from diverse populations. The students are eager to succeed and I love learning from them just as much as they love learning from me.

Other areas of influence over future career goals were life experiences held by the pre-service teachers, and internship schools that prioritized the building of relationships with families. The program is experiencing a rise in the Hispanic demographic, and these individuals report wanting to serve students who were raised in similar situations to themselves. Pre-service teachers also understood the value in building relationships with families. Many of the partnership schools place a priority on this and the pre-service teachers notice it. They reported loving the "parent involvement aspect of the internship school." Another describes their goal in this way, "I want to work in partnership with parents and families in order to create the most meaningful learning experiences possible to then connect further within the community."

Program outcomes. The final theme identified was *Program Outcomes*. These areas were not noted as factors in the preparation of the candidates or their choosing of a career, and therefore will not be elaborated upon in this manuscript.

Mixing the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The research team noted overlap in several themes when looking through both the quantitative and qualitative data sets. The largest factors of influence upon career choice were factors that took place primarily during the internship year within the clinical experiences, such as desiring to work with a diverse student population because of the populations within their internship classrooms, and desiring to work with ESL or SPED students due to their internship experiences or coursework choices. When analyzing the factors of influence from the researcher created survey, this group of pre-service teachers indicated the *Internship School Environment* played the largest role in determining their future career goals. *Coursework Taken During Internship* held place as the second largest impact, while *Endorsement Coursework* was one of the lowest rated factors. What may be having more influence on the desire to teach students within these populations is simply the choice to earn certification in the areas of ESL or SPED due to life experiences and other circumstances. This is certainly an area for future research.

Another occurrence of the quantitative data supporting the qualitative data is in the preparedness realm. Pre-service teachers feel prepared to teach “different students” and understand how they are learning. In turn, the qualitative data indicated that not only do they feel prepared, they desire to teach these diverse populations, and will actively seek employment where they can serve these students.

Discussion

The findings from this study are encouraging for the programs studied. It is inspiring to find that the experiences these programs work to design for the interns are having a positive effect on the long-term goals of the graduates. Each partnership school is purposively chosen because of the diversity of the students the school serves. Many factors are considered such as field experiences prior to the internship year, individual personalities, and chosen specialization. A diversity of field experiences for program candidates throughout the course of study is a priority for these two P-4 teacher licensure programs.

Another positive discovery was that there was little to no difference in the feelings of preparedness between the BSE (4 year) and MAT (5 year) program graduates. Research reviewed for this study discussed the strengthened experience of a five-year teacher education program over a program that prepared teachers in four years (AFT, 2000; Young, Grant, Montbriand, & Therriault, 2001). The researchers posit that the lack of preparation noted in the literature comes not from the amount of time spent in the teacher preparation program, but the amount of time spent in clinical experiences prior to teacher licensure. In the two studied programs, the yearlong internship offers ample opportunity for feedback and guided self-reflection under the supervision of a university faculty liaison and public school teacher mentor. While there are few studies available reviewing programs with full year internships, there are several that speak to the importance of engaging in practical experiences for prolonged periods of time (AFT, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010; Wiseman, 2012). For both the BSE and MAT programs studied, a full yearlong internship in the public elementary school is required. The research team believes it is this internship and the 90+ hours of required field experience prior to internship, that may contribute

to the perceptions of overall preparedness in these candidates in areas where many new teachers discussed in the literature feel inadequate.

Another factor that contributed to the confidence exhibited by program graduates was the amount of support they received from university faculty and public school partners. As noted in this study's findings, these relationships have a direct, positive impact on the quality of the experience for each intern. The same university faculty member remains assigned as a partner with the same elementary school for several years in order to provide stability and support, not only to the interns assigned in that school, but also the elementary school administration and teachers. The pre-service teachers in this study recognized the influence of these individuals and ranked them as the second most significant factor when making career choices. Close relationships and support from faculty mentors are vital to the success of intensive teacher education programs and the accomplishment of its graduates (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Conclusion

The focus of the public education system has recently shifted as new standards-based reforms have been implemented. The new focus on teacher effectiveness has shone a spotlight on the quality of teacher preparation programs. Many new teachers are leaving their preparation programs feeling ill-prepared to meet the needs of the diverse students in their classrooms (AFT, 2012; Hemmings & Weaven, 2005). These are skills necessary for entry-level teachers to possess if they are to prepare students to enter college or a career. The pre-service teachers in this study reported high confidence in their abilities to do these two things, which the researchers speculate is due to the unique structure of the programs studied.

The journey of preparing teachers is a complex and intensive process and there are multiple forces that must be involved in the transition from pre-service teacher education

program to the public school classroom. The findings of this study confirm that beginning teachers must be supported through induction programs with mentoring and modeling from master teachers, intensive professional development to target areas of growth, and action research for designing interventions to meet the needs of all the diverse learners in the classroom. The students in today's classrooms deserve to experience the type of teachers that will positively impact their achievement. Ongoing research and improvement of teacher preparation programs is important as "the increase in teacher preparation programs leads to the improvement of student performance" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 23). Stakeholders must realize that related research on pre-service teacher education is a continuous process with the goal of determining effective ways to produce high-quality teachers who have acquired the knowledge and skills to teach all students (AFT, 2012; Young et al., 2001).

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Appendix

Internship Experiences Survey

Directions: Please mark the answer that best represents you and your experiences for the following items. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

Demographic Data:

Which Education Program are you pursuing?	(1) Childhood Education MAT (2) Elementary Education BSE Licensure
Gender:	(1) Male (2) Female
Ethnicity:	(1) African-American (2) Asian/Pacific Islander (3) Hispanic (4) Caucasian (5) Native American (6) Other
Age Group:	(1) 20-24 (2) 25-29 (3) 30-34 (4) 35-39 (5) 40+
Internship District:	(1) Fayetteville Public Schools (2) Springdale Public Schools (3) Rogers Public Schools (4) Bentonville Public Schools (5) Elkins Public Schools
Which additional areas of licensure are you pursuing? Mark all that apply.	(1) ESL (2) SPED (3) STEM (4) Grades 5 and 6 (5) Grades 4-8 *List content areas:* ________________________ (6) Other: __________________________

Directions: Please circle the number that best represents your feelings in response to the following items.

Preparedness:

As you finish your internship, how well prepared do you feel to do the following:

Teach concepts, knowledge, and skills in ways that enable students to learn	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Understand how different students in your classroom are learning	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Identify and obtain materials and use community resources to create a multicultural curriculum	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Relate classroom learning to the real world.	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Understand how students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development influences learning	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Understand how students' family and cultural backgrounds may influence learning	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Identify and address special learning needs and/or difficulties	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Teach in ways that support new English Language learners	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Help students become self-motivated and self-directed	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Help students learn to think crucially and solve problems	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1
Encourage students to see, question, and interpret ideas from diverse perspectives	Very Prepared 5	Somewhat Prepared 4	Neutral 3	Not Very Prepared 2	Not at All Prepared 1

Directions: Please mark the answer that best represents you and your experiences for the following items.

Career Goals:	
Where do you hope to be employed following graduation?	(1) Northeast AR (2) Central AR (3) Northwest AR (4) South AR (5) Out of State (6) Outside the US
In what type of school do you hope to be employed?	(1) Public (2) Private (3) Charter
In what school environment do you hope to be employed?	(1) Rural (2) Suburban (3) Urban
Rate the variables in order of influence upon your future career goals with 8 holding the greatest influence and 1 holding the least influence.	__ Undergraduate coursework *prior to internship* __ Childhood/Elementary Education coursework *during internship* __ Additional Endorsement coursework prior to and during internship __ Internship School Environment __ University Internship Liaison __ Outside Work Experiences __ Family __ Other (please list):

Describe the students you would *ideally* like to work with following graduation. Why do you hope to work with this particular population?

Is there one experience that led you to choose working with these students or is it a collection of experiences? Describe that experience or experiences.

Words Matter: Looking Closely at the Language Secondary Pre-Service Teachers Use in Describing Students in their Field Placements

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Abstract

This paper looks closely at the language secondary pre-service teachers use to describe their students in a field placement setting. We examine 48 instructional units across five content areas of secondary education. In the units, the pre-service teachers were asked to describe three target students who presented instructional challenges for the pre-service teachers using positive language. Although students were enrolled in a teacher education program in which they often discussed issues of race, class, and exceptionality, we found that many of the pre-service teachers did not talk about individual student needs from a strength-based perspective.

Keywords: teacher education, urban education, race, SES, exceptionality, secondary education

In education, we have been struggling with deficit thinking for decades (Delpit, 1995). Rather than acknowledging the strengths that students bring with them, we tend to focus on what they lack. Discourse analysis is one way to highlight this deficit thinking as evidenced in speech or in writing.

In his analysis of the achievement gap, Carey (2014) uses a cultural analysis approach to identify three different explanations for student failure: 1) blame the individual, 2) blame the social influences on individual behavior, or 3) focus on institutions as replicating social problems (p. 452). He advocates using the third explanation for understanding and addressing the achievement gap in schools. His work is focused on the larger policy issues surrounding the achievement gap and how our words evidence how we think about children:

> We need to constantly analyze the words and labels we use to describe children, their schools, and those who teach them for manners in which these may further penalize already marginalized children. (p. 462).

He also discusses the fact that Discourse around the achievement gap is typically code for speaking about racial minorities and low-income students.

Watson (2012) writes about “the phenomenon of norming suburban,” (p. 986) in which “middle-class whites serve as the marker of perceived correct beliefs, values, and behaviors,” (p. 987). In her study, the pre-service teachers had all attended suburban high schools. She described how the students spoke about race without ever using specific racial words such as Black, Asian, or White. Instead, the pre-service teachers spoke about working with students who were different from them or working in diverse or urban classroom settings. In addition, the students used urban as a way to describe factors of socio-economics, again using middle-class suburban schools at the norm.

In addition to deficit thinking around racial and class issues, pre-service teachers often struggle with how to describe students with special needs. Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) explore teachers' and teacher assistants' use of language in describing students with behavioral challenges. Again, they discuss the "othering" that takes place in describing such students. In these descriptions, teachers and TAs tended to use discourse emphasizing the child's deficits.

In this paper, we explore the words that pre-service secondary teachers use in speaking about individual students in a unit design. In this particular course, and throughout the teacher education program, the pre-service teachers were encouraged to be inclusive and positive in their planning and thinking about students. For this assignment, the pre-service teachers were required to plan units that effectively integrated every student in the class in each lesson, or at least attempted to do so. We were surprised as we began to examine the pre-service teachers' language about individual students and their perceived needs. We read many examples of deficit thinking including the pre-service teachers' descriptions of race, ethnicity, first language, SES, special needs, and parent involvement of their students.

Methodology

For this study, we examined 48 instructional units in five content areas: Social Studies (17), Science (10), English (10), World Languages (6), and Mathematics (5). The pre-service teachers were asked to select three target students to consider as they put together a unit plan. They were asked to write descriptions of three students they felt unsure how to teach. This could include any student deemed "different from self." For this assignment, the unit design was structured to be inclusive of every student in the class meaning rather than planning a lesson based on content, they were expected to plan content based on students. The pre-service teachers were specifically instructed to write a positive student profile for each of the target students. The

instructions for this part of the assignment were:

> Select three students that you worry about how well they are learning in your class to keep in mind during this lesson designing process…At least one of these students should have a disability. Also consider students with behavioral challenges, English language learners, or other traditionally marginalized learners. Use initials to ensure confidentiality. Write a positive student profile for each of the students.

What follows is a detailed analysis of the language used by the pre-service teachers to describe the target students.

Results and Discussion

Describing Race / Ethnicity

The majority of the pre-service teachers, 68%, did not include information about race or ethnicity in their descriptions of their target students. Only 10% chose to identify the race of *each* of their target students. The remaining 22% of pre-service teachers identified the race/ethnic background for *some* of their target students.

In his unit, Shawn described three target students. In describing the first student, Shawn writes: "T is one of my African American students." For his second student, Shawn makes no mention of the student's race or ethnicity. In describing the third student, Shawn writes: "J and his family moved to Denver from Guatemala 4 years ago. They are undocumented immigrants." Based on the fact that Shawn identified one student as African American and one student as Guatemalan, the reader might assume that the second target student is white since 'educators are more likely to identify students by … other signifiers than by their racial signifiers' (Castagno 2008, 322).

In another example, Sara identified one student as “Hispanic, an English Language Learner.” She describes the other two students as coming from “middle class, English-speaking” families. The reader is, again, left to assume the race/ethnicity of the two English speakers. Our guess is that the English speakers were white.

In the following two examples, there does not seem to be a clear pattern in the pre-service teachers’ discourse. Camille identifies one student as Jewish, one as an English language learner, and one as a Spanish-speaker who is an English language learner. She describes the first student by writing: “He is wealthy, upper middle class family, he is Jewish.” For the second student, she does not mention the student’s race/ethnicity, but she writes: “English is his second language.” As she describes the third student, she writes: “His first language is Spanish. English is a second language for student J.” Again, there is no clear pattern—she uses Jewish as a description of the student’s ethnicity. For the third student, we might assume that the student is Hispanic. However, we are not provided the first language or race/ethnicity of the second student.

Another pre-service teacher, Carter, does not mention the racial/ethnic background for one student; identifies one student as originally from Mexico; and identifies the third student as “an English native.” It is unclear whether the third student is from England or is a native English speaker. The reader is again left to make assumptions based on what is not said.

Identifying racial/ethnic background of individual students is problematic. The pre-service teachers did not have access to this information for individual students. Did the pre-service teachers ask the students about their racial/ethnic background? Did they make assumptions based on names or skin color? Did they make assumptions based on the school

demographics? Do they feel uncomfortable talking about racial categories because they have been taught the value of a colorblind discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2001)?

Describing Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Most students, 58% did not identify the SES background of their target students. Only 16% of the pre-service teachers identified the SES for *each* of their target students. Approximately 26% of the students sometimes identified the SES of their target students and sometimes did not. Again, in these instances, the reader is left to make assumptions about the target students.

In her descriptions, Ella makes no mention of SES for two students and then writes that the third student "comes from a middle class family." This is an interesting example because she specifically identifies the student who is perceived as middle class. Does that mean that she perceived the first two students as coming from lower SES backgrounds? It is hard to say.

Lana describes her first student by writing, "he lives in low income housing in a bad neighborhood." For her second student, she does not mention SES. In describing her third student she writes that the student "lives with a considerably wealthy family." We question what does "bad neighborhood" indicate? Is it code for Black or Hispanic? By not mentioning the SES of the second student, are we left to assume that the third student is middle class?

Camille only indicates SES for the student she perceives as upper-middle class. She writes that the student is "wealthy upper middle class family." Again, it is hard to guess what she perceives as the SES of the other two students as she leaves out this information. Sam, on the other hand, only gives the SES for a student that he perceives is

middle class, “he comes from a middle class home.” He leaves out mention of his other two target students’ SES.

Identifying SES of individual students is particularly problematic. Because the pre-service teachers do not have access to this information it must be based on their perceptions in observing the student. With further analysis, we were unable to pinpoint the specific indicators the pre-service teachers used in making designations of SES for individual students. The pre-service teachers may have made assumptions based on the neighborhood in which the school is located (and presumably the student might live), things the student might have said in interacting with the pre-service teachers, or maybe even the clothes the student wears.

Identifying Home Language

Almost half of the pre-service teachers, 47%, identified students as English language learners. As a teacher, it is critically important to know if students are English language learners in order to provide language scaffolds as necessary and appropriate. Most of the pre-service teachers simply stated that the student was an English Language Learner. Many, but not all, of the English language learners in this region are Spanish speaking, so it is interesting that the many of the pre-service teachers did not include the first language of their identified ELL students.

Kristina considers the instructional implications for her ELL student. She writes: “M is also a heritage speaker of Spanish. She is fluent in speaking and writing Spanish and in American Sign Language, she is an ELL and struggles with understanding spoken and written English, since Spanish is her first language and English was being acquired around the time she developed a hearing impairment.” Another pre-service teacher who seems to consider the instructional implications was Will. He writes: “One of my students is an ESL student in the

seventh grade. He is bright and grasps mathematical concepts quickly, but he has difficulty speaking, reading, and writing in English. He first learned to read, write, and count in Spanish, presumably in his native country."

Upon further analysis, two of the pre-service teachers seemed to use the ELL designation as code for underperforming. They did not seem to have an instructional purpose for identifying the ELL students. Michael writes: "English is not the students first language, he has a good grasp of English, when he wants to apply himself." (sic) And, Camille writes: "English is his second language. His work is not often completed on time or turned in at all. He also misses a lot of class he is often absent. This is concerning because his test scores are high A's but due to his frequent absences and missing homework he is only achieving at a C level."

Identifying the English Language Learners is less problematic than the lack of acknowledgement of other identity factors in that the pre-service teachers may have had access through their cooperating teachers to factors such as home language and level of English proficiency. However, as teachers, this information is really only helpful if we acknowledge and understand the instructional implications. English Language Learners are not a monolithic group—instead they are a very diverse group of students with diverse needs. Are the pre-service teachers recognizing this as they speak about their students?

Identifying Special Needs

Throughout the unit plans, the pre-service teachers consistently identified students with special needs through the use of IEPs, 504 plans, and gifted/talented designations. In some cases, the pre-service teachers appeared to use these designations in helping them plan for the unit.

In the following example, it would follow that the unit plan would have opportunities for movement. Alex writes: "He was diagnosed with ADHD in the second grade and was placed on Ritalin to help control the ADHD. The Ritalin helped for the most part but causes a great amount of restlessness and makes him fidgety during class periods and when he has to sit for a long period of time." In the next example, Lindsay identifies both the "label" as well as specific accommodations that the student should receive: "He has been diagnosed with ADHD and at his parents' request, has a 504 plan which requires that he be given extra time for assignments as well as scheduled support sessions from a teacher."

In several cases, the pre-service teachers used the "label" for the student, but did not seem to use this in adapting instruction. Alex writes: "M is a 15-year-old Freshman in my class who has an emotional disturbance issue." Michael writes: "Behavior varies depending on mood, student has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactive disorder." There are many more examples of pre-service teachers providing a label for the student, but then fail to discuss what specific accommodations the student might need to be successful.

In several cases, when pre-service teachers described their students with special needs, the wording was awkward. In both of the following examples, the pre-service teachers seemed to be grappling with the individual needs of the student and thinking about how to accommodate those needs within the general classroom setting. George describes his student by writing that she "…is a young lady that uses a walker. While she has no mental exceptionalities, the walker is a source of frustration when trying to get to different parts of the classroom." Lana writes: "L is a disabled student in a general education classroom. She suffered a bike injury last year and has TBI but only at the moderate level. Her parents are trying their best and keep in close contact with the principal and all her teachers. They have implemented an IEP for her through

the principal and special education teacher." Both George and Lana appear to be trying to address the academic and social needs of their students.

Discussing Parent Involvement

Unit plans did not specifically ask how parents or caregivers would be involved over the course of the unit. Despite not asking for this information, many pre-service teachers still provided some information about parental involvement. There were 28 instances of descriptions of parents. Of these, 18% were positive; approximately 18% were neutral; and, 64% can be characterized as negative.

The positive descriptions of parents, all centered on parent involvement and support. For instance, Sam writes: "…both parents are involved with his education and sports." The neutral instances tended to be factual statements about the parents. For instance, Alex writes: "Her mom homeschooled her in Spanish."

For the descriptions that can be characterized as negative, most indicated that the parents were not involved in the student's education or had a negative influence on the student. Todd writes: "T lives with his mother and his mother's boyfriend. His mother occasionally attends scheduled conferences but overall shows little involvement in T's education." And, Theresa writes: "I am concerned about his life at home because he is always hungry. He was literally sick one day because he was so hungry." It is interesting to see how the pre-service teachers discussed parents as they spoke about their target students.

Conclusion

In their work, Leland and Murtadha (2011) discuss preparing and retaining teachers for urban settings. They focus on the discourse used in teacher education around culture and race and how to work with pre-service teachers:

> Through firsthand experiences, class discussions, reading research articles, and engaging in reflective journaling, students begin to wrestle with the deficit thinking that often permeates the dominant discourse about urban schools and communities. (p. 898)

And, in fact, in the teacher education program described here, many of these strategies were used throughout the program. Cunningham & Katsafanas (2014) identify three components that they use for supporting students in intercultural field placements: 1) modeling culturally responsive teaching in university teacher education classes, 2) implementing activities designed for pre-service teachers to begin to understand their own culture and the cultures of their students, and, 3) critical reflection of intercultural experiences (p. 29). Again, students in this teacher preparation program were exposed to these kinds of approaches.

Watson (2012) advocates starting racial discussions with pre-service teachers at the time of admission into the program. She advocates for a stand-alone course on racial issues as well as weaving these themes throughout other courses. And, finally, she discusses the importance of faculty in teacher education programs developing their own base of antiracial pedagogy and use of critical lens in their teaching.

Ullucci & Howard (2015) take this a step further and argue that teacher educators need to develop class-consciousness as well as race-consciousness. They identify four myths about poverty including: The Bootstraps Myth; The Individual Faults Myth; The Educability Myth; and, The Culture of Poverty Myth, (p. 175). They write:

> In preparing teachers to work with students in poverty, the single most important thing teacher educators can do is to work against this othering. People in poverty

> do not live some monolithic, shared cultural experience that makes all of *them* different from all of *us* (p. 189).

Overall, as we began to look closely at pre-service teacher's use of language in describing students, the pre-service teachers often presented their students in less than positive ways. In fact, they seemed to continue to rely on a deficit model even when surrounded by an inclusive model of teaching. "It is important that future educators realize this and are aware of the voices that get heard and those that get silenced in both schools and the larger society" (Leland & Murtadha, 2011, p. 899). How we talk about students and their families remains a challenge in education. And, in many ways, remains deeply embedded in the ways pre-service teachers think about their students.

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