

# *The Field Experience Journal*

*Volume 4 Fall 2009*

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**Cover:**

*from The Chambered Nautilus*  
Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leave thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!  
Oliver Wendell Holmes

The self-propelling nautilus grows chamber by chamber with each larger than the previous one. This unfolding spiral develops steadily as time passes. In his poem, Holmes saw the mollusk and spiral shell as a representation of the intellectual growth of humans.

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## ***Submission Guidelines:***

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

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## From the Editor

Dear Readers of *The Field Experience Journal*:

This fall 2009 edition of *The Field Experience Journal* begins with “It’s More than Just Working with Students: The Many Advantages of Field Experiences” submitted by Donna Armstrong. In this submission, Dr. Armstrong addresses the influence of teachers, the importance of early and numerous field experiences for teacher candidates, and the necessity of strong relationships between schools and colleges of education.

“The Use of Individualized Growth Plans, Teaching Frameworks, and Cognitive Discussion in the Formative Development of Student Teachers” from Ann Gaudino provides a look at the importance of promoting developmental growth for teacher candidates that should continue throughout their careers.

Jody Piro and Cynthia Hutchison, in their study titled: “Junior Achievement as Field Experience in a General Methods Course”, examined how a College of Education teamed with Junior Achievement to provide early field experiences for its education students within local school districts. Drs. Piro and Hutchinson’s study explored this experience as it related to course content.

“A Dozen Do’s for Planning International Field Experiences” written by Larry Corbett and Ray Francis discusses many of the key elements to consider for successful and meaningful international field experiences.

Finally, my thanks to those who have contributed their manuscripts for our consideration.

Kim L. Creasy

It's More than Just Working with Students:

The Many Advantages of Field Experiences

*Donna M. Armstrong*

*University of Pittsburgh at Bradford*

Those who educate children well are more to be honored than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well.

Aristotle

A teacher's ability to touch the future is metaphorically woven through the very fabric of his or her being. Teachers bear upon their shoulders a responsibility to prepare the next generation of this nation's citizens. Through modeling and direct instruction, teachers provide children the cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral tools which enable them to become competent, caring, and contributing members of society. The lives that a teacher touches over the course of his or her career are many and the influence a teacher can have on his or her students is profound. Based on this knowledge and understanding of the important function of educators, the preparation of teachers is of utmost importance to our society as a whole (Ambe, 2006; Bruning, 2006; Darling-Hammond, & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, n.d.; Wise & Leibbrand, 2000).

There has been an enormous amount of public attention recently focused on teacher quality and preparation (Cochran-Smith, 2006). The general conclusion is that for there to be a change in K-12 students, there must be a change in those who teach

those students. An effort to increase teachers' proficiency and efficacy is a critical component in making necessary changes to the American education system (Bruning, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Therefore, a variety of reforms have been enacted to create more rigorous preparation programs for teacher candidates.

Colleges and universities have the ongoing challenge of assuring their programs of study provide the necessary components to generate well prepared teacher candidates. The creation and implementation of national and state level teaching standards provide a framework upon which teacher education departments can build their curriculum; however, it is the responsibility of higher education entities to interpret the standards and employ them in the creation and delivery of their programs.

Within this process of analyzing and applying the standards, there is an opportunity for great variance in interpretation. Therefore, the onus falls on individual education departments to further identify, through empirical research, characteristics of effective education programs and subsequently build their curriculum on the foundation of these best practices (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Comer & Maholmes, 1999; Dean, Lauer, & Urquhart, 2005; Scannell, n.d.). As this research is conducted, the component which most often is identified as characteristic of a good teacher education program is the need for early and numerous opportunities to practice teaching in field based experiences (Larson, 2005).

In one study of graduates of teacher education programs responses indicated three major recommendations for program improvement: a) more observation time in a wider variety of schools with a wider variety of students and experienced teachers, b) more time actually teaching, and c) closer supervision with more constructive feedback (Darling-

Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989). A notable complaint from teacher education graduates is the existence of a large gap between theory taught and actual classroom practice and utility of coursework. Furthermore, the lack of connection between theory and practice seems to increase after teacher candidates have spent some time in the classroom.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) indicated that many teacher education programs separate theory from application citing that in some places, "...teachers were taught to teach in lecture halls from texts and teachers who frequently had not themselves ever practiced what they were teaching" (p. 31). In addition, often students would complete their coursework before they began student teaching and there was seldom a connection made between what they were doing in their classrooms to what they had learned in their programs.

Jacobs (2001) argued that education programs should design their own curriculum after Vygotsky's scaffolding model by beginning with providing a firm, theoretical foundation and then offering opportunities for practicing teachers to put this theory to use in actual classrooms. It is imperative for effective teacher education programs to provide structured opportunities to practice particular strategies and use specific tools in the classroom setting.

Just like school students, teacher candidates learn by doing. They must be given opportunities to read and reflect, collaborate with other teacher candidates, and share their ideas and experiences. Learning of this kind enables teachers to build the bridge from theory to practice. Model teacher education programs allow teachers to learn about

teaching through practice by providing opportunities to participate in settings that create strong connections between theory and practice (Kent, 2005; Larson, 2005).

Scannell (n.d.) identified field experiences as a critical component in teacher education programs. Therefore, teacher education programs must provide frequent and positive opportunities for teacher candidates to practice teaching allowing them to build self-confidence and a sense of readiness which will ultimately result in a positive disposition about readiness. Jacobs (2001) suggested that opportunities to work with children in authentic surroundings begin in introductory education courses and continue throughout the program.

In effective programs, teacher educators use actual artifacts from the classroom, examples of student work, videotapes of classrooms in action, and case studies of teaching to help teacher candidates connect what they are learning in their courses to actual problems of practice in classrooms (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Through clinical practice, teacher candidates are given the opportunity to reveal what they actually know and demonstrate what they can do (Wise & Leibrand, 2000). An ongoing argument is made for the need for connection between theory and practice, and field experiences are the best way to ensure this occurs.

In addition to “hands on” practice with students, other qualities of effective teacher candidates, such as professionalism, can also be honed during field experiences. Professionalism refers to the dispositions that a teacher must possess in order to be successful in the classroom. It encompasses the areas of collaboration, continuing professional development, and resources. Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein (1999) discussed teaching professionalism in the following way:



Teaching dispositions are the orientations teachers develop to think and behave in professionally responsible ways- for example, to reflect on their teaching and its effectiveness and to strive for continual improvement; to respect and value the needs, experiences, and abilities of all learners and to strive to develop the talents of each to the greatest extent possible; to engage with learners in joint problem solving and exploration of ideas; to establish cooperative relationships with students, parents, and other teachers to keep abreast of professional ideas, and to engage in broader professional responsibilities. (p. 39)

#### Collaboration

Darling-Hammond (1999a) discussed how education reform not only addresses typical areas such as curriculum and instruction, diversity and assessment, but also how to work in a collegial manner with others. Teaching is not a career in which one can work in isolation. Interpersonal skills of communication and collaboration are integral components in the art of effective teaching. Teacher candidates must learn how to collaborate with other teachers, administrators, community support agencies, and families of students.

First, teacher candidates must acquire social skills in order to establish and maintain working relationships with their co-workers. Collaboration with fellow teachers and other educational professionals serves as an opportunity to share knowledge and suggestions as well as glean ideas from seasoned practitioners on best practices. Teacher education can provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to understand what it means

and what it feels like to be members of a group that shares common beliefs, goals and practices.

Ryan and Cooper (2007) emphasized how some teachers can develop an attitude of competition in which they strive to have the best lesson plans or be the most popular teacher. This can result in tension and angst in the workplace which is not conducive to a productive working environment for educators or learning atmosphere for students. Teacher education candidates need to consider their co-workers as sources of information based on years of experience.

Collaboration with families is imperative to the success of students. Comer and Maholmes (1999) specified the importance of building skills in teacher candidates to help increase and improve parental involvement. Parents, by nature, are the most knowledgeable of the preferences and practices of their children, thus they have much useful information to offer and should be viewed as partners in the educational process. Therefore, in addition to the opportunity to experience group membership, teacher education programs must provide teacher candidates with suggestions and techniques on how to work effectively with parents of students.

Ryan and Cooper (2007) indicated that there is sometimes an air of superiority that teachers emanate toward students' parents. This attitude is in complete contradiction to the spirit of cooperation and communication that is essential for a positive learning environment. Berry (2005) described the ability to communicate with parents among many qualities of good teachers as outlined by the public. Teacher candidates must learn how to work cooperatively with parents and consider themselves members of a team

working to provide a rewarding educational experience for the child. Where else can this practice occur except in the field?

### Continuing Professional Growth

Beginning teachers must also learn skills that will allow them to apply what they are learning, analyze what happens, and adjust their teaching methodology accordingly. Pre-service teachers need to engage in inquiry and reflection about learning, teaching, and curriculum (Bruning, 2006). Ryan and Cooper (2007) addressed the importance of being a reflective decision maker in planning, implementing, and evaluating decisions.

Teacher candidates hold firm beliefs about the teaching profession long before they enter the classroom and these persist throughout their teacher preparation and into their early years of teaching (Fajet et al., 2005). Therefore, the examination of pre-service teachers' perceptions about teaching is important for evaluation of teacher preparation programs. Such an evaluation can assist in aligning prospective teachers' previously held beliefs with the pedagogical practices that they will need to learn for their subsequent teaching careers.

Fajet et al. (2005) found that pre-service teachers' perceptions suggest that teacher education courses do little to alter the perceptions students develop during their 12 or 13 years of public school experiences. "It appears from the findings of this study that education majors underestimate the complexity of teaching. Our results demonstrated that they assign great importance to their personal characteristics and less importance to pedagogical training" (Fajet et al., 2005, p. 724). Teacher educators need to be aware of the research on student perceptions which shows that core beliefs tend not to change over time. With this knowledge in hand, teacher educators can take appropriate steps to

provide instruction and guidance to assist students in overcoming their preconceptions and perhaps even misconceptions of education.

Jacobs (2001) suggested that teacher preparation programs should strive to create good decision makers and to do that, teacher candidates must be given time to reflect on their experiences and how to put the knowledge they have acquired to use. Teacher candidates need to be taught how to analyze and reflect on their field practice, to assess the effects of their teaching, and to refine and improve their instruction. Teacher education candidates must be taught how to set clear goals and develop a sense of purpose so they can make sensible, consistent decisions about what to teach, when, and how.

Self-confidence also influences teacher satisfaction and feelings about their work. According to Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein (1999), teachers who lack confidence in their teaching skills or possess doubt about their abilities to help students learn have higher rates of absenteeism and attrition. This attitude could certainly affect how effective a teacher candidate can be. Teacher candidates must be provided with an education that leaves them feeling prepared as teachers so they are able to enter the field self-confident about their abilities.

### Resources

Proof of professionalism in the field of education comes in many forms. Another area of professional growth is knowledge of available resources. Ryan and Cooper (2007) described characteristics of effective teaching including the necessity of knowing what resources are available to help new teachers develop their instructional strategies.

These resources include such tools as videos, research materials, teaching journals, as well as human support in the form of co-workers, administrators and specialists.

Teacher candidates need to develop the skills of identifying useful resources and how to put those resources to use in their own classrooms (Bruning, 2006). Teacher education programs must help teacher candidates identify the role of resource agencies and instill in the candidates the understanding of how those agencies are an integral part of the educational arena. Darling-Hammond, Banks, Zumwalt, Gomez, Sherin, Griesorn et al. (2005) discussed the importance of the knowledge of resources:

Knowledge of the types of curriculum material and resources available at particular grade levels and for particular subject areas-and the ability to evaluate the utility of these for various purposes-is particularly useful to beginning teachers. Prospective teachers should be aware of major resources in the field and those that are in use locally, and know how to find additional resources and critically assess what is available. (p. 189)

Through well-planned and balanced field experiences, teacher candidates will be afforded the opportunity to work directly with teachers, administrators, parents, and other schools support services to identify types of resources available as well as the correct way to utilize these resources.

It is imperative that schools of education constantly monitor the expectations and responsibilities placed on classroom teachers, then subsequently examine their teacher education programs to assure the curriculum provided is designed to address those needs. Higher education educators must keep abreast of changing school climates and expectations placed on teachers. This will enable educators to alter education programs

resulting in the development of teacher candidates equipped with the knowledge and ability to adapt to these climates and become effective teachers.

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The Use of Individualized Growth Plans, Teaching Frameworks, and  
Cognitive Discussion in the Formative Development of Student Teachers

*Ann Gaudino*

*West Liberty University*

Abstract

Promoting formative development is crucial to the growth of student teachers. Formative development can be assisted through the use of individualized growth plans which include a process of self-assessment, goal setting, and feedback for each student teacher. A teaching framework is a helpful tool for the college supervisor and cooperating teacher to use with the student teacher in the goal setting process. Frameworks provide definitions of teaching elements at various levels of accomplishment and establish a common language for professional discussions about the student teacher's progress. Key to these discussions is the ability of the supervisor to serve as a leader of cognitive discussion.

## Introduction

Promoting formative development is crucial to the growth of teachers throughout the continuum of their careers. Formative development of teachers begins from the moment a student enters the teacher preparation program. This formative development is accomplished through coursework, collaborative discussions with colleagues and mentors, field experiences, and clinical practice. By the end of clinical practice, every student teacher should be capable of being a full-fledged teacher who is ready to enter the teaching profession. With this end goal in mind, the clinical practice experience, as well as the entire teacher preparation program, is constructed.

### The History of Formative Development

The importance of formative development in clinical practice began as part of the Master of Arts Teaching program under the direction of Morris Cogan at Harvard University in the early 1950s. It was called The Cycle of Supervision (Cogan, 1973). Cogan undertook the cycle with each master's degree student who was performing clinical practice. The Cycle of Supervision consisted of eight phases: Establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship; the supervisor planning the lesson with the teacher; the supervisor and teacher planning the strategy of observation; the supervisor observing the instruction; the teacher and supervisor analyzing the teaching process; the teacher and supervisor planning the strategy of the conference; the conference between the teacher and supervisor; and the teacher and supervisor planning to bring about change in the teacher's teaching based on the observation and conference. Cogan emphasized the importance of the supervisor's training in the process, the development of a collaborative, trusting relationship between the supervisor and teacher, and the open conversation

between the supervisor and teacher about the teacher's teaching and how to improve the teaching (Cogan, 1973).

At the time, Cogan's practice did not have widespread acceptance and use by others. However, it was a significant turning point in the field of education; for the first time, the value of formative development was formally recognized in the teaching profession. Since Cogan's work, many authors have written in support of the importance of formative development beginning during clinical practice and lasting for the entire career of the teacher. Chronologically, some of the major authors include: Goldhammer (1969), The National Education Association (1972), The National Council on Education (1983), INTASC (1986), NBPTS (1986), Glickman (1990), Glatthorn(1990), Danielson (1996; 2007), and Stronge (2002).

Goldhammer (1969) worked with Cogan at Harvard on the Cycle of Supervision. While he believed the cycle was a helpful process, he outlined that significant problems can occur at each stage. These problems include: The supervisor unnerves the teacher so badly before the class that the lesson suffers; hurried communication; miscommunication; projection; lack of accuracy in observation reporting; acting conspicuously in the classroom; misinterpretation of issues; lack of supervisor planning for conferences; input that is not helpful; and misjudging the benefits and limitations of goal setting. Goldhammer asserted that the key to preventing such mishaps is thorough training of the supervisor as well as the supervisor's dedication to using the process in the best possible way (Goldhammer, 1969).

Glatthorn's (1990) significant contribution to the clinical supervision process was to focus on the benefits of a self-reflection and collaborative reflection that would allow

each teacher to develop formatively. He believed that adult development is most successful when the adult is empowered to guide his or her own development. He suggested using clinical supervision plus several teacher directed professional development modules: The Self-Directed Mode (the teacher works independently on professional development); Cooperative Mode (teachers work together to give one another feedback on their professional practice); and Intensive Mode (the supervisor works intensely with a teacher to remediate a problem).

While almost all public schools systems had written evaluations by the 1970s, few included the clinical supervision model (Stemnock, 1969). However, nationally there was initiative to include some of the practices recommended by Cogan, Goldhammer, Glatthorn, and Glickman. National organizations began to advocate for a formative process that would engage teachers as participants in their evaluation process. Teachers also favored a formative process. A survey by the National Education Association at the time found that 93% of teachers favored the use of evaluation for the purpose of improving teacher performance (National Education Association [NEA], 1972). The push for teacher formative development was an important element of the school reform movement in the latter part of the twentieth century. *A Nation at Risk* (National Council on Excellence in Education, 1983) focused on the deficiencies in schools and school reform (Stronge, 2002). It was the first national effort to focus on teacher formative development as a means of improving teaching in all types of schools---public, private, and parochial. The Recommendations on Teaching included improving teacher salary and working conditions, establishing mentoring programs, and constructing means for teachers to develop and achieve professionally (NCEE, 1983).

In 1986, the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future explored ways of improving teacher preparation and professional development. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) were formed to enhance teacher assessment for initial licensing as well as for preparation and induction into the profession (Stronge & Tucker, 2003).

In 1986, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued its report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. It called for the establishment of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) to develop standards for the formative development and certification of highly skilled veteran teachers. Their propositions included that teachers think systematically about their practice, learn from their experience and participate as members of teach communities to have collaborative discussion about their professional practice (Stronge & Tucker, 2003).

In 2002, *Teacher of the Future* compiled by The American Association of School Personnel Administrators asserted that teacher formative development occurs throughout the continuum of the teacher's career. The AASPA states:

An effective teacher assessment/evaluation program does not stand alone. Rather, it is part of a continuing cycle of improvement that includes hiring, induction and staff development processes. These processes are inextricably entwined; when each part is successfully carried out, it should result in greater teacher knowledge and skills and improved students learning (p. 118).

From research, as well as practice, we learn that teachers move through several stages of development as they progress from student teacher to becoming a master teacher. For this

reason, formative development, supervision, and evaluation should be flexible enough to differentiate between teachers throughout their careers (AASPA, 2002).

### Individualized Growth Plans and Teaching Frameworks

Teaching frameworks and individualized growth plans are tools which university supervisors may use to differentiate goals and formative development for student teachers. Danielson (2007) asserts that the teaching framework contributes to the organization of the teacher preparation program, courses offered, and supervision of student teachers. By aligning coursework with the framework, university educators have the possibility of assurance that graduates are proficient in the areas of the framework. Student teachers use a framework both in their observations of experienced teachers and as a tool for receiving feedback about their own practice from supervisors. Establishing a framework for clinical practice can be accomplished through collaborative discussion with university supervisors and participating cooperative teachers. The discussion can help to determine what domains and elements should be included in the framework and how they should be defined at various levels of expertise. The experience of having this kind of conversation is, in itself, a valuable professional development activity as supervisors and cooperating teachers learn from one another through their exchange of ideas.

An Individualized Growth Plan (IGP) provides the opportunity for each student teacher to receive differentiated experience to develop formatively. A plan is constructed through cognitive discussion led by the university supervisor and including the cooperating teacher and student teacher. The plan outlines areas in which the student teacher will focus over a given time period. Goals may be very short term and address a

specific need or technical change that can be accomplished within weeks. Goals may also be more long term and address a specific need that requires more of an adaptive change that can occur over a longer period of time. The progress of each goal is carefully monitored and assessed in discussion and documentation led by the university supervisor and including the cooperating teacher and student teacher.

There are benefits of using the framework with the Individual Growth Plan. A framework provides a common language among educators about aspects of teaching and excellence. The university supervisor may lead discussion and goal setting with the student teacher based on the domains of teaching and levels of performance. Student teachers can read the performance level indicators for various levels and see what must be done to reach the next level. Furthermore, by focusing on elements in the framework, the conversation is inherently non-personal (Danielson, 2007).

If goals are constructed in alignment with a framework, the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and supervisor may utilize the framework to assess progress. If a goal has multiple components or does not fit comfortably within a framework, it is best to not to force or reconstruct a goal to force the fit. This is not helpful to the formative development of the student teacher. Rather, the university supervisor leads discussion with the student teacher and cooperating teacher to state the goal and construct their own framework for the goal showing levels of proficiency. By working together to create the goal and framework for the goal, the supervisor, cooperating teacher, and student teacher create a practical and useful tool. Through their conversation and work together, they each contribute and thus have “buy-in” to the process.

## Cognitive Discussion

Key to these conversations is the ability of the university supervisor to serve as a leader of cognitive discussion with the adult student teacher. This may be a new and different experience for many supervisors who, from their training and experience, developed expertise in guiding the growth of school-age children. In order to lead collaborative conversations with teachers about their professional practice, supervisors need training about how to work with teachers as adult learners (AASPA, 2002; Brandt, 1996; Costa & Garmston, 1993; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Knowles, 1980; Ribas, 2005).

Cognitive discussion is based on the tenets of cognitive-behavioral psychology. Cognitive-Behavioral Psychology focuses on leading discussion which modifies what people do and how they think (American Academy of Behavioral Psychology, 2009). Ultimately, the goal is for the individuals to be self-sufficient in utilizing self-reflection to modify their own behaviors.

Depending on preference, finance, and need for convenience, there are several ways to develop skills in leading cognitive discussion. One way, would be for a supervisor to locate a local cognitive-behavioral psychologist and study with that person about how to lead cognitive discussion. In essence, it amounts to taking private lessons to learn the skill of leading cognitive discussion (just as one might in learning any other skill---playing the piano, learning to ice skate, etc.). This psychologist could also be contracted to provide on-site professional development sessions for multiple supervisors. A third way to develop these skills is to study the work of Costa and Garmston (2002) on Cognitive Coaching.



Costa and Garmston have authored numerous books and articles on the art of Cognitive Coaching and are the founders of The Center for Cognitive Coaching which offers training in Cognitive Coaching ([www.cognitivecoaching.com](http://www.cognitivecoaching.com)). Costa and Garmston describe coaching as being symbolized by a stage coach: Like a stagecoach, a cognitive coach should help to convey a person from where she or he is to where she or he wants to be. The conveyance is accomplished through carefully constructed conversation led by the coach. The coach asks open, leading questions which cause the person to reflect on his/her professional practice. The discussion provides a set of strategy and way of thinking that invites the individual to shape or reshape his or her thinking in order to solve problems. It enables the individual to modify his or her capacity to modify him or her self. The coach is a mediator; one who figuratively stands between a person and his thinking to help him become more aware of his thoughts (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

### Conclusion

The formative development of teachers begins in the teacher preparation program and continues for the spectrum of their teaching career. Teaching frameworks and Individual Growth Plans are tools which university supervisors may use to assist with goal setting and goal assessment for student teachers. Together, these tools provide common language and definition of the elements of teaching, a timeline for accomplishment, and a differentiated model of formative development which meets the needs of each student teacher. Key to the implementation of these tools is the supervisor's ability to lead cognitive discussion which promotes the student teacher

developing the ability to self-reflect on his or her professional practice and, ultimately, improve his or her professional practice.

It is important that university supervisors receive training to develop their skills in leading cognitive discussion. This training may be provided by a cognitive-behavioral psychologist or through the study of Cognitive Coaching by Costa and Garmston (2002). Because the literature asserts that formative development of teachers should take place over the entire spectrum of a teacher's career, a larger implication is that there may be alignment in the formative development process between the university and school district settings. Working collaboratively, universities and school districts can both implement this process of continuous, differentiated, formative development using frameworks, individual growth plans, and cognitive beginning in the teacher preparation program and clinical practice through the professional hiring, induction, mentor, and teacher evaluation programs in the school district.

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## Junior Achievement as Field Experience in a General Methods Course

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### Abstract

A large southeastern university College of Education teamed with Junior Achievement to provide early field experiences for its education students in local school districts. Students were placed at grade level assignments, and Junior Achievement trained the participants, provided them with curricula, and paired them with K-12 teachers in local counties. Each pre-service student taught five or six Junior Achievement classes in their early field experience. The researchers administered a survey to the 176 teacher pre-service students after they completed their field experience. The surveys explored the Junior Achievement experience as it related to the content of the course: teaching methods, classroom management, issues of diversity, cooperative learning, and whole class instruction. Results suggested a strong fidelity between the Junior Achievement lessons and the topics of the general methods course. The implications of an alternative early field experience in which pre-service teacher candidates actually teach in a clinical setting are discussed.

## Introduction

Teacher education programs have long recognized the value of field experiences. Researchers have documented the benefits of early field experiences (Godt, Benelli, & Kline, 2000; Curtner-Smith, 1996; Denton, 1983). Field experiences have been used to increase the teacher candidates' understanding of cultural considerations related to effective teaching (Sleeter, 2001; Downey & Cobbs, 2007; Barton, 1999) and on extending content knowledge (Philipp, Ambrose, & Lamb, 2007; O'Neal, 2003; Liu, 2001; Varma & Hanuscin, 2008). There have been studies comparing the benefits of alternative field experiences to traditional field experiences (Hanuscin, Musikul, 2007; Metcalf, 1996). Field experience provide a real-life, clinical setting for pre-service teacher candidates to demonstrate pedagogical knowledge and skills. This study explores an alternative early field experience in which pre-service teacher candidates, as volunteer consultants, taught Junior Achievement curricula to elementary or middle school students as part of the an early field experience requirement in a general methods and classroom management course.

## Background of the Study

This study investigated the attitudes of pre-service teacher candidates toward an early field experience. Unlike many field experiences prior to student teaching, students actually taught five or six Junior Achievement lessons in the clinical setting. The teacher candidates were surveyed to understand the fidelity between Junior Achievement training, curricula and teaching and the content of the general methods course.

## Background on Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement (JA) is an international organization with regional affiliates that offers basic economic education to children. Since its founding in 1919 by Horace A. Moses, president of Strathmore Paper Company, Junior Achievement has contributed to the economic and business education of young people in over 3,300 communities in the world. According to Junior Achievement's website, 383,761 Junior Achievement volunteers teach 367,305 classes to 9,326,748 students a year (Junior Achievement, n.d.). Volunteer consultants are recruited from the local community and trained to teach a series of economic lessons at the elementary, middle grades, or high school levels. The program was so well received by schools in the Central Florida area that the organization reached out to a natural ally, a college of education, to recruit additional volunteers.

### History of the Junior Achievement/UCF Partnership

The University of Central Florida (UCF) is a metropolitan university serving over 50,000 students on one main and eleven regional campuses. Students enter the College of Education during their junior year to pursue one of 14 undergraduate degrees. Field experience is a major component of each degree with two 15-week student teaching experiences and several courses requiring volunteer hours in a school or educationally-related setting. The goal of the early field experience is to introduce the students to the actual practice of teaching while they study the theory of best practice in teaching. The Office of Clinical Experiences finds placements for 1,000 student teachers or interns as they are called, each semester. Fortunately, the county school systems that surround the university see pre-service teacher preparation as a joint opportunity and responsibility. Our students are welcomed into the pre-kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms and valued as

an important resource in the teaching and learning environment. However locating appropriate placements that address the objectives of each class and making these placements available to the students in multiple sections of each class could be a full time job. The Office of Clinical Experiences is not involved with these early field experience placements. In most classes the students are sent out with specific course guidelines and are expected to find their own placements. The pre-kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade schools closest to the university are swamped with requests, and the school personnel often complain about the amount of time they spend assisting these early field experience students.

When Junior Achievement approached the dean of the college to invite the college's participation in their successful Elementary School Program, the dean selected the general methods course, required of all initial certification teacher candidates, as the right match for this experience. The faculties for this class were thrilled when they realized that Junior Achievement would be matching each student with a classroom teacher, eager for the JA lessons. This general methods class exposes students to various instructional delivery techniques and the students practice these techniques in video-taped "microteaching" situations. JA provides a venue where the teacher candidates can use these newly acquired techniques in a real classroom setting. The JA staff prepares the teacher candidates to teach the well-planned lessons and they are given all of the materials and lesson plans necessary for the successful delivery of each lesson. These encounters also provide the experience for the teacher candidates to analyze and critique the various instructional delivery techniques that they practice in the general methods course.



The Junior Achievement Elementary School Program, which was introduced in 1992, spans kindergarten through sixth grade with the goal of showing young students the relevance of economic education in the workplace. Eventually JA added a middle grades program, the Economics of Staying in School, to offer content area majors experiences at the secondary level. This program comprises several activities that help students discover the importance of an education in their decision to enter the work force. Gradually, Junior Achievement placements in surrounding counties were added to broaden the range of opportunities for the UCF teacher candidates.

Now in its 15th year, the UCF/JA partnership has evolved into a mutually rewarding experience for both partners. The UCF/JA partners have found opportunities to learn and grow together through long-term planning and problem-solving sessions. Junior Achievement has established two annual scholarships for College of Education students, demonstrating their commitment to the university's mission. The UCF/JA partnership has expanded to other colleges and programs in the university including the College of Business, the Burnett Honors College, the Nicholson School of Communication and the LEAD Scholars Program.

#### Background of the General Methods Course

The state of Florida requires all teacher candidates to take a general methods course as part of their initial certification preparation. During the field experience for the general methods course at UCF students spend a minimum of fifteen hours over the course volunteering in an educational setting. This activity addresses a need in the community, supports the course objectives, involves a connection between the campus and the community, challenges students to be civically engaged, and involves structured

student reflection. Students spend time reflecting on their experiences through ongoing structured classroom discussions related to each course topic and a meta-reflective poster project. The early field experience efforts are the core of much of the learning in the course. The teacher candidate and the classroom teacher sign a contract detailing the types of experiences in which the UCF student might participate. Table 1 lists the types of direct and indirect experiences the students engage in.

Table 1

<b>Direct</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
Tutor	Grade papers
Teach a new or review lesson/activity	Assemble bulletin boards
Lead a cooperative group activity	Set up learning centers
Supervise learning center activities	Develop resource materials
Work with students who are behind/at risk	Collect curricular materials
Coach students as they read orally	Organize materials for lessons
Help student find resource material	Draft correspondence to families
Help supervise a field trip	Translate classroom materials, if able
Work with ESOL student/s	Give written feedback on assignments

Before the UCF/JA partnership began in 1994, teacher candidates spent most of their time in the role of observer, tutor, or classroom assistant. Rarely was the teacher candidate, as a first semester student in the College of Education, invited to teach the whole class at this level. They were learning about lesson planning and not in a position to prepare and present a unit of instruction. With JA providing lesson plans, the general methods class students now had the opportunity to teach—a tremendous boost to the course. The UCF/JA partnership was seen as a win-win opportunity for both partners. Junior Achievement had a steady supply of new volunteers each semester and they offered to locate the placements for the teacher candidates and arranged for the total 15-hour field experience to be completed in the Junior Achievement classroom. This saved

the teacher candidates from canvassing schools, looking for placements, and the carefully planned JA lessons were seen as an opportunity for the students to receive real “hands-on” teaching experience early in their programs of study.

## Literature

### *Literature about Field Experience in Relation to Methods Course*

*Studying Teacher Education: the Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education*, published in 2005, culminated a four-year study of the empirical evidence related to pre-service teacher education in the United States. This report focused on nine research syntheses, one being research on methods courses and field experiences (Clift & Brady, 2005). In summarizing earlier reviews of this literature, the authors explained that prior to 1975, the research on methods courses and field experience included mostly psychological studies. As the field of psychology shifted its attention from observable, measurable behaviors in the 1970s to cognitive studies, teacher educators became skeptical about this early research.

The authors detailed how Lanier & Little’s research review in *The Handbook of Research on Teaching* (1986) verified that teacher education curriculum was inconsistent and that there was little research directed at instruction within teacher education. The authors explained that in the first *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (1990), a strong case was made for a revival of the intellectual foundations of method.

The chapter on methods courses and field experiences in *Studying Teacher Education* recounted that in the second *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton, 1996) the chapters discussing general issues in teacher education did not discuss methods courses, but focused instead on the shift toward

standards-based curricula and teaching. However, the chapter on field and laboratory experiences (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996) bemoans the lack of research verifying that field experience truly prepares more reflective teachers than individuals prepared in more traditional, apprentice-type programs.

After reporting previous reviews, Clift and Brady shifted their focus to the research reported in referenced journals between 1995 and 2001 that addressed teacher education in the context of methods courses, early field experiences, and student teaching. They limited their research to data-based studies. They looked at each content area separately (English, mathematics, science, and social studies) and reported in summary that, “teacher education research within content areas has moved from a focus on generic teaching behavior to a focus on thinking about context. Within each area, beliefs about students, teaching and learning increasingly are investigated in relation to the instructional, interpersonal, social and historical factors that come into play as one begins teaching practice” (Clift & Brady, 2005, p. 325).

Most colleges of education expose teacher candidates to the “real world” of teaching through early field experiences that precede the capstone experience of student teaching. These early field experiences may be related to a general methods course where they can be critiqued and analyzed for their relationship to the content of the course. Curtner-Smith & Sofo (2004) studied the influence of a critically-oriented methods course and the early field experience on physical education teacher candidates. Their main conclusion was that the inward focus of the methods course and early field experience on the analysis of teaching had a considerable influence on the teacher candidates. However, the outward focus on curriculum studies and four permeating

themes of elitism, racism, classism, and sexism had virtually no impact on the teacher candidates. They blamed these vastly different effects of the two foci on the pedagogical development, a concern for survival of the teacher candidates at the time of the methods course and early field experience and suggested a thematic curriculum structure to improve secondary school education in general by making it more child-centered.

Investigators examined the impact of the timing of the field experience in a study of elementary education students enrolled in methods courses with associated early field experiences (Heath & Stange, 1995). The teacher candidates responded to an open-ended questionnaire to determine what knowledge and skills had been learned during the field experience. The researchers found differences based on when the field experience occurred in the teacher education program. The teacher candidates enrolled in methods courses were still developing the knowledge base for teaching, while teacher candidates closer to student teaching made comments directly linked to the delivery of classroom instruction in the field sites.

This study explores the relationship of the Junior Achievement experience to teaching methods, classroom management, issues of diversity, cooperative learning, and whole class instruction. The researchers hoped to learn if the Junior Achievement field experience was better than the traditional early field experience where the teacher candidates may only be observers.

#### *Evaluation of Literature on Junior Achievement Curriculum*

Literature is not available assessing Junior Achievement as an alternative early field experience in teacher preparation programs. While articles describing the Junior Achievement program are included in the literature, only one study has been reported on

the value of the Junior Achievement experience for the participants. Shortly after JA introduced the Elementary Education Program, researchers at the Western Institute for Research and Evaluation, working with Utah State University, conducted a three-tier (formative, summative, and longitudinal) study (Van Scotter, Dusen & Worthen, 1996) of this program. The formative study, conducted during the 1992-1993 school year, revealed that the teachers, principals, consultants, students, and parents surveyed valued the real-life applications of the program. The researchers reported that the K-6 program was appropriate for both genders, was successful in urban and suburban school settings, and suitable for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

During the summative study conducted during the 1993-1994 school year, objective tests of economic content were administered to 3,820 students in a control-group setting. K-6 students in JA schools were matched with students in schools not participating in the JA program. The differences in scores were “significantly statistically and educationally meaningful” (Van Scotter, et.al., p. 35).

When the longitudinal study (1993-1995) was initiated, alternative assessments were implemented. The authors reported that these assessments revealed that students had learned how to apply the concepts and skills gained in the Junior Achievement Elementary Education Program in new situations. Data from all three tiers of the study was used to improve the JA training, communication, and curriculum.

The focus of the present study shifted from the benefit gained by the K-12 students, who are the recipients of the JA lessons, to the volunteer teacher candidates, who deliver the lessons. This study focused on Junior Achievement as a required field experience for teacher candidates.

## Methods

### *Design and Research Question*

A cross-sectional survey design was used. The research question was: Do field experiences using the Junior Achievement curriculum promote fidelity to course topics in a general methods course?

### *Sampling Procedures*

From a junior-level course in classroom methods and management, six undergraduate classes provided a sample of 176 participants. This sample was a mixture of K-6 elementary majors, K-12 majors, and 6-12 secondary majors with a variety of content areas. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the participants were elementary education majors—with seventy-seven percent (77%) in a K-2 or 3-5 setting--and twenty-four percent (24%) of participants received placements at the middle or high school levels

Participants were administered the survey in the same week in the spring semester of 2007. At the time of administration, all students had received Junior Achievement training and completed the course-required field experience in local schools. Institutional Review Board protocol was followed.

### *Demographics*

Of the participants, seventy-three percent (73%) were 18-22 years of age with twenty-seven percent (27%) over age 23; eighty-five percent (85%) of participants were female. Participants were placed in field experience classrooms at both the elementary and secondary school levels: sixty-one percent (61%) of the participants were elementary education majors—with seventy-seven percent (77%) in a K-2 or 3-5 setting--and twenty-four percent (24%) of participants received placements at the middle or high

school levels. Field placements of the Junior Achievement trained participants were made in six local school districts. A majority (76%) of those placements were made in Orange County; 13% in Seminole County; 5% in Brevard County; and 2% each in Lake, Osceola, and Volusia Counties.

### *Instrumentation*

In designing the questionnaire, the researchers focused on several general areas of understanding to determine how well the JA training prepared student candidates to complete the field experience and the JA curriculum, and how the field experience, using the Junior Achievement lesson protocol, has addressed direct and indirect methodologies, classroom management topics, and interaction with diverse students. Using cross-sectional survey techniques, the questionnaire used both closed-end and open-end questions. Response options on closed-end questions were mutually exclusive.

### *Questionnaire*

The survey questions were divided into two parts, each addressing specific questions from the two areas of interest: addressing Junior Achievement as a field experience and addressing the field experience as it related to the general methods course (See Appendix).

Along with the survey questions, participants had the opportunity to make comments regarding ways in which the Junior Achievement format of their field experience addressed the topics of the course.

### *Limitations*

There are several limitations to this study. First, the ability to generalize the results may be limited due to restricting the participant group to one university. Second,



the questionnaire was piloted in the year prior to the study. Therefore, more reliability and validity data may be necessary.

## Results

The researchers asked participants to answer questions addressing two main areas of focus. The first focus involved questions about the Junior Achievement training and teaching in their field experience. The second focus centered on questions relating the Junior Achievement field experience to the topics of the course. Results are shown in the following tables. Tables 2-4 refer to the participants' attitudes toward Junior Achievement curriculum and pedagogy. Table 5 refers to participants' attitudes toward Junior Achievement field experience as they relate to the goals of the general methods course in which they were enrolled.

Table 2. Participants' attitudes toward Junior Achievement Training or lesson format in the field experience. JA= Junior Achievement

Questions 2, 8	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
JA training was sufficient to prepare JA lessons N=176	12%	14%	74%
Participant would volunteer in another JA lesson out of class N=176	Disagree 21%	Neutral 10%	Agree 69%

Table 3. Participant comments about changing Junior Achievement experiences.

Question 9	Lesson Plans	Communication with Field Experience Teacher	No changes	Field experience around state testing time
Participant would change one component about the JA experience. N=77	55%	28%	11%	6%

Table 4. Participant comments about the most enjoyable aspect of Junior Achievement field experience.

Question 10	Teaching	Teacher	Lesson Plans
Participant found this aspect most enjoyable about JA. N=77	56%	22%	22%

Table 5. Participants' attitudes toward Junior Achievement Training experience as they related to the course content.

Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Participant believes that JA field experience increased awareness of teaching strategies N=176	6%	8%	86%
Participant believes that JA field experience increased awareness of classroom management N=176	5%	6%	89%
Participant believes that JA field experience increased awareness of small group interactions N=176	6%	10%	84%
Participant believes that JA field experience increased awareness of whole group interactions N=176	2%	8%	90%
Participant believes that JA field experience increased awareness of diversity in the classroom N=176	13%	13%	74%
Participant believes that JA field experience was beneficial N=176	5%	6%	89%

## Discussion

Results of this study suggest that Junior Achievement curricula and teaching in an early field experience positively related to the content of the general methods in which pre-service students were enrolled. The data suggest there is strong fidelity to course

topics from the JA field experience: eighty-six percent of participants (86%) felt that the experience led to a better understanding of teaching strategies, in general; eighty-nine percent (89%) felt that the field experience led to an awareness of classroom management techniques; eighty-four percent (84%) felt that the field experience helped them to understand small group interactions; ninety-percent (90%) felt similarly about whole group interactions in the classroom; seventy-four percent (74%) felt the experience increased their awareness of diversity in the classroom; and last, eighty-nine percent (89%) felt that the field experience was beneficial to them.

A majority (74%) of participants felt sufficiently trained to go into local classrooms and teach the five lessons for which Junior Achievement had trained them and provided materials. Though some participants provided suggestions for changing the Junior Achievement experience (including the curriculum, the communication with the field experience teacher, or the timing of the field experience, n=77), it was surprising to find that sixty-nine percent (69%) of participants would, independent of the course requirements, continue to volunteer as a Junior Achievement teacher in local schools. Possibly, this call to service may be a result of an emphasis on service learning in Florida's high school requirements and of the College of Education's focus on service learning.

### Conclusions

Making meaningful connections between schools of education and the schools they serve has been a concern for teacher educators (Levine, 2006). Recently, clinical experiences that promote university/school partnerships have been heralded as a positive step in teacher education (Zeichner, 2007a). Both of these trends in teacher education are

addressed in the partnership that the University of Central Florida's College of Education created with Junior Achievement. Students in the general methods course addressed course topics by teaching lessons in partner school classrooms much earlier in their program than in traditional student teaching or intern clinical experiences. Further, the partnership with Junior Achievement provided a working model for colleges of education and outside agencies working together to improve the clinical experience of education students.

The findings of this study suggest that the experiences, encountered while participating in Junior Achievement as part of an early field experience required in a general methods class, had a strong fidelity to the content of the course. The power of being placed in the role of teacher, rather than observer, allowed the teacher candidates to gain an awareness of teaching methods, classroom management, issues of diversity, cooperative learning, and whole class instruction. The field experiences of Junior Achievement are unique in that they provide students a more engaging experience than traditional pre-student teaching clinical experiences. This early field experience addressed the teacher candidate students' needs to experience valuable field experiences earlier than traditional student teaching. Actually teaching to students early in the teacher candidates' course of study clearly provided a more enriched field experience than traditional field experiences, in which pre-service teacher candidates do not have opportunities to teach.

More research aimed at comparing this alternative curriculum and pedagogy to the traditional early field experience is worth consideration.

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Appendix

**Junior Achievement Survey  
Spring 2008**

Instructions: Using the following scale, please rate the level of your belief about each of the following statements. Please use whole numbers only and write your score for each belief in the space provided next to each number. Feel free to make comments about any of your answers.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that it was beneficial to me to participate in the Junior Achievement program as a requirement for EDG 4410.  
Comments:
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that the training I received from Junior Achievement was sufficient to prepare me to teach the Junior Achievement lessons.  
Comments:
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that teaching the Junior Achievement lessons has increased my awareness of teaching strategies.  
Comments:
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that teaching the Junior Achievement lessons has provided me with the opportunity to practice classroom management strategies.  
Comments:
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that I have a better understanding of how to work with a diverse student population as a result of my Junior Achievement experience.  
Comments:
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that I have a better understanding of how to implement small group experiences as a result of my Junior Achievement experience.  
Comments:
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that I have a better understanding of how to implement whole class instruction as a result of my Junior Achievement experience.  
Comments:

8. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that if I had the time I would volunteer to participate in another Junior Achievement experience in the future.

Comments:

Instructions: For each of the following questions please write your answer on the lines provided. Feel free to use the back of the paper if needed.

9. If you could change one thing about your Junior Achievement experience what would it be?

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10. Please describe the best thing about your Junior Achievement experience.

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### Demographic Information

Major \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ College \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender \_\_\_\_\_ EDG 4410 Section 02

Grade level of Junior Achievement placement \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time. We believe your feedback will help us improve the quality of the Junior Achievement experiences in Teaching Strategies and Classroom Management, EDG 4410.

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## A Dozen Do's for Planning International Field Experiences

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### Introduction

International travel and international field experiences are things that can truly change a student's perspective about people and about learning. These types of experiences have the potential to raise awareness of issues related to instruction and learning, diversity, poverty, and culture like no other learning experiences in the typical teacher preparation program. Students grow from the understandings of similarities and differences between their own lives and the lives of those in communities in international locations.

There are a large number of things to consider in establishing field experiences in international locations. As organizers of international field experiences on five continents and over ten countries, the authors would like to share what is believed to be twelve effective keys to the initiation and planning for international field experiences. These keys include:

1. Budget
2. Cultural Awareness
3. Continuity of Program
4. Logistics of International Living
5. Planning for Travel
6. Goals for the International Field Experience
7. Cultural Exposure
8. Program Assessment
9. Pre-visit to Field Experience Site
10. Program Leader and Student Commitment
11. Relationships
12. Communication

Although some of the keys may be similar in nature. They are seen as being unique facets of planning for effective international field experiences. The intent of identifying and discussing these keys is to help others in establishing effective field experiences in diverse international settings.

### Budget

Developing a realistic budget for the students and the program must be given careful consideration. The program can not be so expensive that students are not able to participate in the international experience due to cost; nor can the estimate be haphazardly developed to cause a program deficit.

There are nine general areas to consider when developing a program budget. These areas include tuition/books, accommodations, food, transportation, planned group activities, program leader expenses, miscellaneous to include such items as gifts or honorariums, conversion of currency, and a contingency fund for emergencies.

Many of these areas are standard expenses, such as tuition, books, and program leader expenses. However, special consideration must be given to accommodations, food, conversion rates of currency, and contingency funds. When developing an estimate for accommodations, decisions must be made regarding the type of accommodations. Will the students be staying in homes, hotels or residence halls? Are food costs to be included in the cost of the accommodations? Will the program fees cover the cost of food? Or will the individual program participants cover their own food costs?

When traveling overseas with a group of students other budget considerations must include the conversion rate of currency and a contingency fund. The exchange rate between the US dollar and a foreign currency changes on a daily basis. An excellent

website to monitor and calculate the exchange rate is [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com). A contingency fund of five percent of the total cost should be included in the program budget. This will allow for unseen expenses to include First Aid materials, lost or stolen wallets/purses, or the need to send someone home early.

One additional thought is when working with a group of ten or more students is to always consider the possibility of negotiating a group rate for hotel rooms, tickets for group activities, or plane fare. Using a travel agent in these situations can be extremely helpful.

### Cultural Awareness

If an individual or a group of program participants are unaware of customs, language nuances, national or local politics, or certain historical facts of a foreign country they are visiting, they could unintentionally offend a person, host teacher, or host family members. These unintentional errors or offenses could jeopardize a relationship or create problems throughout the length of the experience. There should be a meeting with the travel group prior to departing for the foreign country. This meeting should be devoted to discussions on customs, language and word usage, national and local politics, economics, educational philosophy, religion and history as it compares to the United States. This discussion must provide the students with a perspective for both the country they are studying and the United States. Most US citizens are very egocentric regarding national and international topics. These US citizens have no idea what opinions that individuals in other countries have about the United States. Often, students are quite surprised when they learn that many foreign countries may not hold the United States in high regard on certain topics. Program leaders must continually impress upon the students that they are

guests in a foreign country and these students must be educated to the customs and cultures of their hosts.

### Continuity of Program

When looking to establish international field experiences, it is a necessity that there be continuity and parity for both “normal” field experiences and those completed in an international setting. A program leader should look for schools and settings that allow students to complete the same tasks and assignments in the international setting as in the “normal” or typical setting found in the US. If students in a pre-student teaching field experience are expected to teach three or four lessons in the field experience, then the program leader must ensure that the students are completing similar tasks and experiences in the international setting. Remember, although the students are in an international setting, they are still expected to complete the same basic program and experiences as all students in the approved university program.

### Logistics of International Living

Most international field experiences for teacher education programs are three to sixteen weeks in length. The logistics for everyday chores and requirements for living in a foreign country can be overwhelming if no prior planning has occurred for addressing individual personal needs. These everyday logistics include accommodations, food, transportation, phones, computers, laundry services, and emergency contacts.

Even though the accommodations are pre-arranged, there will be certain expectations of the program leader, host families, students, residence hall managers, and even the hotel management. These expectations must be clearly defined and discussed prior to or immediately after arrival at the international field experience site. It is true

these students are above the age-of-majority. However, there is an expectation of respect for others, safety, knowledge of emergency procedures, communication, and university policy that must be adhered to throughout the field experience by all participants. When appropriate, it is prudent to provide these expectations to the students in writing and lead a group discussion stating the importance of the program expectations.

Transportation between the accommodations and the field experience site can be a cause of frustration to students, especially if they have little or no experience of traveling in a large metropolitan city and using a public transportation system. Purchasing monthly passes for the public transportation system and providing maps will provide an excellent resource for students. It may be wise to ride the bus, train, or subway system a few times as a group or in small groups to familiarize individuals of how the public transportation system works.

Cell phones and internet connections are required for the “survival” of students in today’s instant communication culture. Cell phones constructed in the United States will not function outside North America. Therefore, someone will need to research the cost of an inexpensive cell phone in the host country to which the group is traveling. Be sure to get a SIMS card in the cell phone that can be used in the host country and have the capability to call back to the United States. Lastly, research the requirements for internet connections for laptops, locations of internet cafes, and the need for electrical adaptors for all electronic devices that students may bring on the international experience. The pre-trip research of inexpensive cell phones and internet connections for laptops will be well worth the time spent in reducing the frustration levels of leaders and students alike.

## Planning to Travel

Obviously, one of the basic needs of the international program is the preparation for travel. The preparation includes investigation of the process of applying for a passport, applying for a visa for the country where you will be traveling, and of course making arrangements for travel to your destination. To arrange for a passport you should visit the US Government site for international travel (<http://travel.state.gov/>). This informative website will provide the necessary information on how to obtain a passport, and which countries require visas, and the documents you will need while traveling.

At Central Michigan University the Office of International Education (<http://www.oie.cmich.edu/>) and the Travel Clinic provide excellent support to both the program leader and the students. The Office of International Education provides a great many resources for international student travel, and the Travel Clinic organizes student inoculations and medication for the international sites. The authors suggest that in planning for an international field experience, that a program leader first check with their own institution and determine what resources are available for planning and preparation for international travel.

Although fairly independent when traveling, the authors recommend the use of a travel agent to help organize travel, transportation, and needed student documentation. The travel agent can serve as a great assistant to the program leader and/or faculty when it comes to monitoring student travel plans, and organizing excursions.

## Goals for the International Field Experience

When developing an international field experience for teacher education students, one should ask why consider an international experience for future teachers? Before a

program leader can respond to questions of “why,” specific program goals for teacher education students participating in an international field experience should be clearly stated. Program goals should include comparisons of pedagogy of various educational institutions and behaviors of many students in different educational settings. These comparisons provide teacher education students with opportunities to observe, experience, and consider various teaching methods, classroom environments, student behaviors, classroom management plans, and numerous curricula.

Additional program goals include exposing future teachers to diverse student populations/learning environments and various global perspectives. All teacher candidates should have diverse experiences with students and parents during their field experiences. These future teachers must also be aware of the individual and cultural global perspectives of others toward the United States. The goals of diverse field experience with a global or international perspective will provide training opportunities to better prepare future teachers.

### Cultural Exposure

A key to successful international field experience is the immersion in the local culture. Several specific conditions contribute to students building awareness of culture. First, the authors are firm believers in organizing home-stay placements with local families for the field experience students. The search for acceptable home-stays can be a time consuming activity. However, it allows students to experience culture in a continuous and personal manner. As a part of a family the students are often invited, or included, in events that they would not normally have access to. For the planning of home-stays it is suggested that a local partner with community ties, such as a Chamber of

Commerce or other community organization, be engaged to help plan and assist with making the home-stay placements.

Second, if home-stays are not possible, hotel or residence hall accommodations can be effective. However, keep in mind that most students have lived in a residence hall and have developed habits that fit their personality. When planning for international field experiences, be sure that students are thrust into community life in some manner. This might include group outings to the market. It might include trips to local parks or festivals. Or it might include informal outings to local attractions. The key is to get students out and into the community to experience the culture.

Third, as a part of the pre-visit, be sure to establish meaningful field trips. For example, in Ghana the Central Michigan University students participate in an African rain forest canopy walk to see life in a rain forest and learn about African perspectives on animals and the rain forest. While in Oaxaca, CMU students participate in the festival at the Zokolo (village square) with music, dancing, good food, and entertainment. These are very different experiences, yet both experiences provide students with a perspective about the culture and the local community in the international setting.

### Program Assessment

The assessment of the international field experience near the conclusion of the program should focus on two major areas. First, the assessment should measure the effectiveness in attaining program goals. This assessment must focus on the students' change in attitude toward concepts such as diversity in the classroom, cultural awareness, and global perspectives. This possible change in attitude over time due to the international field experience of the participants could be measured with a current



assessment instrument, such as the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory, or an assessment instrument could be devised to survey the participants in a more focused manner. Obviously, the survey would be presented to the participants in the field experience in a pre- and post-test situation to best determine the change in attitude toward diversity in the classroom, cultural awareness, and global perspectives.

The structure of the program must also be assessed in a manner as to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the planned international field experience. This program assessment should elicit feedback from the university students participating in the program, as well as, the host teachers through confidential surveys. These surveys should be developed prior to the start of the field experience and, if possible, distributed near the conclusion of the field experience by a neutral party. The program survey should focus on the quality of accommodations, group activities, program costs, and field placements. In addition, the student participants should be given the opportunity to evaluate the program leader on teaching ability, knowledge of material, communication skills, supervision, leadership skills, and overall effectiveness. This program feedback, if used appropriately, would provide valuable information for improving future international field experiences.

#### Pre-visit to the Field Experience Site

One of the authors' strongest recommendations is that as the program leader, a pre-visit should be planned to preview and investigate the site prior to taking students. There is strong rationale for a pre-visit. First, the program leader needs to understand what will be the student field experience environment, where the location of the work site will be, and who will be the host instructors for the students. If the program leader establishes a pre-

visit to the international site, then housing, food service, transportation, needed documents, educational experiences in classrooms and non-formal settings, and field trips for the students can be verified. The pre-visit is an added program expense, however, it is well worth the cost, and will help to ensure a productive and enjoyable international experience.

### Program Leader and Student Commitment

A program leader must keep in mind that when the group is actively engaged in the international field experience, it is not like a normal day. The leader may have many extra duties, including professional development commitments for the host schools, entertaining the faculty in the host schools, and monitoring student progress in the field. It is a very large time commitment for the program leader, and one that should not be taken lightly.

In addition, there is a lengthy preparation time for the students participating in the field experience. Students most likely will have individual as well as group activities in which to participate while involved in their international field experience. The students need to understand the program schedule you develop and the need to maintain a professional attitude toward meeting their individual and group responsibilities.

### Relationships

Another key aspect for planning effective international field experiences is the development of relationships. In almost every case, it is the positive relationship built by faculty and staff with individuals in the international site that creates an effective and meaningful learning experience for students. In many cases the program leader will be

relying on these relationships for guidance for effective lodging and travel, food, emergency services, and many other items.

In addition, it is these relationships that help students to break down barriers and stereotypes of cultures. By connecting, at a personal level, with host families, teachers, students, and many other individuals, field experience students begin to learn and change their perspectives, and develop a global perspective and understanding.

### Communication

A successful international field experience is dependent upon various methods of timely communication with students in the program. The communication with students can be divided into three general areas. These areas include recruiting, planning, and participation of students within the program. Recruiting involves locating and motivating students to register for the courses or program. The recruiting involves communicating through numerous marketing strategies geared toward having students apply to the program. These strategies include development of a colorful brochure designed to be distributed to prospective students that would be interested in studying and traveling abroad. These brochures could be distributed in teacher education courses on campus, emailed to student via a list serve, and offered to students during a reception for students focused on international opportunities. In addition to the brochure, a website should be developed to describe the international field study opportunity. The website should be attached to the departmental website with appropriate pictures for everyone to take notice of the posted material. This website would contain program information such as dates, costs, expectations, possible group activities, application material, and various pictures of past students involved in the program.

During the planning stage communication to the students should focus on group meetings that detail preparation for travel, coursework information, and notes to individual students regarding their field placements, and accommodations. As the date for departure nears, the use of email becomes extremely important in sharing last-minute information with the students.

The participation stage of communication requires early, focused face-to-face discussions with the full group. This group meeting should be organized to discuss any issues or frustrations the students have encountered early in the program. This face-to-face open discuss with the full group increases the opportunity to communicate in a concise, consistent manner, with little room for misunderstandings. The students should have access to the program leader's email address and cell phone number at all times. This should help alleviate issues quickly and not allow problems to fester.

Good communication builds a strong program, allows for excellent organization of the program, and helps to address problems or issues in an efficient manner.

### Conclusion

The dozen "do's" for planning an effective international field experience are concepts that have proven to be useful in many field experiences that these authors have planned and supervised in recent years. These concepts can be applied to a variety of international field experiences, including two-week pre-student teaching experiences, eight-week student teaching opportunities, and sixteen-week student teaching internships. No two international field experiences are designed in the same manner and may not have similar program goals. In addition, the faculty and students of various teacher education programs will have different characteristics and each foreign country visited will have its

own uniqueness. However, using the dozen “do’s” for planning international experiences will increase the probability of creating a successful international field experience for future teachers to be better prepared for teaching students in culturally diverse settings.

## Resources

Office of International Education at Central Michigan University. Taken from the internet at <http://www.oie.cmich.edu/> on June 10, 2009.

Travel Health Clinic at Central Michigan University. Taken from the internet at [www.cmich.edu/University\\_Health\\_Services/Immunization\\_Clinic.htm](http://www.cmich.edu/University_Health_Services/Immunization_Clinic.htm) on June 22, 2009.

US Department of State. Bureau of Consular Affairs. Taken from the internet at <http://travel.state.gov/> on June 23, 2009.

Universal Currency Converter. XE.com. Taken from the internet at [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) on June 13, 2009.

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