Excelsior
Leadership in Teaching and Learning
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COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Call for Manuscripts

*Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning* provides a forum to explore issues related to teaching and learning at public and independent colleges and universities with programs in teacher preparation. *Excelsior* solicits original, thought-provoking manuscripts of various formats, including papers presenting research on issues and practices important to teacher education and in-depth discussions of perspectives on issues and practices that contribute to the preparation and professional development of educators. A third format—Nota Bene—contains brief, focused articles; book reviews; website or technology recommendations; and a What Are You Reading? feature.

**Deadlines for submission:**
- June 1 for the fall/winter edition
- December 1 for the spring/summer edition

See also projected deadlines for two upcoming **Special Topic Issues.**

**Manuscript Preparation and Submission**

To submit a manuscript to be considered for review

- Send an electronic file compatible with Microsoft Word as an e-mail attachment to the editor, Cynthia Lassonde, at Lassonc@oneonta.edu.
- Manuscripts must follow APA style as outlined in the most recent edition of the APA style manual.
- Research and Perspectives manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages, including references. Nota Bene manuscripts should not exceed 5 pages, including references.
- Include a 100-word abstract for Research and Perspectives manuscripts.
- The cover page should consist of the title of the manuscript, a suggested running head, as well as the authors’ names, affiliations, addresses, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers.
- Omit headers and footers except for page numbers.
- Omit all identifiers of the authors and affiliations from the manuscript. Be sure computer software does not reveal author’s identity as well.
- Secure all permissions to quote copyrighted text or use graphics and/or figures of other non-original material. Include permissions with manuscript.
- Data-based manuscripts involving human subjects should be submitted with a statement or verification from the author that an Institutional Review Board certificate or letter approving the research and guaranteeing protection of human subjects has been obtained from the researcher’s institution.

Manuscripts will be subject to a blind review by peer reviewers and the editor. The review process will take approximately three months from time of submission.

All manuscripts will be judged on their scholarship, contribution to the knowledge base, timeliness of topic, creative/thoughtful approach, clarity and cohesiveness, appropriateness to category, and adherence to preparation guidelines. Selections may also be affected by editorial decisions regarding the overall content of a particular edition.
CALL FOR NOTA BENE’S NEW FEATURE:
WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Send us a short description of the professional book you are currently or have recently read. Tell us, what are you reading and what do you think of it? Would you recommend it to other teacher educators? Why? How has it informed your practice, your research, or yourself as a teacher educator?

See examples of this feature in this issue.

Brief, focused articles; book reviews; or website or technology recommendations are also requested for this section.

Deadlines for submission:
June 1 for the fall/winter edition
December 1 for the spring/summer edition

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS FOR SPECIAL TOPIC ISSUES

Deadline December 1, 2009
Special Topic Issue on
Enhancing Student Learning Through Meaningful Collaboration

This NYSATE/NYACTE Conference Issue will explore the many faces of collaboration in teacher education. What does collaboration look like at your university? What types of community partnerships have been developed in your area? How do students and professors or colleagues work together to improve instruction and student learning? Collaboration through self-study is also welcome. Share what you are doing so others may learn from your experiences, trials, errors, and successes. We are looking for innovative approaches that seek to meet students’ needs.

Deadline June 1, 2010
Special Topic Issue on
Teacher Preparation for Special Education and Inclusion

With guest Associate Editors
Patrice W. Hallock, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor of Education at Utica College in Utica, New York, and
Alicja Rieger, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Education at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia

Topics may include (but are not limited to):
• inclusive practices;
• educational policy;
• attitudes and values related to special education and individuals with disabilities;
• pervasive disabilities;
• categorical issues such as learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disabilities,
• speech/language disabilities, autism, etc.;
• culture and disability; working with families;
• disability-related humor; humor in inclusive classrooms and communities;
• leisure and recreational activities for individuals with disabilities;
• evidence-based practices;
• use of children’s literature to promote disability awareness;
• use of culturally diverse children’s literature to promote culturally (including ability differences) responsive classrooms and communities;
• Response to Intervention; academic intervention services;
• diagnosis and identification of students for special education services;
• assessment and the issue of fairness in grading students with special needs;
• alternative assessment;
• assistive technology and use of educational technology in classrooms;
• Universal Design;
• distance education and teacher preparation programs;
• systems change;
• action research in inclusive classrooms;
• co-teaching in inclusive classrooms;
• cross-cultural research related to special education;
• transition;
• promoting self-determination and self-advocacy skills among individuals with disabilities;
• employment;
• IDEA and/or NCLB as they relate to the education of students with disabilities;
• future of special education.

Manuscript content that reflects research and models best practice is encouraged. All manuscripts must use people-first language.
New York State Association of Teacher Education

and

New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

invite you to participate in our

NYSATE & NYACTE Annual Conference

Please note that this will be the ONE AND ONLY
NYSATE/NYACTE conference for the 2009-2010 academic year.
There will be NO Spring 2010 conference.

Our Theme is

AN INCLUSIVE VISION FOR TEACHER EDUCATION:
EXPLORING ISSUES OF ENGAGEMENT

October 22 - 23, 2009

Preconference Event
October 21, 2009

Gideon Putnam Resort and Spa
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(www.gideonputnam.com)

Visit www.NYACTE.org and www.NYS-ATE.org
for more information.
Message from the President
Call for Nominees for NYACTE’s Annual

CHARLES C. MACKEY, JR.
EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE LEADERSHIP AWARD

Complete nominations must be postmarked by July 1, 2010.

The Charles C. Mackey, Jr. Excellence in Service Leadership Award honors an educator in New York State who has demonstrated personal and professional qualities that exemplify the highest standards of service leadership in teacher education. An excellent servant leader is one who through personal knowledge, wisdom, ethical practice, and courage models effective practice and thus enables others to reach individual, institutional, and communal goals.

The Charles C. Mackey, Jr. Excellence in Service Leadership Award recognizes an individual who represents Teacher Education in his/her respective institution of higher education in New York State. The individual exemplifies service leadership within his/her institutional setting and within the broader New York professional community through engagement, initiative and personal qualities that reflect relevant High Standards for Teacher Education Accountability as defined by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education:

1. Serve first and foremost as an advocate for P-12 students, especially for promoting the growth and development of all students;
2. Promote diversity in teacher education faculty, preservice teachers, curriculum, and programs;
3. Be accountable to prospective teachers for their preparation to meet state licensure expectations (including knowledge of subject matter and of the students to whom those subjects are taught);
4. Be informed by the best practice and most current research on teaching and learning theory and practice, including the commitment to active scholarship by teacher education faculty;
5. Operate in collaboration with professional agencies responsible for quality assurance in the teaching profession.

Past recipients of the award:
Charles C. Mackey, Jr., Doris T. Garner,
James Shuman, Linda Beimer,
Jan McDonald, Suzanne Miller, and Joseph Frye

For more information on requirements and to access the nomination form, go to www.NYACTE.org or contact David Arneson at learneson@earthlink.net.
Notes from the Editor

Ahhh! Summer break. For many of us it is time to catch up with our professional reading and writing, to wrap up projects, and to think about new ventures. I use my summers to do all three but admit to sometimes doing it while sitting in my backyard with my feet up and an iced tea at my side. This summer as I was thinking about what I wanted to read, I said to myself, Wouldn’t it be great to know what other teacher educators are reading to enhance their professional development this summer? What are the latest and greatest titles? So, I thought about adding a new feature to the journal where colleagues could share good reads. When I brought this idea to our National Editorial Board, they responded with full support and sent the contributions published in this issue. The result is a brand-new feature we’re calling “What Are You Reading?” that includes informal book recommendations from teacher educators. We’d like to make this a recurring feature. We invite you to send a brief description of what you are reading. See the Calls section in this issue for more information and deadlines. We hope you contribute to this feature regularly as you find interesting books that you think others should read. Also, invite your colleagues to tell us what they’re reading, too.

With this Fall/Winter 2009 issue, we include a new edition of the “Update from the New York State Education Department” written by the State’s Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education, P-16, Johanna Duncan-Poitier. We received positive feedback from many members about the premiere of this feature in our last issue. Look for this section in future issues as we continue to provide you with updates from State Ed.

Besides our new call for “What Are You Reading?” contributions, we are offering two Calls for Manuscripts. We are excited to be working on a conference issue that highlights articles on meaningful collaboration. Following that issue, we are thrilled to announce the addition of two guest associate editors, Patrice W. Hallock, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education at Utica College in Utica, New York, and Alicja Rieger, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Education at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, who will help, with their expertise, produce a themed issue on teacher preparation in special education and inclusion. See the Calls in this issue.

This issue begins with an article by David Arneson about the latest recipient of NYACTE’s 2008 Charles C. Mackey, Jr. Excellence in Service Leadership Award, Joseph P. Frey, Associate Commissioner, New York State Education Department. Congratulations, Joe! Then we offer several reports of research: Instruction to Understanding: The Emotional Underpinnings of New Teachers’ Professional Development (Schlosser and Balzano), Refining Models of Algebraic Generalization among Elementary Preservice Teachers (Hallagan, Rule, and Carlson), Voices from the Field: Teacher Candidates Struggle to “Read” Literacy Strategies for Teaching Adolescent Literacy (Giouroukakis), Health teacher candidate Dispositions: Presenting a Method of Assessment (Balog and Banerjee), and “This Camp Is So Fun. It’s Like Going to the Movies!”: Teachers’ Practices and Transformations in Students’ Affective Dimensions toward Literacy (Richards and Bennett). We end the issue with our “What Are You Reading” feature followed by book reviews by Karen Stearns and Annette Digby.

By the time you read this issue, we’ll be in the swing of the fall semester (perhaps a bit late to be thinking about summer reading). Those of us at NYACTE wish you a wonderful new academic year. We sincerely hope the articles in this issue will in some way benefit your professional development and your candidates’ learning.

Cynthia A. Lassonde, Editor
Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning

A forum for research-based discourse to inform the preparation and professional development of educators

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Joseph P. Frey, 2008 Recipient of the Charles C. Mackey, Jr. Excellence in Service Leadership Award

David Arneson
New York Institute of Technology

Joseph P. Frey

Joseph P. Frey, Associate Commissioner, New York State Education Department, was awarded the 2008 Charles C. Mackey, Jr. Excellence in Service Leadership Award. He was presented with the award at the fall 2008 annual conference in Albany.

We look to our educational leaders to be strong educators, to frame their work on central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement, to be change agents on behalf or our children (first and foremost) and our communities, to make strong connections with other people—valuing and caring for others as both individuals and as members of the educational community. Joe Frey models these essential characteristics, applies them to the work done, and expects others to do the same.

What is most apparent is Joe’s work throughout the state. Joe is an advocate for children and for improving the quality of their education. Joe understands that a significant contributor to a child’s academic and personal success is having competent and caring teachers in the classroom.
Joe’s colleagues had this to say about Joe and his work:

He has partnered with teacher preparation programs and agencies, such as NYSATE and NYACTE on a number of initiatives to reach this end. Joe has been instrumental in supporting the work of the Teacher Education Advisory Group and the development of TEACH workshops at the NYSATE/NYACTE conferences. Our NYSATE and NYACTE constituents value his talks and his genuine eagerness and sincerity in seeking our input on important matters that may impact and shape New York State P-12 education and P-16 initiatives.

Jerry Rivera-Wilson and Julius Adams
NYSATE Executive Board

Joe Frey has reached out to communicate with the education community, particularly with higher education. He seeks feedback regarding the proposed state education department changes and listens to the concerns of others. He has worked with us closely in forming the Teacher Education Advisory Group, which provides a means for communications among higher education colleges and universities and the state education department.

Bob Michael, Past-President NYACTE

Engagement with the field of education is expressed through his position in the State Education Department, where he step-by-step advanced over the years toward greater responsibility and authority. I believe this advance reflects the appreciation his colleagues have for his astute judgment and the style he has employed that engages others in decision making to shape the field. His work has been extremely productive. Through his efforts and leadership, education, and particularly teacher education in New York State is being transformed.

Jerry Mager, Syracuse University

Joe Frey is a man who knows the rules, understands their application to specific programs and institutions, and is willing to take the time to help novices and old hands alike as they adjust to changing times and regulations. When the regulations, exam schedules or exams change, it is usually Joe who is introduced to clarify and interpret. At the meetings where such changes are announced, Joe responds to questions—some of them harsh or burdened with frustration—and he responds with clarity and patience.

Davenport “Mike” Plumer
New York Institute of Technology

I have had the opportunity to witness Joe in action! Not only do we look forward to meeting with him, but we value his insight, his commitment to seeking all perspectives, his ability to hear and address the input he receives, and his commitment always to improving outcomes for each and every one of our children.

Debra Colley, Niagara University
Those who have worked with Mr. Frey know the degree to which he is informed by data about the field and the degree to which he urges all constituencies to consider the data that should guide policy and practice. His careful analyses of the data are one good example of how he approaches issues of the field, not from an ideological vantage point, but from the realities of our systems.

The Charles E. Mackey Award is one of the highest honors we can bestow on one of our colleagues. It has been awarded to only the best among us—those whose impact on our profession and the field of education is indisputable and valued. I believe that Mr. Frey matches well the criteria set to select those who would be thus honored, and that his selection for this award continues the tradition established in honor of Charlie Mackey, our good friend, colleague and leader. I am pleased and honored to present the award to Joe Frey.

This is excellence in leadership; this is Joseph Frey. New York State is fortunate to have him in a position with such far-reaching implications in education. He is a colleague, an advocate, a tireless worker, and a voice for us and our students in Albany. Congratulations, Joe, a friend who is passionate about teaching and learning and compassionate about people.

Author Biography

David Arneson is recently retired from New York Institute of Technology, where he served as Chairperson of the Teacher Education Division in the School of Education, with graduate and undergraduate childhood and adolescent education programs. Dr. Arneson served as President of the NYIT Academic Senate for 5 terms and various other institutional positions. He currently serves on the Leadership Foundation for Teacher Education as the Associate Chairperson, and serves on several state and local policy boards and civic associations.

Email: learneson@earthlink.net
Update From
the New York State Education Department

TITLE TO COME

*Johanna Duncan-Poitier*
Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education – P-16
Author Biography

Johanna Duncan-Poitier is the Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education - P-16 in New York State where she has responsibility for ensuring quality and accountability in over 7,000 public and non-public schools, 270 colleges and universities, and over 400 proprietary schools. She also directs the preparation, certification, and practice of more than 227,000 teachers and school leaders, and coordinates efforts to recruit and retain quality teachers and school leaders in the State’s schools. Email: p16education@mail.nysed.gov.
Reports of Research and Self-Study

Instruction to Understanding: The Emotional Underpinnings of New Teachers’ Professional Development

*Linda Kramer Schlosser*
St. John Fisher College

*Betsy Balzano*
SUNY College at Brockport

Abstract

This study focuses on the professional development of 54 newly certified, preservice teachers who participated in a masters program that incorporated a 15-hour-per-week internship in an urban school. Perceptual and independent data were collected from 10 cohorts who completed the program between 1998 and 2007. Findings suggest that new teachers’ knowledge and practices change when rigorous year-long masters programs are situated in schools. The roots of these changes are the connections between cognition and emotion that emerge from intensive, context-rich professional development.
Emotions are not just messy toddlers in a china shop, running around breaking and obscuring delicate cognitive glassware. Instead, they are more like the shelves underlying the glassware; without them cognition has less support. (ImmordinoYang & Damasio, 2007, p. 5)

Monday mornings, before the start of the school day, a cohort of 4 newly certified teacher candidates who have opted to complete their master’s degrees by means of a specially designed graduate program, meet as a group to discuss their plans for the week. Each of these preservice teachers, called interns, opted to forego job applications for a year to participate in a graduate program that includes a year-long support group and a 15-hour-per-week teaching commitment in a mentor’s classroom. This integration of graduate coursework with simultaneous teaching experiences result in a significantly different approach to the preparation of new teachers. Consider, for example, the following incident described by Jennifer at a Monday meeting early in the fall.

It occurred to me last week when I noticed how S [mentor] would stop, check for understanding, and wait for active listening from everyone, that maybe there was so much confusion when I taught a lesson because I think I just keep on going without enough stopping.

While Jennifer had studied these elements of instruction in her undergraduate program and could identify them in context, it was not until she intuitively compared her own performance to her mentor’s that her awareness of their potential impact on student learning was strengthened. Her “aha moment,” however, was not solely due to the additional clinical experience afforded by the program. We believe connections, such as the one Jennifer spontaneously made, are more likely to result when professional development programs include on-going opportunities for new teachers to think and talk about the relationship between pedagogical concepts and personal teaching performance with other like-minded peers and professionals in the school (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The purpose of this article is to describe a year-long master’s program that enables initially certified, preservice teachers to gain advanced skill levels before entering the job market as full-time teachers. It is not realistic to expect that undergraduate preparation programs can produce highly qualified teachers upon graduation. Rather, in keeping with the literature linking the impact of high-quality induction programs to teacher development (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), we propose that programs designed to build on initial study, integrating graduate coursework with year-long mentored teaching experiences, are significantly more likely to result in greater epistemic growth. Furthermore, it is our belief that the program we will describe leads to skilled performance because it provides the time, opportunity, and support preservice teachers need to examine their teaching skills in light of the theory they are learning, and most importantly, because it builds on strong emotional processes that enhance new teachers’ ability to think, learn, and grow. We propose that emotional thinking is a critical, but undervalued, component in teacher decision-making, and that harnessing the power of emotion can produce more reflective practitioners, thus, more highly qualified ones.

Our proposal is based on ten years of qualitative data collected from cohort members who participated in a small grant-funded program. Programs similar to the one we
describe here are not wide-spread: There is relatively little data showing how teachers prepared in this way compare with teachers from more traditional programs (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). In describing the outcomes of this program, our goal is to generate discussion about the critical role of school-based professional development in harnessing the emotional thinking that we believe leads to greater epistemic growth.

Background

The link between emotional states and the capacity to think and learn has been at the forefront of neuroscience since the 1990s (Fischer, et al., 2007; Goleman, 2006). Researchers believe the neural wiring between the brain’s thinking and emotional centers shows that emotions are not just problematic baggage that can interfere with our ability to think logically, but specific neural mechanisms that can support cognition: attention, learning, and decision-making (Ashcroft & Kirk, 2001; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Neurobiological studies highlighting relationships between body, emotion, and cognition (Bechara, 2005; Damasio, et al., 2000) suggest that emotions play a critical role in bringing prior knowledge to the forefront to inform real-world decision-making. To this end, emotional processes may be a key component in the transfer of knowledge learned in teacher education courses and fieldwork to novel settings such as the early years of teaching. Some support for the interrelatedness between emotional thinking and the development of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge has been suggested by Zembylas (2007).

When intense preservice professional development is situated in schools, the potential for emotional thinking to support teacher cognition may be further enhanced. We know that in professions such as teaching, progression from novice to highly skilled performance is heavily influenced by context (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006). Context provides valuable concrete examples that can be used by teacher educators to coach novices as they attempt to transfer theory to practice. When novices have a stake in the context, enough time and experience within the context to identify problems, and when there is coaching to help them connect theory to practice, meaningful learning is more likely to occur (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). As we will demonstrate, emotional, context-dependent connections preservice teachers make have enormous repercussions for the way they consolidate the knowledge they use to make decisions, and for the way they ultimately learn to teach.

A School-Based Masters Program

The Collaborative Intern-Masters Program (CIMP) is a subset of a traditional masters program. A group of 4 to 6 graduate students is accepted annually based on competitive applications and available budget. For two semesters and one summer, these newly certified teachers complete graduate courses in education and work as interns in urban classrooms under the auspices of mentor teachers. Their mentors are carefully selected by building administrators using written proposals and past teaching performance evaluations. Grant funds pay interns’ graduate tuition in return for their service to urban schools.

Each week begins with the seminar that meets on-site on a rotating basis among the participating schools. The seminar is envisioned as a support group with a structured
agenda. Interns are encouraged to look analytically at their teaching, their classroom, and the theories they are learning, while the group, as a whole, acts as a sounding board.

To help interns frame what actually happens in their classrooms with theories and ideas they bring to the setting, seminar begins with critical incident writing. Interns are asked to identify an event that occurred the previous week, write about it, and present the event to the group in the fashion of a medical model (as described by Hole & McEntee, 1999). The incidents selected might be perceived as positive or negative, puzzling or surprising, and could reflect any aspect of teaching and learning. Why was this event critical? What do we need to know to understand the nature of this incident? What did the intern observe, think, or do, and why? Critical incident topics often result from the interplay between assignments in other graduate courses and interns’ experiences in the school setting, and subsequently drive the selection of future seminar readings. The goal is for interns to develop habitual cause-effect thinking (Grant & Gillete, 2006) that will lead them to researchable thesis topics in midyear, and, of course, to the further refinement of their teaching skills.

The smallness of CIMP has facilitated the development of relationships among interns, college faculty, and school-based personnel, making the close collaboration and sharing of ideas the easy give-and-take boundary crossings described by Anagnostopoulos, Smith, and Basmadjian (2007). Principals observe the interns as they would first-year teachers, using the district protocols and procedures. They participate in occasional seminars, meet with mentors, and involve the interns in professional development activities and school committees as they would full-time first-year teachers.

Over the course of the year, interns gradually assume more responsibilities in their classrooms. In this way, induction into the school and community is a kind of protected immersion. As the year draws to a close, the interns design a professional development day for the faculty at each school to share the findings from their masters’ research as well as what they have learned about teaching from their days at the school.

Perceptual and Independent Data

Different insights on how interns across the ten cohorts learned, as they balanced graduate study and classroom teaching, were obtained during their internship year through critical incident protocols, weekly journals, and informal interviews. Data were coded using a constant comparative method to develop broad categories (e.g., relationships with students) and to further refine them into subcategories (e.g., understanding students’ out-of-school lives or being approachable to students). Informal interviews with individual interns and the cohort, as a whole, were used to uncover similarities, examine differences and similarities within and across categories, and to explore emerging themes. We developed a template of issues that CIMP interns thought about and considered critical, tracing the trajectory of their thinking by tabulating the number of times the category surfaced for individual interns and for the cohort group, as a whole. Data from cohort groups then were compared and combined to develop a hierarchy of issues that surfaced as important to the 54 interns across the 10 cohorts.

At the end of their internship year, interns reviewed their critical incident notebooks and weekly journals and developed a detailed concept map (Meijerm, Zanting, & Verloop, 2002) to trace their thinking across the year. Interns’ concept maps were compared to the trajectories we developed for them as a way of confirming or rejecting
our categories. Concept maps were also used to investigate connections between interns’ identification and analysis of issues during the early part of the year, and their selection and implementation of masters’ research projects in their classrooms later in the year.

Principals’ observations of interns at three points during their internship year were collected as independent measures of what interns learned. Principals observed interns at the beginning, middle, and end of the year, and rated them on the same five-point scale used to evaluate full-time teachers: distinguished, proficient, meets professional standards, below professional standards, and unsatisfactory. The three evaluations collected for each intern were compared to the intern’s emerging profile of critical issues, and used as the basis for our informal interviews about teaching and learning. In addition to serving as our independent measures of interns’ growth over time on the teaching skills identified by the district, principals’ observations were used by interns as conduits to reflect on their effectiveness. Table 1 lists the teaching behaviors observed and reported on by the principals.

Table 1. District Protocol for Teacher Observation

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
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<tr>
<td>I. Pedagogy</td>
<td>Knowledge and application of effective practice</td>
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<td>Student-centered instruction</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary and multicultural curricula</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Content</td>
<td>Knowledge of subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive organization/Presentation of content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student outcomes and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Professional development and school quality</td>
<td>Documentation of continuous learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration with peers and colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in practice to meet student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Home involvement</td>
<td>Encouragement of family involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility, timeliness, and variety in teacher/family communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, we wanted to find out whether the interns who had graduated in the last ten years were still teaching and in what type of setting they were employed, as well as their beliefs about the usefulness of the program to their development as teachers. To do this, we designed a survey in 2005 and mailed it to nine cohorts beginning with the 1997 interns. We distributed the same survey electronically to the 2006-2007 cohort at the end of their first year of teaching, one year after they completed the program. Our return rate was 60%, and of those who responded, all were employed as teachers or administrators and 39% were employed in urban schools.

As with qualitative studies, we sought to understand the “preoccupations” (Huberman, 1995) of the interns in our ten cohorts through the analysis of critical
incidents, journals, and interviews, and through the eyes of their supervising principals during their internship year. We also sought to capture their perceptions of what they learned as novices years after they had entered the field. We looked for patterns within and across groups, and sought to understand ways the patterns did and did not connect to existing theory on how teachers learn (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of multiple measures of data collection across time allowed us to develop an intriguing snapshot of what the 54 interns learned during their internship year, and what they believed they had learned as they reflected on their program in light of their actual work experience years later. Taken together, these snapshots led us to believe that the changes we saw in interns’ knowledge and practices not only resulted from the year-long, school-based internship, but from the connections between emotional thinking and cognition that emerged in the rich context of classrooms.

**Looking Within: Findings from Interns’ Critical Incidents, Journals, and Interviews**

Teachers manage hundreds of situations each day, making decisions rapidly and often relying on autonomic responses or prescribed strategies. They do not have the opportunity to replay a classroom episode, consider its implications, and institute a “do-over.” When decisions are made without the benefit of analytical thinking, they can, over time, lead to habitual ways of doing things that may not be in the best interests of students. In our work with the ten cohorts, we discovered the power of critical incidents and journals to deepen interns’ thinking, and therefore improve performance, by focusing their attention on innately interesting, bothersome, puzzling, or surprising episodes from their classrooms.

I’m having a hard time getting kids to listen and do their work, especially during math. Yesterday two students had serious outbursts that lasted a long time and kept me from going on with the lesson. I tried ignoring and proximity, but they were so loud no one else could focus. I was so frustrated and embarrassed, and almost angry. Since I am not full-time in the classroom, I feel that’s why students may not listen to me. K [mentor] suggested that I eat lunch with small groups of students to get to know them better, so I will start with these two kids. I am bringing chocolate chip cookies, too! By working on developing a relationship with them, I am hoping to gain a level of respect and understanding . . . -Charlotte, Critical incident, October

In seminar discussions we asked our interns to talk about these incidents in terms of teacher behavior and student learning and, over time, this focus produced a propensity to think broadly about cause and effect (Grant & Gillete, 2006). As Charlotte illustrates, it is easy to slide into frustration over inappropriate behavior, more difficult to think about possible causes. Was the behavior related to something that could not be changed (her status) and therefore not her responsibility to address? Was the behavior related to her relationship with the two students or her inability to understand their instructional needs as subtly suggested by her mentor? Although, in October, Charlotte does not consider the diverse routes these different ways of thinking might take her, she does accept the gentle nudge to think beyond her original assessment and consider a broader range of causes. In critical incidents and journal entries that followed her lunch dates with
students, Charlotte articulated the importance of understanding students’ academic abilities and holding appropriate expectations “because students listen more and do their work if I show I understand.” Prompted by her frustration and embarrassment, the changes she made in instructional behavior lead Charlotte to a more complex perspective on students’ participation in class.

We came to refer to critical incidents such as these as “precipitous events” to account for their emotional load and because, over time, our data show that the majority of interns, consciously or unconsciously, tended to narrow their attention to specific types of incidents that held personal relevance. Too, as an intern’s ability to separate observation, analysis, and decision-making improved, the intern’s focus led to the development of a kind of expertise and often to a watershed. Charlotte, for example, continued to write about two problem students’ lack of engagement and began to research goal setting conferences as a management tool. She developed a case study for her master’s research project to investigate whether goal setting and individual meetings with students could improve their levels of engagement.

At the conclusion of her internship, Charlotte revisited what she had written and developed a concept map to trace her thinking. She grouped and color-coded all critical incidents she considered similar in nature, and gave each category a descriptive label. Using the labels, she developed a map to illustrate her preoccupations during the year. Thicker lines represent the categories that she identified as dominate in her thinking. Figure 1 is the concept map she drew to present to her peers at the final seminar. The patterns she identified caused her to remark, “It was as if I knew what was important all along but I didn’t know how to name it.”

**Emotion, Reflection, and Cognition**

With each successive cohort, the impact of critical incident analysis on preservice teachers’ thinking was made clearer to us. Our original focus on the content of critical incidents expanded to include questions about the influence of emotions. Did emotional thinking drive the identification of specific incidents as critical incidents? Or were the critical incidents, themselves, emotional triggers? Were the rich context of the school-based program and the coaching by mentors and like-minded peers necessary precursors?

We found that 78% of the critical incidents identified by the total group of 54 interns clustered around three broad categories: effective teaching strategies, discipline and management, and building relationships/rapport with students. Table 2 illustrates the broad categories that were developed using a constant comparative method to code critical incidents and the percent of critical incidents coded for each category.

This hierarchy of concerns generally held true for individual cohorts as well as for the total group of 54. We had predicted that classroom management and discipline would surface as the top concern for each cohort, followed by specific concerns about the urban setting, itself. We were surprised when the majority of critical incidents focused on instructional issues and when building rapport with students continued to surface almost as often as discipline and management. We attribute this to the collaborative, integrated, mentored nature of the program. We also believe the nature of the program was one important reason the interns did not characterize critical incidents as strictly urban issues nor did they blame the urban environment for the concerns they identified.
To illustrate the ways in which reflection on critical issues, and the power of the emotional thinking behind them, influenced the professional development of interns we include the following profiles. These interns were selected because their profiles most clearly show the influence of emotion, cognition, and reflective practice on their development both during their internship year, and later as they completed their first years of teaching. In both cases, patterns in the issues interns identified surfaced early in the year and led interns to take specific courses of Figure 1. Charlotte’s Concept Map
Table 2. Types of Critical Incidents Identified by Interns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Codes</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective teaching strategies</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline and management</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships/rapport with students</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students with special needs</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with mentors</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of inadequacy as a teacher</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

action in their classrooms. Ultimately both interns selected research topics for their master’s theses in these areas and, as is characteristic of highly effective teachers, what they learned was so personally powerful that they put their ideas into action during their first years as classroom teachers.

Profile One: Diane’s Questions about Respect

Diane’s internship began with concerns about discipline and management and moved quickly into a focus on relationships with and among her students. Early in September Diane drew a triangle in her journal and labeled the points: students, curriculum, and instruction. Below her triangle she jotted the following thoughts:

1. Students bring with them (everyday) baggage, attitudes, and perceptions for behavior.

2. Students need structure, consistency, follow-through, stimulation!

3. Students need OWNERSHIP of behaviors and learning.

I know a teacher’s management impacts on learning and I have a lot of needs in this area. My goal is to constantly reflect on my practices and methods and the results of my actions. -Diane’s Journal, September

From the beginning, perhaps because she had been placed in a fourth-grade classroom that had a reputation for being especially tough, Diane struggled to find her balance. Her critical incidents described encounters with students whose “strong personalities,” “disrespect,” and “lack of ownership of their behaviors” caused her to spend the majority of her 15 hours of teaching time arguing with students. In October she told us, “Although tired and frustrated, I am optimistic. . . . All of us, teachers and students, have it in us to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.” When we asked her to explain what she meant, Diane remarked that she thought there must be something in the classroom environment that would encourage more respectful behavior. “Do I have
students’ respect? Have I earned it? Is the misbehavior me or is it them?” Her preoccupation with student “baggage” and its impact on the classroom carried through in weekly journal entries and surfaced constantly in critical incidents about individual students’ behaviors. Finally, after reading Ruby Payne’s book, A Framework for Understanding Poverty, Diane hit upon a plan. She decided that, “perhaps through some kind of character education,” she could teach her students the hidden rules of classrooms and therefore change the environment.

Diane searched the literature for strategies she might try and made the decision in November to institute morning meetings. Morning meetings were used to teach the cooperation and communication skills Diane saw as deficit, but were also an opportunity for students to speak their minds. “They have different ideas about what’s ‘fair.’ They feel our classroom rules are unfair so therefore they do not have to follow them and do not understand why a consequence is given. I keep hearing, ‘I didn’t do nuthin’! I only. . . ’ so I’m going to start with discussions and role playing about what fair means.” Diane’s mentor was in full agreement and, together, they launched the program which remained in place throughout the year.

Diane collected data on students’ perceptions of morning meetings, planned meeting agendas around misbehaviors she wanted to eliminate, tallied the numbers of targeted misbehaviors when they occurred, and found that the meetings did make a difference. One of the last critical incidents Diane described was a picture of the growth she saw in her students and in herself as a result of the morning meetings. She was surprised by how much “students need the teacher to monitor and regulate their behaviors but also how the opportunities to learn self-regulation and self-monitoring strategies can improve individual learning.” She told us, in fact, that classroom management was not all about control, but “about being fair and developing rules and routines based on commonly held ideas about fairness” and that learning this had guided her development as a teacher in “the most positive direction I can imagine.”

Diane presented her thesis to the school’s faculty, and when she was interviewed for her first teaching job, her ideas about morning meetings, classroom management, and relationships with students were one of the reasons she was hired. Diane not only instituted morning meetings in her new classroom, but she trained other teachers in her new school and presented her program, with curriculum and slide shows, to graduate classes at area colleges.

Profile Two: Nancy’s Questions about How Children Become Readers

For Nancy, critical incidents revolved around effective teaching, particularly in the area of reading because it impacted her students in every subject. Like Diane, Nancy found herself placed in a challenging classroom. Her third-grade students were a very diverse group with widely differing skill levels. She quickly became concerned with planning because she was unsure how to address the variety of levels. In October she wrote, “I read a paragraph with the class today and when I stopped to ask for definitions, I realized they did not know the meaning of so many words that the paragraph made little sense to them. Even though it was English-Language Arts (ELA) test preparation material, they weren’t ready, I stopped. You can’t assume that students know something just because you are using the material provided for that grade level.” Because Nancy was to take over the teaching of guided reading in her classroom the following week, she decided she would need to re-think both her approach and her expectations for the students.
In November, Nancy was still struggling with what she could do to help her students reach district and state reading goals. “My students misbehave when they don’t understand what we are doing. Behind each misbehavior, I know there is a need unmet. I get very frustrated and it breaks my heart to see a student so lost. I just need to keep building my knowledge of guided reading.” Fortunately, Nancy’s mentor agreed that she, too, could use some fresh ideas.

Nancy became interested in trying different approaches, veering away from the district’s prescribed reading program as much as she was able, and observing whether the new ideas she tried increased students’ engagement and motivation. It was difficult, and she wrote often about giving up reading instruction time to prepare students for the ELA test when the students had so much trouble reading in the first place. “ELA is driving me insane. It makes me very mad!” For Nancy, the watershed came shortly after Thanksgiving. She had taught a reading lesson with role playing that went remarkably well and she was surprised that students caught on so quickly. “Sometimes they amaze you! I wish I could figure out what happened to make them so ‘on.’ They couldn’t answer any of the questions the day before! It makes me think that it’s always there, but we just need to figure out how to bring it out.” How to bring it out became reader’s theater.

The middle of winter found Nancy’s reading class deeply involved in reader’s theater, reading prepared scripts to increase fluency, and writing their own scripts for fun. Nancy regularly collected data on fluency rates and compared them to their fluency scores at the beginning of the year. She interviewed students about reader’s theater and she collected observation data on engagement during class. Like Diane, Nancy was thrilled to find her students making progress. She wrote, “The students are really motivated by reader’s theater. They look forward to it and we are ALL having fun! (Me, too!) We have been working on using expression and they pick it up faster than normal. I think this is because they have a purpose for using expression when doing reader’s theater.”

Nancy, too, presented her research data to the school’s faculty at the end of the year, along with a slide show of her reading class doing a reader’s theater production for the younger grades in the school. The following year Nancy was hired to be the ELA teacher on an interdisciplinary team and she immediately instituted reader’s theater in her sixth-grade classroom. “I have learned,” she told our final seminar, “not just to allow for the teachable moment—but to go and find the teachable moment. You cannot rely on the structure of the curriculum as the be-all-and-end-all.”

**Principals’ Observations**

Interns were observed at three points during the year using standardized district forms. Although they did not progress at the same pace or demonstrate exactly the same strengths, final, end-of-the-year evaluations were consistently positive. Principals rated all interns as either proficient or meeting standards, ratings that compared favorably with those given to the full-time, experienced teachers at their schools. An analysis of principals’ comments indicated the area of greatest growth across the ten cohorts was in Category I, Pedagogy. In fact, three of the four key ideas in this category—knowledge and application of effective practice, student-centered instruction, and classroom management techniques—were directly related to the content of the majority of critical incidents written by the interns.
Of special interest was one key idea, change in practice to meet student needs, under Category III, Professional Development and School Quality. The focus on cause-effect relationships in critical incident writing lead the majority of the 54 interns in our study to the realization that changing instructional behavior was a more effective way to increase engagement that simply telling students to “pay attention.” In this area, abundant comments written by principals, such as the following, pointed to interns’ growth.

Students used their books to find thick and thin questions and write them on sticky pads. Once everyone began working, Ms. S. [the intern] circulated around and then called a guided reading group to her table. She asked them to think about the book and showed them a chart to help with thick and thin questions. “Can you give me a thin question?” Once they gave her a question, students wrote it down on their own charts. Students seemed to struggle with this activity. I believe this is why Ms. S. stopped and called this particular group to come up and work directly with her. - Principal’s Observation, March

Principals’ observations indicated that the interns consistently demonstrated, over the course of their internship year, an increasing ability to use constructive feedback from observations to improve their teaching.

Most telling, however, is the fact that, with only one exception, when teaching positions opened in their schools, principals pushed to hire graduating interns to fill the spots. The preparation of the interns was so well regarded that the district’s central office agreed to place graduating interns interested in remaining in the area on the district’s “early hire” list giving them priority in the hiring process, along with long-term substitutes and contract teachers, well before any other first-year teachers could be interviewed.

**Looking Back: Findings from the Survey of Ten Cohorts**

Darling-Hammond (2006) reports graduates’ perceptions of the usefulness of their preparation programs change during their first years in actual practice. We were pleased to find that graduates in all cohorts felt very positively about the program, rating every item on the survey as strongly agree or agree on a four-point scale. Interestingly, the two items that received the lowest mean ratings may reflect, in part, the growing focus on assessment over the last 10 years and a continuing tendency for teachers to feel isolated in their own classrooms. Table 3 illustrates the total mean rating of survey items in descending order.

Included on the survey was an open-ended section for past interns to discuss any perceived outcomes we had not listed. Their comments support our belief that an intensive year-long program situated in schools provides the time, opportunity, and support essential to the development of high quality teachers. The following excerpts are characteristic of what they told us.

[The internship] showed me the reality and allowed me to test the theories and strategies for the first time without the sole responsibility for the classroom (1998).

• [It] gave me the foundation on which to build [future learning] (2001).
• It is an incredible transition between student teaching and a first year of teaching (2002).

• If I was to start teaching after student teaching I would not have felt prepared enough (2004).

• The opportunity to participate in and contribute to the entire year-long curriculum was valuable for a deeper understanding of how students learn over time (2005).

Reflecting through the lenses of their current roles as teachers or administrators, past interns pointed to the importance of their internship years as “a jumping off point” that enabled them to continue to learn from teaching after they entered the field. This is an important outcome because expert teaching skills develop over time (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999) and are most likely to develop when teachers have acquired the ability to transfer pedagogical knowledge and skills (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) to the real world of teaching; this, despite perceived incongruence, puzzling effects, and complex settings.

Table 3. Survey Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a result of the Collaborative Masters Program . . . . . . . . . . . . .</th>
<th>Total Mean Rating on a 4-Point Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made a smoother transition from college to professional life.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had a broader repertoire of teaching strategies that I felt confident using during my first years.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was better prepared to handle the complex interactions of a classroom when I began teaching.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was a more reflective practitioner.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was more prepared to handle theoretical and practical questions during job interviews.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was more positively perceived by administrators as better prepared to teach.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was better able to use a broader range of formal and informal assessments to guide my teaching during the first years.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was more positively perceived by my colleagues as better prepared to teach.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

“Understanding of practice must be integrated with understanding in practice” (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2000, p. 402) in order to make the theoretical frameworks of learning real to teachers. For the interns in this study, the usefulness of the theories they had learned as undergraduates became transparent only when they, themselves, encountered concrete problems or personal concerns to which they could apply the theories and test the results of modifications they made. Having an audience of like-minded peers who acted as a sounding-board, as well as the time to reflect on issues, led interns to a greater understanding of practice and directly impacted their later experiences in their first years of teaching.

The more strongly interns felt about particular incidents, that is, the more emotionally invested they were, the more focused they became on analyzing the associations between incidents and their outcomes. Subsequently, the more closely interns connected the outcomes of critical incidents to their self-perceptions of ability as teachers, the harder they worked to link theory and practice. As Le Doux posits, “Emotions, after all, are the threads that hold mental life together. They define who we are in our mind’s eye. . . ” (1999, p. 11). Or as one intern described it, “. . . the more I reflect on [critical incident], the more motivated I become to succeed for my students. I will get this!” Critical incidents, with their emotional undertones, became something about which interns could take action; they became opportunities rather than impenetrable barriers.

When our classroom’s student teacher arrived, it was a turning point for me. Suddenly, rather than being the newer or inexperienced teacher in the room, Jason was. He began turning to me for suggestions and guidance as much as he turned toward R [mentor]. Because of this, I felt the urge to step up to the challenge and be what he needed me to be—a strong, confident teacher. Within a week or two, I suddenly felt as if I belonged. I felt right in my own skin every moment I was in the classroom. My teaching became stronger. Behavior management felt second nature. Plus, I really started to act like myself—goofy and silly and quirky, and my students have really responded to my natural and true behavior. I became a teacher within, rather than feeling as if I was putting on that role each day. I am surprised that Jason’s arrival has had such an effect on me. . . -Annie, Critical Incident, March

How can we prepare highly effective teachers? Although there is no definitive answer to the question (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), the experiences of the interns have provided us with two noteworthy approaches. First, we believe that preservice programs designed to build on initial study by integrating graduate coursework with year-long mentored teaching experiences are more likely to result in highly qualified teachers. Our data illustrate that rich contextually-based programs that provide sheltered support are needed for novices to link theory with practice in a personally relevant, meaningful way. Secondly, our experiences lead us to propose that the relationship between learning and emotion plays a far more profound role in the development of highly qualified teachers than has been previously considered. Our experiences suggest that emotional thinking is a critical, but undervalued, component in teacher decision-making, and that intensive, school-based professional development for preservice teachers can harness the power of emotion in ways that will produce more reflective practitioners.
Emotional thought is often typecast as less important, less productive than rational thought. In the same line of thinking, being too emotional has been blamed for poor judgment, such as being too attached to a situation to make an objective decision. Our experiences with the 54 interns, however, lead us to reject the notion of scientific detachment when it comes to the preparation of highly qualified teachers. Our data emphasize the idiosyncratic, situational, and, yes, emotional nature of teachers’ thinking. It is emotional thinking that played the central role in bringing prior knowledge to the forefront as interns struggled with decision-making in their classrooms. Emotional thinking focused interns’ attention, framed their questions, and sent them in search of new techniques, new approaches, and new materials that might benefit their students. Finally, emotional thinking lead to the translation of critical issues into research projects, the outcomes of which impacted the later teaching experiences of interns like those profiled in this article. Indeed, our ten years of work with intern cohorts cause us to suspect that the roots of highly skilled performance stem from the neural wiring that links cognition and emotion, roots that grow quickly and deeply within contextually-based professional development programs.

Nurturing the connection between emotional thought and cognition can produce teachers with high levels of professionalism and commitment. Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) observe that when we fail to acknowledge the role of emotions in learning, “we fail to appreciate the very reason students learn at all” (p. 9). We believe the same can be said of novice teachers who learn, or fall short of learning, the concepts and skills that will make them exemplary.

References


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Refining Models of Algebraic Generalization among Elementary Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

This article describes elementary preservice teachers’ models of connecting algebraic generalizations with a related contextual problem. The study followed a pretest-intervention-post-test design, with an accompanying survey. Subjects engaged in model-eliciting activities by creating instructional materials consisting of sets of related items that illustrated cases of an algebraic generalization of the form $y = ax + b$. Students also filled out an accompanying survey sheet regarding their attitudes towards the intervention. Results indicated (a) refinement and expansion of models despite initial difficulty with authentic applications, and (b) students’ attitudes towards writing generalizations and teaching algebra to elementary students improved.
Introduction

There is a pressing need to inform and improve algebraic instruction (Rand Mathematics Study Panel [RAND], 2003) because of the need for citizens who can apply higher levels of thinking in business and industry such as generalizing patterns, determining relationships among quantities, studying structures, and using mathematical procedures to solve problems. Although the number of research studies on the teaching of algebra has recently increased (Kieran, 2004; 2006), the research base on teachers’ knowledge regarding algebraic instruction is still quite limited (Doerr, 2004; Menzel, 2001; RAND, 2003). Mathematics educators, in their calls for reform, discuss a variety of expanded views of algebra including a focus on algebra as part of the elementary curriculum and attention to forming generalizations of patterns set in meaningful contexts (Kaput, 2000; NCTM, 2000). Research shows that elementary level students are capable of algebraic reasoning (Kaput & Blanton, 2001a), yet many elementary level preservice teachers (Zizkas & Liljedahl, 2002) and classroom teachers (Kaput & Blanton, 2001a, 2001b) may not understand the role of algebraic generalizations nor ways to connect generalizations to an authentic context. Therefore, a study of how preservice teachers develop a robust understanding of algebraic generalizations through creation of hands-on story-problem materials may shed light on this conceptually difficult area.

To address the goal of examining growth through creation of algebraic materials, preservice teachers’ responses to writing a contextualized word problem to accompany a given algebraic generalization of the form, \( y = ax + b \), were examined. This paper focuses on the preservice teachers’ models of algebraic generalizations, and specifically, their ability to connect a given generalization to an authentic, story-problem context.

A detailed study using an iterative process supported by the theoretical framework described in the next section was conducted that addressed these questions: (1) How do preservice elementary teachers develop and refine their interpretations of a given algebraic generalization? (2) How do preservice teacher attitudes about writing algebraic generalizations change in response to instruction set within a context?

Theoretical Framework

Subject matter knowledge is critical to successful teaching (Ma, L., 1999; Hill, Schilling, & Ball, 2004). As well, anxiety toward mathematics and achievement are related (Ma, X., 1999). Recent reforms call for increased emphasis on algebraic reasoning at the elementary level, yet most current preservice teachers’ preparation in algebra occurred at the secondary level, leaving them with little experience to teach algebraic concepts in age-appropriate ways. Research has indicated that students can extend a pattern more readily than they can generalize from it (Orton & Orton, 1999; Zaskis & Liljedahl, 2002). Classroom teachers participating in staff development projects do successfully enhance algebraic instruction and may successfully “algebrafy” the elementary curriculum (Kaput & Blanton, 2001a, 2001b). Algebrafy refers to identifying problems based in arithmetic (with a numerical answer), and learning how to bring out algebraic generalizations. In addition, teachers learn to ask questions that promote algebraic reasoning.

However, because preservice elementary teachers likely have not had the benefit of such dynamic elementary experiences, it is critical to examine their existing models of
algebraic generalizations and explore activities that might perturb and expand their understanding. Hence, a “models and modeling” perspective of teacher development (Doerr & Lesh, 2003) was used here to provide a framework for analyzing teachers’ understanding as they test, revise, refine, and extend their thinking during a mathematics methods course. This research focused upon preservice teachers’ models of interpretation for connecting algebraic generalizations with an authentic context.

**Methodology**

This study followed a pretest-intervention-post-test design accompanied by a culminating qualitative survey of preservice elementary teachers (N = 58; 48 female, 10 male; 58 European-American). First, the preservice teachers completed a pretest where they were asked to write an authentic contextual problem for the equation \( y = 2x + 3 \). A few weeks later, students worked with “algebra rules object boxes” (Rule & Hallagan, 2007), instructional materials consisting of sets of related items that illustrated cases of an algebraic generalization accompanied by two cards for each object-set. Four object-sets and eight cards were provided in a plastic shoebox to each group of four preservice teachers. The fronts and backs of two cards with algebraic generalizations of the type \( y = ax + b \) that accompanied three example object-sets (with the objects shown on the reverse side of one card) are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Cards for the Star Trim Problem (Fronts are to the left; reverse sides to the right.)

**Star Trim Story Problem**

A company makes trims for fancy costumes. They want to create a product line of symmetrical star trims in several sizes. If there is always a center large star surrounded by a symmetrical arrangement of stars in a line, determine the rule for the total number of stars.

Let \( z \) be the total number of stars in the trim design.

Let \( n \) be the number of stars on one side of the central star.

\[
\begin{align*}
z &= 2n + 1 \\
n &= 3, 2, 1
\end{align*}
\]

**Stars on trim**

Each trim piece has \( 2n \) stars plus the middle star to produce \( 2n + 1 \).
Preservice teachers first matched the front of a card that presented a story problem to the corresponding object and attempted to define the variables, using $z$ and $n$. They checked their work by looking at the reverse of the card (shown on the right side of Figures 1 and 2). Then they created an algebraic generalization using the two variables and searched for the card with the same equation. Again, they checked their work by reading the back side of the card. After spending time exploring the instructor-made object boxes, subjects were assigned to work in a group to find or make a set of related objects (showing the first three or four iterations of the pattern determined by the equation) that followed an algebraic rule of the form $y = ax + b$. Students also wrote a contextualized problem that supported the object and equation. Then, each group of four preservice teachers shared their algebra rules object box with another group of preservice teachers. This repetitive cycle allowed preservice teachers multiple opportunities to test, revise, and refine their thinking about the generalizations in the object boxes. After the subjects created their materials, they engaged in a final reflective activity. Subjects were asked to (1) state what you learned about writing algebraic generalizations this semester; (2) describe your current feelings toward writing generalizations and teaching algebra to elementary students as compared to the first day of the semester; and (3) list pros and cons of making the algebra boxes. Finally, the preservice teachers were given an identical post-test about six weeks later. Consistent with a models and modeling
approach, this methodology left a trail of artifacts from which to document the development in the preservice teachers’ models for connecting algebraic generalizations to an authentic context.

**Results**

Table 1 shows the rubric used to score student solutions, example student responses, and pretest-post-test scores. This rubric was developed by examining student responses. All student responses were recorded in separate cells in a column on a spreadsheet. They were then scored as correct or incorrect in the next column of cells. Correct responses were examined to determine the level of explanation. A brief description of the type of explanation was entered in the next column. Similarly, the incorrect responses were analyzed, and the types of errors made were listed on the spreadsheet. The sorting functions of the spreadsheet were used to group similar errors or responses and to rename them with a more general description. These were then classified into four levels of performance: proficient, basic, emerging knowledge, and poor. Each category was assigned a numerical score from 3 down to 0, as indicated on the first row of the rubric. Half of the preservice elementary teachers performed poorly on the pretest exercise. This low performance level indicated their lack of understanding of algebraic generalizations, although it was encouraging that almost 40% showed proficient or basic knowledge. Post-test results indicated marked improvement of almost one score point (post-test mean of 1.82 compared to the pretest mean of 1.05); a calculated t-test statistic indicated the mean score on the pretest was significantly smaller than the post-test mean score (p-value < 0.001). On the post-test, the percentage of preservice teachers evidencing proficient or basic performance increased to over 57%, while the percent of those with poor performance decreased to 12.5%.

Preservice teachers generated many interesting authentic examples for \( y = ax + b \). Four representative examples are shown in Figure 3. Additional examples are available in Rule and Hallagan (2007). Most of the materials generated by preservice teachers were mathematically correct, although a few errors were found. One group produced the following problem for \( z = 4n + 3 \) that illustrates the two most common errors. It was accompanied with a board showing just three foam shirts, each with four buttons and one extra button attached to the side of each shirt. “A Shirt Story Problem: A mother is buying her son three new button-up shirts. Each shirt has four buttons. The shirts also each come with an extra button. Determine a rule for the number of buttons there are altogether.” The first error was that only one case (the case in which three shirts were purchased) was shown. Several other preservice teachers also failed to show multiple cases of their story problems. The second error concerned the correct equation for this situation, which was \( z = 5n \), because each shirt had 5 buttons (4 + 1 extra). If the problem were rewritten to say that one extra button was given to the customer when one or more shirts were purchased, the generalization \( z = 4n + 1 \) would have applied; but only one extra button representing the constant term should have been illustrated.

Determining whether an item in a story is a constant or a multiplied variable is difficult for preservice teachers. On the pretest, many preservice teachers produced story problems for \( z = 2n + 3 \) that indicated similar conceptual problems. “You have two parents. They had \( n \) amount of biological children plus three adopted children. How many were there all together?” This story fits \( z = 2 + n + 3 \).
Table 1. Rubric for Scoring Pretest and Post-test Problem with Example Student Responses and Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Level</strong></td>
<td>Proficient Performance</td>
<td>Basic Performance</td>
<td>Emerging Knowledge</td>
<td>Poor Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria for Judgment</strong></td>
<td>Correct contextual problem using a variable to fit the generalization. Contextual problem is presented by giving several solutions and asking for the generalization or presented as a situation involving a variable.</td>
<td>Correct contextual problem using a variable to fit the generalization but with poorly stated question; <strong>or</strong> Contextual problem gives values for all variables; it is not a generalization.</td>
<td>Numbers in contextual problem match numbers in given equation, but operations are wrong; <strong>or</strong> Context almost fits but would make more complex or different equation.</td>
<td>Context is merely a translation of the numerical expression into English words with or without added objects; no real context; <strong>or</strong> Student merely solved for n; <strong>or</strong> Incomplete; no attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example of Contextual Problems Placed in the Category</strong></td>
<td>Bicycles have 2 wheels and tricycles have 3 wheels. How many wheels are there in total if there are n bikes and 1 tricycle?</td>
<td>The factory packaged 2 toothbrushes in each box. They had already filled 5 boxes, and there were 3 toothbrushes left. How many toothbrushes were there all together?</td>
<td>Two boys were playing basketball, and n more boys decided to play. Then 3 more boys decided to play. How many were there all together?</td>
<td>Two more than 2 added to 3 is n. Two pennies times n pennies plus three pennies equals what number?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Pretest Responses</strong></td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Post-test Responses</strong></td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example of the same difficulty is as follows: “Two boys were playing basketball and then n more boys decided to play and then three more boys joined them. How many boys were playing all together?” These types of errors decreased markedly on the post-test, indicating that preservice teachers were learning to differentiate constants from variables as a result of the activities. Results of the qualitative survey revealed the following.

In response to question 1, which was, State what you learned about writing algebraic generalizations this semester, student responses were coded into three categories as follows: ability to write a generalization improved (24%), understanding the importance of
writing generalizations (27%), and learned new techniques to help write a generalization (63%). Comments included, “I learned that algebra isn’t really that bad,” and “You should let students discover them not lecture.”

In response to question 2, Describe your current feelings toward writing generalizations and teaching algebra to elementary students as compared to the first day of the semester, students wrote 139 different comments. Fifty percent of these comments indicated a somewhat more favorable feeling towards algebra, and 49% of these comments indicated a clearly more favorable feeling towards writing generalizations and teaching algebra to elementary students. Students’ comments included the following:

They take time and patience to teach and learn. Practicing helps and I’m not so afraid of them anymore, and

I’m a lot more comfortable with working and teaching algebraic problems primarily due to the exhaustive practice in and out of class with them. Even at first figuring out how to write an algebraic problem was very difficult but through various methods of practice the concept became clear.
Students’ attitudes were favorable towards teaching generalizations at the conclusion of the project. Finally, in response to question 3, List pros and cons of making the algebra boxes, students responded as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

All students in three classes of preservice teachers enrolled in a mathematics methods course for elementary teachers participated in this study. Although a sample size of 58 provides a reasonable view of preservice teacher performance in this area, the study is limited by the fact that all subjects were European-Americans attending the same college in Upstate New York; research on dissimilar preservice teacher populations from other areas may yield different results.
Figure 4. Pros of Algebra Boxes

chart to come

Figure 5. Cons of Algebra Boxes

chart to come
Concluding Remarks

Consistent with prior research of preservice elementary teachers’ ability to generalize patterns (Kaput & Blanton, 2001a, 2001b; Zizkas & Liljedahl, 2002), these subjects had difficulty in making authentic connections for a simple algebraic expression. This may indicate that this group of subjects does not necessarily have the knowledge to “algebrafy” the elementary curriculum (Kaput & Blanton, 2001a, 2001b). Although our results pose a concern about the ability and readiness of preservice teachers to implement many of the current calls for reform of elementary algebraic instruction, it is hoped that the nature of the activities will refine and extend preservice teachers’ models of algebraic generalization (Doerr & Lesh, 2003).

Two key implications of the project emerged. First, preservice teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching and learning of writing algebraic generalizations improved during the course of the study. Because attitudes towards teaching mathematics may influence students’ mathematical success (Ma, X., 1999), it is critical that we continue to study the development of activities such as the algebra rules boxes. We consider the favorable comments made by students in response to the qualitative survey to be one of the successes of the project. Many students made favorable remarks about creating the algebra boxes. One of the drawbacks to implementing the algebra rules object boxes was the amount of class time it took to demonstrate the materials and then have the students try out each other’s materials. Although some students found the effort confusing, time consuming, and difficult, the benefits seem to outweigh the drawbacks, particularly in light of the results of the post-test. Second, preservice teachers’ content knowledge improved, in that they learned to conceptualize and connect the algebraic notions to concrete examples. Subjects also enhanced their ability to make the distinction between constants and variables and write a generalization. Because subject matter knowledge is integral to good teaching (Ma, L, 1999), the nature of the activities is potentially significant to preservice teacher education.

Preservice teachers need extensive experiences in developing their own understanding of the role of algebraic generalization at the elementary level as well as models to enhance children’s understanding in the classroom. Many call for highly qualified and knowledgeable teachers; therefore, the use of concrete materials in this study has the potential to enhance the preparation of preservice teachers to teach algebra at the elementary level. The protocol also needs to be tested further and a cohort of preservice teachers followed into the early years of their practice to examine their development in teaching algebraic concepts.

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Voices from the Field: Teacher Candidates Struggle to “Read” Literacy Strategies for Teaching Adolescent Literacy

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Abstract

A multi-case action research study investigated how teacher candidates respond to teaching literacy in interdisciplinary contexts to diverse adolescents after taking a graduate education course that focused on strategic literacy instruction. The data revealed that teacher candidates began to develop more positive beliefs of teaching literacy and that their knowledge of literacy instruction was evolving. By the end of the course, they were able to discover new content-specific literacy strategies and how they could be applied to actual classroom practice. The implication is that teacher educators need to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to discover and practice effective content-specific strategies.
**Introduction**

Why do I have to teach reading in my content area? I’m not an English teacher.

Even if I wanted to implement literacy strategies, I wouldn’t be able to because I have no time. I need to teach the curriculum that will be covered on the state test.

These are typical statements uttered by the teacher candidates in my graduate literacy education course on the first day of class. At the end of the course, teacher candidates submit a final reflective paper. The following statement represents, in general, candidates’ changed perspectives towards their role as teachers of literacy:

Taking this class has given me a whole new approach to teaching. I am now much more aware of and sensitive to the responsibility of every teacher to have in-depth knowledge of reading and writing processes as well as content knowledge.

– Bill (Social Studies)

Having taught the literacy education course, EDU 506B Adolescent Reading, Writing, and Communicating in the Content Areas for Inclusive Classrooms of Diverse Learners, for ten semesters now, I am always struck by the change in candidates’ attitudes towards literacy instruction from the beginning of the course to the end. Content-area teacher candidates initially resist to “read” [to use the metaphor of reading that I consider synonymous to comprehending or understanding as does Neufeld (2005)] and make sense of the course because they do not believe in what they are “reading,” that is, that they will need to teach literacy to their adolescents in their interdisciplinary contexts. All content-area teachers are responsible for teaching literacy strategies appropriate to their disciplines (Freedman & Carver, 2007) to support their students’ learning of subject matter. By the end of the course, teacher candidates’ “reading” abilities change over the course of the semester. They are better able to “read the lines” of the course and understand the importance of helping adolescent students use literacy to learn content. They are also able to “read beyond the lines,” that is, understand beyond this semester-long course that it is their responsibility to incorporate literacy into their subject-matter curriculum and also more importantly how to actually accomplish it.

The definition of content-area literacy applied in this course is the ability to use multiple forms of texts and sign systems to learn subject matter in a given discipline. It goes beyond “reading and writing” to learn content (Vacca & Vacca, 2005) and includes the use of multimodalities (e.g., visual, aural, digital, etc.) to make content-area texts accessible. The definition also acknowledges the multiple literacies adolescents encounter on a daily basis “including the Internet, compact discs, music, television, magazines, other forms of print, and other sign systems and media” (Bean, as cited in Bean, 2000, para. 2). In today’s world, students need to be able to gather, interpret, apply, critique, and communicate new information across genres, media, and cultures. A focus on multiple literacies in secondary schools may help students navigate multiple media and texts and succeed in a globalized world. “Focusing preservice teachers’ on multiple literacies potentially opens them to a new awareness of the out-of-school literacies of their students [and] provides ideas for possible bridges to content-area concepts” (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007, p. 3).
Although the literature on content-area literacy instruction in teacher education abounds (Freedman & Carver, 2007; Gupta, 2004; Hall, 2005; Bean, 2001), there are a limited number of studies that examine how secondary teacher candidates develop an understanding of how and why to teach content-specific strategies—existing, self-created, or adapted strategies—that fit their particular disciplinary literacy tasks (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

To examine how my efforts as a teacher educator of a course in content-area literacy instruction helped secondary teacher candidates develop an understanding of what it means to teach literacy to adolescent students and how to actually do it, I conducted a study utilizing action research and multi-case study methodologies to examine how and why their attitudes toward and understanding of literacy changed over the course of the semester. I wanted to examine my instruction in terms of what worked, what did not work, and why. I looked forward to surprising findings. Specifically, I pursued two research questions: (a) How does the graduate-level course’s emphasis on literacy strategies influence in-service and preservice content-area teachers’ dispositions concerning literacy instruction? (b) How does the graduate-level course’s emphasis on literacy strategies shape in-service and preservice content-area teachers’ knowledge of literacy and literacy instruction? The implications would assist other teacher educators in formulating effective curriculum for secondary teacher preparation.

**Literature Review**

All too often, secondary teachers find out that their students lack the necessary literacy skills to read and write to learn content (Kamil, 2003). As students ascend the grades and literacy demands in different subjects increase, reading and comprehending text can become a difficult process. Students typically dislike reading when they are forced to read, when they read what they do not know about and care about, when they read difficult books, and when they are interrogated about what they read (Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Outcomes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) suggest that secondary school students, even with accommodations, do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to comprehend text. All secondary students are facing a need for a high degree of literacy, but the outcomes are not there (Kamil, 2003). Specifically, 26% of eighth-graders read below the basic level of reading-level achievement performance (NAEP, 2007). This fact becomes more troublesome when one factors in the tremendous influx of English language learners and students with special needs entering the mainstream classroom. Even in graduate school, many students can be disengaged from reading when they are disinterested in the content they are required to read.

**The Importance of Teaching Students Literacy Strategies**

Teaching students literacy strategies in the content areas is essential in helping them understand themselves as learners. “Teachers who know how to teach the reading and study skills strategies appropriate to their content area enhance their students’ success in the classroom” (Roe, Stoodt-Hill, & Burns, 2007, p. xiv); as a result, students become more effective readers and learners of the subject matter. Knowledgeable teachers provide students with the strategies they need to acquire and use new information found
in traditional print and electronic texts. Classrooms in which students learn to read, write, and engage in discussions allow them to construct meaning and improve their content-area knowledge and language skills (Sturtevant, 1995). When students are taught literacy strategies, they learn how to use them. The instruction has positive effects on their general understanding and interpretation of texts (Pressley, 2002). When multiple literacies are valued and used in the classroom to teach content, students are engaged, make connections to new information (Sheridan-Thompson, 2007), and change from disengaged, struggling adolescents to competently literate ones (O’Brien, 2006). According to Ogle,

…there’s nothing more significant than preparing kids well with the tools they need to think, to learn, and to use multiple literacies in their lives. We’re not just preparing them for high school. We’re preparing them for life, and if they can’t read and write well, if they can’t speak well, we haven’t done our job. (as cited in Arcangelo, 2002, p. 15)

Despite the low reading achievement level of our secondary school students—adolescent students are scoring lower in reading today than they did in 1992 (NAEP, 2007)—in general, students are not actually taught strategies and the value of applying them, even though there is strong research evidence that teaching literacy strategies is effective at improving their understanding of texts (Neufeld, 2005; Meltzer, as cited in Kamil, 2003). Teacher education programs need to be designed as such to allow teacher candidates to see the value in literacy strategies and learn how and why to implement them in their particular subject areas in order to support students’ literacy needs.

The Importance of Changing Teachers’ Beliefs about Literacy Instruction

Research shows that teachers’ beliefs about literacy influence their plans and actions (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gupta, 2004), which in turn influence the literacy practices and achievement of secondary students (Richardson et al., 1991; Bandura, 1997). An improvement in attitude often contributes to a transfer from knowledge to practice (Dieker & Little, 2005; Hall, 2005). Therefore, if beliefs predict action, then teacher education programs need to help teacher candidates develop their beliefs about literacy instruction (Freedman & Carver, 2007) and experience how literacy instruction works. Helping teacher candidates develop positive attitudes towards literacy instruction is difficult when they fail to see the efficacy of strategic instruction. This multi-case action research study examines how a graduate literacy education course influenced teacher candidates’ dispositions towards and knowledge of literacy and literacy instruction in the secondary content-area classroom.

Methodology

The Course and My Role as Instructor

The study took place in the course, EDU506B Adolescent Reading, Writing, and Communicating in the Content Areas for Inclusive Classrooms of Diverse Learners, which is a six-credit course that graduate students in the adolescent programs are required to complete. The course focuses on literacy instruction in the content areas.
The goal of this course is to enable teacher candidates to effectively teach literacy in interdisciplinary contexts to students in grades 7 through 12. It is designed to prepare teacher candidates to effectively teach listening, speaking, reading, writing, visualizing, and thinking skills across the curriculum to diverse adolescent students in grades 7 through 12. Topics addressed include the theory and practice of reading and writing instruction, language and concept acquisition, instructional conversations, guided reading, think-alouds, reflective and engaged reading, literature-based instruction, writing workshops, journals, portfolios, and technology integration. The main text is Secondary school literacy instruction: The content areas by Roe et al. (2007), and the course also requires extensive supplemental readings.

The course is theory-and-practice oriented. Teacher candidates elaborate and refine their theories of teaching literacy in interdisciplinary contexts. They also have multiple opportunities to apply and practice learned strategies through various course assignments, such as the simulated teaching performance whereby teacher candidates design a lesson plan and teach it to their classmates as if they are their designated students. As a former English teacher, I share with them my “stories from the field” related to my efforts in applying content strategies to my practice. For example, early in my teaching career, I assumed students could read literary texts just because they were decoding accurately. However, I soon realized that they were not making sense of what they were reading. They were not learning with text. I understood that I had to explicitly teach them literacy strategies to help them actively read with a purpose, to think about what they knew and connect it to new knowledge. I also realized I needed to use other texts and media to involve students more deeply in the content. I used texts and media, such as supplemental readings, authentic writing prompts, video, audio, and the computer to name a few.

One specific story from the field that I tell them is about the visualization exercise that I would employ in the introductory lesson on Of Mice and Men (1937) by John Steinbeck. In this exercise, I described the setting to my tenth-grade students as they closed their eyes and tried to imagine what the setting looked, smelled, and felt like and some of the sounds and tastes associated with it. After they opened their eyes, we proceeded with a discussion on what they remembered from this exercise, how their senses were tapped, and what they predicted the story would be about. A discussion of the setting, mood, and initial character description motivated students to pick up the book and continue reading to see what happened next. The Of Mice and Men visualization activity was more motivating and informative than the traditional reading of the setting description in the first few pages of the book that my students would do in previous years. When I tell these stories to my teacher candidates, they are able to contextualize their learning, conceptualize better what a practical application of strategic instruction looks like, and become more convinced of its benefits than previously.

In the course, I also model for them existing self-created or adapted strategies using multiple texts and modes that they may find useful for their content areas. Teacher candidates eventually create their own repertoire of research-based strategies that they could use depending on what the context requires. This is my goal: to equip them with the necessary research-based tools to make content comprehensible for their adolescent students.
The Participants

The participants in this study were eight teacher candidates enrolled in the required literacy education course, EDU506B, in the fall 2007 semester. There were four female students and four male students, consisting of three Science Education majors, three English Education majors, one Math Education major, and one Spanish Education major. Two students were in-service teachers in their second and third years of teaching respectively in a parochial school. Six students were preservice teachers, already in the field, doing observations and/or participating by teaching a few lessons throughout the semester to fulfill the Graduate Education program’s field experience requirement. All students in the course were seeking a master’s degree and initial teaching certification in their content area. For two students, teaching was a second career.

Data Sources

Data sources included observations, surveys, and documents such as field-based course assignments, namely, the literacy experience initial paper, the collaborative book review and presentation, the unit plan and unit plan presentation, the lesson plan, and teaching performance, and the content and strategies final paper. Candidates’ natural work was collected as data as is typical in action research (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). The course assignments were scored on a scale of 1 to 3 using comprehensive rubrics. The assignments were collected at different points in the semester, which allowed me to see growth and also created a degree of triangulation (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007).

Observations. Observations were made as a way of documenting the occurrences in the classroom as they related to the investigation of the research study. Class discussions, presentations by the students and the instructor, one-on-one student and instructor conferences, and small- and large-group in-class assignments provided rich data. These observations were recorded in the form of fieldnotes during the lesson or at the end of the lesson.

Surveys. Students completed one pre-course and one post-course attitudes survey. The survey consisted of 14 statements concerning literacy instruction in the content areas with which teacher candidates could answer on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The intention was to determine if there was or was not a change in perspectives concerning literacy instruction. Although questionnaires are limiting because they rely totally on the honesty and accuracy of participants’ responses, they nevertheless can be useful. The questions are examined for bias, clarity, and validity and tested through administration to small groups for usefulness and reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Documents. The first assignment students had to complete was the literacy experience paper. Teacher candidates were asked to write about their earliest experiences learning to read and write. The purpose of this assignment was to encourage students to reflect on their own experiences with literacy and examine how past experiences might have informed their attitudes towards teaching literacy. In addition, it was hoped that teacher candidates could understand from their own personal learning experiences that all learners learn differently and vary academically, linguistically, and culturally. This
means that as teachers they need to differentiate their instructional techniques to meet the
diverse needs of their students.
The assignments submitted in the middle of the course included the collaborative book
review assignment, the unit plan/unit plan presentation and the lesson plan/teaching
performance. The latter assignment requires candidates to do the following:

1. Develop a lesson plan from the curriculum unit that you will be teaching to the
class. Submit one lesson plan that specifies strategies that will help students
comprehend text and learn concepts in your content area and follow the standard
Molloy lesson plan format (a comprehensive five-page template), including
applicable New York State Learning Standards (http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/
standards.html). Specify content area, grade level, and abilities of students.

2. Teach the lesson to your classmates as if they were your designated group of
students within a classroom setting. After the demonstration, the class will give
you feedback on your lesson.

The lesson plan/teaching performance assignment allowed candidates to do two
things: (a) practice incorporating literacy into their instruction in a simulation exercise in
which they taught a lesson to their classmates as if they were their designated students
and (b) after the lesson reflect on their teaching performance and with the instructor’s
and classmates’ feedback think of ways to improve it.

The teaching performance could constitute an authentic activity because it is situated
during the semester that teacher candidates are engaged in field experience (Apprentice,
Pre-professional, and Student Teaching phases), conducting observations and teaching
several to most lessons in their high-school placements. The experiences that they gain in
field and in the course inform each other. The same teaching performance rubric used in
field is also employed in this course which provides uniformity of standards and makes
the activity even more authentic. Teacher candidates prepare an effective lesson that they
know their peers will be participating in and also critiquing and that their professor will
be evaluating. They look forward to feedback that they receive from their peers and
professor and gain valuable insights that they incorporate into the revision of their lesson.
As the class participates in the lesson, they gain an understanding of what adolescent
students could be experiencing and think about ways that they could incorporate the
strategies demonstrated into their own lessons. “Encouraging reflection about previous
classroom experiences (K-12) as students during university courses helps preservice
teachers to be innovative and critical of subsequent classroom teaching experiences, thus
making up for their lack of professional experience” (Redden, Simon, & Aulls, 2007,
par. 3).

The final assignment was a strategies paper which synthesized everything that
teacher candidates learned in the course. The following is the prompt for the final paper:

Focusing on your certification area(s), write a paper summarizing what you have
learned regarding recommendations for students’ literacy skills and strategies in your
teaching area. Include what you have learned from your research article, your
textbook, your collaborative book review and other sources.
This assignment gave insight into teacher candidates’ experiences in the course and their growth as learners. In all the assignments, teacher candidates were required to discuss selected literacy strategies and their application to content teaching.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The study is a multi-case action research study in which the perspectives of participants and the interactions between them are taken into account (Tellis, 1997). Each of the eight participants consisted of an individual case and together formed a whole study. “Multiple-case studies follow a replication logic…” whereby “each individual case study consists of a ‘whole’ study, in which facts are gathered from various sources and conclusions drawn on those facts” (1997, Case Study Methodology, para. 9). As in all case studies, multiple sources of data were triangulated for accuracy and reliability of results. Within the context of action-research, data was systematically collected, interpreted, and reflected upon over the course of the semester. This reflective process contributed to an evolving understanding of the research questions, and to the improvement of teaching practice (Mertler, 2006).

The data was analyzed by coding passages according to the categories of knowledge and dispositions. To increase validity, two research assistants and the researcher analyzed the data separately. The fieldnotes and course documents were analyzed for themes. There were only a few discrepancies across data sources that were then re-examined and re-coded in collaboration with the researcher. The final themes mirrored the research questions.

Data sources were collected and utilized at the end of the course and after course grades were given. Participation by teacher candidates was voluntary. Pseudonyms were used in place of participants’ names. Research conducted was approved by the Institutional Review Board.

**Results: Teacher Candidates’ Voices**

In this section, narrative accounts of the experiences of four representative teacher candidates in the course are presented. Different content areas are represented to reveal different voices and perspectives. The referencing codes represent the following data sources:

- Literacy Experience paper (LEP),
- Collaborative Book Review (CBR),
- Unit Plan (UP),
- Lesson Plan (LP),
- Teaching Performance (TP),
- Strategies paper (SP), and
- Fieldnotes (FN).

**Martha (English Education Major)**

From the beginning of the course, Martha saw herself as both a literacy teacher and a content teacher. The perception was not difficult to form since the two roles are
intertwined and even overlap. As a future English teacher, Martha understood her role to be that of a literacy teacher who will teach both literature and reading-writing “which open the door for critical thinking and promote in-depth analysis of various literary genres” (SP, p. 8). She discussed in her initial writing assignment her recognition “that not all students will love to read as she did/does.” She argued that “the trick is to find ways to engage them that reading can be pleasurable, and most importantly to eradicate any negative connotations they may have regarding reading” (LEP, p. 3).

Whereas in the beginning of the course, Martha discussed her role as a literacy teacher in abstract terms, as the course progressed, she began to concretize her views of teaching literacy and specified ways to foster students’ literacy development. For example, she argued that in order for students to build literacy and improve their reading comprehension, they need to use vocabulary-building pre-reading strategies. “An extensive vocabulary is the foundation on which to build literacy and improve comprehension” (SP, p. 3). One strategy used to strengthen students’ vocabulary base is Word Splash. In her unit plan’s lesson scenario, she describes how she would use this strategy:

Students will participate in a Word Splash activity using vocabulary words from their vocabulary charts, class discussions, and the reading. Students will construct a paragraph using six provided vocabulary words. The words do not need to be used in the order they appear and the paragraph should be relevant to The Great Gatsby. The six words for the activity are imply, permeate, vehement, feign, supercilious, and garrulous. (UP, p. 13)

**Edgar (Science Education Major)**

It was evident in class discussions and course assignments that Edgar, a Science Education major, understood, as did Martha, the importance of integrating literacy into the content areas, and specifically into the science curriculum: “Science literacy is just as important as any scientific research because once the experimentation is completed someone must translate, interpret, and analyze what had happened into a coherent, logical, and professional manner” (SP, p. 1).

In the course, Edgar grappled with the idea of how to infuse literacy into his own high school science classroom in a way that matched his teaching style and fit his particular context (second-year teaching in a Catholic high school). He expressed his belief in simplistic terms: “Literacy does not mean only reading and writing but verbal communication as well.” He attempted to select and write about and use reading, writing, and communication strategies that could become integrated into science, such as class discussion, semantic mapping, and the KWL chart (Ogle, 1986). Edgar discussed the need to maximize students’ engagement with text through literacy activities when he wrote: “I think literacy starts with a motivation, determination, and curiosity. Clay P. Bedford once said, ‘You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.’ ” Edgar agreed that “[i]n many cases content area teachers feel that literacy should only be addressed in English classes,” but “literacy must be addressed head on by all content areas.” He struggled with the idea that he was fully responsible for assisting his students in understanding science and putting this idea into practice. In class, he would constantly raise the issues of the need to cover the curriculum, meet the expectations of his outcomes-focused supervisor, and teach to the test (FN).
Megan (Science Education Major)

Reading was not something that Megan used to choose to do in her spare time. In fact, she stated that she was never much of a reader. In school she felt as if she was being forced to read and comprehend advanced material causing her to dislike reading even more. She disliked reading because she struggled with it while her teachers expected her to be able to comprehend grade-level text. Megan commented about her experience entering seventh grade: “I can remember ‘reading’ an entire book for English class, not understanding one word I ‘read’ and thinking it was fine” (LEP, p. 3). Having the choice to self-select texts in college and in graduate school helped her enjoy reading: “As I get older, reading is becoming less of a pain and more of an enjoyable experience. I find myself more interested in the books my friends are reading and I want to read them myself!” (LEP, p. 4).

At the beginning of the course, Megan saw herself exclusively as a Science teacher and not as a literacy teacher. She stated: “I began the semester with the idea that comprehension, note taking and study skills fell under the English Language Arts curriculum and all other teachers would simply teach” (SP, p. 9).

Megan described her journey from “naïve thinking” to insightful discovery in her final paper:

Reading comprehension is very important, and has become more significant to myself, in particular, throughout this course. My elementary school never stressed proper note taking or study skills. My English teachers were the ones to educate me on the necessary skills I needed for all subjects. From that point on, I felt it was their sole responsibility to instruct students about these skills. Again, I take full responsibility for my naïve thinking, and now after completing this literacy course, can say that I, as a science teacher, will be teaching comprehension, note-taking, and study skills. (p. 9)

She discussed the role of science teachers in developing students’ fluency, specifically, accurate word decoding, automatic processing of information, and prosodic reading, to help them understand science texts.

Megan also recognized the importance of connecting new information to old information by activating students’ schemata using multiple literacy modes. She writes:

Teachers can do this in number of ways, such as starting discussions about the text material prior to reading, viewing media clips to initiate a topic, or using computers and the internet to set the stage for new theories. Students’ prior knowledge will be activated and their schema developed purely by previewing material using other means of learning, like technology.

Tim (Math Education Major)

Tim, a Mathematics Education major, attributed his literacy achievement to his teachers who used motivational techniques, like stickers and gold stars, to get him to read more. Tim suggested that “…students be taught pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies in the high school math classroom so that they can effectively interpret and study from the textbook” (SP, p. 4).
Tim was quite unsure of what to make of the course initially. EDU 506B was the first course he took in the program in pursuit of a graduate degree in Math Education (teaching was his second career) and had not been exposed to literacy strategies before coming to graduate school. From the beginning, he questioned the content of the course: “What do you mean students in math classes need to be able to read?...What do they need to read in a math class?” (FN).

In his final paper, he wrote about the struggles students face when trying to read math content and how teachers could address their literacy needs:

Most students in the high school math classroom do not engage themselves with the text when reading independently. The textbooks of a high school math classroom present both written and mathematical content, which quite often is too much information for students to synthesize and comprehend…They also need to be somewhat math literate in the sense that they need to solve certain problems using numbers, variables, and mathematical reasoning. Thus when coupled together, many students become upset, frustrated, and simply give up. This is where the teacher paired with the effective use of pre-, during-, and post-reading provides immediate assistance to the struggling student.

Tim also discussed several of these reading strategies, like Enactment Strategies (Wilhelm, 2002) (CBR), “to engage students into their textbook, develop their math literacy,…so that [they] can build connections with other subject areas and most importantly effectively incorporate the information which was learned into their own lives” (SP, p. 10). According to Wilhelm (2002), enactment strategies or action strategies are strategies that create situations in a classroom that allow students to “imagine to learn,” through dramatic and aesthetic activities; they employ multiple modalities and actively involve, engage, and challenge students in meaningful ways, allowing them to use visuals, gestures, speech, and so forth to deepen their comprehension of the text. Tim embedded literacy in the interdisciplinary unit plan which he developed with Edgar and Martha in creative ways. In the unit description section of their Math/Science unit plan, the authors wrote:

The students will see how the material scaffolds onto each other, as well as how math is used to prove the theories of genetics, ecology, populations, and evolution. Mathematical concepts are applied in depicting relationships amongst scientific hypotheses. Throughout this unit, on the genetics of evolution, it will be made evident how both mathematical and scientific ideas correlate with one another. (UP, p. 2)

Results: The Whole Picture

Dispositions

How did the course’s emphasis on literacy strategies influence in-service and preservice content-area teachers’ dispositions concerning literacy instruction? Data revealed that teacher candidates began to develop an understanding of their responsibility as literacy teachers.
Realizing their responsibility as literacy teachers. As the course progressed, teacher candidates became more accepting of the notion that they were literacy teachers; they began to see themselves in this role. The initial literacy experience paper assignment allowed teacher candidates to reflect on their earliest experiences with literacy and revealed how these experiences affected their decisions about content literacy strategies. It is evident from their papers that candidates had both positive and negative experiences with reading and writing in school and that their teachers played a role in forming their beliefs about literacy.

Not being able to comprehend a text was a contributing factor in candidates’ dislike of reading. Their teachers’ actions in the classroom, whether or not they allowed self-selected reading or independent reading, or whether or not they reinforced good reading habits and taught literacy skills shaped students’ attitudes towards literacy instruction. If their content-area teachers did not instruct literacy skills, then they believed that literacy instruction fell only under the domain of the English teacher; they brought this attitude to the course. Furthermore, teacher candidates also linked a dislike of reading to a disconnect between their teachers’ expected mode of expression and their desired mode of expression. If their teachers encouraged and valued the use of multiple literacies in the classroom, then they had a renewed interest in their subject area.

Surveys

The pre-course and post-course attitudes surveys were administered to examine if the graduate literacy education course promoted changes in teacher candidates’ attitudes towards adolescent literacy and literacy instruction. Teacher candidates’ responses did actually change to indicate more positive attitudes. For example, in the pre-survey 50% of teacher candidates disagreed and 50% agreed with statement #1, Literacy instruction is the domain of English Language Arts teachers. In the post-survey, more teacher candidates disagreed (62.5%) and fewer agreed (37.5%) with the given statement. Those who agreed added next to the statement the following qualifier: “Literacy instruction is the responsibility of all content-area teachers but especially the ELA teachers.” This is significant because it demonstrates how teacher candidates were still trying to understand what it means to be content-area teachers of literacy.

However, as their responses to question #1 in the post-course survey indicated, candidates still believed that they were teachers of literacy strategies rather than literacy teachers. They were still trying to read beyond the lines of the text, that is, understand beyond this semester-long course that teaching students how to think is more important than covering the curriculum or teaching to the test.

Knowledge

How did the course impact teacher candidates’ knowledge of literacy and literacy instruction? The data revealed that teacher candidates’ knowledge of literacy was evolving and that by the end of the course they were able to “read” the importance of teaching students literacy strategies in their respective content areas and to “read” key effective strategies and how to implement them in the classroom. Specifically, they were in the process of (a) developing an understanding of literacy and literacy instruction, (b) understanding that literacy is a process that facilitates learning in all disciplines, (c)
discovering new literacy strategies and how they could be applied to actual classroom practice, and (d) still learning to “read” content-literacy instruction.

*Developing an understanding of literacy and literacy instruction.* The constructivist view of understanding is being able to explain information, connect it to previous knowledge, and use information. Applying this definition to what the teacher candidates learned in the course, it is evident that they began to develop an understanding of what it means to be a content literacy teacher and learn new literacy strategies, connect them to their background knowledge, and apply them to classroom practice. They also gained new insights into tapping students’ multimodalities to make new information accessible.

Teacher candidates also understood literacy as being situated and socially constructed (Gee, 1996, as cited in Sheridan-Thomas). In their final papers, they discussed the importance of incorporating multiple modes of expression into their lessons. In their actual lesson plans, they used technology and created scenarios that addressed the diverse learning styles of students. They recognized the importance of tapping into students’ multiple literacies to connect what is already familiar to what is not. The Molloy lesson plan format that teacher candidates need to follow in designing their lessons includes a section on Differentiation Modes that they need to address. This ensures that they understand how to address the diverse multimodal needs of all students. Some examples follow:

- The visual/spatial learner will benefit from many of the lesson strategies including scene analysis and illustration, character map, various graphic organizers, vocabulary chart, creative note-taking strategies, Be the Expert, and the rotating brainstorm activity. All of these techniques involve visualization which will enhance the learning experience of students.

- The verbal/linguistic learner will advance through participating in class discussions, group work which requires oral reporting, Be the Expert, think-pair-share, peer conferencing, Hot Seating, rotating brainstorm, vocabulary chart, and reading aloud in class. These techniques require students to verbalize their reflections, to interact with their peers, and to give and receive feedback from their classmates.

- The interpersonal learner will excel from the discussion and interaction which occurs during the creation of graphic organizers, Be the Expert, Hot Seating, rotating brainstorm, think-pair-share, peer conferencing, active listening, exit cards, and class discussion.

- The intrapersonal learner will benefit from the class activities which require personal reflection and require students to apply themes and concepts to their own lives such as journal writing, making predictions about the novel, analyzing quotations from the text, short answer questions, essay questions, letter writing, class discussion, and writing a society column.

*Understanding that literacy is a process that facilitates learning in all disciplines.* Teacher candidates in the course expressed having gone into their respective fields because they had knowledge of and passion for their subject areas. Initially, teacher
candidates could not yet “read” the importance of teaching literacy in all content areas. Eventually, the end of the course, teacher candidates, gained insights into the usefulness of strategic instruction in all disciplines.

Discovering new literacy strategies and how they could be applied to actual classroom practice. Teacher candidates learned existing, self-created, and adapted strategies from course assignments, discussions, and lessons that they could specifically apply to their particular teaching contexts. Teacher candidates demonstrated their knowledge of a multitude of existing literacy strategies when they engaged in the “popcorn” activity where they took turns naming different strategies in just a limited amount of time. Tim was impressed and thought that if we were to write down the strategies and count them, we would discover that they were at least one hundred or even more. The variability in strategy selection suggests that these students engaged in an analytic consideration of the diverse students that they would be teaching (Bean, 2001) and created a repertoire of strategies from which to select from and use as the situation required. They learned how to use strategies flexibly and to select appropriate ones depending on the situation.

In the teaching performance assignment, teacher candidates demonstrated the use of various subject-specific literacy strategies in an adolescent classroom in student-centered and creative ways. These strategies included adapted strategies as well as self-created strategies. For example, Tim incorporated the following literacy activity into his lesson scenario: “Students will read the poem One Inch Tall from the book Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. They will write a brief paragraph about the experiences a one-inch-tall person might encounter” (UP, p. 22). Subsequent developmental procedures have students relate the poem to ratio and proportion.

The use of students’ multimodalities was also evident in teacher candidates’ work. For example, in a lesson on biomes, teacher candidates had students create and build a “Biome Scene” with plants, animals, and other geographic structures representing their given biome, using materials such as oaktag, markers, pens, pencils, papers, etc. After the groups finished their project, each group presented its scene and explained what materials were used to represent the scene and why. The rationale is that students would be engaged in a multimodal activity that taps their creativity and appeals to their senses. Another example is Tim’s math lesson in which students worked on probability problems concerning seats on an airplane visually displayed on paper. In Angie’s lesson, students viewed a PowerPoint and were asked to identify the correct Spanish descriptive adjective or adjective depicting emotions. In his strategies paper, Peter discussed the use of a video of one of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speeches to show the impact of effective rhetoric on an audience.

The make-up of the class was also a factor that contributed to teacher candidates’ experiences with literacy instruction. It was evident in the course that the teachers learned from each other and were able to make meaning of and contextualize their experiences. Edgar would often come to class sharing his experiences of trying to incorporate literacy into his science classroom. He would say to his colleagues, “This strategy really worked in my class today. You should try it.” Tim, who worked as a substitute math teacher, would come to class and exclaim, “Wow. I tried this strategy, today and the kids loved it!” Sometimes, he would add, “But I did it a little differently.” Teacher candidates were able to make meaning of the strategies that they were learning in class and contextualize them in actual practice.
The initial and final papers as well as in-class reflective pieces, gave teacher candidates the opportunity to understand themselves as teachers and learners and plan for future action. It has been documented that when teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices, they develop (a) a better understanding of the teaching process, (b) stronger pedagogical skills, and (c) improved attitudes toward the teaching-learning process and their diverse students (Honigsfeld & Schiering, 2004).

Still Learning to “Read” Content-Literacy Instruction

Although teacher candidates overcame their resistance to “reading” content-literacy instruction through EDU506B, they were still trying to understand in depth how literacy would fit into their teaching contexts amid ubiquitous curriculum- and test-driven practices in their schools. Candidates initially complained that teaching literacy strategies took too much time and that they needed more importantly to teach content that would be covered on the test. Even though candidates reported in their literacy experience paper that standardized testing hindered their enjoyment of reading in school, nevertheless, teaching to the test was a possible priority consideration next to literacy instruction.

What Surprised Me

Even though teacher candidates learned a wide range of content-literacy strategies, in fact, they were very selective in their choices when it came to incorporating them into their assignments. They tended to cling to a few good ones that they tested out and liked and were somewhat hesitant to try out new ones. They repeated these strategies in their discussions and course assignments. For example, Tim first read about enactment strategies in Jeffrey Wilhelm’s book (2002), Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension, which he critiqued for an assignment. After realizing their effectiveness in teaching math, Tim incorporated these strategies into his collaborative unit plan, individual lesson plan, and final strategies paper.

Teacher candidates learned to formulate new strategies and adapt existing ones so that they could address the specialized reading demands of the content areas of math, science, history, English, Spanish, and social studies, since understanding the importance of their role in strategic instruction, albeit significant, was not sufficient. Teacher candidates must learn how to integrate literacy into their curriculum and practice that is appropriate and effective for their respective content areas. “Traditional efforts to encourage every content area teacher to be a reading teacher by pressing them into service in teaching purpose-setting and summarization strategies have neither been widely accepted by teachers in their disciplines nor particularly effective in raising reading achievement on a broader scale” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 13).

Discussion

This multi-case action research study investigated how teacher candidates respond to teaching literacy strategies in interdisciplinary contexts to diverse adolescent learners after taking a graduate education course that focused on strategic literacy instruction. Specifically, the study examined how the course influenced teacher candidates’
dispositions towards and knowledge of literacy instruction at the secondary school level. Like the adolescent students they would be teaching, they, too, had to be able to “read” and make sense of the “text”—the course in this case—to learn the content and to make meaningful and effective applications to their contexts.

Teacher candidates adopted more positive dispositions concerning content literacy instruction by the end of the course as they began to develop an understanding of the importance of implementing literacy development into content-area teaching. In terms of knowledge, they developed an understanding that literacy is a process that facilitates learning in all disciplines. They learned new literacy strategies and how they could be integrated into their fields. Teacher candidates’ understanding of literacy and why and how it should be taught, however, is still evolving. Teachers need to be shown the professional value of literacy and how to teach it. It is hoped that the course is a microcosm of the classroom and that teachers engage in interdepartmental collaboration concerning content-area literacy instruction when they go into their own classrooms.

Teacher candidates gained through classroom assignments, discussions, and trial and error testing of strategies in their own classrooms, a new perspective that strategic instruction does not have to be time-consuming and that it needs to be woven into the curriculum if we want our students to be able to develop their literacy skills and consequently succeed on standardized exams. Using multiple texts, genres, and media can help maximize students’ motivation and engagement with content and develop them into thinkers in our knowledge-based world. Teaching literacy should not be an add-on, but rather integrated into the curriculum. In theory, teacher candidates seemed to understand this idea as evidenced in the data. It is my hope that these students continue to make literacy a part of their curriculum and teach literacy strategies despite contextual constraints that they may face in their classrooms; that they develop creative understanding (Roe et al., 2007) and produce new literacy strategies and applications based on their experiences in the course. Teaching content that may be covered on the test may raise test scores, but not students’ understanding of the material. In fact, it has been shown that students who are taught literacy strategies improve their scores on tests (Ness, 2007; Kamil, 2003).

Conclusion

This multi-case action research study attempted to shed light on the importance of carefully designing teacher preparation courses in a way that will maximize teacher candidates’ potential of becoming effective literacy practitioners. If teachers’ attitudes towards literacy instruction predict action, then teacher educators need to work with preservice and in-service teachers to change their deeply rooted ideas and beliefs. They also need to provide opportunities for these teachers to discover and practice effective strategies to meet the demands of their respective content areas.

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Health Teacher Candidate Dispositions: Presenting a Method of Assessment

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Abstract

According to the standards outlined by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers must know and demonstrate the content knowledge of pedagogy, professional knowledge, and skills and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. An assignment was developed in a health education teaching methods course to help health teacher candidates articulate behavioral objectives for beginning to expert levels of teacher candidate dispositions in five dimensions. The assignment created a unique learning opportunity for health teacher candidates where they identified behaviors considered professional and appropriate in five key dispositional dimensions. The articulation of dispositional criteria and behavioral objectives helped the development of a method of assessment that was compiled in a document. This document is a useful resource for teacher preparation programs and demonstrates the educational unit’s instructional staff’s commitment to teacher candidate learning.
Introduction

An educational unit seeking accreditation of their teacher preparation programs is required to comply with the standards explicated in National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)’s conceptual framework. NCATE provides a template in the form of its conceptual framework to assist schools, departments, and universities in creating learning environments where new teachers are able to attain not only knowledge of content and pedagogy, but also professional skills to teach. NCATE believes that, “caring, competent, and qualified teachers should teach every child. Student learning involves basic skills but also the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as a responsible citizen and contributor to the new economy” (NCATE, 2002, p. 3). The caring aspect of the teachers is addressed by the notion of dispositions.

Defining Professional Dispositions

NCATE has required all professional education units (PEUs) seeking accreditation to formulate a conceptual framework designed to direct the instruction and focus of all programs within the unit. The conceptual framework of the researchers’ college derived from NCATE consists of six standards divided into two thematic sections: Candidate Performance and Unit Capacity (NCATE, 2008). The candidate performance standards (1 and 2) focus on knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher candidates. All teaching units must be able to demonstrate that their students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to facilitate high-quality P-12 student learning. The idea is to produce excellent teachers who possess dispositions that help their students develop academically and socially (Helm, 2006). Specifically, NCATE (2002) defines dispositions as:

...the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (p. 53)

As defined by NCATE, dispositions translate into “a way of being” or even personality characteristics that teacher candidates must either possess or cultivate to be effective teachers. Furthermore, once key dispositions have been identified, the process of teaching candidates to fully understand their meaning and importance, and helping them cultivate such dispositions, has to be a well-defined task. According to Borko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007), those in favor of building dispositions into the NCATE standards claim that “dispositions are an individual’s tendencies to act in a particular manner” (p. 361) and can predict whether teacher candidates will apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in their own classroom teaching. Helm (2006) states that it is difficult to identify key dispositions that efficiently facilitate P-12 student learning. Many colleges and universities are concerned about the assessment of dispositions because it is not easy to measure qualities like decency, humility, or virtue. Mullin (2003) suggests that teaching and learning beyond knowledge and skills is in the area of affect, which includes qualities like zeal, goodness, and style:
In teaching, affect can be a charisma that when used to draw students into relationships that are supported by knowledgeable, skilled and caring teachers, transforms those students into passionate, life-long learners who are committed to and skillfully engaged in life, relationships and the world around them. (p. 3)

Clearly, the interpretation of dispositions can be varied, ranging from abstract concepts like affect or goodness to concrete concepts like punctuality and attention to detail. NCATE’s conceptual framework employs a shared-vision approach, seeking to merge with the unit’s intellectual philosophy and mission of teacher education. As such, the definitions of teacher dispositions are left to the unit or institution seeking accreditation. The Professional Educational Unit (PEU) at the researchers’ college has aligned its conceptual framework to meet NCATE’s six expectations of candidate performance and unit capacity. Specifically, theme two of the conceptual framework of the college’s PEU defines student teacher dispositions as Positive Outlook: Optimism and enthusiasm; Intellectual Integrity: Honesty, trustworthiness, and fair-mindedness; Respect: Consideration, cultural sensitivity, and empathy; Self-Awareness: Sensitivity to others; Dedication: Persistence, flexibility, generosity, creativity, and patience (The College at Brockport Professional Education Unit, 2005).

The researchers used the definitions of student dispositions from the conceptual framework of their college’s PEU as a template to further explicate the five dimensions of dispositions. The following five dimensions of health teacher candidate dispositions were further defined: Respect: Having consideration, cultural sensitivity, and empathy toward self and others; Positive Outlook: Optimistic and enthusiastic perspective on one’s self, work, co-workers/peers and life situation in general; Self-Awareness: Having knowledge about one’s strengths and weaknesses, a willingness to improve upon one’s deficiencies, an open acceptance of challenges, and the ability to share one’s talents with others without bias or judgment; Intellectual Integrity: Honesty, trustworthiness, and fair-mindedness toward one’s work and co-workers/peers; Dedication: Being persistent, flexible, generous, creative, and patient. These definitions were used to guide the students’ instruction regarding the dispositions.

Rationale

Once dispositions are defined, according to McKnight (2004), it is crucial to develop or adopt reliable assessment tools to measure the teacher candidates’ progress along the complex process of “settling into the dispositions” (p. 227). Many colleges and universities that make identifying dispositions part of their teaching methods program are concerned about how to assess them (Diez, 2006; Helm, 2006). Hillman, Rothermal, and Scarano (2005) agree that teacher candidate dispositions are an important component of teacher education programs, and schools must develop “systematic plans for effectively evaluating dispositions and dealing with consequences of negative dispositions” (para. 8). Wayda and Lund (2005) argue that to ensure that teacher candidates internalize the dispositions, they must be held accountable for them. Consequently, there are many approaches to assess dispositions, including using a variety of commercial instruments, student portfolios, entry interviews, and instruments created by colleges and university education programs to fit their interpretation of the dispositions (Mullin, 2003; Wayda & Lund, 2005; Hillman et al., 2005; Helm, 2006; Lund, Wayda, Woodward & Buck, 2007).
While the larger purpose of the project was to develop a method of assessing the health teacher candidates’ level of proficiency in the five dispositions, the underlying goal of the project was to assist the health teacher candidates develop a thorough understanding of the meaning of the dispositions. This was accomplished by helping teacher candidates articulate the meaning of the dispositions by developing a set of behavioral objectives reflecting the defined criteria for each disposition. By understanding what each disposition truly meant, each candidate was given the opportunity to critically self-reflect and place themselves in the appropriate level of competency. Phelps (2006) states that teacher candidates’ dispositions can be shaped by posing questions to them that “shape various habits of mind.” (p. 176). Villegas (2007) proposes that dispositions are “tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs” (p. 373). It follows, therefore, that the teacher candidates’ actions should be the focus of measurement. Observable actions clarify the assessment process and provide opportunity for correction and improvement, once appropriate standards are articulated. According to Bowers (2005) and Harrison, Lawson, and Wortley (2005), engaging a student in reflection and self-assessment not only helps the student see the value and worth of assignments but ultimately helps them achieve professional autonomy and increases their self-confidence. In a second step towards measuring teacher candidates’ level of competency regarding the dispositions, candidates completed an online self-assessment at the beginning and end of the semester where teacher candidates learn teaching methods. In the self-assessment, they self-reported on their perceived level of proficiency regarding the five dispositions, keeping in mind the behavioral descriptors developed earlier in the semester.

Methods and Procedures

Prior to data collection, Institutional Review Board approval to conduct research was obtained from the researchers’ college Human Subjects Committee. The project was conducted in two phases over the duration of one semester. At the researchers’ college, health teacher candidates spend the penultimate semester of their senior year in a teaching methods program where they are expected to apply their knowledge of theories and models of Health education to lesson plan development and community programming.

At mid-semester, the health teacher candidates receive feedback about their performance both academic (grades, etc.) and dispositional (how they are doing in terms of the dispositions). The health teacher candidates receive written feedback from their faculty about their level of competence in each of the dimensions of the dispositions. All faculty teaching the health education teaching methods courses meet with the individual students and then discuss the progress of each candidate to put together an assessment of each individual candidate that might look like this:

D has stated that she isn’t Exemplary in any of the dispositions, but felt as though she was proficient in all the Dispositions. D is at the very top (1%) in terms of academic rank in the class, and we perceive her only weakness to be her level of self-confidence (which seems to be low). On the whole, D appears painfully shy, tentative, unsure, even fearful and naive. We believe that as D matures and acquires experiential knowledge, her self-confidence will improve and she will grow into a fine health professional. We would state that D’s overall Dispositional rating would be Developing.
The purpose of providing a written mid-semester assessment of the health teacher candidates’ level of competency regarding the dispositions is two-fold: First, it provides the candidate with a sense of how he or she is being perceived by his or her faculty; and secondly, it provides the candidate with the opportunity to improve their level of competence regarding the dispositions.

**Phase I**

In the first week of the semester, students were asked to describe behaviors at the Unacceptable, Developing, Proficient, and Exemplary levels for each disposition as part of a Disposition Worksheet assignment (Figure 1). During the second week of the semester, they were asked to complete an online self-assessment reporting on their own level of proficiency regarding each disposition. The online self-assessment was created by the assessment coordinator housed in the researchers’ PEU. The online self-assessment comprised the following questions:

1. Overall, how often do you demonstrate a **Positive Outlook** when you are working with children, their families, and other education professionals?

2. Overall, how often do you demonstrate **Respect** when you are working with children, their families, and other education professionals?

3. Overall, how often do you demonstrate **Intellectual Integrity** when you are working with children, their families, and other education professionals?

4. Overall, how often do you demonstrate **Dedication** when you are working with children, their families, and other education professionals?

5. Overall, how often do you demonstrate **Self-Awareness** when you are working with children, their families, and other education professionals?

The students rated themselves on a four-point ordinal scale on each of the five questions, indicating their level of proficiency being either Unacceptable, Developing, Proficient, or Exemplary, quantified as follows:

1. Unacceptable (displaying the disposition 0 through 39% of the time)

2. Developing (displaying the disposition 40 through 74% of the time)

3. Proficient (displaying the disposition 75 through 89% of the time)

4. Exemplary (displaying the disposition 90 through 100% of the time)
In addition, the health teacher candidates also provided a two- to three-sentence qualitative explanation of their rating. Subsequently, they were also required to write a brief paper describing their knowledge of and level of competence regarding the dispositions. The questions they had to address in their two- to three-page paper included their qualitative understanding of the dispositions, why they felt dispositions were important to the profession of health education, where they believed they had work to do, and finally what they believed were the tools, resources, or skills they needed to reach their goals with regards to the five dimensions of health educator dispositions. Figure 2 is an example of student generated behavioral objectives for the various levels of competency for the Positive Outlook disposition.

**Figure 1. Health Educator Disposition Assignment**

Complete the Student Disposition Worksheet. Describe _behaviors_ that you believe exemplify Exemplary, Proficient, Developing, and Unacceptable, in each of the 5 dimensions of Health Educator Dispositions, viz: Dedication, Positive Outlook, Intellectual Integrity, Respect, and Self-Awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Outlook</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong></td>
<td>A positive outlook is defined as an optimistic and enthusiastic perspective on one’s self, work, co-workers’ peers, and life situation in general. Describe behaviors that you believe fall in each of the following categories.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td>Respect is defined as having consideration, cultural sensitivity, and empathy toward self and others.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual Integrity</strong></td>
<td>Intellectual integrity is defined as honesty, trustworthiness, and fair-mindedness toward one’s work and co-workers/peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedication</strong></td>
<td>Being dedicated means being persistent, flexible, generous, creative and patient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Self-awareness is defined as having knowledge about one’s strengths and weaknesses, a willingness to improve upon on’s deficiencies, an open acceptance of challenges and the ability to share one’s talents with others without bias or judgment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the health teacher candidates also provided a two- to three-sentence qualitative explanation of their rating. Subsequently, they were also required to write a brief paper describing their knowledge of and level of competence regarding the dispositions. The questions they had to address in their two- to three-page paper included their qualitative understanding of the dispositions, why they felt dispositions were important to the profession of health education, where they believed they had work to do, and finally what they believed were the tools, resources, or skills they needed to reach their goals with regards to the five dimensions of health educator dispositions. Figure 2 is an example of student generated behavioral objectives for the various levels of competency for the Positive Outlook disposition.
Figure 2. Example of Teacher Candidates’ Behavioral Description of the Levels of Competency with the Positive Outlook Dimension of Dispositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Outlook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sloppy self-presentation</td>
<td>Dressed the part, but not acting it</td>
<td>On time and present</td>
<td>Always willing to be able to be involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative outward attitude</td>
<td>Going through the motions, but not putting forth a lot of effort</td>
<td>Asking appropriate questions</td>
<td>Work is completed to the fullest ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning legitimate authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Going the extra mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing negative thoughts or feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Open minded</td>
<td>Always looking to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking initiative</td>
<td>Being responsible, respectful, and trustworthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>Looking for the big picture</td>
<td>Having a high level of self-confidence and self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming others or outside events for own shortcomings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II

At the end of the semester, the students completed the same online self-assessment they had completed at the beginning of the semester as a post-test. They also wrote a second paper describing their movement and growth along the four levels of proficiency from being unacceptable to exemplary professionals in health education. The online self-assessment was completed twice during the senior year: prior to the didactic educational fall semester (pretest), at the conclusion of the fall semester (post-test).

Data Analysis

Twenty-four health teacher candidates enrolled in the health education methods program, completed the same online self-assessment at the beginning and end of the semester. Of these, 96% were female, and the remaining were male. The mean age of group was 22.79, with a standard deviation of ±2.1. After students had completed the online self-assessments, the data were downloaded into Microsoft Excel® and percentages were calculated for responses in each category for each disposition.

Results

A percentage distribution of student self-assessments at both beginning and end points of the semester was calculated (Figure 3). At both points in the semester, the health teacher candidates self-assessed at Proficient to Exemplary levels in the Positive
Outlook domain. In the class exercise describing behavioral objectives for each level of competency, the health teacher candidates had described that “being on time, displaying enthusiasm, going the extra mile, displaying a high level of self-confidence and a ‘can-do’ attitude (self-efficacy)” were Proficient to Exemplary behaviors. It was also clear to see that the health teacher candidates did indeed embody these behaviors – typically, students enrolled in the teaching methods program are a highly motivated group because they are in their final year of coursework, preparing to enter into student teaching. The health teacher candidates in the researchers’ study sample have actively chosen teaching or community health education as their profession and are eager to begin that journey. The students’ self-report was cross-validated by their instructors’ mid-term report of their dispositional performance.

With regard to the Respect domain of the dispositions, the health teacher candidates remained consistent in their beginning to end self-report as well – mostly rating themselves as Proficient to Exemplary.

In the Intellectual Integrity domain, there was an increase from Developing to Proficient at the beginning of the semester to Proficient to Exemplary at the end of the semester. This too was believable because during the semester, the health teacher candidates were provided the opportunity to improve their writing/citing and research skills, as well as hone their knowledge about theory and practice in health education. Consequently, they were better prepared at the end of the semester and appropriately reported higher levels of competence regarding Intellectual Integrity.

Similarly, in the Dedication domain, the health teacher candidates were more likely to report even Unacceptable to Developing to Proficient levels of competency. The teaching methods semester is typically challenging for the teacher candidate. Although this is the career path they have chosen, the work required for the courses, coupled with field observation and other commitments can often prove to be difficult to manage and does, in some cases, diminish the students’ sense of dedication. At the end of the semester, however, when the “big-picture” or a tangible outcome begins to become apparent to the health teacher candidates, their sense of having made the right career choice is typically reaffirmed.

Their end of the semester self-assessment for the Dedication domain increased to Proficient to Exemplary levels. Lastly, the health teacher candidates self-assessed at the Proficient to Exemplary levels at the end of the semester. Having successfully completed the program and after receiving feedback from faculty, the supervisors at their community and school sites, they were able to acquire a better sense of themselves – their strengths and weaknesses.
Students’ comments, explaining their rationale for their self-perceived level of proficiency were recorded. The following thematic statements were noted (verbatim) for those students who rated themselves exemplary.

Positive Outlook:

To date I would say that I have mastered being optimistic and seeing the good in a situation that seems daunting. I am able to help pass this optimism on to others that are approaching the same situation. I believe I need to focus on genuine enthusiasm towards what I am about to embark on. I tend to let nerves get in the way and mask my enthusiasm at times.

I always try to come in with a smile, and if the day before my class was rough, I look at today as a new day.

As I have matured in my last years of college, one of the most important things I have learned is that having a negative outlook never gets you far. With that said, everything I do, I try to have a positive attitude about everything.

I would rate myself as exemplary when working with children, their families and other professionals. I come to class feeling optimistic about challenges I may face, and how these challenges will better my skills as a student and potential teacher.
Respect:

I feel that I am very respectful of others. When subbing, a young boy became upset and instead of having him sit and cry at his desk, I brought him into the hallway to have him explain, and for me to listen to what his situation was.

I would rate myself as being exemplary in this category. I love listening to others and hearing what they have to say. Likewise, I am polite and very slow to judge. Rarely am I ever not considerate of others.

When I received a long term position as a Chinese translator, and spoke/knew any Chinese, I saw it as a possibility to learn from a culture I knew little about and to teach the students about our American culture.

Intellectual Integrity:

I am honest, trustworthy, fair-minded and loyal. I do take pride in my work and I always feel there is room for improvement. It is hard for me to do the ‘extras’ and sometimes I am not sure what they are.

Time management, responsibility, and accountability are some of my core values. I pride myself on being an effective organizer and planner. As I continue with my education, I look forward to seeking out feedback to further develop my time management skills. For these reasons, I have rated myself proficient in this category.

I would say that I am close enough to developing however I do still have characteristics of unacceptable. I do procrastinate and am late sometimes but I am really working on that. For the most part I can cite sources correctly, and use research to learn and advance myself intellectually.

Dedication:

I believe I am persistent and flexible. I do also believe I need to focus this semester on improving my patience. I easily get frustrated with peers who work at a slower intellectual pace. I do realize in my future I will have students and colleagues who work at a slower pace so this is an issue I need to correct.

I am developing in this section. While I rarely give up or quit at anything, I feel that I could be more of a volunteer. I am always willing to help others but sometimes I don’t throw myself out there to do so unless I see the problem right in front of me. I do always complete my work well and on time because I don’t like doing less that I know I am capable of.

Self-Awareness:

I am well aware of my strengths and weaknesses. My one area that can use improvement is problem solving. Sometimes it is hard for me to give multiple ideas to solve problems.
I would rate myself as proficient. I am very aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I use constructive criticism to improve myself. I always accept responsibility for my actions. In this category I just need to make sure I am always taking steps to improve myself.

I am aware of what I can and can’t do. I can take criticism and it is often taken to the heart. This is good for the fact that I am serious on improving this flaw however it affects my emotions sometimes.

It appeared to the researchers that the health teacher candidates had a good sense of the definitions of the dispositions enough to be able to internalize them and accurately place themselves in the various levels of competency. Equally revelatory were the results regarding the candidates who did not rate themselves Exemplary on the different dimensions. Twenty of the twenty-four did not rate themselves Exemplary on the Positive Outlook dimension at the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, at the end of the semester, no one was in the Unacceptable or Developing category. To provide a clearer understanding of his/her rating, a student’s explanation was as follows,

I tried to always see the brighter side of events that happened while as a student and doing my internships. I was up to all of the challenges that were laid before me this semester and exceeded the expectations on many of them.

The previous quote implies, perhaps, that there still was work to be done. Regarding the Respect disposition, 46% reported being Proficient even at the beginning of the semester; this remained somewhat consistent at the end of the semester as well. Fifty percent of the students felt they were Proficient with regard to Respect at the end of the semester. The following is the statement of a student who chose to remain Developing with regard to Respect, at the end of the semester,

I feel that I am developing in the category of respect. I sincerely attempt to be open to the view points of others. I often will attempt to make modifications and be understanding of those who may need more help, however I do often get frustrated. I rate myself as developing because when I look at my professionalism in terms of respect because I feel that I could still use work.

At the beginning of the semester, 54.2% of the students rated themselves proficient in the Intellectual Integrity disposition. Curiously, at the end of the semester, the cluster had increased to 75% at the Proficient level in the same dimension. More students had moved from the developing level to the Proficient level at the end of the semester. Here is an example of a student who felt as though he/she had improved in the Intellectual Integrity dimension, but was not quite at an Exemplary level.

I feel that I am proficient to exemplary in this disposition. I am an honest, open, and trustworthy person. I take pride in all that I do and am open to others opinions or ideas. Example: My mentoring teacher and I would discuss the lessons that I taught so that I could reflect as to what I would do better to improve the lesson.
At the beginning of the semester, only 37.5% of the students reported being Proficient in the Dedication disposition at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester, however, 58.3% felt more Proficient. In his/her own words, the student explained,

Having a passion for what you teach is probably the most important asset to me. Dedication, I think, is where I have been, and am, the strongest, and moving towards exemplary. I feel that I am creative and try to think of new ways to present or teach topics. I also feel that I have been very dedicated to my students, and live for those golden teacher moments. Throughout my school field experience I stayed every day after school with my teacher. I also attended meetings with her, and on my own went to a staff development meeting where I substitute teach. In my second placement, I had very little direction and therefore had to come up with my own ideas for projects. I believe that I did the best that I could at this placement, but I didn’t feel as passionate for what I was doing because within the senior population, I believe, that it is more difficult to change attitudes and habits. This is why I say that I am proficient moving towards exemplary rather than exemplary.

In the Self-Awareness dimension at the beginning of the semester, one student did actually report being at the Unacceptable level. Most of the students (58.3%) felt they were at the Proficient level at the beginning of the semester with regards to Self-Awareness. At the end of the semester, however, most students (71%) reported feeling Proficient in Self-Awareness. The following is a statement that exemplified the explanation of why students did not rate themselves Exemplary in Self-Awareness dimension:

I still feel that I am proficient, almost exemplary, in this area because I still need to work on improving my weaknesses. I have not been afraid to ask for help, or for other’s opinions and insights. I have been willing to change to meet the needs of others. Noticing when a lesson has, or has not worked for a class, I try to adjust it for the next. I feel that I have good self awareness while I am teaching and when presenting information. For example, I was doing an activity with a class and realized while doing it, that I was doing it backwards. To try to fix it, I began to change it up a little bit until it began to work again. The class didn’t even notice that I had made a mistake. While I was presenting information to the seniors, I really did not want to bore them so I tried to lively and somewhat entertaining. I broke the ice with a joke, appropriate of course. I also was to administer a survey to as many of the seniors as I could. I wanted them to feel comfortable with me, so for the first couple of weeks I really tried to get to know them so that they would be willing to answer the questions and work with me.

**Discussion**

**Value of the Project**

The project revealed rich data in that the researchers were able to catch a unique glimpse into the lives of health teacher candidates during the most grueling of semesters of their undergraduate program. The students were able to introspect, self-reflect, and most
importantly, self-assess and report with a high amount of accuracy (corroborated by mid-semester faculty ratings) on their levels of competency regarding the dispositions. It is fair to assume that at the beginning of the semester, most students are at the developing to proficient levels of competency and may feel an improvement at the end of the semester. This was reflected in the students’ responses. The significance of such a project was apparent in two important areas. It created a unique learning opportunity for our health teacher candidates wherein they were able to identify behaviors considered professional and appropriate in five key dispositional dimensions. The candidates were able to critically self-reflect and chart their own progress throughout the semester with regards to their levels of proficiency in the five key dispositions. By introducing the assignment at the beginning of the semester, the students were able to keep the dispositions in mind as they progressed along the semester. Finally, the articulation of dispositional criteria and behavioral objectives by the students helped the creation of a method of assessing their progress through the semester towards exemplary levels of proficiency regarding the five dispositions.

Lessons Learned

Judging from the students’ responses regarding their relative lack of confidence at the beginning of the semester, the researchers felt that feedback regarding how the students were performing with regard to the dispositions should be offered regularly throughout the semester, not merely at mid-point. The feedback could be informal or formal, depending on the type of activity or exercise or demeanor graded or observed. Further, all faculty teaching the methods courses could complete the same assessments for the students and provide students with the results. As a next step, using the student generated behavioral objectives, faculty teaching methods courses and student-teacher supervisors could assess each students’ progress in the five dispositions and match them to the students’ self-assessments, with the objective of helping the students further reach their goal of becoming exemplary health professionals. There should also be a mechanism where students could be held back from student teaching or indeed, pursuing a teaching career if they demonstrate an unacceptable disposition level, which directly supports NCATE’s intention in developing the Standards for Professional Education Units.

Future Directions

The researchers have incorporated the project (teacher candidates’ self-assessment and definition of the dispositions) into their curriculum and will continue to collect data as long as it is in keeping with NCATE requirements. As an ongoing project, the researchers will be able to document the process of assessing dispositions. Such a document will be a useful resource for teacher preparation programs in New York State, and the assignment will be used as evidence of the educational units’ commitment to teacher candidate learning related to dispositions.
Conclusion

Limitations

The process of defining and assessing the dispositions is a subjective one and continues to be unwieldy. It should be noted that while it is relatively easy to identify and place behaviors in the Unacceptable and Exemplary categories, for all the dimensions of the dispositions, it is not easy to describe behaviors that fall in the two middle categories (Proficient and Developing), making them difficult to assess. The researchers believe that such a problem can be remediated by creating a quantitative rubric that assesses dispositions on an interval (continuous) rather than ordinal (categorical) scale.

Implications for Teacher Education

Whether Teacher Candidate Dispositions are a “way of being” or “acting,” they must be measured. It is not enough to presume that at the end of their senior year, teacher candidates will miraculously develop a positive outlook, respect, dedication, intellectual integrity, and self-awareness good enough to make them strong teachers or health educators and help them enjoy their professional choice. By defining, clarifying, and quantifying each level of competency in the five dimensions of dispositions, the researchers felt as though they had taken the first step in helping students internalize the true meaning of a health teacher who is compassionate and effective. It is also important to emphasize that inappropriate dispositional behaviors may place the “physical and/or psychological safety of children and adolescents at risk” (The College at Brockport Professional Education Unit, 2008, p. 4), and the researchers believe that the initial assessment process of the level of competency for the dispositions is an essential part of the training of teacher candidates.

References


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“This Camp Is So Fun. It’s Like Going to the Movies!”: Teachers’ Practices and Transformations in Students’ Affective Dimensions toward Literacy

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Susan V. Bennett
University of South Florida, Tampa

Abstract

In this case study, we investigated transformations in 9 first- and 9 third-grade students’ beliefs about their literacy abilities and shifts in their attitudes and motivation toward literacy in a summer literacy camp for students at risk. There were 75 kindergarten through eighth-grade students in the camp and 52 graduate education major teachers. Students received considerable support because of the substantial number of teachers. Four sources of triangulated data show that 7 first- and 8 third-grade students displayed more affirmative beliefs about their literacy abilities as the camp progressed and exhibited more positive attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing. Implications are for literacy teachers of young children, literacy teacher educators, and school districts to consider students’ affective dimensions.

Please Note: The opinions we offer in this paper about high-stakes standardized tests, and reading and writing instruction in many primary classrooms are solely our views and may not be the opinions held by our administrators and colleagues at the University of South Florida.

This research was funded by the University of South Florida College of Education Institute for Instructional Research and Practice and the Institute for At-Risk Infants, Children and Youth, and Their Families.
Along with cognitive ability, students’ affective dimensions play an important part in their literacy achievements (Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001). In particular, self-efficacy beliefs about reading and writing competence, and attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing appear to be key determinants in students’ literacy growth. These attributes are strongly related to engagement with literacy (Kim & Lorsbach, 2005; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004). Not surprisingly, research shows time spent engaged in reading and writing is strongly related to success (Powell, McIntyre, & Rightmyer, 2006; Samuels & Wu, 2009).

We believe many teachers in the United States often unintentionally disregard the strong force psychological qualities play in students’ reading and writing accomplishments. Teachers are held accountable for students’ test scores; and, therefore, they are preoccupied with test preparation and performance rather than students’ psychological dimensions (Murphy, Shannon, Johnson, & Hansen, 1998). According to the United States Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, “teachers should be judged by their students’ performances, although not solely on test scores” (retrieved June 16, 2009, from http://www.teachermagazine.org/tm/section/associated-press/2009/06/08/duncan meritpay_ap.html).

Regrettably, focusing exclusively on performance has the potential to promote students’ sense of failure and shame, which can lead to learned helplessness where students do not view themselves as capable readers and writers; and, therefore, they avoid literacy tasks (Ames, 1992; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). “Failure-avoidant students do not do the work because the work is a threat to ability perceptions or self worth. Students who are learned helpless do not do the work because they do not feel capable of doing the work” (Seifert, 2004, p. 143). Research shows students who resist reading and writing undermine their literacy development, which in turn, directly impacts their beliefs about their reading and writing abilities and their attitudes and motivation toward literacy (see Cotton, 2001, for an inclusive summary of this research).

In this grant-funded, exploratory, mixed-methods inquiry, we employed a psychological lens (Powell, McIntyre, & Rightmyer, 2006) to investigate transformations in first- and third-grade students’ beliefs about their reading and writing abilities, and shifts in their attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing as they participated in a summer literacy camp for students at-risk. We chose first- and third-grade students as study participants because “the early years are a critical period for literacy development” (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999, p. 238). In addition, studies indicate early interventions provide the foundation for students’ subsequent literacy development – especially students at-risk (Griffith, Beach, Ruan, & Dunn, 2008). Tutors were classroom teachers matriculating in an innovative, graduate interdisciplinary reading and writing methods course informally entitled, The Reading/Writing Connection.

As the instructor of the combined courses and supervisor of the camp (Janet) and the doctoral teaching assistant (Susan), we were aware of the growing body of research that indicates teachers’ practices can exert positive influences on students’ beliefs about their reading and writing capabilities and their attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing (Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Powell, McIntyre, & Rightmyer, 2006; Stipek, 1996, 2002; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004; Yair, 2000). We wanted the students in the camp to experience success, feel confident about their literacy abilities,
and know they were valued and accepted within their learning context since so many of them were typified, and thought of themselves as struggling readers and writers. Therefore, we urged the graduate education majors (i.e., teachers) in the camp to adopt practices recognized as fostering students’ positive self-efficacy beliefs, attitude and motivation. Specifically, the teachers: 1) provided small group instruction; 2) posed higher level questions; 3) modeled and taught reading comprehension and writing strategies; 4) promoted students’ active responses to literacy activities; 5) encouraged peer collaboration; 6) coached students rather than imparted facts and information; 7) offered authentic literacy experiences; 8) provided positive feedback; 9) gave students choice of literacy activities; and, 10) connected reading and writing with multiple literacies (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). We also encouraged the teachers to promote a sense of group community, scaffold and support students’ reading and writing initiatives in a risk-free environment, and view students as readers and writers with substantial promise.

**Question Guiding Our Inquiry**

Our study was guided by the following question: What is the relationship between the practices of teachers in the summer literacy camp and transformations in first- and third-grade students’ self-efficacy beliefs about their reading and writing abilities and shifts in their attitudes and motivation toward literacy?

**Theoretical Frameworks**

We grounded our inquiry in two intersecting theoretical frameworks and knowledge-based themes: (a) conceptual perspectives on self-efficacy beliefs, attitude, and motivation and their relationship to reading and writing achievement; and, (b) reading and writing strategy instruction from sociocognitive views that consider the importance of the social and cultural contexts in which instruction takes place and situates students directly in the center of the reading and writing processes (Vygotsky, 1978). We explain these perspectives more fully in the following section.

**Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a construct “synonymous with confidence and refers to a person’s judgment about his/her capabilities to perform a task” (Seifert, 2004, p. 137) (also see Bandura, 1997). Constructivist principles posit that students’ beliefs about their academic competence “are not innate, but rather the result of development and construction over time through learning experiences” (Bouffard, Marcoux, Vezeau, & Bordeleau, 2003, p. 172). Major influences on students’ reading and writing self-efficacy beliefs are how well they have succeeded in previous literacy tasks and the encouragement they receive from others (Wigfield et al., 2004). Studies across grade levels show teachers’ practices can enhance students’ positive beliefs about their reading and writing abilities (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000), and there is a strong relationship between students’ self-efficacy beliefs and their reading and writing performances (Maimon, 2002).
Attitude

Attitude is distinct from motivation (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Attitude refers to liking or disliking a task. If students think reading and writing are boring, or too difficult they may develop an aversion to these activities, which affects their literacy achievements (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). Research indicates in addition to boredom and frustration with literacy tasks, other factors that impact students’ attitudes toward reading and writing include their classroom experiences, confidence levels, and teachers’ practices (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004). Pertinent to this inquiry is that factor analysis of data conducted in a national survey indicated students’ attitudes toward reading fall into two dimensions: 1) recreational reading; and, 2) school-related reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

Motivation

In this study we consider motivation as intrinsic motivation, which is the enjoyment of activities for their own sake (Cox & Guthrie, 2001). “Teachers and researchers who work with young children generally agree that motivation plays an important part in becoming a proficient reader” (Quirk, Schwanenflugel, & Webb, 2009, p. 199). When students are motivated to read and write they spend large amounts of time reading and writing, which directly relates to their literacy development and willingness to persevere when reading and writing become difficult (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Mazzoni, Gambrel, & Korkeamaki, 1999; Morrow, 2004). Motivation is also strongly tied to the amount and breadth of students’ reading and writing. Relevant to this research is that students’ motivation is strongly influenced by the kinds of experiences they have in school (Stipek, 1996, 2002; Turner, 1995; Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998).

Reading and Writing Strategy Instruction from a Sociocognitive Perspective

Grounded in Vygotskian notions (Vygotsky, 1978), a sociocognitive view of reading and writing instruction assumes students’ reading and writing development is best facilitated through social interactions (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky proposed that true learning takes place in the natural exchange of language between student and peers and student and adults (e.g., teachers) in an interactive, social environment. This position supports collaborative reading and writing groups in which readers and writers have considerable opportunities to talk with peers and teachers about strategy usage (NCTE, 2004). The cognitive benefits of peer discourse and the active role of participants in their own learning have been the subject of numerous studies (Haneda, 2008; Van Sluys, 2003).

Sociocognitive perspectives also assume students are able to learn something new about reading and writing when instruction is situated within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Students’ ZPD refers to what they can learn with support from knowledgeable others (e.g., peers or an adult, such as a teacher). Thus, sociocognitive views of instruction connect to supportive scaffolding in which responsive teachers meet students’ reading and writing instructional needs within their ZPD (Clark & Graves, 2005).
Other Related Perspectives

Beyond the theoretical perspectives previously discussed, we also examined the small amount of research devoted to communities of interest in education (Richards with Bennett, Kroeger, Hirt-Nelson, & Severson, in press) relevant to the summer camp’s tutoring configuration in which master’s students in two different classes collaborated to plan and offer reading and writing lessons to small groups of students at-risk (the same groups of students throughout the program). Furthermore, we inspected the literature on interdisciplinary teacher education programs (Bullock, Park, Snow, & Rodriguez, 2002; Kaufman & Brooks, 1996). Intermittently popular since the early 1920s, interdisciplinary teaching has once again received favorable attention in the United States as an alternative, or as an extension to a separate - subject curriculum (Akins & Akerson, 2002). We believe an interdisciplinary tutoring approach is beneficial to students in need of additional reading and writing support, and we wanted to prepare our master’s education majors for what we anticipate will be a multidisciplinary pedagogy of the future. “If teachers are to engage in collaborative interdisciplinary endeavors in schools, they must be able to experience and explore such settings in their teacher education programs” (Kaufman & Brooks, 1996, p. 236). In addition, we perused research indicating summer tutoring initiatives can enhance students’ motivation to read and write and increase their reading and writing achievement (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson, 1997; David & Pelavin, 1978).

Summer Camp Structure

As part of course requirements, 52 graduate education majors in two different combined courses (reading and writing) collaborated as teachers in the camp. Following two introductory meetings on campus, the graduate education majors met for the next 8 weeks at a community center in a low-income urban housing area. From 9 to 10 a.m., they participated in class meetings and observed model lessons offered by Janet, the supervisor of the camp and instructor of the combined courses. Then, they met in small groups for half an hour to plan their tutoring initiatives. They communicated weekly by email with Janet and with their tutoring group members through Google’s ReadWriteThink online group communication system, and they often met before tutoring sessions or during the week to plan lessons.

Following class meetings and planning, the literacy camp met for 2 hours (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Of the 75 K - 8th grade students, 90% received subsidized meals in their schools during the school year. Eighty percent of the students were African-American, 15 % were Hispanic, and 5 % were Caucasian. The majority scored at or below the 20th percentile on annual reading and language arts standardized assessments administered in their schools (University Area Community Development Corporation, 2009).

We grouped the students in the camp according to their grade levels (K - 8), and the graduate education majors chose the group of students they wished to teach based upon grade level. There were 9 groups that consisted of 8 or 9 students, and 5 to 7 graduate education majors (2 or 3 education majors from the writing class and 3 or 4 education majors from the reading class).

The graduate education majors (i.e., teachers in the camp) began their lessons by journaling with individual students in their group. They created messages based on each student’s writing stage, interests, and reading and writing instructional requirements, and if needed, helped students write responses. The teachers linked fiction with informational
text and modeled and helped students engage in reading comprehension and writing strategies. They also connected reading and writing and linked narrative and content text because these connections increase students’ reading and writing development (Richards with Bennett, Kroeger, Hirt-Nelson, & Severson, in press). In addition, the teachers connected reading and writing with multiple literacy lessons that included technology, dance, drama, music, and visual art. At the close of each session, the teachers asked the students, “What did we learn today?”, wrote the students’ responses on chart paper, and reviewed the list weekly to enable the students to recognize their accomplishments.

The substantial number of teachers in each group provided opportunities for the students in the camp to receive considerable individual support and scaffolding as they participated in the tutoring sessions. Small literacy instructional structures have been found to benefit students at-risk. For example, Triplett (2006) studied intervention groups in first, second, and third grade and found students labeled as “struggling” in some social contexts, such as a regular whole class grouping, were not labeled “struggling” by a pull-out teacher in a small group setting. Therefore, in addition to the small group configuration, in an atypical aspect of the tutoring sessions, one or two designated teachers in each group responded to students in need of differentiated instruction and attention. These supportive teacher practices did not isolate students from their peers. Rather, students received extra attention as needed within their small community of learners.

Methodology and Data Sources

With our university’s Institutional Review Board approval, we recruited two tutoring groups—a group of 9 first-grade students and a group of 9 third-grade students to participate in the inquiry. We determined an intrinsic embedded case study was the most appropriate methodology to answer our research question (Stake, 2005). Researchers choose intrinsic case methods when they are curious about the case itself (Stake, 2005). An embedded case study is a sub unit of a larger case (Yin, 2003). We considered the camp itself as the larger case and the two tutoring groups to be sub units.

Case study is an ideal methodology when researchers want to include contextual conditions of a particular time and place that are relevant to the study (Yin, 2003), and “an in-depth investigation is needed” (Tellis, 1997, p. 1). For instance, in our inquiry we wanted to study transformations in young students’ affective dimensions in relationship to teachers’ literacy practices in a summer literacy camp.

We collected four sources of data over the eight weeks of the camp:

1. Susan observed each of the two tutoring groups for one hour each week and recorded and transcribed her observation notes. She particularly looked for evidences of students’ enthusiasm, motivation, effort, level of confidence, on-task behavior, perseverance, and persistence.

2. We analyzed the students’ weekly journal writing for confirmation of self-efficacy beliefs about their reading and writing abilities and positive shifts in their attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing. For example, over the course of the camp we looked for longer journal responses; elaboration and extension of ideas; responses to tutors’ questions; and, affirmative statements about reading and writing.
3. The teachers administered a pre- and post-tutoring measure, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1990). This 20-item instrument designed for students in grades 1 through 6 has a satisfactory internal consistency across elementary grades with the recreational, school-related, and total scores having a satisfactory internal consistency across elementary grades. The first 10 items assess students’ attitudes toward recreational reading while the last 10 items assess students’ attitudes toward school-related reading. The four anchor pictures for each item depict illustrations of the cartoon cat, Garfield. The instrument awards 1 through 4 points depending on the Garfield picture selected (4 points designated for the most positive picture; 1 point designated for the most negative picture). The instrument provides a total raw score and percentile ranks based upon grade level.

4. At the conclusion of the camp, Susan taped and transcribed semi-structured individual interviews with each of the 18 students in the study. Examples of the interview questions are: “You have been coming to reading and writing camp. Can you tell me what you did in the camp?”; “What do you especially like to do here?”; “What have you learned about reading and writing since you have been in the camp?”; “Have you learned any reading or writing strategies?”; “Have you become a better reader and writer in the camp? Why or why not?” and “How do you feel about yourself as a reader and writer?”

We categorized and chronologically ordered the data sets for each student in the inquiry and systematically analyzed the 168 artifacts (18 pre- and 18 post-Reading Attitude Surveys, 114 journal entries, 114 observation notes, and 18 transcribed interviews). We rated each student on the 20-item Elementary Reading Attitude Survey using 4 scores: recreational reading, academic reading, full score, and percentile rank. We employed constant comparative analysis techniques to analyze and systematically characterize the discourse in the observation notes, journal entries, and individual interviews relevant to our inquiry. Constant comparative methods in qualitative research initiatives entail systematically comparing words, phrases, sentences, and longer discourse in an effort to develop conceptualizations about possible patterns, themes, and relationships in narrative data (Stake, 2005).

We collated and inspected individual data sets for each student in the study. For example, we examined observation notes written during the first and second weeks of camp that described Rayon as “off task, distracted; needing individual help,” and compared these data with observation remarks recorded during the next 6 weeks of camp that increasingly depicted him as “interested in the lesson, engaged with reading and writing, and willing to learn and use reading and writing strategies.” We also noted on the first day of camp when a teacher asked Rayon, a third-grader, “How do you feel when you read a book in school?” he circled an unhappy Garfield face on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and was awarded 1 point as specified in the survey directions. In the same way, we documented that Rayon circled a half-scowling Garfield face when asked the same question on the last day of camp and received a score of 2 points. In response to a teacher’s journal question about what he learned in camp, in a final journal entry, he wrote, “I can read and write. I like my art too and I can skip words and go back to them when I read.”
In addition, we analyzed Rayon’s responses to questions on the end-of-camp semi-structured interview. When asked, “What have you learned about reading and writing since you have been in the camp?” he replied, “I like to read Spider Man and Sponge Bob now. I love this. This is fun in the camp.”

We coded these data as evidence of positive transformations in Rayon’s competency beliefs and attitude and motivation toward reading and writing. Lastly, we compared and came to conclusions across all data sets for the 18 students in the inquiry.

Discoveries

We cannot state with certainty that our inquiry distinguishes teachers’ practices as catalysts that transformed first- and third-grade students’ psychological dimensions toward literacy in positive ways. However, our analysis of the 18 data sets showed that with 8 weeks of reading and writing tutoring for a total of 16 hours, 7 first-grade and 8 third-grade students (N = 15) in the study displayed more affirmative beliefs (i.e., self-efficacy) about their reading and writing abilities as the camp progressed. Although several mediators suggest gender as a possible agent, similar to findings in Hansford and Hattie’s (1982) study, we noted no significant differences for gender. This same pattern held true for attitudes toward reading as determined on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), predominantly in the area of recreational reading, such as reading a book on a rainy Saturday, reading for fun at home, getting a book for a present, and starting a new book. Moreover, the students’ journal entries, Susan’s observation notes, and the students’ interview responses indicated positive shifts in their motivation toward reading and writing.

Making the Data Visible

In the following sections we make selected segments of the data visible by presenting excerpt protocols collected over the 8 weeks of the camp that highlight Jon, a third-grade student in the study. The data are from observation notes, dialogue journal entries, scores on the pre- and post-tutoring Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1990), and narratives extracted from the semi-structured interview.

**Excerpts of Susan’s Observation Notes**

Date: 6/11. Jon is sitting in a circle of students and teachers in his small tutoring group. After completing the Garfield Survey, a teacher read the story, Stanley’s Party (Bailey, 2003) to the students and stopped at appropriate times in the book to ask them if they had ever acted like naughty Stanley. Most of the students responded with stories about their misdeeds, but Jon sat silently, twisting around in his chair and looking at the other students as they verbalized responses. Following the story, another teacher modeled Speed Writing and asked the students to engage in a Speed Writing activity in which they wrote a letter to Stanley. One of the objectives of Speed Writing is to write non-stop about a topic and to keep writing until the teacher says, “Time is up.”
Jon appeared to engage in Speed Writing, but when I examined his paper, I saw he had written nothing except an entire page of capital I’s. When his teacher asked Jon why he had written nothing but capital I’s, Jon did not answer and smiled a half smile.

Date: 7/15. The teachers created “microphones” from black paper and silver foil. Each pair (a teacher and a student) shared a microphone. As noted in previous weeks, Jon has become increasingly more engaged with literacy lessons and today he is quite involved. He appears to be interested in what his teacher says. For example, Jon’s teacher spoke into her “microphone” to ask Jon, “What did you like or not like about today’s story?”

Jon took the “microphone” from his teacher’s hand and replied (while talking into the “microphone”), “I liked the story because it was about a funny frog that thought he flew. He had a funny name too - Gorky and he mixed up a mixture of stuff in the kitchen to make a magic drink.”

When the teacher asked the students to write to Gorky, or his parents, Jon enthusiastically began to write to Gorky. He wrote, “Der Gorky- Did you fly? Did you drem that you flu? I want to kno. Jon”

Excerpts of Dialogue Journal Entries between Jon and his Teacher

Date: 6/11. Excerpt of Teacher’s Journal Entry to Jon
Do you like to read and write?
Jon’s Journal Response
No I do not

7/8: Excerpt of Teacher’s Journal Entry to Jon
What did you like about the camp?
Jon’s Journal Response
I had fun last week. My teacher tawt me to chunk the word My favorite thing last week was we took pitchers. I read that arctic wolves eats rabbits and some stories were funny like Gorky and Stanley. The teachers are nice read books like Detercive Laure an Scanimals. I learntne startgies- yes /No and Why and I Wonder and What Do You Think-like you have to put the parts together to figure out the answer. I like it when we read and write together.

7/15: Excerpt of Teacher’s Journal Entry to Jon
Do you think you learned to read and write better in the camp?
Jon’s Journal Response
Yeah the teachers help us and like us.

Interpretation of Scores on Pre- and Post-Reading Attitude Survey

As indicated by the data shown in Table 1, Jon’s pre-tutoring raw score for recreational reading on the Garfield Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1990) was one (1). His pre-tutoring raw score for academic reading was twenty (20). Using the scoring directions supplied by the authors of the Garfield Reading Attitude Survey, we determined Jon’s pre-tutoring full score was twenty-one (21). The raw scores translated to zero (0) percentile for recreational reading and the fourteenth (14) percentile for academic reading. Jon’s full pre-tutoring percentile score equaled zero (0).
As shown on Table 1, Jon’s post-tutoring raw score for recreational reading was thirty-one (31). Thus, he scored thirty (30) points higher on recreational reading at the end of camp than at the beginning of camp. Jon’s post-tutoring raw score for academic reading remained at twenty (20). However, his full raw score rose to fifty-one (51) because of the gains he made in his attitude toward recreational reading. Therefore, his post-tutoring full score rose to fifty-one (51) with a percentile of twenty-eight (28). We can assume that Jon’s post-tutoring full percentile score of twenty-eight (28) as opposed to a pre-tutoring full score of zero (0) was the result of participation in the literacy camp.

Table 1. Jon’s Pre- and Post-Tutoring Scores on the Garfield Reading Attitude Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recreational Score</th>
<th>Academic Score</th>
<th>Full Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade/Pre</td>
<td>Raw 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentile 0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade/Post</td>
<td>Raw 31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentile 57</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpts of Jon’s Responses to the Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Susan: What did you do in the camp this summer?

Jon: Ummmm dodge ball, soccer, playing games and board games.

Susan: How about the reading and writing part of the camp?

Jon: We did readers theater with the rainforest book. I was a character.

Susan: Who were you?

Jon: I was the boy – that’s the big part.

Susan: Can you name any reading or writing strategies you did?

Jon: We did I Wonder and Speed Writing, How Do You Know? And what do you think will happen next? And right there questions and we wrote to characters in books. We read The Great Kapok Tree and there were lots of animals in the book. There was a monkey and even our teachers were in the play. We had a paper hatchet for the play and we had costumes. Oh, and a strategy was I See, I Think, I Wonder. I can do I Wonder good- it’s about what you wonder about the book.

Susan: Have you become a better reader and writer in the camp?

Jon: Mmmmmm- oh yeah.

Susan: In what ways can you read and write better now?
Jon: I can do it better – that’s all I know.

Susan: How do you feel about yourself as a reader and writer?

Jon: What’s that?

Susan: You know, do you feel happy when you read and write or do you feel sad and unhappy?

Jon: I feel happy- glad- I do my work now. I wrote my own book on ocean animals- it’s a real book I tell my friends we even write our own stuff. This camp is so fun it’s like going to the movies only it’s really reading ‘and writin’ camp. Ooh, and we learned a writing strategy - Add one word/stretch the sentence and we did a play about the Great Kapok Tree. I learned W L K. I know/W stands for I want to learn in a book and L is what I learned. We wrote in our journals. We made animal hats. The teachers loved us and I learned Right There, On Your Own, and Think and Search. I liked it all about the camp and our world walls outside the camp.

**Limitations of the Inquiry**

Prior to stating our conclusions and implications, we discuss the limitations pertinent to our exploratory inquiry. One concern is that we cannot make assumptions and draw conclusions from a study in which we observed and interacted with 9 first- and 9 third-grade students for a total of 8 weeks and 16 hours of instruction. In a small-scale inquiry such as this, it is impossible for us to come to conclusions about what changes in students’ affective dimensions were influenced by teachers’ practices and what transformations occurred as a result of students’ maturation and growing confidence levels over time as they became familiar and comfortable with the camp’s structure, the tutoring lessons, and the teachers in the camp.

Another problem is that we did not sufficiently tease out the three intertwined constructs of self-efficacy, attitude, and motivation, which we plan to do in a follow-up study. The terms attitude, self-efficacy, and motivation are often used interchangeably in the literature (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999). Therefore, in follow-up research, to better distinguish and understand these constructs, we plan to employ instruments, such as the Children’s Reading Motivation Survey (Gambrell, 1996), and The Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) (Henk & Melnick, 1995) in tandem with The Garfield Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and qualitative methods.

In addition, we do not intend to suggest that self-efficacy, attitude, and motivation are the only constructs relevant to students’ reading and writing achievements. It is quite possible that other psychological dimensions were responsible for the positive changes in the students’ affective dimension toward literacy. Furthermore, broader views of the three constructs we employed are available (e.g., see Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998).

We also have to acknowledge our own biases as researchers. As the supervisor/instructor of the camp and the doctoral teaching assistant, we were invested in students’ success. Therefore, we might have seen positive outcomes in students’ self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing when in actuality positive shifts in these dimensions were limited. Hermeneutic principles explain that
others might bring dissimilar experiences, diverse mindsets, and ultimately a different lens that allow them to view the data in diverse ways, employ different data analysis methods, and come to contradictory understandings than ours (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Conclusions and Implications for Literacy Teachers of Young Students, Literacy Teacher Educators, and Education Policy Makers

We take an ecological, contextual perspective regarding this exploratory research. It would prove naïve for us to try to generalize our conclusions from the specific context in which we studied transformations in students’ self-efficacy beliefs, attitude, and motivation. Nonetheless, we believe the profiles of the 18 students in the inquiry add to a body of research that investigates the importance of teachers’ literacy practices with respect to transformations in students’ affective qualities toward reading and writing (Stipek, 2002; Taylor, et al., 2003). In our opinion, with only a few exceptions (e.g., see Quirk, Schwanenflugel, & Webb, 2009), inquiries into the topic of students’ psychological domains have languished in the current climate of high stakes test preparation and emphasis on students’ performance. We attribute positive transformations in the affective dimensions of 7 first- and 8 third-grade students in the study to dimensions of the interdisciplinary community of interest tutoring program. We believe the characteristics and contextual dimensions of the camp’s learning environment that included individualized instruction offered as needed within the larger tutoring group, well-planned collaborative lessons, and teachers’ practices that maximized students’ feelings of safety, control, and capacity to take risks in a supportive instructional climate helped to impact students’ competency beliefs about reading and writing and their attitudes and motivation toward reading and writing in positive ways. In essence, this model of instruction, values not only students’ efforts, but also values students themselves as human beings and learners worthy of respect.

We were intrigued by students’ post tutoring scores on the Reading Attitude Survey that indicated their positive attitudinal shifts toward recreational reading. We think this transformation might be explained by the camp climate. The summer literacy camp does not operate like school. As Jon, the student we highlighted in this paper noted, “This camp is so fun it’s like going to the movies only it’s really readin’ and writin’ camp.” Jon was correct. Perhaps the camp climate helped students recognize the joys of recreational reading. Although some reading and writing in school contexts is enjoyable, most school-related reading and writing instruction is influenced by standardized test considerations. Teachers tell students what to read and in what ways to respond to a reading selection. Similarly, teachers tell students what to write, in what voice to write, and the number of paragraphs to include.

Our discoveries speak first to literacy teachers of young students. We have no doubt that the risk-free, test-free environment of the camp and teachers’ individualized scaffolding offered to students in need of some extra support served to emancipate students as readers and writers. Therefore, despite teachers’ requirements to emphasize students’ performance on high stakes tests we strongly urge them to offer supportive literacy learning climates, which our graduate student teachers in the camp tell us they intend to do in their classrooms. Ultimately, “the critical factor in the learning process may be how teacher and student interact” (Seifert, 2004, p. 148). Teachers who nurture and support students as they learn to read and write expand students’ sense of confidence.
and self-efficacy, and these constructs transfer into learning-oriented behaviors of intrinsically motivated students (Seifert & O’Keefe, 2001).

Teachers might also consider offering small-group literacy instruction. Triplett’s findings (2006) coupled with our discoveries in this inquiry indicate that young students thrive in learning situations where they feel comfortable and teachers have time to coach, scaffold, and offer feedback and praise.

Implications also apply to literacy teacher educators and programs of instruction in colleges of education that are offered to preservice and graduate education majors. Education majors need coursework and selected readings to help them recognize the importance that students’ affective dimensions play in their literacy achievements. Education majors also need to understand how to foster these psychological variables in students at all grade levels. Positive reading and writing beliefs about one’s competence, and attitude and motivation are “associated with a number of desirable outcomes including higher reading [and writing] achievement, deeper cognitive processing, greater conceptual understanding, and willingness to persevere when reading [and writing are] difficult’’(Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999, p. 237). However, all too often, literacy courses focus on the theoretical processes and pedagogy of reading and writing rather than on the students who learn to read and write.

We think implications of the research are relevant to school districts as well. We were especially interested to learn through our literature review that the amount students read and write for enjoyment is a major contributor to reading achievement and knowledge of the world (Powell, McIntyre, & Rightmyer, 2006). Therefore, we suggest school district policy encourage students to self-select their reading material and their writing topics as often as possible. Furthermore, since self-efficacy and attitudes and motivation are linked to students’ reading and writing achievements, the challenge is for schools that serve students at-risk to acknowledge these important constructs as crucial to students’ literacy success.

In closing, we offer some caveats to those who believe high-stakes test preparation and performance are the means to students’ literacy accomplishments. Scholars note (and we agree) there are dangerous consequences to high-stakes testing (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2006). Authentic reading and writing (i.e., literacy events) are much more than students’ responses to questions on literacy assessments. Students’ reading and writing achievements are based upon the joint functioning of cognition and affective dimensions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). For these elements to thrive, effective instruction for reading and writing must include support for both cognitive, and positive affective qualities to develop (Wigfield et al., 2004).

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Nota Bene

What Are You Reading?

Contributed by Members of Excelsior’s National Editorial Board

As the reader knows from reading this issue’s “Notes from the Editor,” this new feature of Nota Bene invites readers to contribute a short review of a book they are currently reading or have recently read. Tell us, what are you reading and what do you think of it? Would you recommend it to other teacher educators? Why? How has it informed your practice, your research, or yourself as a teacher educator?

The contributors of this first “What Are You Reading?” feature are members of Excelsior’s National Editorial Board. They are Laura Dorow, Lois Fisch, Carol Merz Frankel, and Joanne Dowdy.

Laura G. Dorow
Utica College
Utica, New York


Dr. Randy Pausch wrote The Last Lecture during his final months of terminal cancer. His goal was to leave a legacy for his three young children. He left much more than that. This is an amazing book that speaks with clarity and insight. Randy was a professor of Computer Science, Human Computer Interaction, and Design at Carnegie Mellon University. He was asked to give his “last lecture” just a few months before his death. The book is a series of personal reflections that he told his co-author, Jeffrey Zaslow, via cell phone while riding his bike around the neighborhood as he prepared for the big day. The actual “script” for the lecture given at Carnegie Mellon was a PowerPoint presentation of 300 slides with images of family, students, colleagues, offbeat illustrations, and bits of advice (p. 11).

The Last Lecture is a quick read filled with humor, inspiration, and wise advice. In parts 4 and 5 he shares stories of his academic life that provide us with moral guidance, teaching strategies, and inspiration that remind us why we have selected teaching as our life work. Randy thinks of teaching as “enabling the dreams of others” (p. 105). In chapter 26 he shares his delight at the success of his students’ projects building virtual worlds. He writes, “If I could help individual students, one on one, as they worked toward achieving their childhood dreams, was there a way to do it on a larger scale?” (p. 121). Although he is referring to his development of Alice, a software teaching tool for creating animations, in reality he accomplishes this goal with the “last lecture.” I believe this book will encourage many teachers to help their students achieve their dreams.

Ten years after the killings at Columbine High School, we continue to ask “Why?” and “How can we prevent another such tragedy?” Rather than answer those questions for us, Dave Cullen, a journalist, relies on extensive primary-source materials to provide us with an account of the massacre and the events both before and after it. Thoroughly engrossing, the book reads like a novel. Extensive end notes and references, however, lend credibility to Cullen’s account of the events. What evolves is a somewhat surprising portrait of the two killers, both of whom appeared to be intelligent, popular boys, not the bullied weaklings many of us thought them to be. Most stunning is the realization that Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris had been planning the attack for at least 18 months and that both had leaked information to various sources during that time. School staff, counselors, the police, and friends all had information related to the attack but, for a variety of reasons, did not share that information with others. In the end, the reader begins to understand Eric and Dylan’s answer to the question “Why?” but is left with the haunting impression that, while this tragedy might have been prevented, there is no way to assure that another school massacre won’t occur in the future.

I recommend this book for anyone who plans to work with children. It will change the way you think about troubled youth and school violence.

Carol Merz Franke
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Tacoma, Washington


Having spent the last year fully involved in Japanese education, I was surprised to find a couple of books that gave me new insights and some hours of good reading. The first is Japanese Lessons: A Year in a Japanese School through the Eyes of an American Anthropologist and Her Children by Gail Benjamin. This is a personal and engaging account of her family’s encounter with Japanese schools, showing how much the school demands of parents and hinting at the place of foreigners in Japanese schools. Even a reader who is familiar with the literature on Japanese schools finds herself surprisingly willing to cheer on Benjamin in the competitive making of box lunches. Benjamin’s clear but unobtrusive references to the literature adds credibility to the charming and personal style.

The second book is Learning to Bow: Inside the Heart of Japan by Bruce Feiler, the account of his year in Japanese schools with the JET teacher exchange program. Feiler has gone on to write other fascinating accounts of his travels; but this, his first, is full of
youthful enthusiasm and wonder at his adventures. His accounts of the annual field trip to Tokyo Disneyland and the sadness at a student suicide mark the range of his emotional involvement with the students.

Both of these books are an easy way into a comparative perspective that can enrich teacher education classes, lending short vignettes that can add depth to lectures or case analyses. Both books give an intimate account of schools with a social structure and an authority structure that is so different from that of US schools that it is hard to imagine. American teacher education students find it hard to imagine students enjoying cleaning the school or running their own class without a substitute when their teacher is absent. These books warrant a summer afternoon with a pot of green tea!

**Joanne Dowdy**
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Kent, Ohio


I am reading a book about music and the brain. It is very interesting to me as an arts-based literacy teacher. I don’t do enough music prompts in my classroom. I believe that this book will help me find some connections between learning/living/communicating at a high level. I am sure that music enhances more than our mathematical literacy, and I am eager to apply the book’s findings in my own classroom.

This book “explores the place music occupies in the brain and how it affects the human condition.” The blurb also says that “Music can be inspiring, moving us to the heights or depths of emotion—and it can also be our best medicine.” The book tells us how that works out in our daily experiences.
Book Review of
Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh

By Gerald Grant (2009)
Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Karen Stearns
SUNY College at Cortland

A Tale of Two Cities

Published 150 years after Dickens’ tale of social injustice in his own two cities, Paris and London, Gerald Grant’s Hope and Despair in the American City analyzes the impact of varying school desegregation policies on student achievement in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Syracuse, New York, Grant’s hometown. Sociologist and Professor Emeritus at Syracuse University, Grant is author of an earlier study (1988) of a Syracuse city high school (disguised as Hamilton High) in the throes of integrating what was considered when it opened in the early fifties an elite public school. He returns in Hope and Despair to the fundamental question he was asking in Hamilton High, what makes a good school? But in Hope the question takes on greater urgency as Grant examines what has happened in the twenty years since Hamilton High to his and other like cities across the country. These cities, Grant argues, fail to ensure equal educational opportunity for all children. What he calls the “invisible wall” between impoverished cities and affluent suburbs continues to divide expectations for academic achievement by race and class. Over some years in which the phrase “closing the achievement gap” has lead the national conversation about reform in public education, Grant sets out to show the reader how two cities, one in the northeast and one in the south, have responded over the last half century to what he calls “the burden of school desegregation.”

Let me say up front that Grant’s tale is a very personal one for this reviewer. A Syracuse native myself, I was teaching English in suburban high schools during the years Grant describes in Hamilton High. As part of my current work in English Education at a state teacher education college, I have spent many hours supervising student teachers in both suburban and urban middle and high schools in the Syracuse area, including Hamilton High, the high school that serves my own neighborhood. The Syracuse that Professor Grant describes is one I know well. Born, like Grant, to working class parents who lived within city limits, through third grade I attended Syracuse city schools before my parents moved my brother and me to a suburb just outside of Syracuse. It was 1953. A year away Supreme Court justices would rule that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. But, I had not and would not sit in the same
classroom with a Black child until I went to college. I stayed local, earning both my B.A. and M.A. at LeMoyne (a local Jesuit college) and Syracuse University. Those intervening years were marked in my own consciousness by civil and women’s rights movements and protests against an unpopular war in southeast Asia. Oddly enough—given my Syracuse roots and the fact that since the early 70s, like Grant, I have lived within city limits—I was much less aware of what was happening in my city and its schools until the mid-90s. It was at that time that I was a teacher in a city high school and shortly thereafter matriculated in a doctoral program at Syracuse. Here I spent two of my teaching assistantship years supervising student teachers in city elementary schools. It was there, in the Cultural Foundations of Education program, that I met my teacher, mentor, and eventually dissertation advisor, Jerry, as I know him, Grant. In this case, the personal is most assuredly the political. I credit Jerry with posing the questions that have helped me to better understand the political nature of the history and sociology of schooling in America.

In the first two chapters (of six), Grant tells the story of his own experience of growing up on Syracuse’s south side. Graduating from its aptly, at that time, named Central High School, he returned with his own family to live in the city in the late 70s, a time when most residents, in Syracuse and in other cities just like it, were heading to the surrounding suburbs. The strength of these chapters is the seemingly easy way Grant juxtaposes the thriving Syracuse of memory where . . .

fathers on my block went off to work at local factories and where a ten-year-old could safely ride his bike for miles through neighborhood streets to play in a grand system of city parks. . . (p. 36)

with the Syracuse he and his three children, now enrolled in city schools, encountered when several years after he had taken a position at Syracuse and lived for a half dozen years in one of the most beautiful and wealthy of the Finger Lakes villages, the family began its new adventure. That adventure informs Grant’s analysis of the depletion of social capital—the yeast, he argues, that “makes a good school rise” (p. 120)—in the city of his and my birth but also in a number of other urban centers around the country. Grant answers the questions these chapters, entitled What Happened to America’s Cities? and Can This Neighborhood Be Saved,? pose with a telescoped history lesson detailing bad urban social policy, state legislatures whose decisions fostered de facto segregation by barring urban schools from sharing suburban tax bases, erratic school leadership, teachers who at their best could not ameliorate the effects of poverty and prejudice on urban families, and, most importantly, a Supreme Court decision (Milliken v. Bradley, 1972) that effectively walled off underprivileged children in many American cities creating “segregated institutions for the poor” (p. 143). Much here—including especially Grant’s discussion of the impact of Federal Housing Authority’s blatantly racial mortgage policies in determining urban/suburban residential profiles and METCO (Metro Council for Educational Opportunity)-like experiments (rejected in the 70s by surrounding townships when proposed by a Syracuse City School District superintendent) to bus inner city children to suburban schools—is informed by his personal experience of working toward urban renewal in his own neighborhood and his broad knowledge of decades of failed and some successful attempts at reform in other American cities.
In Raleigh-Wake County, Grant finds one such successful reconstruction that took place over a century and a half in what he calls the Three Reconstructions of Raleigh (chapter 3). According to a 2007 Brookings Report on America’s cities Grant references, Syracuse, which has been losing population for decades and where fewer than half of children who begin kindergarten in Syracuse city schools graduate from high school, a statistic that Grant notes would cause protests to break out and school boards to be voted out of office in surrounding suburban communities, ranks in the bottom fifth on measures of economic health and growth. In contrast, current census figures show that Raleigh is prospering as the fastest-growing city in the nation and one experiencing an “urban renaissance” (p. 175). Grant has spent years talking with community leaders, parents, teachers, and school administrators, past and present, and takes the title of this central chapter, There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh (chapter 4) from dozens of interviewees who told him just that. Smart urban policy, community leadership, and the decision in 1976 to voluntarily merge city and suburban schools has created what Grant describes as an “economically balanced common school” (p. 184) and one that four years before No Child Left Behind federal law was passed, dared to determine that 95% of its children would pass state tests. In a later chapter, he says of this effort:

It took courage and a bold transformation of conventional political arrangements to nourish diversity and provide genuine equal educational opportunity. . . . Merging the city and county school systems saved the city from rotting at its core. . . . (p. 185)

He goes on to hail Raleigh a city of hope that embraced the opportunity to maintain racial and economic balance, nurture innovation among its teachers1, and close the achievement gap between Black and White children. Grant tells Raleigh’s story deftly in a chorus of voices, telling statistics, and, one of the book’s finest features, through an historical sociological perspective that shows the marked gains poor and minority children have made compared with their peers in similar-sized city schools. These chapters are a rebuke to those who mouth post-NCLB legislation that all children can learn but in practice demonstrate they believe just the opposite.

In his Tale of Two Cities, Dickens depicts the plight of the French proletariat under the brutal oppression of the upper classes in the years leading up to the revolution. Hope and Despair calls for no less a revolution in our willingness to fulfill the promise implicit in the American ideal of the common school. Grant suggests that like the French aristocracy “America defaults on that promise at its peril” (p. 185). In March of this year, President Obama, addressing the US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, echoed Mr. Grant’s vision of that America. Like Grant, Mr. Obama links continued economic health to the quality of the education we provide for all children. He says

 despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we’ve let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us. . . . In 8th grade math, we’ve fallen to 9th place. Singapore’s middle-schoolers outperform ours three to one. Just a third of our 13- and 14-year-olds can read as well as they should. And year after year, a stubborn gap persists between how well white students are doing compared to their African-American and Latino classmates.

The President goes on to say that the “decline in American education is untenable” and “unacceptable for our children” and that only by reversing it can we sustain a democracy.
Mr. Grant’s book makes that same case forcefully and eloquently. His is the prose of a seasoned researcher and writer. And this is a book anyone interested in public education and especially those working toward establishing the conditions in their cities and suburbs that provide equal educational opportunities for all children must read.

1Raleigh currently boasts the highest number of National Board certified teachers in the country.

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Book Review of
Teaching for Intellectual and Emotional Learning (TIEL):
A Model for Creating Powerful Curriculum

By Christy Folsom. (2009).
New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

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Context

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1837) in The American Scholar characterized a true scholar as having the ability to think independently, thus providing freedom from having to accept or “parrot” the ideas of others. To meet the challenge of preparing scholars, schools must provide all students with equal access to knowledge and opportunities for developing their critical and creative thinking skills (Michelli, 2005). A 2008 report by the Forum for Education and Democracy (Democracy at Risk: The Need for a New Federal Policy in Education, Darling-Hammond & Good) identified thinking and social-emotional skills as priorities for schools, both in terms of teaching and learning outcomes and commitment of funds and other resources. Talking about the importance of intellectual and emotional learning is relatively easy; however, putting those ideas into practice is often challenging, even for veteran teachers.

Written by Dr. Christy Folsom and published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2009, Teaching for Intellectual and Emotional Learning (TIEL): A Model for Creating Powerful Curriculum originated from the author’s dissertation and draws upon her personal and professional experiences of the author, as well as upon the works of J. P. Guilford (1968), Mary Meeker (1979), and John Dewey (1938). Folsom began her professional career as a New York City public school teacher with assignments in elementary and middle school settings. She taught general education classes, as well as special education and gifted students. Folsom uses her past experiences to inform her current role as a teacher educator in the City University of New York. Reflecting upon her various roles, she observes that “students have generally learned best when I taught thinking skills through project-based learning” (p. 1).
Overview

Many students, including high achievers, lack critical and creative thinking skills (Folsom, p. v). Likewise, many teachers lack the ability to assist students in developing such skills. The book explores this educational conundrum by investigating the following questions: “How can teachers learn to integrate the teaching of thinking skills into their classroom curriculum? How can they use project work to teach their students self-organization skills? What will help teachers discuss thinking and learning with their students? How can teachers be encouraged to include the explicit teaching of thinking into their curriculum?” (p. viii).

To answer these questions, the book is organized into five parts. Part I consists of two chapters, one that establishes the historical context for a discussion on intellectual and emotional learning and a second one that describes in detail the TIEL model and curriculum design wheel. Utilizing teacher case studies and student work products, Parts II-V focus on four tenets of effective teaching and learning: consciousness, communication, curriculum, and connections. Framing Parts I-V are the Introduction, in which Folsom discusses the personal and professional journey that led to the book, and the Appendix that explains the research methodology employed in her dissertation study designed to merge “the work of Guilford and Dewey to form the TIEL Curriculum Design Model” (Folsom, p. 287). Through an effective, deliberate organizational structure, Folsom provides a theoretical framework with accompanying project-based assignments for teaching “the self-organization skills of decision making, planning, and self-evaluation” (Folsom, 2009, p. 1).

Reactions

While the chapters all work together to create an interesting, instructive resource, the second chapter entitled What Is Tiel? provides the foundation for the remaining chapters. Folsom effectively uses both narration and visual aids to assist the reader in understanding the TIEL Model as a “tool that scaffolds the complex teaching and learning as required in our newly flattened world” and the TIEL Curriculum Design Wheel as a “visual representation of the components of thinking and qualities of character” (2009, p. 12). The Wheel functions as a color-coded graphic map for explaining ten segments of the TIEL Model, five of which support social-emotional processes/qualities of character and five that support cognition/thinking operations.

Folsom aligns the five qualities of character with the five thinking processes as follows: appreciation: divergent thinking, mastery: convergent thinking, ethical reasoning: evaluation, empathy: memory, and reflection: cognition. Each of the ten segments is also divided into subskills that students need to know and that teachers need to know how to teach. For example, the subskills within “appreciation” are love of art, music, nature; recognizing beauty; knowledge and respect of culture; and diversity. The companion segment “divergent thinking” includes creative thinking, flexibility, originality, many possible options; imagination, curiosity, and humor (Folsom, p.33)  Similarly, a review of the other four matched segments and accompanying subskills provides additional evidence of the need to teach for both intellectual and emotional learning. As noted by VanTassel-Baska, “the model becomes an indispensable tool for teaching and learning in classrooms that value thinking and feeling as equal partners in learning” (Folsom, 2009, p. xii).
After explaining the TIEL Model and Curriculum Design Wheel, Folsom makes the wheel “come alive” by examining four components of teaching and learning through the experiences and reflections of four teachers and their students. First is the need for teachers to develop a consciousness of the knowledge and skills that students need to learn. Ted, a veteran third-grade teacher known for his effectiveness in the classroom, acknowledged that he was unaware, or not conscious, of what he could be doing to assist his students in becoming self-regulated, self-empowered learners. The TIEL Model gave him both the knowledge and freedom to design project-based assignments such as a social studies immigration project through which his students learned self-regulation and self-management. Through the success of his students, Ted himself gained sufficient confidence to change the way he taught and realized the meaning of “when the teacher uses fewer words and asks good questions, the students’ mental involvement increases” (Folsom, p. 83).

Next is the need for teachers and students to communicate about thinking and social-emotional learning. In preparation for this section, Folsom follows Erica, a third- and fourth-grade teacher, through her first three years of teaching as she seeks to develop a vocabulary to discuss thinking processes with her students. Erica recognized that “in the new landscape of teaching and learning, educators need new vocabulary” (Folsom, p. 97). She, however, did not learn this new vocabulary in her teacher education program and was faced with “on-the-job” learning. Erica credits the TIEL Wheel, coupled with the mentoring by Folsom, for her ability to develop assignments such as a Mexico study project that led to “the common language, the visual concreteness, the flexibility of the framework in addressing various levels of learning, and the way it helped her and the students make generalizations” (p. 129).

A third tenet of effective teaching and learning is a curriculum that promotes critical and creative thinking. Stacy was a fourth-grade teacher who relied upon traditional approaches to teaching, including the use of textbooks, workbooks, and professionally published worksheets. She was teaching the way that she had been taught. Even though Stacy was aware of the social and emotional needs of her students, the idea of moving to a student-centered curriculum created fear and uncertainty. Her passion for students and the emotional and social well-being brought her out of her comfort zone to design projects like an explorers unit that included students in decision making, planning, and self-evaluation, thus resulting in increased motivation and creativity (Folsom, p. 246).

Brian, a second-grade teacher, helps the readers understand the importance of connections in teaching and learning. Like many teachers, Brian had an extensive repertoire of strategies for teaching thinking, but he had given little thought and preparation to teaching thinking processes in his classroom. Through an author’s study project and other student-centered assignments, the TIEL Model enabled him to “draw on his prior knowledge and experience to make connections to theory, to his personal thinking, and to the thinking of his students. These new insights helped him expand the possibilities for teaching and learning in his classroom” (Folsom, p. 251).

The professional growth of Ted, Erica, Stacy, and Brian is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the book. Folsom has a way of bringing the reader into the lives of these teachers and students. The author herself is another central figure in the book. Not only does she talk about her roles as a teacher, mentor, and researcher, but she also becomes one of the learners. In the section on communication, she talks openly about her inability to communicate with Erica. Just as Erica is learning a new vocabulary with
which to communicate with her students, so is Folsom. The theme of self-reflection by
veteran teachers and teacher educators, as well as students, runs throughout the book and
serves as a reminder that everyone has room for growth and development. The teachers
also represent a diversity of academic backgrounds, professional experiences, and
teaching styles. Each one, however, is a risk-taker whose struggles and ultimate
successes in the classroom will motivate readers to try something new for their own
benefit as well as that of their students.

The historical background and philosophical foundation set the stage for examples
of project-based assignments, including evaluation forms, that can be replicated in
classrooms across the country. Complementing the narrative are figures, charts,
evaluation forms, bulletin board ideas, and other visual aids. The TIEL approach to
teaching and learning is especially timely with the current emphasis upon test
preparation to meet local, state, and national standards. This book is a testimony to the
premise that teaching and learning should be enjoyable and that student-centered projects
can lead to increased intellectual achievement and emotional growth.

Summary

Schools are charged with preparing students to be contributing members of society
while giving them tools to access the many opportunities for an enjoyable, productive
life. For many administrators and teachers, fulfilling these purposes can be stimulating
but challenging, especially in today’s standards-based world. The book achieves its goal
of balancing historical context with current climate, theory with practice, and knowledge
and skills of teachers with intended intellectual and emotional outcomes for learners.
Dr. Folsom has succeeded in providing a valuable resource for administrators, teachers,
and teacher candidates at all levels who are committed to providing opportunities for
their students to expand their own abilities to think creatively and critically, while
simultaneously expanding their own capabilities.

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