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From Your Editor

After much delay, we bring you the combined Issues One and Two of Volume 27. The decision to combine these issues was prompted by thematic similarities among the manuscripts, but that decision bore significant fruit as the editorial staff earnestly began to plan for the long-term viability of our journal. This two-year planning process culminated in the recommendation earlier this semester to take *The Professional Educator* from a purely print journal to a web-based journal.

In addition to providing a more efficient and time-sensitive outlet for your peer-reviewed scholarship, the online journal format should allow us to share your research with a wider audience at a fraction of the cost. The specifics are still under construction, but please know that we are excited by the changes and look forward to sharing the new concept with you later this summer.

On a personal note, I am excited to announce that this will be my final issue at the helm. While I have been pushing *The Professional Educator* toward this transition for the last several years, other commitments and opportunities rear their heads and demand a reckoning. Cynthia Reed, Director of the Truman Pierce Institute, has agreed to steer our ship into these new waters, and we look forward to her leadership and enthusiasm.

As always, I have enjoyed working with our authors and reviewers in bringing you this collection. I hope you find them informative and, perhaps, provocative. As we enter this new era, we welcome your thoughts, ideas, comments, and submissions, and we look forward to reviewing and publishing your scholarly work in the near future. Thanks for your continued support.

Miles L. DeMott
Editor
About the Publishers

AUBURN UNIVERSITY’S
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND TRUMAN PIERCE INSTITUTE

College of Education

Auburn University, a fully accredited land-grant institution, is located in Auburn, Alabama. The institution was established in 1856 as a small Methodist liberal arts college with 80 students. It is the second oldest, four-year coeducational school in the southeast.

The College of Education was established in 1915. It is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and other accrediting agencies and has an excellent reputation for its professional preparation programs, from bachelor’s through the doctorate. Within the College are five departments: Counseling and Counseling Psychology; Curriculum and Teaching; Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology; Health and Human Performance; and, Rehabilitation and Special Education. The College of Education emphasizes high quality in the preparation of professionals for schools and for other educational agencies through innovative programs built on a strong research base. The College has always responded to the changing demands of the profession, maintaining program relevance to the field through constant examination of new program options. This emphasis has enabled the College to develop one of the most comprehensive professional preparation programs in the southeast.

Truman Pierce Institute

The Truman Pierce Institute is named in honor of Dr. Truman M. Pierce, an education visionary, who served as Dean of Auburn University’s College of Education for two decades and made regional and national contributions to educational arenas. Born and reared in a town called Equality, Alabama in 1906, he developed outstanding characteristics and attributes that guided his efforts for improving society and the lives of people across the nation.

The Institute functions under the auspices of Auburn University in keeping with its historic commitment as a land grant university to advance the welfare of humanity through education. Located within the College of Education, the Institute works with private and public institutions to achieve its mission—improving preservice teachers’ preparation and K–12 education—and its purposes which are vividly expressed in the projects of the Truman Pierce Institute. The projects include participating in a learning coalition with local education agencies, developing the West Alabama Learning Coalition, facilitating the Center for Professional Development Schools, designing and coordinating surveys of educational interest for Alabama, and co-publishing *The Professional Educator*. 
An Examination of Listening Effectiveness of Educators: Performance and Preference

Michael B. Gilbert
Central Michigan University

Abstract

Most students prefer visual input – through normal development or instructional reinforcement – yet, most teachers provide information to be taken in by listening. This mismatch can confound the learning process.

To determine how well teachers listen and what their teaching/learning preferences might be, more than 200 educators provided data about listening effectiveness and personality preferences. The data showed that those individuals who are more logical and thought-oriented listened more effectively overall and veteran educators listened better than student teachers (most likely attributable to their longer experience).

The implications are that teachers who overuse the auditory mode might be creating an environment where some students will get into distress and seek negative ways to get their needs met. The major finding was that educators who are strong in thought orientation tended to be the better listeners. Regardless of the personal orientation of teachers, the precursor to student learning is the teacher’s ability to connect with them personally.

Introduction

People who become professional educators have base (foundation) personalities that are conducive to the profession. Educators, who typically fall into three of six base personality categories, make teaching their career choice because of the prospect of helping others, structuring logical learning sequences and environments, or offering the adults of tomorrow tools that are valuable and important to meet their (and society’s) needs. These perceptual preferences describe some of the characteristics of those base personalities found in educators.

Teachers see students as ready receivers of the knowledge and skills they have to offer. They deliver lessons using the same structure their instructors used to teach them, and they presume their students will accept the information in the way they have delivered it. These methods are reinforced by their own learning preferences.

If these students have personalities that are much like their teachers and are indeed prepared to receive these learning experiences in the way they are being delivered, then the teachers and students are well matched. Students are motivated, and they move through the various learning activities unimpeded, for the most part.

For many students (regardless of their age), these strategies and this environment do not match their need for fun, action, or personal space. Students who are not motivated by their teachers, by school, or by life in general do all in their power to interact in ways to get these needs met. These students may be often characterized as at-risk when, in fact, their base personality types and their needs are very different from their teachers’ types and needs. [Base personalities are seen in individuals as early as six months of age and provide the basic perceptual preferences (Kahler, 1982).]

Understanding the needs of students with different preferences and working to reach them is the first step in communicating with them. Successful learning for all students relies on connecting with the teacher productively.

One aspect of managing a student successfully is related to whether the student and the teacher are “connecting” along open doorways of communication. If there is miscommunication, we can predict that negative coping strategies will be used by both the teacher and the student. These negative coping strategies are correlated to the personality
part the individuals are using and the positive energy they have available. (Knaupp, n.d., p. 8)

When teachers’ own psychological needs are not met, they usually deal with students’ misbehavior in negative ways. When students do not get their needs met, they usually fall into predictable distressed behavior to get what they need—with or without their conscious awareness.

Connecting with others is at the heart of communication—defined best as one person understanding what another wants understood. The key to this understanding is listening. Teachers who prefer imparting information through lecture require students to listen carefully and well. Many of these teachers see the world through their thoughts and beliefs. Their reliance on auditory methods suggests that students already know how to listen. In reality, few do know how to listen.

A model is simple, but the practice is difficult. Average adults spend about one-half of available communication time listening. Students, however, are in listening situations much longer; some estimate 65 to 90 percent. One might presume that available time translates into effective practice; however, most people have never been taught the skill of listening. Hence, it is not surprising that most do not do it well. As a result, most listen ineffectively, including the educators who demand their students do it.

In their classrooms, teachers set the standard for student behavior and learning and demand that students conform—yet not every student is comfortable with this prescription. Students have differing learning styles and ways of processing information (Barbe & Swassing, 1979; Gardner, 1983; Gregorc, 1982; McCarthy, 1980). Personality characteristics may also describe different preferences (DeBono, 1985; Myers & Briggs, 1943, 1976, 1985). In most of these models, one or several aspects of personality are used to depict an individual and suggest that people function in life and in learning situations with the manifestations of those characterizations. (Chart 1 shows the comparative personality indicators of some of the major models.)

### Chart 1

**Comparative Personality Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kahler</th>
<th>Myers/Briggs</th>
<th>GregorcDeBono</th>
<th>McCarthy</th>
<th>Barbe/Swassing</th>
<th>Gardner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td><em>FJ</em></td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Red Hat</td>
<td>Style One</td>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td><strong>TJ</strong></td>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Black Hat</td>
<td>Style Two</td>
<td>Auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td><strong>TJ</strong></td>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Blue Hat</td>
<td>Style Two</td>
<td>Auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>I*TP</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>White Hat</td>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>EN*P</td>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Green Hat</td>
<td>Style Four</td>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td><em>NT</em></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Yellow Hat</td>
<td>Style Three</td>
<td>Bodily-Kinesthetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Myers-Briggs Identifiers: E= Extraverted; F= Feeling; I= Introverted; J= Judging; N= Intuitive; P= Perceptive; T= Thinking]

[Gregorc Delineators: A = Abstract; C= Concrete; R= Random; S= Sequential]

**Sources**


Using Kahler’s (1982) Process Communication Model (described below) to identify personality types and preferences, Gilbert (1994) reported the relationship between the interaction energy (the ability to interact with other types of people) and performance (grades) of students. This relationship was a comparison of student personality type and teacher-designated grades. If one interprets a grade (criterion-referenced performance) as the student’s ability to meet the teacher’s expectations, it is not surprising that those who are most like the teacher will fare particularly well. Table 1 shows the significant correlations ($p < .05$) derived from the previous research (Gilbert, 1994). The positive general characteristics of each personality are as follows: Reactors are feeling-oriented; Workholics are thought-oriented; Persisters are belief-oriented; Dreamers are reflective; Rebels are playful; and Promoters are action-oriented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>0.4101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>0.3660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>0.3591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>0.3396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>0.0889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>-0.2496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows a higher correlation of grades with the personality types of most teachers (see below). Those students who have a lower or negative relationship to grades may prefer a kinesthetic environment, something not readily available in many classrooms. Moreover, these students are likely to be identified as Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disordered by their teachers (Bailey, 1998).

The Process Communication Model (Kahler, 1982) places six personality types in one of four quadrants on an Assessing Matrix (Figure 1), the two axes of which describe continua from Involved to Withdrawn and Intrinsically to Extrinsically Motivated. Teacher types tend to be more intrinsically motivated, spanning the full range from being involved to withdrawn. Poor-performing (at-risk) students fall into the quadrant that describes them mostly as Involved and Extrinsically Motivated. Those types that had the weakest correlations between Interaction Energy and Grades must get their needs met positively to stay out of distress: Rebels need playful contact, and Promoters need incidence (lots of activities in short periods of time with quick payoffs). Their main preferred intake mode is kinesthetic—provided on
A limited basis by their intrinsically motivated teachers.

Another study focusing on aspects of Process Communication showed similar results: “...a student’s grade is significantly affected by the student’s personality type base...” (Wallin, 1992, p. iii). Teachers trained in Process Communication may positively affect student performance through understanding student needs and preferences better (Hawking, 1995).

Class size may confound the individualized activities or learning input necessary to access those students who do not respond readily to the teacher’s predominant mode of instruction (Coty, 1994). If teachers deliver instruction verbally, then learning to listen carefully and critically are key aspects of improved student involvement.

H. A. Murray’s 1938 work, Explorations in Personality, suggested important concepts:

... personal needs, defined as motivational personality characteristics, represent tendencies to move in the direction of certain goals, whereas (the classroom environment) provides an external situational counterpart that supports or frustrates the expression of internalized personality needs. Therefore, situational variables found in the classroom environment may account for a significant amount of behavioral variance. (in Pierce, 1994, p. 38)

At-risk learners need a supportive classroom environment, one that caters to their learning preferences. Most classrooms offer a product-oriented climate, which may only reinforce student insecurities in their performance. “They
associate the classroom environment with failure; expecting to fail, they often do” (Pierce, 1994, p. 38). To be effective, teachers need to listen to and talk with their students (Steer, 1984). Of course, this presumes that teachers are educated in listening skills (Swanson, 1997) and are prepared to listen when situations or students invite them.

“As good listeners, teachers: (1) establish a classroom environment conducive to learning; (2) make better pedagogical decisions based on good listening skills; and (3) model good listening behavior for students” (Bozik, 1987). Listening competency is important to being an effective teacher in “sending and receiving messages that: (1) are used to obtain or give information; (2) express or respond to feelings; (3) speculate, theorize, or include fantasy; (4) serve to maintain and facilitate social interaction; and (5) seek to convince” (Cooper, 1986).

Flexibility in environmental and instructional strategy provides ways in which all learners can be accessed (i.e., motivated). Subscribing to this approach allows educators to explode one of the long-standing myths: “You can’t let them move around; they are too disruptive” (Pope, 1994, p. 7). Moving away from traditional patterns by recognizing different learner needs gives teachers a plethora of approaches—and permission to use them.

Many educators limit the ways in which they offer and process information because of their personality strengths and preferences. Sometimes even good teachers may assume mistakenly that teaching strategies that worked previously for their students will work with all children. A reason they may have been successful is that they connected with similar personality strength and preferences of their students. Educators must listen carefully and collaboratively (to and with their students) to communicate successfully (Wilmore, 1995). Knowing how to accommodate different patterns and perceptions expands the interaction effectiveness most educators seek.

Purpose of the Study

Because listening occupies such a predominant place in most classroom instruction—far in excess of the approximate 50 percent non-instructional use noted by Rankin, Nichols, Steil, and others (Gilbert, 1989)—the purpose of the study was to determine how well educators perform the skill they require most students to use 65 to 90 percent of classroom time. Moreover, the research focused on whether some types of educators listened more effectively than others. It was presumed that those educators who are more withdrawn and intrinsically motivated would listen better than other educator types.

An ancillary purpose was to document what patterns—perceptual and motivational—predominate with educators. A corollary problem was to determine how able educators are to interact with others, especially those unlike themselves. These aspects would suggest how likely educators are able to adapt to other people (in their professional and personal lives). Teachers who are more alert to the physical and psychological manifestations of students’ loss of motivation will understand blocks to learning (Kasimbira, 1984).

Instrumentation

Listening effectiveness was determined by an overall score on the Watson-Barker Listening Test (WBLT) (Watson & Barker, 1991), standardized for adult audiences and divided into five subscales: (1) evaluating message content, (2) understanding meaning in conversations, (3) understanding and remembering information, (4) evaluating emotional meanings in messages, and (5) following directions and instructions. Personality patterns were derived from the Kahler Personality Pattern Inventory (PPI) (Kahler, 1997).

The WBLT videotape took approximately 30 minutes to administer in group settings. The PPI was completed individually in about 30 minutes. Data were collected during the 2002–2003 academic year.

Several thousand subjects across the United States were used to refine and validate the WBLT, including executives, professionals, government employees, and undergraduate/graduate students from a variety of universities and curricula. Pilot tests were subjected to factor analyses, item analyses, reliability tests, and descriptive analyses. Face validity of each item was judged by a panel of listening experts (Watson & Barker, 1991). In
addition, Roberts (1986; 1988) and others (as cited in Watson & Barker, 1991) reported the WBLT to be valid.

A study similar to the current one was undertaken in 1996 by the author with nothing notable coming from the data analysis, only that no distinctions between personality types could be ascertained (Gilbert, 1997). This was puzzling until the findings of Villaume and Weaver (1996) were published. Their work challenged the validity and reliability of the subscales of both the WBLT and the Kentucky Comprehensive Listening Test (KCLT) (Bostrom & Waldhart, 1983), a standard measure for many years.

Villaume and Weaver (1996) contended that the overall scores on the tests were circumspect because the sub scores were deemed unreliable. Their research showed different groupings of items in factor analyses than the test authors indicated. Further, Villaume and Weaver suggested that there were distinctions to be made between literal recall in listening situations and those areas that required interpretation and evaluation-based paralinguistic factors and subtextual cues.

Even though the WBLT had been revised (1999) into a shorter test, no additional validity and reliability data were available to support use of the shorter, less-fatiguing version. The researcher instead chose to use the original longer version, incorporating the factors discovered by Villaume and Weaver. [The KCLT was also considered as a data-gathering instrument, but it was unavailable from the publisher in time for the initial data gathering at the beginning of the academic year. Even though the researcher found another source for the KCLT, he eliminated this instrument from the project since all of the potential subjects would not be able to use the same instrumentation.]

Kahler’s work (1982) has its foundations in Transactional Analysis, which suggests that certain ego states (Parent, Adult, or Child) describe behavior. Each person has an individual structure of personality types—a base, the strongest part, and each of five other personality types in decreasing strength. Each personality type has character strengths, psychological (motivational) needs, communication preferences, and predictable patterns and behaviors that occur when one is in distress (described simply as not fulfilling one’s needs positively).

Kahler’s (1997b) PPI is a valid and reliable measure of one’s personality structure and behavioral preferences. Two hundred four items were administered to 180 people, representing each of the identified personality types, to determine face, concurrent, and predictive validity. Only items with a correlation greater than .60 ($p < .01$) were accepted for inclusion in the final inventory (Kahler Communications, n. d.).

The data used for the current research were the personality determinations from the PPI, and the overall and the five Villaume-Weaver factored subscale scores on the WBLT. These six scores allowed for an analysis of the relationship between one’s personality patterns and listening effectiveness. The demographic categories (independent variables) were gender and position (student teacher or veteran educator).

Sample

To provide a cross section of educators, both student teachers and veteran educators were sampled. Subjects came from Maryland, Michigan, New York, and Tennessee.

Data were gathered from 217 subjects. The sample was predominantly female (n = 164, 76%) student teachers (n = 139, 71%). (Fifty-three males comprised the sample, and there were 58 veteran educators. Twenty of the subjects were missing position designations.)

Educator Types

Educators tend to predominate with three personality types described by the Process Communication Model (PCM) (Kahler, 1982) — Reactors (“feelers”), Workaholics (“thinkers”), and Persisters (“believers”). The probable reasons people choose education as a profession may explain this array. In the strongest part of their personalities, they are compassionate, sensitive, and warm (Reactors) and want to help others; they are logical, responsible, and organized (Workaholics) and can structure learning activities in sequences, in a timely fashion, and in rational ways; or they are conscientious,
dedicated, and observant (Persisters) and understand what they believe is valuable and important to teach and be learned.

The PCM contends that each of us has a personality depicted as a six-story building. The first floor is our base personality, observable by six months of age. The order of the remaining five floors is set by age seven. Each successively higher floor is less “furnished” than those below. This furnishing relates to the amount of relative energy available to each person in those aspects of personality.

A unique feature of the PCM is Phase. This describes that aspect of one’s personality where one attempts to fulfill needs—one’s motivation. This motivation may be described by one’s Base (33 percent of the time) or in movement to the next higher floor (Phase change) of the personality structure (67 percent of the time). Ninety-nine percent of those who experience a Phase change do so as a result of long-term distress with and resolution of a particular life issue (Kahler, 1997a). Interestingly, this evolution occurs with or without one’s awareness. These life issues are as follows for the six PCM Personality Types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>Issue for Phase Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>Grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>Self-Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>Abandonment/Bonding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all of the subjects completed the PPI. This shortcoming was due in part to the voluntary nature of participation in the project and the fact that responses were to be completed online and out of the control of the researcher. Eighty-eight percent of the group (n = 133) were Base Reactors (49%), Workaholics (13%) and Persisters (25%), and 82 percent were Phase Reactors (25%), Workaholics (26%) and Persisters (31%). More than 74 percent of the group were either a Base or Phase Reactor, Workaholic or Persister, or a combination of two out of the three. The data showed this group of educators was eight percent Base Rebels, two percent Base Dreamers, and three percent Base Promoters. Thirteen percent were Phase Rebels; five percent were Phase Promoters; and one percent was Phase Dreamers. The comparative data between the general population and the research sample are shown in Table 2. [The “Educator” arrays were derived from the data collected for this study.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>General Population Base</th>
<th>Educator Base</th>
<th>General Population Phase</th>
<th>Educator Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These differences were significant ($p < .001$). Educators were much more intrinsically motivated than the general population. (This is characteristic of Reactors, Workaholics and Persisters.)

It was interesting to note that 43 (28%) subjects had Bases that were also their Phases. This means that the perceptual preferences and motivational needs of the sample group of educators were drawn from the same personality type; they had not yet experienced the Phase change found in two-thirds of the general population. While the group was evenly divided in the number of people who did not change Phases, the veteran educators had a higher percentage (43%) than did the student teachers (13%). A higher proportion of the veteran educators seem to have had less opportunity to deal with the life issues that precipitate Phase changes than did the student teachers. [One might presume the obverse, given that veteran educators have more life experience.] The Base and Phase frequencies are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Educator Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Reactor</th>
<th>W’holic</th>
<th>Persister</th>
<th>Dreamer</th>
<th>Rebel</th>
<th>Promoter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the concept of Phase is unique to the Process Communication Model and adds to the model’s comprehensiveness. One’s Phase is the part of the personality structure where one is motivated under normal conditions. Experiencing a Phase change means that one’s motivators change. If one is a Reactor (base) in Persister phase (the most frequent pattern, seen in 16% of the
sample), then that person is most easily motivated by recognition for work and conviction—these are the psychological needs of Persisters. However, that individual still experiences the world most easily through feelings (Reactor perceptual preferences), but, in this case, will appear more like a Persister, in many of the words, tones, dress, and environmental preferences of the Persister-type person. For this sample, this predominant pattern indicates educators with strong abilities to feel first but currently motivated by recognition of their positive contributions to the organization and for their convictions.

Results

The overall mean of the 217 people who completed the Watson-Barker Listening Test (WBLT) was 32.3 out of a possible 50. This converts to a mean scaled score of 64.6 (by multiplying the raw score by 2), almost three percent below (p < .01) the national median of 66 and the national mean of 66.4, both normed on a pretest basis in 1991 with a group of more than 3,700 managers, supervisors, and professionals (Watson & Barker, 1995). The five subscales on the WBLT are: (1) evaluating message content (CONTENT), (2) understanding meaning in conversations (CONVERS), (3) understanding and remembering information (REMEMB), (4) evaluating emotional meanings in messages (EVALEMO), and (5) following directions and instructions (DIRECTNS).

The WBLT contains 50 questions. The scores on each 10-response subtest were multiplied by 2 to convert it to a possible total of 100, the basis on which the national norms were calculated for the longer version. The means for each of the converted subscales are shown in Table 5, along with the comparisons with the norms as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Converted</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>-.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVERS</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>-.672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMEMB</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>-4.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALEMO</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>5.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTNS</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>-6.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>-2.855</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lowest subscale for the sample group of educators was in understanding meaning in conversations, 2.3 percent below the national norm. The greatest difference from national norms was in understanding and remembering information, 8.5 percent below the national norm (p < .001). The area of greatest proficiency was evaluating emotional meanings in messages, exceeding the national norm by 6.8 percent (p < .001). Other significant differences were in following directions and instructions, 7.5 percent below the national norm (p < .001), and in the overall score, 2.8 percent below the national norm (p < .01).

The PCM variables (as determined by the PPI) were the main focus of the research—to determine if any aspects of personality were predictable...
Indicators of listening effectiveness. Previous research (Gilbert, 1997) found no differences in the listening effectiveness of the sample on the overall WBLT score or any of the subscales when using Base and Phase designations. The reason for no variation seemed to be the lack of differentiation among the designators—Base and Phase were each assigned a single digit to distinguish one personality type from another. The Personality Pattern Inventory responses provide distinctions from 0 to 100 for each personality. This represents the percentage of available “energy,” or the ability to tap into that part of a person’s structure. Because of the greater distinguishability, more discrete analyses were possible.

The “energy” means for the group were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major questions to be answered were:

1. Are there personality types that listen more effectively than others in general?
2. Are there specific types of listening that distinguish one personality type from another?

Using the overall score on the WBLT, the following results were found:

1. Veteran educators listened significantly ($p < .001$) better than student teachers (see Table 6).
2. Strong Workaholic energy was the best predictor of overall listening effectiveness ($p < .01$; see Table 7).
3. Strong Dreamer energy was the best predictor of overall listening ineffectiveness ($p < .05$; see Table 7).

Veteran educators listened significantly better than student teachers. They scored 10 percent higher overall on the WBLT.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$t$ Score</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>-4.76</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p$ value $< .004$
Table 7

*Predictors of Listening Effectiveness by Total Score on the Watson-Barker Listening Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>-0.143</td>
<td>-1.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workaholic</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.303</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.380</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>-0.139</td>
<td>-1.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dreamer</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.192</strong></td>
<td><strong>-2.418</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>-0.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>-0.511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p value: 0.095, 0.093, 0.017, 0.001

People with strong *Workaholic* energy were better listeners. People with strong *Dreamer* energy were poorer listeners. (Workaholics are very data-driven; Dreamers are highly directable and may need to be instructed regarding particular information beforehand.) Other predictors and differentiations were not significant.

The distinctions discovered through the factor analysis done by Villaume and Weaver (1996) were interesting in the different subscales that were generated. They determined the following groupings:

**Factor**
1. Literal recall of information
2. Literal recall with semantic and pragmatic inferences
3. Paralinguistic elements
4. Discursive judgments based on subtextual cues
5. Most warranted implications in the context of strongly competing alternative implications

**WBLT Items**
- WB2, WB13, WB14, WB29, WB41, WB43, WB48, WB49, WB50
- WB23, WB24, WB25, WB26
- WB31, WB32, WB34, WB40
- WB11, WB16, WB18, WB20, WB38
- WB4, WB8, WB36, WB45, WB47

These designations were a bit different than the ones identified by the test authors: (1) evaluating message content, (2) understanding meaning in conversations, (3) understanding and remembering information, (4) evaluating emotional meanings in messages, and (5) following directions and instructions. The items making up the majority of Factor One, characterized as Literal Recall of Information, were taken mostly from the WBLT Subscale Five, Following Directions and Instructions. Factor Two, Literal Recall with Semantic and Pragmatic Inferences, was com-
prised of items from the WBLT Subscale Three, Understanding and Remembering Information. Factor Three, Using Paralinguistic Elements, was made up of items from the WBLT Subscale Four, Evaluating Emotional Meaning in Messages. Factor Four, Discursive Judgments Based on Subtextual Cues, was comprised mostly of items from the WBLT Subscale Two, Understanding Meaning in Conversations. Finally, Factor Five, Most Warranted Implications, was based on items from three WBLT subscales: One, Literal Recall; Four, Evaluating Emotional Meanings; and Five, Following Directions and Instructions.

The reordering of the items gives the user of the test more meaningful (reliable) information with which to draw conclusions. The distinctions offered by Villaueme and Weaver give a sounder basis for the use of the WBLT. The following data present Villaueme-Weaver factors with the PCM personality designations.

Table 8 shows that people with strong Dreamer energy listen poorest when required to recall information literally. Dreamers tend to be highly directable; hence, they might need to be told to focus on particular information. No other significant distinctions were shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td>-.1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workaholic</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>1.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>-.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>-.234</td>
<td>-2.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>-1.330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p value</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that strong Reactor energy yields poorest listening related to semantic and pragmatic inferences. These people tend to be more literal (and initially trusting) in their relationships. They prefer to believe what they are told and typically will not infer other interpretations to what the speaker says.

An analysis of Factor Three, Paralinguistic Elements, did not yield any significant predictors among the personality types. An analysis of Factor Four, Evaluation of Subtextual Cues, showed those with high Dreamer energy listen more poorly. These data are arrayed in Table 10, with a similar interpretation to the analysis of Factor Two (above) — Dreamers need focus.
### Table 9
*Predictors of Listening Effectiveness by Factor Two (Semantic and Pragmatic Inferences)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>-.222</td>
<td>-2.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workholic</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>-.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>-.122</td>
<td>-1.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>-1.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.527</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p value</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.006</td>
<td></td>
<td>.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.667</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10
*Predictors of Listening Effectiveness by Factor Four (Subtextual Cues)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td>-1.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workholic</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>1.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persister</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dreamer</strong></td>
<td><strong>-.190</strong></td>
<td><strong>-2.375</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>-1.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p value</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.080</td>
<td><strong>.019</strong></td>
<td>.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of Factor Five, Most Warranted Implications, yielded no significant results among the personality types. The analyses using the factors determined by Villaume and Weaver (1996) showed those with high Workaholic energy listened best to factual information; those with high Dreamer energy listened poorest on two factors (Semantic and Pragmatic Inferences, and Subtextual Cues); and those with high Reactor energy listened poorest on the factor relating to drawing pragmatic and semantic inferences.

**Discussion**

It was anticipated that educators who are more intrinsically motivated and withdrawn (Workaholics and Persisters) would listen more
effectively than any of the other personality types, because they seem to prefer auditory input. This was not the case with Persisters, even though the contention related to Workaholics was borne out.

A possible reason that Persisters did not listen as well was because they tend to overlay messages with their beliefs initially. That is, they evaluate the message using their values and opinions as they consider the worth and utility of the information.

Prior to the data collection, the presumption of differences was based on the various orientations and descriptions of the personality types identified by the Process Communication Model (Kahler, 1982). Workaholics and Persisters are motivated by recognition for their work—a focus on accomplishment acknowledged by others and a certain precision in functioning. They experience the world through thoughts and opinions, respectively. Knowing that Reactors are more people-oriented and need acceptance of self, that Dreamers prefer solitude with little or no interaction with others, and that Rebels and Promoters need the more kinesthetic interaction of playful contact and incidence led the researcher to the construct that there would be a difference in listening performance.

Using the factors determined by Villaume and Weaver (1996) yielded some interesting and predictable results. Workaholic energy may allow one to focus better on factual information; the more Workaholic one is the better one can sort through data delivered orally.

High Dreamer energy may confound a listener unless the directions for gleaning information are provided beforehand. Similarly, those whose feelings guide them tend to have difficulty in sifting through information to use pragmatic and semantic inferences effectively.

The researcher, who oversaw the administration of all of the listening tests, observed some consistent flagging of attention as the test progressed. Villaume and Weaver (1996) also echoed that the longer version of the WBLT might be fatiguing.

A disappointment was the failure of all of the subjects to complete the PPI; hence, there were fewer complete files to use for the more extensive data analyses. Using the current (shorter) version of the WBLT, after it has been factor analyzed, would provide another way of gathering the listening data. Different “incentives” or finding a more captive way of collecting the personality information would be more salutary. An additional problem is the cost of the PPI, which is substantial when compared with other instruments. This means that categorical support would be necessary to use the instrument more extensively. Its value is its comprehensiveness, which does not appear to be available elsewhere.

**Summary and Implications**

Gilbert (1988; 1989) reported that listening is required in classrooms and in other educational situations a majority of the time, but most educators have had little or no formal training in learning and teaching the skill of listening. Moreover, the differences in personalities and preferences provide other layers of explanation as to what happens in classrooms (Bailey, 1998; Gilbert, 1999).

Since the gap between the need for listening and preparation in listening appears to be consistent, the researcher wanted to examine whether certain types of educators listened more effectively than others, especially as the research might have implications for classroom environments. The representative educators demonstrated limited significant differences in their listening effectiveness as measured by the Watson-Barker Listening Test.

Educators who have a strong ability to think (as opposed to feel, believe, etc.) appeared to be the best listeners. Those who are more reflective and are highly directable listened least effectively.

Most educators typically use auditory and visual input for instructional activities—approaches that work best with students who have those preferences. If learners follow the same patterns as the educators in this current study, Workaholics will be most effective in taking in factual information by listening. Reactors will need encouragement to look past the literal information. Dreamers will need to be directed to focus on particular aspects of messages to listen effectively.
If Persisters are to listen effectively, they may need to be given time to filter messages through their belief systems. Rebels and Promoters will have to be motivated to listen, since it is likely they prefer to learn kinesthetically. This means these students can shift their learning preferences only if they meet their contact and incidence needs first and positively.

Educators should be sensitive to potential problems in overusing the auditory mode to present material. While oral presentation might be preferable for classroom control and for other reasons, it may also foster distress in those learners who prefer to take in information visually or kinesthetically.

Those educators whose preferences or personality strengths suggest they might listen better to be more effective would do well to seek workshops or training in developing listening skills. Teacher educators might also consider adding instruction in listening to pre-service programs to make requisite training in a critical communication skill that will augment the emphasis on classroom management and discipline strategies (Ritter & Taylor, 1990).

Effective teachers must first connect with their students personally as the precursor to foster student learning. This may result in their being remembered by their students, in part, for their active listening and empathy (Ferguson & Thomas, 1987).

References
Gilbert, M. B. (1994). Meeting communication needs of students can promote success. (Unpublished off-campus duty assignment report, University of Arkansas at Little Rock)


Knaupp, J. (n.d.) Preservice teachers' ranking of personality characteristics preferred by primary students, middle school students, parents and administrators. Unpublished manuscript, Arizona State University.


Using Vignettes To Build and Assess Teacher Understanding of Instructional Strategies

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University of California, Los Angeles

Abstract

In the last fifty years, the use of stories in education has included vignettes as an effective stimulus for discussion of real-life contexts and problems. However, vignettes have rarely been used as an assessment tool and there is no reported consensus on their definition and design. This article documents the use of vignettes as an effective method of assessing pedagogical understanding in our teacher development courses from 1995-2003, suggesting that vignettes are significantly correlated with more traditional forms of assessment, are highly predictive of course-ending project performances, and represent an episode of learning in their own right. Finally, we propose a more concise definition and a more rigorous course of study for vignette development and implementation.

A critical theme of institutions of higher education in the preparation and continuing education of teachers is that educational research informs and is informed by practice. Identifying and assessing what and how teachers learn during their professional development is an important component in assisting them to better teach their students. The use of stories in various formats has long been a powerful and successful method for modeling, teaching, and researching behavior and understanding in general education, health sciences, social sciences, and behavioral sciences.

One type of story, the vignette, has been used in the social sciences and more recently in the health and education fields as a reflective, research, and modeling tool (Callicott, 2003; Campbell, n.d.; Chambers, 1999; Galguera, 1998; Hughes & Huby, 2002; King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2002a; Kruse, 1997; New Hampshire Equity Handbook Writing Team, n.d.; Pransky & Bailey, 2002; Schwartz & Riedesel, 1994; TESOL, 2001; Vaughn & Klingner, 1999; Volkmann, 1998). Researchers and educators have found vignettes to be very effective in these contexts for several reasons: vignettes are relatively easy to construct, they provide a useful focus and stimulus for discussion, they are valuable in addressing difficult-to-explore and sensitive topics, they can be used with individuals and groups, and they reflect real-life contexts and problems.

Vignettes have rarely been reported as a means of assessing mastery of course content. Furthermore, there are few definitions or construction criteria for vignettes in these contexts, and certainly no reported consensus on their definition and design. Given the benefits of using vignettes in research, modeling, discussion, and reflection, and the need to determine teacher qualification, it is important to determine whether vignettes can also be an effective assessment tool in teacher education.

An important step in this process is the collection of evidence that vignettes are a reliable assessment tool that complements more traditional assessment styles. In addition, it should be determined whether vignettes can augment the information gathered in more traditional assessments. Besides content and skill mastery, do vignettes help to measure affective goals, such as the motivation to learn? Do vignette assessments provide evidence of problem solving and critical thinking?

Furthermore, it is critical to determine if vignettes can assist in state-mandated assessment of teacher understanding of pedagogy. The challenge of assessing portfolios may be partially addressed through vignette scoring guides that quantify responses that are unique and authentic. Finally, vignettes should be studied for evidence
of an assessment task as an episode of learning. Does an assessment task that encourages modeling, rehearsal, and transfer provide more opportunities for learning than more traditional forms of assessment, (e.g., multiple-choice, fill-in items)?

Since 1995, we have been using vignettes as a method of assessing pedagogical understanding in teacher development courses. We believe the vignette to be a highly effective assessment tool and suspect that vignettes have a strong predictive component as well as provide a rich learning experience for eliciting and promoting teacher understanding. We would like to share our experiences and data with teacher educators and researchers in order to propose a course of study on the use of vignettes in assessing pedagogical understanding in teacher education programs. Based on the literature and our experiences, we would also like to propose a more concise definition and establish more rigorous criteria for vignette development and implementation in this assessment process.

Review of Literature

Stories as Educational Tools

A story is defined by Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2003) as “a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events and, often, the characters involved in them.” Stories have been used in many different forms and formats as a powerful and successful method for modeling, teaching, and researching behavior and understanding in general education, health sciences, social sciences, and behavioral sciences. Story formats include case studies, long narrative descriptions of real or hypothetical situations in which learners are asked to identify or solve a problem (Gideonse, 1999; Hrabie, Kinzie, & Julian, 2001; Jackson, 1998; Loughner, Harvey, & Mil-heim, 2001; Marsick, 1998); case stories, stories that simulate the real world but are written by individuals within the classroom and told from their perspectives (Hunter & Hatton, 1998; Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1998); scenarios, narrative descriptions that contain a set of realistic assumptions and facts about the future used to provide a unified context for decision-making (International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture, n.d.; Pesonen, n.d.); and vignettes.

Vignettes in Education and Research

A recent review of the literature on vignettes revealed a wide range of definitions, usage, construction, testing, and examples. Definitions were rarely provided and varied greatly, which caused confusion of vignettes with other types of stories. In fact, many studies and articles used the terms case study, case story, scenario, and vignette interchangeably, incorrectly, or uniquely, (e.g., Jackson, 1998; Kruse, 1997; Walen & Hirstein, 1995; Weigle & Scotti, 2000; Weiner, Rand, Pagnano, Obi, Hall, & Bloom, 2001).

Broadly defined, vignettes are “short stories about hypothetical characters in specific circumstances to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond... moving from the abstract to context-specific” (Finch, 1987, p. 106). Vignettes consist of text, images, or other forms of stimuli, ranging from short written prompts to live events, to which research participants are asked to respond (Hughes & Huby, 2002). Herman (1998) uses the term case vignette to describe a written description, photograph, or videotaped scene as a brief glimpse of an educational situation. Campbell (n.d.) comes closest to an operational definition:

A vignette is a short story without an ending. It is short, but not too short to present an issue. It is detailed, but not so detailed that the underlying issue gets lost. A vignette presents an issue, such as the under-representation of girls in advanced math courses, in a context with which individuals can identify. A good vignette has fewer complexities and personalities than real life, sets up a situation in which there is no one “right” answer, and is flexible enough that individuals from different groups (teacher/administrator, female/male, liberal/conservative) can identify with the story and bring their perspective forward in discussions of solutions. (p. 2)

Vignette Construction and Design

In addition to a lack of consensus on vignette definition, there was a noticeable lack of informa-
tion on how vignettes were constructed or should be constructed. When using vignettes to promote discussion and problem solving concerning equity in math and science education, Campbell (n.d.) proposed a vignette construction process and shared samples of vignettes for different target groups, (e.g., administrators, teachers, students, parents, policy makers, researchers). She listed three major steps in creating vignettes: determine issues and areas of concern, develop situations that are realistic and relevant, and test the vignettes on groups similar to those who will be using them (Campbell, n.d.).

In their review of the use of vignettes as a research tool in the behavioral sciences and health care, Richman and Mercer (2002) proposed an alignment along eight axes in the construction and application of vignettes. These axes addressed the function of the vignette, method of implementation, collection, type of respondents, content covered, time available, type of response elicited, and ethical issues. Richman and Mercer put forth the design issue of whether to use already existing data in the construction of the vignette or to construct material suited to the specific purpose. They also posed the question of vignette delivery media—written documents, audiovisual, or oral—while stating that the literature strongly suggested that vignettes are usually given in written documents of varying lengths.

In their review of the application of vignettes in social and nursing research, Hughes and Huby (2002) addressed the differences between vignettes and real life processes and explored some practical advantages and pitfalls of using vignettes. They found that vignettes provided a useful focus and stimulus for discussion, may be constructed from unrealistic events and real life events, were valuable in detecting subtleties and nuances, and were useful in addressing difficult-to-explore and sensitive topics. The issues they presented in constructing effective vignettes included making the topics and contexts relevant to the audience and addressing the readers abilities and styles.

King, Murray, Salomon, and Tandon (2002b) addressed similar issues when constructing vignettes for surveys: how and when to address the vignette character’s intellectual, cultural, and religious background as well as physical attributes and personal information. They recommended that vignettes be written so that people from different backgrounds could understand them as similarly as possible, that details be scrutinized to avoid introducing unwarranted assumptions, and that vignette characters be as similar as possible to the audience.

When authors did provide samples of their vignettes, a wide range of formats were found that included short and long dialogues, formulas, pictures, and short and long narratives with and without follow-up questions. Vignettes ranged from 25 to 1000 words in length. The accompanying questions and tasks varied in terms of number, length, type, and amount of detail.

Vignette Usage

The lack of consensus of vignette definition and format may be due to its diverse usage across fields that seldom overlap or confer with one another. Vignettes have been used in the social sciences since the 1950’s (Hughes & Huby, 2002) and more recently in the health sciences to model best practices (Callicott, 2003; Orlander, Gupta, Fincke, Manning, & Hershman, 2000), to describe common situations and conditions (Pickett, Streight, Simpson, & Brison, 2003; Stelmachers & Sherman, 1990), to study technique effectiveness (Goldie, Schwartz, McConnachie, & Morrison, 2001), and to identify attitudes and beliefs (Sleed, Durrheim, Kriel, Solomon, & Baxter, 2002; Thurber, Heller, & Hinshaw, 2002).

Vignettes have also been used in the field of education as models of effective teaching (TESOL, 2001; Vaughn & Klingner, 1999), to identify and study attitudes and beliefs (Galguera, 1998; Schwartz & Riedesel, 1994), and as a tool to support teachers in their development, reflection, and problem-solving abilities (Campbell, n.d.; Kruse, 1997; New Hampshire Equity Handbook Writing Team, n.d.; Pransky & Bailey, 2002; Volkman, 1998). Only a few instances of vignettes used to assess knowledge were found, (e.g., Cohen, Sheete, Seal, Daum, & Lauderdale, 2003), and those were in the health field.
Vignettes as a Written Assessment Tool in Teacher Development

Richman and Mercer’s (2002) view of vignettes as a feasible alternative to observation and a flexible and fertile component of qualitative research suggests that a vignette analysis assignment might be an assessment tool to complement more traditional forms of content or skill mastery. Research conducted in the fields of health and behavioral science (Hughes & Huby, 2002) suggests that vignettes could be used as an assessment tool to collect evidence of mastery of skills, terms, and concepts for the following reasons:

1. Vignettes provide a useful focus and stimulus for discussion.
2. Vignettes may be constructed from unrealistic events and real life events.
3. Vignettes are valuable in detecting subtleties and nuances.
4. Vignettes are useful in addressing difficult-to-explore and sensitive topics.
5. Vignettes can quickly generate considerable amounts of data from a large participant group.
6. Vignettes can be defined and standardized to enable all participants to respond to the same stimulus.
7. Vignettes do not necessarily require participants to have in-depth knowledge of the topics under study.

Given the positive aspects of vignette use, we performed an analysis of data collected between 1998–2003 in two online teacher education courses that used vignettes as an assessment task to elicit teacher pedagogical understanding. Based on the research literature and our experiences and results, we believe that vignettes are a strong candidate for assessing teacher understanding and predicting appropriate teacher implementation of instructional strategies.

Method

Vignette Definition and Construction Criteria

We define vignettes as incomplete short stories that are written to reflect, in a less complex way, real-life situations in order to encourage discussions and potential solutions to problems where multiple solutions are possible.

The five criteria for this type of vignette are:

1. It is a story. It is a narrative but not a dialogue, case study, case story, or scenario.
2. It is short. Its length is 50-200 words.
3. It is relevant. It simplifies a real-life situation that is relevant to participants but one in which no participant is likely to have expertise.
4. It allows for multiple solutions/answers and is intended to encourage independent thinking and unique responses. It includes a prompt with instructions and a set of tasks, i.e., specific issues to be addressed in the participant’s response directly connected to a scoring guide.
5. It is purposely incomplete. It can be truncated — plot line stops at a critical juncture and participants complete the vignette — or abridged — story’s details are omitted so that multiple interpretations can be defended.

In a truncated vignette participants are asked to complete a storyline according to a set of criteria defined by the course curriculum. Truncated vignettes are typically used to evaluate process, rather than product, i.e., examining a student’s
completion of the storyline to assess if a particular problem-solving skill has been mastered. In an abridged vignette participants are asked to demonstrate mastery of course content by answering specific questions concerning the vignette and justifying their positions. Abridged vignettes are typically used to evaluate product, rather than process, i.e., examining a student’s analysis of a situation to assess if specific knowledge has been mastered.

The following truncated vignette concerning classroom management is drawn from a teacher development course taught by one of the researchers:

A colleague of yours, Bernie Bunsen, is a middle school science teacher who designates the last 30 minutes of each class meeting for one week to complete lab activities on the various states of water. To the delight of his classmates, one student has been fooling around during the lab time, tossing ice cubes around the room, sabotaging the fog machine, disrupting other group work, etc. Some of his classmates are starting to imitate him to get the same reactions from others. Mr. Bunsen is obviously concerned about the lack of productive work getting done as well as the safety hazards caused by the misbehavior. Mr. Bunsen has confided in you that he is deciding among several options: send the lead misbehaving student out of the classroom for detention during lab time, assign him more science work, fail him on the lab assignment, punish the entire class for the misbehavior, speak privately with the student, speak with the entire class about the misbehavior and the importance of safety measures, give the student the option of re-submitting his lab work for a partial score increase.

Complete the following tasks:

1. Using the information provided in this week’s readings, identify the type of misbehavior or mistaken behavior the disruptive student in the vignette is exhibiting and discuss possible causes for his behavior. Be sure to identify clues in the vignette, information from the readings, or assumptions you made to defend your response.

2. Choose from Mr. Bunsen’s options, the readings’ list of classroom management strategies, and/or your own ideas to recommend a set of options for Mr. Bunsen. Be sure to defend your selections.

Note the range of possible responses to these tasks. Although the classroom management problem is clearly identified in the vignette, the cause is not and there are numerous ways for Mr. Bunsen to solve the problem, e.g., clarify the assignment, remind students of consequences, be consistent and caring with the students, and help the misbehaving student change his behavior.

The truncated vignette task is more open-ended than that of the abridged vignette, which provides scaffolding for multiple interpretations linked to the course content. The following abridged vignette concerning scaffolding is drawn from the same teacher development course:

Random Guess is a high school math teacher who provides a free, two-hour problem-solving workshop for juniors and seniors preparing for their college admissions exams. Once a week after school during the fall semester, students meet with Mr. Guess to work on sample math problems. This year, he has decided to try out some new techniques in his workshop. In addition to simply answering questions posed by the students concerning problems in a handout that he has given them the prior week, he has decided to (a) review a math topic; (b) solve one or two related problems on the board while thinking out loud; (c) work with the class to solve several more problems on the board; (d) administer a short individual quiz of selected problems; and (e) review the quiz problems before handing out next week’s handout of problems.

Complete the following tasks:

1. Analyze what Mr. Guess is doing to help these
students learn in terms of Vygotsky’s theories and their instructional implications in relation to scaffolding and social learning. Be sure to defend your answer with examples, clues in the vignette, or assumptions that you have made.

(2) Describe two ways Mr. Guess could modify his instructional plan to promote input from others.

Note again the range of possible responses to these tasks. There are several clues within the vignette to indicate evidence of scaffolding in Mr. Guess’ teaching and there are numerous ways to promote student input, e.g., cooperative learning groups, student demonstrations, teach-back activities.

Vignettes differ from case studies which are longer, more detailed reports to be analyzed and discussed. Nor is the vignette a case story which is written by the student-participant and focuses on his/her perspective. Finally, vignettes are distinguished from scenarios which are future-based stories.

Setting and Context

Evidence supporting the use of vignettes as an effective learning tool and means of assessing participants’ pedagogical understanding was collected in over 30 sections of two online teacher education courses between 1998 and 2003. The participant population consisted of employed school teachers, college instructors, and corporate trainers. The lectures and the use of vignettes as a teaching and assessment tool in the two courses were identical. Course topics included models of learning theory, models of teaching theory, the application of learning theory to online education, and distance learning assessment theory.

Course assessment included two vignette assignments, a midterm, two additional vignette assignments, and a final project. The midterm included four vignettes to be analyzed as well as five essay questions. The final project was the creation of a detailed proposal for an online course or training program.

Vignette Assignment Descriptions

In the first and second vignette assignments (abridged), the participants were given descriptions of teaching situations and asked to classify and evaluate one of them in terms of various issues of teaching and learning theory. Each vignette’s description was purposely vague so that various interpretations were possible, allowing the participant to find clues in the vignette description that indicated the presence of a learning strategy. In the third and fourth vignette assignments (truncated), participants were asked to adapt a hypothetical online lesson to fit a specific learning theory and then create an assessment plan for measuring participant performance. The vignettes were scored by the instructor using a scoring guide, (see Table A1 in the Appendix), which weighed the defense of a choice more heavily than a particular choice. These vignette assignments were therefore used to measure mastery of course content and transfer of those concepts to new contexts.

Results

To collect evidence of reliability of the vignette as an assessment tool, means and correlation coefficients were calculated using data for each of the participants’ four vignette scores, (a cumulative vignette score with 100 possible points), a midterm score (100 possible points), and a final project score (100 possible points). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Mean vignette, midterm, and final project scores were not significantly different across the two courses. Moreover, when comparing earlier sections of each course (1998–2000) to more recent sections (2000–2003), mean scores were not significantly different. These findings together suggested that the scoring guides for the various assignments were consistently administered from section to section and from course to course over the years and that any differences in the participant populations did not significantly affect vignette, midterm, or project performances. The data for all 610 participants were therefore considered collectively.

Cumulative vignette scores ($M = 91.77, SD = 6.24$) were not significantly different from mid-
term scores ($M = 92.00$, $SD = 4.32$) or final project scores ($M = 92.71$, $SD = 5.22$). Intercorrelations between cumulative vignette and midterm scores were $r = .27$, $p < .0001$, between cumulative vignette and final project scores $r = .21$, $p < .0001$, and between midterm and final project scores $r = .09$, $p < .03$.

Since there was a significant overlap of course content between the vignettes and the midterm, it was expected that their pairing would produce the greatest correlation coefficient. There was less content overlap between the final project and the earlier assessments. It was nevertheless noteworthy that the correlation coefficient between the vignette scores and the final project scores was nearly the same as the vignette-midterm correlation, while the midterm and final project scores produced a much smaller correlation coefficient. These findings suggested that the vignette score was better than the midterm as a predictor of final project performance.

Vignette scores were then sorted into three groups (lower, average, higher) to see if vignette scores could successfully predict midterm and project scores. Mean midterm and final project scores were significantly different among the three sorted vignette groups. When midterm scores were sorted into three groups using the same cutoff values, mean final project scores were not significantly different among the three midterm groups. These two findings again suggested that the vignette score was better than the midterm as a predictor of final project performance.\(^1\)

In each section of the two courses, approximately 10% of the participants posted incomplete responses to the first vignette assignment that needed to be resubmitted. These respondents initially failed to address all of the tasks in the instructions (e.g., not defending their choices with vignette clues). In all cases, resubmitted vignette scores were substantially higher. For these participants, the first vignette assignment evidently incorporated scaffolding as part of the learning technique. The 10% resubmission figure dropped to nearly zero on subsequent vignette assignments, which suggested that participants quickly learned how to complete vignette assignments.

**Discussion**

Preliminary results in two online teacher education courses indicated a significant link between vignette and midterm scores and suggested that vignettes may be a reliable assessment tool in measuring teacher pedagogical understanding and an area of research worth further study. Since 50% of the midterm points were vignette items, this correlation was a measure of reliability, i.e., the scoring guides were consistently used and participants tended to perform similarly on the two assessments. Since the final project was not vignette-related but measured the same course content, the correlation between vignette and final project scores was a measure of construct validity, i.e., evidence that supported decisions concerning final projects and overall course grades.

**Vignette Assessment as a Learning Event**

The re-submission data provided additional support to the notion that the vignette assessment is an episode of learning in and of itself. The participants quickly learned how to complete vignettes and remarked that they understood the course content much more clearly following the vignette assignment. Wolf (1993) refers to assessment as a “heads-on encounter with a culture’s models of prowess. Assessments publish what we regard as skill and what we will accept or reject as a demonstration of accomplishment” (pp. 213-214). An assessment therefore allows students to see their work as someone else sees it.

The familiar assessments, e.g., standardized multiple-choice tests, are often the scapegoat example of assessment as a missed learning opportunity. Students are not always given samples of different levels of performance or the criteria that define those levels. They rarely see the test booklet again but instead are handed a brief summary report or, worse, just a score. Few are the opportunities to discuss problem-solving strategies or attempt a second try. Yet, the research is clear that worthwhile work requires incubation, revision, and collaboration.

Vignette assignments are particularly well-suited to serving two learning purposes: as an opportunity to learn, they encourage reflection,
rehearsal, motivation, and collaboration; and as an assessment tool, the detailed analysis behind the score allows for re-submitted work and further reflection. Wolf (1993) refers to a zig-zag path between assessment and instruction, considering which assessment practices will protect, nudge, and inform the students during the long course of work. As learners plot a course between humility and excellence, the assessment becomes an episode in which students learn how to write, conduct research, experiment, or solve problems along this zig-zag path.

One benefit of the vignette assignment is that the target of the assessment shifts so that instructors and learners rate performances. Assessments can promote higher-order critical thinking skills just as well as lectures or activities. The assessment episode is not necessarily a terminal one; the learning goes on. They need not be individualistic; collaboration keeps assessment dynamic. And the need for test security and authentic authorship is lessened; instructors can capture a much broader and more thorough set of snapshots of the learners’ performances. As a result, the assessment’s reliability is strengthened, making its inferences more valid.

Suggestions for Further Study

Based on these initial results we believe the vignette to be a highly effective assessment tool which has a strong predictive component and provides a rich learning experience for eliciting and promoting teacher understanding. Herman’s (1998) case vignette research, involving a related instructional tool in a similar setting, suggests that vignettes help teachers apply theoretical constructs and research findings to classroom situations. We encourage teacher educators and researchers to engage in further study on the use of vignettes in assessing pedagogical reasoning in teacher education programs. Trends worthy of further investigation include vignette effectiveness in formative and summative assessment, in assessing problem-solving skills, and in assessing transfer of knowledge and skills from one educational setting to another.

Further research is suggested to isolate the study of vignettes from the following variables:

- delivery mode (face-to-face, online, blended, text-based, video)
- instructional method (lecture, instructor-moderated discussion, learner-generated summaries)
- assessment type (learner-completed vignettes, learner-generated vignettes)
- vignette type (truncated vs. abridged)
- time mode (synchronous vs. asynchronous)
- collaboration (cooperative learning vs. collaborative assessment)
- content area (other than instructional development)

Furthermore, the following research issues need to be addressed:

- refining the definition of vignette
- refining the vignette scoring guide, including equating two or more vignettes used in the same assessment
- collecting evidence of the reliability of vignettes as an instructional and assessment tool
- collecting evidence of the validity of inferences made following vignette assessment, including course grades and teacher qualification decisions
- comparing vignette assessments with essays, summaries, and forced-choice test items

Conclusion

The beauty of the vignette activity is that, by its very nature, learners must transfer their learning to other situations and in doing so integrate their knowledge and skills well enough to make predictions about new situations. It is important to provide a scoring guide to the participants beforehand as well as some sample vignette responses to give them a clear indication of what comprises an effective vignette analysis. Although this entails time spent away from teaching course content, the potential for making the assessment activity an episode of learning and for encouraging transfer of learning to new situations is well worth the extra time.
Using Vignettes to Assess Teacher Understanding

References


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Footnotes

1It was possible that the intercorrelations were significant due to the large data sample, (n = 610). Thirty random samples of 60 cases (~10% of the data sample) were therefore selected and analyzed. In 50% of the random samples, cumulative vignette scores were significantly correlated with final project scores and with midterm scores, (p < .05). Midterm scores however were significantly correlated with final project scores in only 17% of the random samples. These findings again suggested that the cumulative vignette score was better than the midterm as a predictor of final project performance and was an effective predictor of midterm performance as well.
Appendix

Table A1
Vignette Scoring Guide

__ Language (2 points)
  Language and phrasing are appropriate
  Construction underscores and enhances meaning
  Spelling is correct
  Punctuation is accurate
  Grammar and usage are correct

__ Comprehensiveness (3 points)
  Addresses the question
  Answers all parts of the question
  Includes appropriate references
  Addresses at least two points of view when appropriate, including clear and focused statement of agreement/disagreement

__ Accuracy (2 points)
  Answers accurately portray the information
  Content is accurate
  Interpretation is accurate

__ Defense (3 points)
  Includes relevant evidence in support of each viewpoint
  Justifies answers using appropriate references to readings, theory, and research
  Includes relevant and accurate definitions and components of key terms
  Provides appropriate examples of key terms and issues
  Defines the problem and suggests viable resolutions

Final Score (10 points) ______

9–10 = A
8 = B
6–7 = C
5 = D
0–4 = F
Reliability and Stability of Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) Scores Across Gender, Race, and Grade Level

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Abstract
The reliability and stability of Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) scores were examined for the recreational and academic subscales and for the total scale. The responses of 718 students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were included in the analyses. A seven-day interval between testings was used. The recreational and academic subscale scores and the total scale scores of the ERAS were analyzed by gender, ethnicity, and grade level.

The alpha coefficients suggested adequate internal consistency across gender, ethnicity, and grade level, with all coefficients exceeding .75. The stability coefficients associated with gender and ethnicity were below .70 level, ranging from .48 to .67. Except for grade six students, the stability of the ERAS scores over the seven-day interval tended to be low.

Evaluation of elementary students’ reading attitudes is an important component of a comprehensive reading program. Knowledge of students’ attitudes about reading, whether found to be favorable or unfavorable, is useful to educators and researchers in planning and evaluating instructional programs designed for individual students as well as programs for groups of students. In general, educators and researchers agree that a student’s reading attitude plays a central role in whether or not he or she becomes a competent reader (e.g., Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Athey, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Ley, Scher, & Dismukes, 1994; Lipson & Wixon, 1991; Smith, 1988; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). In fact, several theoretical models showing connections between affective dimensions of reading and reading development are presented in the literature (e.g., Athey, 1985; Cambourne, 1995; Guthrie, 1996; Matthews, 1976, 1985, 1994; McKenna, 1994).

A number of instruments are available to measure elementary students’ attitudes, motivation, and interests related to reading, such as the Conversational Interview (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1995), the Measuring Reading Activity Inventory (Guthrie, McGough, & Wigfield, 1994), the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995), and the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (Wigfield, Guthrie, & McGough, 1996). One of the most frequently used instruments, however, is the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) which was developed by McKenna and Kear (1990) as a public-domain instrument that would “enable teachers to estimate attitude levels efficiently and reliably” (p. 626). During the past decade, the ERAS has been included in various studies designed to examine relationships between reading attitude, reading habits and selected cognitive variables (Allen, Cipielewski, & Stanovich, 1992); reading attitude and approaches to literacy instruction by grade level (Bottomley, Truscott, Marinak, Henk, & Melnick, 1999; McKenna, Stratton, Grindler, & Jenkins, 1995; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 1997); reading attitude and reading achievement across grade level, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Diamond & Onwuegbuzie, 2001); reading attitude, reading ability, gender, and
Only minimal evidence of the reliability of the ERAS scores is presently available. In the standardization study to establish norms for the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), alpha reliability coefficients were reported, but stability of the scores over time was not investigated. Only one study has been located which examined the stability of the ERAS scores (Kush & Watkins, 1996). Using an exceptionally long three-year interval between test administrations, Kush and Watkins reported very low (high of .36) stability coefficients for males, females, and the total sample.

Diamond and Onwegbuzie (2001) used Magnusson’s (1967) formula, as recommended by Vacha-Haase, Kogan, and Thompson (2000), to obtain predicted reliabilities for a sample of 1,968 students in first through fifth grades that was predominantly African American. All predicted reliabilities were high ranging from the upper .80s to the low .90s. However, for these predicted reliabilities to be appropriate, the error variance for the Diamond and Onwegbuzie sample is assumed to be the same as that found in the sample reporting the original reliabilities. This is a strong assumption that may or may not have been met.

Numerous writers have emphasized reliability coefficients can vary across subgroups (Crocker & Algina, 1986; Huck, 2000; Sandeval, Frisby, Geisinger, Scheuneman, & Grenier, 1998; Thompson & Vacha-Haase, 2000; Worther, White, Fan, & Sudweeks, 1999). Additionally, Thompson and Vacha-Haase (2000) cautioned against relying on reliabilities provided only from the norming sample and stress the importance of obtaining reliability estimates from a variety of populations.

It was felt that additional reliability data was needed because so few published studies have examined either the stability or the internal consistency of ERAS scores, and the reliability data presently available is based on samples which were predominantly European American. Both the McKenna and Kear (1990) and the Kush and Watkins (1996) samples were primarily European American. Eighty-four percent of the McKenna and Kear sample was European American and 94 percent of the Kush and Watkins sample was European American. The Diamond and Onwegbuzie (2001) sample was primarily African American (77%), but their reported values were, as indicated earlier, estimates based on strong assumptions. Little reliability data is available for non-European American respondents.

In an attempt to provide a broader base of reliability data for the ERAS, the present study obtained estimates of alpha reliabilities, not only by grade level as provided by McKenna and Kear (1990), but by gender and race as well. Additionally, the present study examined score stability over a more realistic time interval than that provided by Kush and Watkins (1996).

Method

Participants

A total of 718 students in grades four through six responded to the ERAS. The students represented four school districts and 11 schools located in a southern state. The sample consisted of 374 boys and 344 girls representing 52% and 48% of the total sample, respectively. Of those indicating their race, 349 (49%) were European American and 367 (51%) were African American. Two of the participants did not identify their race. Of those for which grade level was identified, 112 were in grade four, 108 were in grade five, and 61 were in grade six. Unfortunately, grade level was not designated for the remaining participants. The reading abilities of the students ranged from very poor to very good. The reading program in 10 of the 11 schools was a basal reading program, and in the remaining school the reading program was a structured, direct-instruction reading program that emphasized reading subskill acquisition.

Instrument

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), developed by McKenna & Kear (1990), measures two aspects of reading attitude: recreational reading (10 items) and academic reading (10 items). A total reading attitude score may also be obtained by summing scores for the two subar-
As a public-domain instrument, the ERAS is a frequently used instrument which may be used by teachers and school administrators to “(a) make possible initial conjecture about the attitudes of specific students, (b) provide a convenient group profile of a class (or a larger unit), or (c) serve as a means of monitoring the attitudinal impact of instructional programs” (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 628).

“Recreation items focus on reading for fun outside the school setting and the academic subscale examines the school environment” (Kush & Watkins, 1996, p. 316). For example, two recreation items ask: “How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?” and “How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?”, and examples of academic items are: “How do you feel about learning from a book?” and “How do you feel when it’s time for reading class?”

The ERAS was designed to be administered to groups of students, with the teacher reading aloud each item.” After each question, the comic-strip character Garfield is shown in four different facial expressions ranging from a very positive expression to a very negative expression. Students are told that the Garfield illustrations represent the following moods: very happy, a little happy, a little upset, and very upset. Students circle (or mark) the picture of Garfield that most closely represents their feelings about the question. To avoid a neutral, central category, an even number (four) of scale points is used. The ERAS is scored using a Likert scale, with four points assigned to the very happy Garfield face, three points to the slightly happy Garfield face, two points to the mildly upset Garfield face, and one point to the very upset Garfield face. Scores for each student may be obtained by summing item responses. The scores on each subscale can range from ten to 40 with a possible total composite score range of 20 to 80 (McKenna, Stratton, Grindler, & Jenkins, 1995).

Norms for interpreting ERAS scores were created by administering the instrument to a sample of 18,138 students in grades 1-6 from 95 school districts, representing 38 U.S. states. The sample was balanced for gender, with only five more females than males, and included 84.3% European American students, 9.5% African American students, and 6.2% Hispanics. Reliability of the ERAS was obtained by measuring the internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951) of the two attitude scales, and the alpha coefficients ranged from .74 to .89 (McKenna & Kear, 1990). These coefficients suggest adequate levels of internal consistency for the scores and also that the item format using Garfield appears appropriate even for grades five and six.

A number of procedures were used to gather evidence of the construct validity of the ERAS. Comparisons were made between the ERAS means (recreational subscale) of students based on: library card holders versus noncardholders (means of the two groups differed statistically \( p < .001 \) with the cardholders having the higher mean), students who currently had library books checked out versus those who did not (means of the two groups differed statistically \( p < .001 \) with the students who had books checked out having the higher mean), and the students who watched an average of less than one hour of television per night versus those who reported watching more than two hours of television per night (means of the two groups differed statistically \( p < .001 \) with the low-television group having the higher mean). For the academic subscale, comparisons were made between the ERAS mean scores of students categorized by teachers as having high, average, or low ability overall reading ability (means of the high-ability and low-ability readers differed statistically \( p < .001 \) with the high-ability readers having the higher mean). The relationship between the subscales was examined by calculating an intersubscale correlation coefficient; the coefficient of .64 indicated that approximately 41% of the variance in one set of scores could be attributed to the other, suggesting that while the two subscales are related, they reflect dissimilar factors. Also, based on results of factor analyses, using the unweighted least squares method of extraction and varimax rotation, the authors concluded that the factor analyses produced strong evidence that the two subscales of the ERAS reflect discrete aspects of reading attitude (McKenna & Kear, 1990).
Procedures

Permission was granted through the participating school districts’ central offices to administer the ERAS to students in grades 4, 5, and 6. The ERAS was administered to classes of students as a group by university faculty and graduate students in the area of literacy who had been trained to administer the instrument. The ERAS was administered on two occasions with a seven-day interval between administrations. Anonymity of student responses was achieved by pre-assigning numbers to students on class rosters and distributing the ERAS instruments to students using the class roster, so that absent students’ forms were not distributed; students were instructed not to write their names on the ERAS instrument. The proctors explained that the purpose of the survey was to study students’ thoughts and feelings about reading and that in no way was it a test with correct or incorrect responses. The meaning of each Garfield “face” was explained from left to right as: “very happy,” “a little happy,” “a little upset,” and “very upset.” The students were instructed to mark with an “X” the Garfield face that corresponded to their feelings when considering each question. A sample question was read aloud and the possible face choices were reviewed and discussed, with students’ questions related to clarification being answered. The proctor read aloud each question, proceeding to the next question after all students had marked their responses on the ERAS instrument. The same procedures were followed for the retest administration of the survey with a reminder from the proctor to the students that they should answer the questions based on their feelings at the present time.

Analyses of Data

Internal consistency reliability was estimated using Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, and score stability was examined using Pearson product-moment correlation between the scores from the first and second administrations of the ERAS. The interval between testings was seven days. Coefficient alpha was calculated using scores for the first testing. Cronbach’s alpha and stability coefficients were obtained by gender, race, and grade level.

Results

Means and standard deviations associated with ethnicity, gender, and grade level for the ERAS recreational and academic subscales and total scale are presented in Table 1. For the recreational subscale, the means ranged from 26.28 to 30.29; for the academic subscale, the means ranged from 25.65 to 29.74; and for the total scale the means ranged from 52.50 to 59.93. In general, the mean values were comparable to those reported by McKenna and Kear (1990) for grades four through six. Only the grade four mean scores for the recreational scale and the total scale were notably different from those reported by McKenna and Kear. The grade four mean scores for the present sample tended to be lower. It should be noted that there was only minimal change in mean levels of the scores across the two test administrations. Mean levels differed by only about one scale point for the recreational and academic subscales and by only about two scale points for the total scores. Mean level stability is apparent.
### Table 1

**Group Means and Standard Deviations for First and Second Administrations of the ERAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recreational Reading</th>
<th>Academic Reading</th>
<th>Total Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Adm.</td>
<td>2nd Adm.</td>
<td>1st Adm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European American (n = 349)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>30.08</td>
<td>29.48</td>
<td>29.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>7.16</td>
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<td><strong>African American (n = 367)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>28.97</td>
<td>28.10</td>
<td>29.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males (n = 374)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>28.80</td>
<td>27.80</td>
<td>28.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females (n = 344)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>30.29</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td>29.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 4 (n = 112)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>27.37</td>
<td>25.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 5 (n = 108)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>28.81</td>
<td>28.11</td>
<td>27.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 6 (n = 61)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>27.43</td>
<td>26.28</td>
<td>29.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across ethnicity, gender, and grade level the alpha coefficients tended to be in the .80’s (Table 2). Only the alphas for the recreational subscale for fourth-grade students (alpha = .78) and for the academic subscale for sixth-grade students (alpha = .76) were less than .80. In general, the alpha coefficients were adequate across all groups examined.
Table 2
**Cronbach’s Alphas and Stability Coefficients by Ethnic Group, Gender, and Grade Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Recreational</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (n = 367)</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American (n = 349)</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (n = 374)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (n = 344)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (n = 112)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (n = 108)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (n = 61)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stability coefficients across ethnicity, gender, and grade level tended to be much lower than the corresponding alpha coefficients (Table 2). Except for the grade six sample, all stability coefficients were below .70. For the two ethnic groups, the stability coefficients ranged from the mid .50s to the mid .60s, with the coefficients being somewhat higher for the African American sample. For the gender groups, the coefficients were generally in the upper .50s to the lower .60s. The grade level coefficients exceeded .70 only for the sixth-grade sample. For the fourth- and fifth-grade samples the coefficients varied from a low of .48 on the recreational subscale for the fifth grade sample to .65 on the academic subscale for the same group. In general, the stability coefficients for the fourth- and fifth-grade samples were rather low, suggesting considerable instability in the reading attitude scores over the one-week time period.

The similarity in mean scores and alpha reliabilities across grade levels, between this study’s results and those reported by McKenna and Kear (1990), suggest that the missing grade level indications for some of the students does not present a serious limitation in the present findings.

**Discussion**

The alpha coefficients across ethnic group, gender, and grade level were in the .80s, with the exception of the recreational subscale for fourth-grade students which was .78, and the academic subscale for sixth-grade students which was .76. In general, the alpha coefficients indicated that the subscale and total scale scores of the ERAS possess adequate levels of internal consistency for the groups included in this study.

While results of this study corroborate the findings of McKenna and Kear (1990) about the internal consistency of the ERAS subscales and total scale, the stability coefficients suggest instability of ERAS scores over a short period of time, particularly in grades below grade six. The stability coefficients found in the present study are notably higher than those reported by Kush and...
Watkins (1996), but this is not surprising since the time interval between testings used by Kush and Watkins was three years, a very large interval for examination of score stability. Although considerable fluctuation in reading attitude scores of individual students was found within groups, group mean levels remained similar across administrations. The finding of score instability within groups indicates that individual student score interpretations need to be made with caution. Classroom teachers and reading specialists must be aware that changes in reading attitudes can be quite notable even over a short period of time. Such attitude changes may occur when an individual student feels that he/she was not very successful in a recent reading activity such as retelling a story. Also, a change in reading attitude may occur when a student has been reprimanded by a parent for his/her reading performance. Conversely, a student who just received a good grade, or a compliment, for their reading performance in a language arts activity may exhibit a more positive reading attitude than prior to such positive feedback. Additional studies are needed, especially those designed to identify possible factors, or conditions, that are connected with home and/or school events and activities that may influence reading attitude changes. Nevertheless, in order to obtain an indication of a student’s reading attitude devoid of short-term fluctuations, it appears that reading attitudes may need to be assessed more than just once. Assessments at periodic intervals would likely provide a better estimate of reading attitude.

References


GA: Universities of Georgia and Maryland, National Reading Research Center.

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The Professional Educator is now included in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database in the Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education. This is one of sixteen clearinghouses that collects, abstracts, and indexes education materials for the ERIC database.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education also responds to requests for information in the subject areas of teaching and teacher education and in health, physical education, recreation, and dance. The Clearinghouse produces monographs, bibliographies, papers, and free digests, dealing with the latest topics of interests in the teaching and teacher education fields and in health, physical education, recreation, and dance.
Developing a Professional Development Program Model Based on Teachers’ Needs

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Abstract

This paper presents a model of a teacher needs-based (TNB) professional development program. The TNB model formed the foundation of three externally funded professional development programs. The objectives of this model are to maximize the effects of a professional development program, and to help participants sustain their learning over the long term. The goals, content, main activities, and structure of the present professional development program were decided based on teachers’ and administrators’ inputs. The structure of this model was a combination of traditional and reform types. The main activities of the programs were hands-on activities, collaborative work, reflections, discussions, self-monitored practice, and providing an inservice program. The effects of the program are discussed in the Findings. This study suggests ways to enhance professional learning: including the participants as decision makers and consumers, recruiting participants from the same context, connecting professional learning and practice, and building a partnership between university, public schools, and local education agents.

Developing a Professional Development Program (PDP)

In order to develop a successful PDP, program developers go through both standard procedural and specific contextual issues. Jones and his colleagues (1992) listed the common issues considered by PDP developers: individually guided teacher activities, feedback on new teaching practices, opportunities for teacher input and involvement in establishing a PDP, an inquiry approach for addressing teachers’ pedagogical problems, and generating a knowledge base that facilitates effective teacher decision-making. The remarks made by Jones and his colleagues are critical to success, and yet they are directly related to teachers or can be controlled by teachers.

Other issues to be considered in designing a PDP deal with specific contextual situations. Some of these issues are to be faced by teacher educators rather than classroom teachers. For example, providing resources, establishing organizational culture and structures, ensuring equity, developing leadership, supporting the effective use of standards and frameworks through professional development, and evaluating a PDP. Then again, additional contextual factors exist that are generated by those other than classroom teachers or teacher educators: the physical environment, policies, the local history of professional development, and parents and the community. Therefore, a PDP must be developed and conducted by classroom teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and parents/community collaboratively.

Features of a Successful Professional Development Program (PDP)

Adopting Multiple Strategies

Like other teaching and learning processes, professional development cannot be handled by an isolated strategy. Each program uses a variety
of strategies in various combinations. The National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990) identified five different models of effective staff development for teachers: training, individually-guided staff development, observation/assessment, involvement in the development/improvement process, and inquiry. Many program organizations have simultaneously adopted several strategies from among these five strategies, and successful cases have been reported.

Organizational Features

With regard to the PDP structure, workshops, seminars, and conferences are considered the traditional form of activity types while reform types of a professional development program use study groups, networking, mentoring, coaching, and regular school day meetings that may occur during the process of classroom instruction or planning time. The advantages of the reform types of professional development are that teachers are able to make connections with classroom teaching that are easier to sustain over time. In addition, they may be more responsive to how teachers learn, have more influence on changing teaching practice, and be more responsive to teachers’ needs and goals (Ball, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Stile et al., 1996).

Longer Duration

It is also suggested that the duration of professional development is related to the depth of teacher change (Shields, et al., 1998), which includes the span of time over which the activity takes place, as well as the number of contact hours that participants spend in the activity. Longer activities are more likely to provide in-depth discussions of issues dealt with in the professional development program, helping to understand new strategies, as well as to allow teachers to try out new practices in their own classroom (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Speck, 2002).

Building a Teacher Community

The participants of professional development may be a collective group or individual teachers from many schools. However, it is reported that a PDP designed for groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level has several advantages. For example, the teachers have the opportunity to discuss concepts, skills, and problems encountered during the professional development. They can also integrate what they learn with other aspects of their instructional contexts such as common curriculum materials, course offerings, and assessment requirements. The teachers can “discuss students’ needs across classes and grade levels, as well as sustain changes in practice over time” (Garet, 2001, p. 922). This cohesiveness helps teachers keep their enthusiasm about new knowledge and novel applications, as well as to have these take hold and endure (Belcastro et al., 1992; Langberg, 1989).

Matching Purpose and Strategies

The content focus of a professional development program may vary: subject matter content, teaching practice, goals for student learning, ways students learn particular subject matter, and so on. Many educators claim that professional development should focus on both knowledge of subject matter as well as understanding how children learn specific content (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Hiebert et al., 1996). In 1998, Loucks-Horsley and her colleagues presented specific strategies that correspond to what the primary purpose of the professional development model is meant to be. Their model has been adopted and modified by many educators designing PDPs. First, in order to build teacher knowledge, it is recommended that teachers engage in the kinds of learning that they are expected to practice with their students. Secondly, curriculum implementation and curriculum replacement units can be used as fundamental activities for practicing teaching. Thirdly, creating new instructional materials and strategies to meet the learning needs of students is a suggested activity for translating theory into practice. Lastly, in order to promote reflection, conducting action research, discussing case studies, examining student work (and thinking), and organizing study groups are considered exemplary strategies for a PDP.
Present Research: The Teacher Needs-Based Professional Development Program Model

The professional development model introduced in this paper is based on three externally funded projects for different grade groups: K–3, 4–6, and 5–8. These projects were designed to fulfill local teachers’ needs, which reflected their personal deficiencies in content or pedagogical content knowledge, students’ needs, and/or new state/local education policy. The primary goal of this Teacher Needs-Based PDP was to deepen the participating teachers’ conceptual understanding of mathematics content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge by exposing them to innovative and creative approaches that necessitate active participation in developing mathematics concepts.

The goals, content, main activities, and structure of the present professional development program were decided based on teachers’ and administrators’ inputs. In order to design the program, information was collected from the following: Interviews with teachers and administrators, a survey, Standardized test outcomes, and local schools’ improvement plans. These programs were constantly evaluated and modified throughout the year. The detailed process of program implementation is discussed in the sequel.

This study sought ways to maximize the effects of a professional development program (PDP) on teaching practice and to help teachers sustain their learning over the long term. Especially, this article investigates the following:

- How to develop the various phases of an effective professional development program: Beginning, during, and after?
- To what extent did the Needs-Based professional development program affect the participants’ practice?
- What lessons did we learn from the TNB model to guide future professional development efforts?

The Need for a Needs-Based Professional Development Program

“Just once I wish our staff development days could be used to meet some of my needs, there are so many areas where I need help” (Olivero, 1976, p. 194). This teacher’s comment depicts a typical in-service meeting. Decreasing enrollments and a lack of teachers’ motivation for staff development may be due to in-service having been designed to cater to the masses in the school district. Another cause may be the emphasis that administrators place on the latest hot topics, rather than attempting to individualize and personalize professional growth plans (Bradley, 1996; Olivero, 1976). There have been calls for a form of professional development that is responsive to the intrinsic needs of teachers to be more productive, to change perspective, and encourage teachers to improve (Belcastro & Isaacson, 1992; Bolin & McConnell-Falk, 1986). Taken together, professional growth is possible when a professional development program responds to teachers’ personal needs.

Identification of Needs

It is suggested that teachers who teach young students “need to determine what students already know and what they still have to learn. Information from a wide variety of classroom assessment—classroom routines, conversations, written work, and observations—helps teachers plan meaningful tasks that offer support for students whose understandings are not yet complete and helps teachers challenge students who are ready to grapple with new problems and ideas” (NCTM, 2000, p. 77). In other words, teachers need to focus on areas of weak student performance, as well as their own understanding of mathematics concepts and pedagogical techniques to improve these areas of deficiency.

In order to determine the needs for teachers/students and identify areas of deficiency in the local mathematics curriculum, the following data were collected and analyzed: interviews with teachers and administrators, a ‘Teacher Needs’ assessment survey, Statewide Standardized Test outcomes, and the Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) of local schools. The initial stage of developing the Teacher Needs-Based professional development program consisted of interviewing teachers and administrators in local school districts. These interviews were conducted to gather data about the teachers’ and students’ needs, as
well as contextual factors of the local school districts. Secondly, diagnostic survey studies were conducted to understand the needs of local school teachers. Thirdly, outcomes of the state standardized tests were analyzed to investigate the needs of students in terms of their deficiency areas, weaknesses, and strengths. Lastly, the CIPs of local schools were examined to understand each school building’s efforts/policy toward better mathematics education.

Items on the teacher surveys focused on identifying the following: mathematics strands or areas of greatest student deficiency; mathematics strands in which teachers felt uncomfortable; methods by which teachers can become more comfortable teaching mathematics; strategies for addressing student deficiencies, types and frequency of student assessment; and mathematics strands that received little attention. Responses to the survey indicated that teachers’ perceptions about areas of deficiency did not always correlate with deficiencies identified through test data analysis. Results also indicated that while our State Proficiency Tests use rubrics to evaluate students’ written responses, the majority of the teachers seldom required students to write in mathematics and rarely employed the use of rubrics as part of the evaluation process.

Teachers suggested several ways to address deficiencies: more mathematics professional development; greater access to effective hands-on activities, teaching strategies, and research-based best practices; increased alignment of curriculum to state and national standards; and more emphasis on the need for adoption of a new mathematics program. These suggestions were considered and adopted throughout the project planning process. In addition, the mathematics topics indicated in the Standardized Test data as weak content areas received special attention during the projects.

Foundation of the TNB Model

The NCTM Standards (2000) provide a new vision of the mathematics classroom: the role of teachers is to hear students’ ideas, to let students construct their own meaning, and to assess students’ progress in alternative ways. The only way to practice this new idea of teaching mathematics in the classroom is if teachers themselves learn/do mathematics differently. In order to introduce different and yet successful ways of doing mathematics, the projects sought to build on and extend professional development projects such as the Cognitively Guided Instruction Project (Fennema & Carpenter, 1992), the Active Learning Model (Smith, Johnson, & Johnson, 1991), and Academic Systems Mediated Learning with Interactive Mathematics (Metz, 1996).

Moreover, the project planning team members concurred with Stiff’s (2000) statements, which address the need for a supportive working environment, development of content knowledge and pedagogical strategies, and high-quality teaching materials.

Structure of the TNB Model

The common goals of the three projects were to (1) increase the participants’ understanding of Ohio’s Mathematics Academic Content Standards and the National Standards; (2) apply models of mathematics teaching strategies that involve active participation of the learner; (3) increase the participants’ knowledge and application of alternative means of assessment; and (4) increase the participants’ knowledge and application of effective questioning, writing, and discussion skills as an integral part of mathematics learning.

This TNB model set forth with a workshop form for a whole year. Each participant received 6–8 graduate credits from the university. The number of total contact hours differed depending on the total credit hours that the grant offered. Participants were required to attend an introductory special workshop during the Winter Quarter; five (or six) full-day meetings (Thursdays and Saturdays) during the Spring Quarter; a one-week workshop during the Summer Quarter; and three (or four) meetings (Thursdays and Saturdays) during the Autumn Quarter. The workshops were conducted through discussions, collaborative group work, hands-on activities, problem-solving opportunities, reflections, and presentations by the participants. On-site assignments included readings in textbooks and additional reading materials, audio and videotaping of participant lessons, writing reflection papers on these taped
Developing a Professional Development Program Model

Building a Teacher Community

To help foster a teacher community, at least two or three teachers were recruited from the same school district. These groups of teachers were subsequently expected to act as the nuclei of professional development groups in their own schools and districts, sharing their experiences at regional conferences/seminars and by running workshops. As an application of instructional strategies, participants organized a five-hour professional development program or a parental involvement program (such as a Family Math Night) within their respective school districts that focused on learning mathematics. The professional development yields indirect benefits, increasing the project participants’ leadership abilities and introducing effective teaching strategies to other teachers who did not participate in the project. The parental involvement activity such as a Family Math Night increased parents’ awareness of the National and State Standards and assisted them in helping their children become mathematically literate.

Evaluation of the TNB Model

The effects of a PDP can be assessed in the areas of teacher knowledge and skills, as well as teaching practice. According to a survey study by the U.S. Department of Education, teachers that participated in an efficient PDP report that their knowledge and skills were enhanced in the areas of curriculum, instructional methods, approaches to assessment, use of instructional technology, strategies for teaching diverse student populations, and the depth of knowledge of mathematics (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). The teachers also indicated changes in their teaching practices in the domains of mathematics curriculum content, cognitive challenge of mathematics classroom activities, instructional methods employed, types of mix of assessment used to evaluate students, ways technology is used in instruction, and approaches taken towards student diversity. All these areas were taken into consideration in our project evaluation process.

The TNB Model was evaluated by participants, instructors, curriculum supervisors, and the project evaluator. The following tools were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program:

- Survey studies and interviews: Pre- and post-study questionnaires were used to evaluate the overall project impact on participants’ teaching. Follow-up interviews were conducted with several teachers.
- Concept maps: Concept maps were used to compare participants’ entering and exit knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward teaching mathematics.
- Participants’ assignments, including reflective journals, were reviewed to prepare the following sessions and to fulfill participants’ needs.
- Site visits: The project team visited participants’ classrooms and workshops/seminars conducted by participants to evaluate the project contribution to participants’ teaching.
- Reflecting on practice: Participants recorded their own teaching in audio and/or videotapes for self-monitoring and self-evaluation of their own lessons. Participants exchanged audiotapes and/or videotapes (recorded their lessons) and provided comments on the teaching performance and classroom management of others.

Evaluation by project participants and instructors was an ongoing process. Communication through journal entries and informal conversations meant to exchange ideas were crucial factors in developing an effective/efficient program. Each session was designed to supplement participants’ needs and areas of weakness, which had been identified by the instructors and/or expressed by...
the participants. In addition, instructors held meetings before/after each session to reflect on the session, as well as to review participants’ journals. Instructors visited all the participants’ classrooms to observe their teaching, as well as to offer consultation. These visits provided instructors with information about the teaching situation/status of each participant, which helped the instructors understand the teachers’ immediate needs. The curriculum supervisors, instructors, and the project evaluator visited participants’ classrooms before, during, and after the project. These communications with teachers and site visits helped us assess the project’s contribution to the teachers’ teaching and its impact on their school buildings.

**Findings: Effects of the Needs-Based Program**

Table 1 is a summary of the professional development program that includes the role of systematic aids for project goals and observed outcomes. Through classroom discussions, interviews and written documents, such as journals and a follow-up survey, the participants and the project staff reported the effects of the TNB professional development program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals</th>
<th>Provided Systematic Aids</th>
<th>Observed Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the participants’ levels of understanding of Ohio’s Mathematics Academic Content Standards</td>
<td>• Introductory workshop: Standards (state and national), General issues in mathematics education, Reform curriculum, and Assessment</td>
<td>• Participants clarified their beliefs about mathematics teaching and learning by explaining the need to change such beliefs in the light of current research, best practices, and the future needs of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hands-on activities from the regular workshop sessions</td>
<td>• Participants demonstrated conceptual understanding in mathematics by choosing developmentally appropriate mathematics experiences for their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing ideas and resources</td>
<td>• Participants evaluated best practices to determine their effectiveness in meeting State and National Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussions after each activity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Class presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developing inquiry-based lessons with children’s literature and traditional textbooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing curriculum materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply models of mathematics teaching strategies that involve active participation of the learner</td>
<td>• Hands-on activities from the workshop sessions</td>
<td>• Participants demonstrated teaching strategies, which could engage students in active participatory mathematics learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative group work</td>
<td>• Participants appropriately used commercially and/or teacher developed curricular materials, including manipulatives, software, web-based course tools, and Internet sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Class presentations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reflection papers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflections on practice (video-taped lessons and audio-taped lessons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing curriculum materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
### Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals</th>
<th>Provided Systematic Aids</th>
<th>Observed Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Increase the participants’ knowledge and application of rubrics and alternative means of assessment | • Reflections on practice (video-taped lessons and audio-taped lessons)  
  › Clinical interviews with students and a report on the interviews  
  › Analyzing students’ work/thinking  
  › Hands-on activities from the workshop sessions  
  › Discussions during the workshop | • Participants used videotapes of their own teaching in mathematics classes to reflect on and improve their instructional practices.  
• Project participants developed a sample alternative assessment tool that demonstrates students’ understanding of mathematics concepts (e.g., clinical interviews, learning logs, systematic observations, annotated class lists, and portfolios).  
• Participants monitored student performance in mathematics by applying rubrics and keeping records of alternative assessment results. |
| • Increase the participants’ knowledge and application of effective questioning, writing, and discussion skills as an integral part of mathematics learning | • Designing and providing Family Math Night or an inservice program in participant’s own school building  
  › Hands-on activities from the workshop sessions  
  › Reflective journals  
  › Reflections on practice (video-taped lessons and audio-taped lessons)  
  › Sharing ideas and resources  
  › Discussions during the workshop | • The participants provided evidence of effective questioning, writing, and discussion skills by posing “what if” questions, connecting mathematics to other subjects, and applying mathematical skills in a real life context.  
• Project participants conducted inservice workshops/seminars for their colleagues that demonstrate effective teaching strategies, as well as the ability to utilize questioning, writing, and discussion skills in their school districts. |

Change in attitudes and beliefs about teaching mathematics: The teachers reported that they are not afraid of introducing innovative ways of solving mathematics problems anymore. It was observed that they were trying to adapt new/invented pedagogical strategies and alternative ways to assess their students’ understanding/learning.

- Becoming more knowledgeable practitioners: The teachers started to investigate and modify the teacher resources based on the students’ level and the objectives of the lesson. The participants became better able to find necessary information through various resources: internet, references, and experts.

- Being a reflective practitioner: The participants also reported that participating in this project helped them to become more reflective practitioners. The teachers noticed that they ask themselves ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions more often. By the end of the program, the teachers’ concerns were not limited by personal matters or short-term solutions, but were able to set their sights on long-term goal.

- Creating a student-centered classroom: It was observed that the participants were trying to create a student-centered classroom. The teachers reported that they allocated more time for students to think about a problem, come up with their own solutions, and discuss why their solutions
work or why they do not work. However, it was still noticed that the teachers were threatened by the amount of concepts to cover in a short time period.

- Aligning with the Standards: It was also observed that participants took time to determine if their teaching goals and approaches met the standards recommended by NCTM and the State of Ohio, which was also one of the project goals.

**Implications**

What lessons did we learn to guide future professional development efforts? The primary goal of this study was to find ways to maximize the effects of a professional development program (PDP) on teaching practice and to help teachers sustain their learning over the long term. The TNB model considered all the barriers and facilitators in teachers’ sustained implementation of new practices. This PDP model is applicable not only with mathematics teachers, but also with any professional educators. The following suggestions provide professional educators with insights into designing a professional development program.

**Including the Participants as Decision Makers and Consumers**

To determine what our participant teachers expected from the PDP, our project development teams found the data collected from the diagnostic survey to be beneficial. Teachers’ desires varied and reminded us that planning a PDP should start with the ends (outcomes) in mind and that teachers should be encouraged to be involved in the planning process.

Some PDPs are often criticized because the activities are disconnected from one another. It is reported that activities are more effective in improving teachers’ learning if they form a coherent part of a wider set of opportunities for teacher learning and development. In order to establish coherence among professional development activities, a PDP must be developed based on what participants need and what they already know. Also, it is better to focus on units and do one or two units per class. Needless to say, the professional development designer’s challenge is to assemble a combination of learning activities that best meet the teacher’s needs, goals and context.

Therefore, in order to develop an effective PDP, the project goals must respond to the potential project participants’ needs and expectations of a program. Taken together, the program participants should be considered as partners throughout the process—planning their own learning experiences, implementing practices, providing feedback, and evaluating the program (Abbott, et al., 1999; Bradley, 1996; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998).

**Recruiting Teachers from the Same Context**

The demand for professional development opportunities for certain grade groups was greater than what we were able to supply. This unbalance between demand and supply required serious discussion regarding the recruiting process of participants. As mentioned earlier, to increase the impact of the project, our project staff decided to recruit three or four teachers (one in each grade) per school, and to give priority to the schools that had a team of teachers with a strong commitment to the project. The advantage of this recruiting process was that teachers from the same building came to the program with an existing support group and the team would have a strong potential influence on the mathematics curriculum in their school system. In addition, having participants from the same school districts made possible to balance between meeting the needs of individual teachers and advancing the organizational goals of their schools and districts (Bradley, 1996).

**Connecting Professional Learning and Professional Practice**

Another issue that arose during the project was the teachers’ expressed preference for summer classes over classes during the school year. They were, however, aware that such a schedule would deprive them of the opportunity to immediately incorporate their ideas into the classroom. Researchers have reported that one of the most formidable barriers in implementing new practices is the lack of time to implement a program (Abbott et al., 1999; Klingner et al., 2003). In order to connect professional learning and practice,
schools should stop just counting the hours or programs that a teacher participates in professional development. In addition, schools should provide participants with more time to grow, begin to measure what happens as a result of their participation, and provide teachers with follow-up to professional development, such as opportunities for practice in the classroom.

Building a Partnership Between University, Public Schools, and Local Education Agents

The fiscal agent (the university), several Education Service Centers (ESCs), the Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC), public schools, and the participant teachers had been working for several months toward the common goal of the project. Needless to say, this collaborative structure enhanced the project, and was an essential factor in building a teacher needs-based PDP. The participants’ commitment to the program became much stronger and persistent when their ESC curriculum supervisor and principal supported them.

For the teachers, participating in the decision making process of a professional development program can be a vehicle for pursuing further professional development in a collaborative relationship with administrators (Belcastro et al., 1992; Conoley, 1989). Another advantage of conducting a PDP based on partnership is that the various areas of the participants’ expertise complemented each other. For example, some of the planning partners had been involved in research-based reform curricula such as Connected Math, Discovery Math, Investigations (TERC), and Everyday Mathematics. Some of the partnering districts have mapped Ohio’s curriculum standards to their school-based curriculum, and these partners started to take a leadership role in working with other districts to complete this objective. Furthermore, considering that “inadequate support from administrators” and “a lack of fit between the practice and other methods mandated by the school district” are known barriers to scaling up practice (Klingner, et al, 2003, p. 413), building a partnership between the professional development program provider and the administrators is one way of overcoming barriers.

Other Challenges

Professional development must address several challenges. First, the need to educate an increasingly diverse student population should be considered and understood along with the principal issue of the PDP that it must be relevant to student learning. Secondly, professional educators should be aware of the need to change as required by new goals, as well as the necessity for teachers and other professional educators to create new organizations as needed. In other words, higher education faculty (teacher educators) must realize that while the PDP is a critical component of reform, it cannot carry the reform movement alone. The PDP must be linked to those same clear goals for students as well as to school leadership, resources, staffing, and the needs of the national/state/local education community. Also, “top-down support for bottom-up reform” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995) is needed.

Overall, for the best outcomes, a PDP should have an appropriate level of challenge and support, provide activities demonstrating new ways to teach and learn, build internal capacity, use a team approach, provide time for reflection, and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the activities.

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A Comparison of the Internship Experience for Student Interns Placed in Different Urban School Environments

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University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if there was a difference in the internship experience between student interns placed in either an urban Professional Development School or an urban non-Professional Development School. Student interns from two urban universities who have partnerships with neighboring urban school districts participated in this investigation. The Student Internship Experience Survey was used to identify differences between the experiences, based on the following measures: (a) Commitment to the Profession, (b) Teaching for Real/Context Based Learning, (c) Reflective Practitioner, (d) Approach to Urban/At-Risk Learners, and (e) Self-Efficacy. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted, and revealed that differences based on the five measures between internship experiences in a Professional Development School setting and a non-Professional Development School setting could not be identified.

Teaching in an urban school district can be a challenging endeavor for even the most competent and experienced teacher. For the novice teacher, it can be especially daunting and frustrating, to say the least. Haberman (1995) described this experience for beginners “. . . as an extraordinary life experience—a volatile, highly charged, emotionally draining, physically exhausting experience” (p. 1). The intensity, profound economic disparity, and inequalities are often beyond belief for many of those new to the profession, and contribute to high attrition rates (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004; Haberman, 1995; Kozol, 1991).

According to the National Commission for Teaching and America’s Future (2002), 50% of urban teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their career, citing lack of support, behavior problems, and lack of adequate preparation for the demands of urban teaching as the factors influencing their decisions to leave (Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Stafford & Haberman, 2003; Haberman, 1995). Furthermore, in some urban districts, this turnover period can be as short as three years (Haberman, 1995). This is especially alarming since teacher quality has been identified as the foremost indicator of students’ scholastic success (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Over three million teacher vacancies over the next decade are predicted by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2002), and a preponderance of these openings will be at urban district schools (United States Department of Education, 2002). What makes this situation even more critical is that urban districts face a greater challenge with hiring and retaining fully credentialed teachers, especially in the areas of mathematics, science, special education and bilingual education, when compared to both their suburban and rural counterparts (Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Stafford & Haberman, 2003; Olson & Jerald, 1998; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002). This disparaging dilemma can be attributed to the intractable social hardships and debilitating conditions that urban teachers must confront (Olson & Jerald, 1998). The legacies of concentrated poverty, neighborhood crime and violence, adult despair and discouragement, and family instability that pervade urban communities contribute to the difficulties and challenges for effective teaching and student success (Olson & Jerald, 1998).
It is quite evident that teacher preparation programs and urban school districts are faced with a monumental task for preparing and recruiting high quality teachers to work in urban students. Meeting such a lofty challenge requires forging partnerships among K-12 teachers, administrators, and the higher education community. The Professional Development School model, which emerged from the Holmes Partnership, holds the potential to provide teacher candidates with the necessary guidance, early experiences in the field, and the opportunity to learn from experts on site within an urban context (Abdal-Haqq, 1998).

**The Internship Experience**

The internship experience, or student teaching, is usually identified as the most significant and crucial component of the teacher preparation program. However, traditional teacher education programs and internship requirements tend to be universal, rather than focused, which may contribute to the notion that teacher candidates are not adequately prepared for the ideology needed for working with urban children (Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Meyerson, 2001; Haberman, 1995).

Although there is a broad consensus that high quality and practical field experiences are crucial for learning to teach, the research base is inconclusive on the effectiveness of various internship experiences (Allen, 2003). Furthermore, the Education Commission of the States (2003) reported that this lack of a sound research base indicates the need to develop a strong field experience that unites professional practice and methodology coursework. Vereen (2002) proposed that internship experiences should also be designed specifically to increase the student interns’ feeling of self-efficacy in urban school teaching, since numerous studies have documented its’ effect on teaching success. For example, Chester & Beaudin (1996) investigated the effect of change on self-efficacy beliefs, teacher characteristics, and instructional practices. Involving over 173 urban teachers, they concluded that providing opportunities for collegial interactions and teacher reflection fostered positive changes in efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, studies conducted by Benton & Richardson (1993) and Neubert & Bilko (1998) showed an increase in professional efficacy of student interns placed in a Professional Development School environment when compared to student teachers in a non-Professional Development School environment.

According to the Holmes Group (1990), Professional Development Schools are far more than laboratory schools for university research, demonstration sites for displaying best practice, or merely settings for preservice teachers to gain clinical experiences. Rather, Professional Development Schools are places where teachers, administrators, and university faculty come together to deliberate on and find solutions for problems of student learning (Gardner & Libde, 1999). Teaching in the Professional Development School is to be shared by university faculty and school teachers. Classroom teachers and university faculty engage in collaborative research on educational practice. Preservice teachers are supervised by both school administrators and university faculty. Professional Development Schools, are by design, places for the ongoing professional development of preservice teachers, novice teachers, veteran teachers, and for continued research on teaching and learning (Lunenberg, 1998). They are designed to be communities of learning.

Internship experiences in urban Professional Development Schools are designed to better prepare student interns for teaching in high-poverty school environments, and working with urban students. Emphasis is placed on collaboration between partners. This is especially vital to the development of preservice teachers since the literature confirms that the long-term success for many prospective candidates is sometimes impaired by the lack of expert guidance, support, and opportunities to reflect on their teaching practices (Veenman, 1984). Wilson, Miller, and Yerkes (1993) explained that true collaboration demands that educators move from traditional practices of teaching, and transcend into thinking of new approaches and practices.

Although experience requirements and opportunities are unique for each partnership, the overall purpose is to assist student interns in addressing the ideological context of ‘urban’ in their pedagogical and assessment practices, to
critically analyze their current belief systems and practices, and to expand their knowledge base and widen their world views regarding diversity (Holmes Group, 1990).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare an urban Professional Development School internship experience with that of a traditional experience in a similar urban non-Professional Development School. The research question that guided this investigation was:

1. Is there a difference in the internship experience between student interns who completed their internship experience in an urban Professional Development School and student interns who completed their internship in an urban non Professional Development School as measured by (a) Commitment to the Profession, (b) Teaching for Real/Context Based Learning, (c) Reflective Practitioner, (d) Approach to Urban/At-Risk Students, and (f) Self Efficacy?

Methods

Participants

Approximately 59 student interns participated in this study, and were placed in urban elementary schools, which were located in two large, urban metropolitan school districts. Of this population, 29 student interns completed their internship experience in urban Professional Development School sites within the participating districts. The original population of student interns consisted of 30 subjects. However, one student intern experienced difficulty in meeting the demands of teaching in an urban school setting, and, therefore was excluded from the study. Subjects were matched on the variables of school profile, grade point average (.00–.09), teaching experience, length of experience, and qualifications of their clinical faculty members.

Participating universities had similar internship requirements, however, the length of the experience differed slightly. One university required two 7-week placements. These placements would be in the same school environment, but at different grade levels. The other participating university required one 16 week placement within the same grade level. Upon examination of the specific requirements for each university, it was noted that the only difference between the two placements was an additional 2 week observation period for the 16 week placement. The researchers believed that this would not pose a significant concern since the subjects were matched on the length of their experience. All assigned clinical faculty members had at least 3 years of teaching experience. Clinical faculty members for the urban Professional Development Schools were selected by a Steering Committee, while the urban non-Professional Development School faculty members were selected by their building principals.

Procedures

All student interns were administered the Student Teaching Experience Survey at the conclusion of their student teaching experience. The Student Teaching Experience Survey contained 103 Likert-type items based on a scale from “Almost Always” to “Almost Never.” This questionnaire survey was designed to assess student interns’ and student teachers’ experiences based on the following measures: (a) Commitment to the Profession, (b) Teaching for Real/Context Based Learning, (c) Reflective Practitioner, (d) Approach to Urban/At-Risk Learners, and (e) Self-Efficacy. Developed by the researchers, this instrument was based on the current literature, research, and operating model of Professional Development Schools. With regard to content-related validity, the Student Teaching Experience Survey was reviewed and evaluated by three university faculty members who are nationally recognized for their experience and expertise with the Professional Development School reform effort. They were given the task of critiquing the list of statement and making recommendations as to the clarity and readability of each survey instrument. They also examined the instrument to judge categorical placement of each item.

The Student Teaching Experience Survey was also field tested with student interns from two urban universities who were not involved with this investigation. This allowed the researcher to identify ambiguities, misunderstandings, and
other inadequacies, and make the necessary modifications to clarify the survey items. To address the internal consistency reliability of the five subscales of this instrument, Coefficient alpha (Cronbach’s alpha) was computed, and the results ranged from .71 to .83, indicating that the internal consistency of each subscore was reliable.

**Results**

Data from the Student Teaching Experience Survey was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics, and a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). Mean scores of each group indicated that the urban Professional Development School student interns scored slightly higher on each of the five measures. These results are reported in Table 1.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique for determining differences between groups on more than one dependent variable, was conducted to compare the internship experiences as measured by (a) Commitment to the Profession, (b) Teaching for Real/Context Based Learning, (c) Reflective Practitioner, (d) Approach to Urban/At-Risk Learners, and (e) Self-Efficacy. It can be seen in Table 2 that the Wilks’ Lambda, when transformed to an F value, was not statistically significant at the .05 level. Thus, when the five measures were considered simultaneously, there was not a significant difference between the urban Professional Development School internship experience and the urban non-Professional Development School internship experience.

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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
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<td>Commitment to the Profession</td>
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<td>106.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>13.68</td>
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<td>Non-Professional Development School Student Teachers (N=30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
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<td>SD</td>
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<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Multivariate Analysis of Variance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Source of Variation</td>
<td>Wilks’ Lambda</td>
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<td>Group</td>
<td>.87</td>
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N=59

**Discussion of Findings**

The data from this study suggest that there was not a significant difference in the internship experience of student interns in an urban Professional Development School setting and student interns in an urban non-Professional Development
School setting as measured by the 5 variables. The MANOVA yielded a nonsignificant $F$ when the mean vector scores were collectively considered.

The results indicate that, although more concentrated efforts were made in the Professional Development School environment to equip the student interns with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions to meet success in an urban school environment, the student interns placed in a non-Professional Development School also believed their internship provided them with rich experiences to assist them in their development as an urban educator, and to understand the demands of urban school teaching. This suggests that Professional Development School partnerships need to make these concentrated efforts much earlier and throughout the teacher preparation program. For example, the emphasis on “urban pedagogy” can be in place when the student interns begin their observation requirements in an urban school setting, and continue throughout their preparation tenure. This will allow the student interns more time to internalize the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions needed to be an effective educator in an urban school environment.

One also needs to consider the maturity of each PDS partnership when interpreting the results. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards for Professional Development Schools (2001) provides specific criteria for the identification of partnership stages. These developmental guidelines outline “…the degree of commitment, level of expertise, the degree of institutionalization and support, and the impact the PDS partnership has outside its partnering institutions” (p. 6). A total of 6 Professional Development School sites were involved in this investigation, and of these, 3 sites were identified as being at the “Developing Level” and 3 were at the “At Standard” Level. The criteria for each of these levels include:

- **Developing Level** — Partners are pursuing the mission of the PDS partnership and there is partial institutional support. At the developing stage, partners are engaged in PDS work in many ways. However, their supporting institutions have not yet made changes in their policies and practices that would provide evidence of institutionalization.
- **At Standard** — The mission of the PDS partnership is integrated into the partnering institutions. PDS work is expected and supported, and it reflects what is known about the best practices. At this stage partners work together effectively resulting in positive outcomes for all learners. Partnering institutions have made changes in policies and practices that reflect what has been learned through PDS work, and that support PDS participants in meaningful ways (NCATE, 2001, p. 7).

The results of this study may have been influenced because 3 of the PDS were identified as being at the “Developing Level,” and not “At Standard,” this, may have influenced the results of the study. The partnerships were still developing at these sites, and these schools were not yet in a position to meet the criteria set forth by the Holmes Partnership for Professional Development Schools, even though they met the “Developing Level” standards set forth by NCATE.

Data from this investigation also suggests that other urban school settings not identified as a Professional Development School site may be just as effective in providing student teachers with meaningful internship experiences that highlight collaboration, commitment, contextual teaching, self-efficacy, and working with urban, at-risk students. However, the expectations and support of each cooperating teacher, the working conditions and climate of each school, and the leadership of the building administrators may have been the significant contributors impacting the student teachers perception of their internship experience.

### Recommendations for Further Investigation

Further study is needed to determine if the Professional Development School reform effort needs to broaden its scope in the fundamental changes the partnerships are willing to make. For example, the partnering universities and schools involved in this investigation, focused only on
providing additional support and initiatives during the internship experience. More restructuring efforts need to be made throughout the teacher education program. Doing so would allow the university–school partnership to explore the prospect of redefining how best to prepare urban teachers, and the quality and kinds of experiences that contributes to teacher candidates’ development.

Future investigation is also needed involving a larger population sample and with different Professional Development School settings. This will allow educators to ascertain the specific changes that are occurring at the different sites, and the ways that these changes are affecting the teacher candidates’ learning during the internship experience. Finally, levels of the partnership relationship, as identified by NCATE, should be considered in future investigations. Researchers may want to consider only utilizing Professional Development Schools “At-Standard” levels when comparing to non-Professional Development Schools sites because they have met specific criteria and guiding principles essential to the success of Professional Development Schools.

Professional Development Schools seek to create ambitious learning communities for the improvement of teacher education programs and practices. The Holmes Partnership communicates this goal by stating:

A primary aim of Professional Development Schools will be to contribute to intellectually solid programs of teacher education that intertwine the wisdom of theory and practice; that encourage shared conceptions among university and school faculty; that assist novices in evaluating, integrating, and using knowledge from multiple sources; that convey the moral basis of teaching; and that recruit and keep imaginative and interesting teachers in the profession. (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 48)

For university-school partnerships to see the tangible results of achieving this goal, more ambitious restructuring needs to be made in the teacher preparation program. Short term programs and initiatives alone do not constitute a high quality internship experience. The Holmes Group (1990) elaborates on what is needed to achieve this goal by presenting the following 6 guiding principles essential to the success of each partnership:

1. All students would participate seriously in learning for understanding.
2. Schools and classrooms would be organized as learning communities.
3. Social barriers would not exclude children from participating in learning.
4. All members of the community would engage in learning.
5. Community members (teachers, administrators, and teacher educators) would collaborate in researching and reflecting on teaching and learning practices.
6. Principles demanded by the PDS would require such substantial changes, that institutions would need to be re-invented.

In order for a Professional Development School to fulfill its mission, these guiding principles must be in place.

The preparation of teachers for urban schools is considered a “distinctive enterprise” (Haberman, 1994). Preparation “… occurs in schools, with children, while functioning in the role of teacher with the help of a coach or mentor …” (Haberman, 1994, p. 22). To move forward, Professional Development School partnerships must agree upon and focus on essential elements and experiences that define a high quality and practical urban field internship, so that future teachers “… will succeed and serve in schools with less than ideal working conditions serving diverse children in poverty” (Haberman, 1994, p. 1).

References


The Value of Professional Teaching Portfolios to Prospective Employers: School Administrators’ Views

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess administrators’ views in a mid-western state regarding the development of a job search portfolio for pre-service teachers. All pre-service teachers must complete the professional portfolio, a requirement for initial teacher certification, during the teacher preparation phase of the degree program. It is proposed that with input from administrators who hire beginning teachers that the professional portfolio can be modified/adapted for use as a job search portfolio. Subjects (n = 252) volunteered for this study by responding to a survey mailed to 675 state school administrators. Recommendations gathered from the study are provided.

“An education student in her last month of residency recently went to her professor and said ‘You won’t believe what happened today! I showed my supervising teacher my portfolio and after looking through it for a few minutes, she put it under her arm and said let’s go. The principal must see this!’ She practically dragged me into the principal’s office and said ‘Look at this! I’ve been telling you we need to interview this student for our faculty. Her portfolio is outstanding.’ After looking at the portfolio for a few minutes, the principal scheduled an interview with me and requested that I bring my portfolio.” (Morgan, 1999, p. 416)

Introduction

More and more states now require demonstration in a teaching portfolio of an acceptable level of proficiency on a set of externally defined teaching standards as part of the initial teaching licensure process. However, even though teacher education programs may require their students to include evidence of proficiency on a recognized set of standards, there is much variation as to the types of artifacts selected or recommended to include in the teaching portfolios. This is true not only from one state to another, but can also be seen across teacher education programs within the same state.

Much has been written about portfolios, their use in teacher education, and the need to consider their purpose when designing and implementing a portfolio program. The research on portfolios has primarily focused on the information that a portfolio provides about a teacher candidate, how portfolios should be structured and what they should contain (Vavrus & Collins, 1991; King, 1991; Shulman, Haertel & Bird, 1988).

The use of the portfolio as a job search tool has been addressed less extensively. There is little research available that documents the extent to which portfolios are currently used by school administrators (Weinberger & Didham, 1987; Williamson & Abe, 1989). This limited research has shown that although school administrators express support for the use of portfolios in employment decisions, they tend to rate traditional hiring tools as more useful than the integrated performance measures.

As the use of portfolios in teacher education program assessment increases, the need to modify portfolios for job searches increases as well. The full collection of material that may be required to reflect the elements of a professional education program portfolio will be too extensive for a building principal to find helpful in making a hiring decision. How can students make this transition from completing a professional portfolio used for teacher certification purposes to one
used in the job interviewing process? Simply put, what exactly should one include in a beginning teacher employment portfolio?

**Research Questions**

Three major questions were addressed in this study:

1. Do administrators use the portfolio in the hiring process? Why or why not?
2. What should be included in the job interview portfolio?
3. What type of portfolio format or presentation is most conducive for administrators’ use in the hiring process?

**Theoretical Framework**

*Teaching Portfolios*

A portfolio is generally characterized by depth of learning. This notion of depth is evidenced by several authors who define a portfolio as:

- The structured documented history of a carefully selected set of coached or mentored accomplishments substantiated by samples of a learner’s work and fully realized only through reflective writing, deliberation, and serious conversation (MacIssac & Jackson, 1995).

- Being more than a container — a portfolio also embodies an attitude that assessment is dynamic and that the richest portrayals of teacher (and student) performance are based on multiple sources of evidence collected over time in authentic settings (Wolf, 1991, p. 130).

- A fusion of processes and product. It is the processes of reflection, selection, rationalization, and evaluation, together with the product of those processes (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995, pp. 68–69).

The ability to better understand the nature of an individual’s learning through the use of portfolios is enhanced through the development of teaching portfolios (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995). A teaching portfolio is defined as a structured collection of evidence of a teacher’s best work that demonstrates a teacher’s accomplishments over time and across a variety of contexts (Edgerton, Hutchings, & Quinlan, 1992). Kenneth Wolf (1991) declares, “Portfolios provide a connection to the contests and personal histories of real teaching and make it possible to document the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time” (p. 129). The teaching portfolio is seen as a more “authentic” form of teacher assessment (Barton & Collins, 1993) as well as a way to better capture the complexities of teaching and learning over time and across different contexts in authentic settings (Shulman, 1988). In addition, the teaching portfolio is intended to be a dynamic portrayal of teacher performance based on multiple sources of evidence (Valencia, McGinley & Pearson, 1990). And, finally, Brown and Wolfe-Quintero (1997) defined a teacher portfolio as “a purposeful collection of any aspects of a teacher’s work that tells the story of the teacher’s efforts, skills, abilities, achievements, and contributions to his/her students, colleagues, institution, academic discipline, or community” (p. 28).

Currently, portfolios are being widely used across the country by teacher preparation programs to promote student learning, professional development, and reflection and to provide evidence for evaluation (Stone, 1998). Teaching portfolios in pre-service teacher education can be used as a way of encouraging student teachers to document and describe their skills and competence as a teacher. Portfolios have the potential of providing much richer information than do traditional assessment methods (Long & Stansbury, 1994). Results of the four-year Teacher Assessment Project at Stanford reported that engaging in the process of portfolio development appears to encourage teachers to become generally more reflective about their teaching practices (Vavrus & Collins, 1991). Mokhtari, Yellin, Bull and Montgomery (1996) reported in their study that when pre-service teachers maintain a portfolio of their work, they learn to assess their own progress as learners. In addition, Ford and Ohlhausen (1991) found that participation in the teaching portfolio process played a critical role in changing students’ attitudes, beliefs, and classroom practices related to alternative forms of assessment. Developing a portfolio can be difficult for pre-service teachers who are unfamiliar with this assessment process.
and who have limited time to devote to the project (Stone, 1998).

Several tensions associated with using portfolios, including time and understanding the portfolio concept, as identified by Anderson and DeMeule (1998), surfaced quickly as the university in their study made plans to implement the state requirement of professional portfolios. Portfolios were seen as “another task in a very crowded certification year” (Anderson & DeMeule, 1998). In addition, students questioned the value of the portfolios and lacked an understanding of the purpose of them. Krause (1996) found that specific instruction was needed in order for students to comprehend portfolio development, as well as sufficient time and support from supervisors. Students needed assistance from faculty on the reflection process of their work, extended engagement in the ongoing portfolio process, and the understanding on how the portfolios will be used in conjunction with other forms of assessment.

**Job Interview Portfolios**

Several different kinds of teaching portfolios have been identified in the literature. A “learning portfolio” (Wolf & Dietz, 1998) refers to a teaching portfolio that engages student teachers in inquiry about their teaching and documents professional growth over time. A “credential portfolio” is used to determine whether student teachers have demonstrated some level of proficiency on a set of teaching standards that are defined at the university or state level (Snyder, Lippincott, & Bower, 1998). An increasingly more common example of a teaching portfolio seen in recent years is one used for employment purposes. This job interview portfolio typically “showcases” students’ best work and is used when students apply for teaching positions (Zeichner & Wray, 2000).

In agreement with the National School Reform Faculty of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (Cushman, 1999), whatever the uses of professional portfolios, they will be seen not as an end in themselves but as an ongoing tool in a practice that includes routine opportunities for thoughtful reflective dialogue throughout the school community. Portfolios have the potential to be a form of assessment that shift the responsibility and ownership of learning to the student, encourage students to reflect on their learning, integrate theory with practice, and become more knowledgeable about assessment issues (Stone, 1998). In addition, portfolios are having a positive impact on preservice teachers because they promote reflection, facilitate learning, and assist in the job search (Anderson & DeMeule, 1998).

A study conducted by Boody and Montecinos (1997) among Iowa school principals suggested that the teaching portfolios of beginning teachers were being underutilized in the hiring process. Another study by the Education Placement Consortium as reported in Jacobson (1997), which surveyed more than a thousand members of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators, also showed that interview portfolios tend to be underused. Only 6% of personnel directors and 4% of superintendents reported reviewing portfolios prior to interviews, but more than 50% of those surveyed preferred portfolios for the final interviews. Principals were the most likely group of administrators who indicated a preference to reviewing the portfolio. Most of the respondents in that study said that even though they are not currently requiring portfolios from applicants, more school officials are beginning to request them. Administrators are finding that portfolios provide important insights into a teacher’s individual talents and beliefs about education.

Administrators who do use or encourage the use of portfolios for job searches do so for several reasons. One of the most often mentioned reason for portfolio use is that the portfolio provides visual evidence of skills and abilities (Guillaume & Yopp, 1995; Jonson & Hodges, 1998; Wiedmer, 1998). Portfolios benefit the interview process by encouraging students to reflect on their teaching, strengths, weaknesses and beliefs. This enhances the quality of the interview time because the candidate has already given thought to the areas the interviewer may wish to discuss (Guillaume & Yopp, 1995; Maskeiwicz, 1998; Wiedmer, 1998). McLaughlin and Vogt (1996) and Jonson and Hodges (1998) add that the use of portfolios by a candidate suggests that, as a teacher, the candidate may be more open to using a variety of assessment methods, especially portfolios, with
their own students.

Advice concerning job interview portfolio content has emphasized efficiency and brevity. Based on a survey done by Jonson and Hodges (1998), administrators’ interviews primarily focus on teacher competencies in subject matter content and curriculum development. To effectively address either area, teachers found the portfolio to be of great help. Most administrators in a study done by Guillaume and Yopp (1995) indicated unit plans, evidence of communication with students and families, and evidence of classroom management skills were desirable skills to demonstrate. Some advised the use of videos while others discouraged them. Newman (1993) found that the use of proper English and the presentation of error free work were important for creating a positive impression. Many administrators reported that although they value portfolios, time constraints preclude reviews of lengthy documents (McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996).

Rationale for Study

In 1997 the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP) announced that portfolios would become an element of state teacher accreditation procedures and this requirement would be incorporated into all state teacher education programs. As a result of that mandate, a major university within that state designed a policy for portfolio assessment that spans ten teacher education programs and four colleges (Colleges of Education, Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Science, and Human Environmental Sciences). Students submit their professional portfolios three times during their professional development, once for full admission to professional education, once prior to the final student teaching experience, and once at the end of student teaching and prior to the institution’s recommendation for state licensure.

The development of professional portfolios as required for state certification could be seen by pre-service teachers as just “one more thing to do” in an already busy teacher education program as students attempt to complete university and state requirements for licensing, in addition to focusing on obtaining a teaching job. Much has been written about the values of portfolios in teacher education. They foster reflection, engage the students in the evaluation of their own work, help students clarify their own goals, point out strengths and weaknesses, and provide visual evidence of learning. However, as students at the university presented in this study became involved in their portfolio development, there were times when these values were either too abstract for them to recognize or students felt that these values already existed in other parts of their professional education experience. Many students began to consider the portfolios as intrusive and just additional busy work. As Guillaume and Yopp (1995, p 100) indicated, portfolios can become a “low stakes endeavor” for students since there are so many other evaluation elements such as case studies, research papers, and lesson and unit plan development in existing programs. The required professional portfolio quickly became one more cumbersome, time-consuming requirement—of benefit to the state and the institution, but not to students.

At the same time, anecdotes about job search portfolios were being heard throughout the educational community. Some of the teacher education graduates reported that several school districts were requiring portfolios for job interviews. However, some reported that administrators did not like portfolios and were refusing to look at them if offered. Thus the following study was conducted to examine the use of portfolios in the hiring process. The goals of the study were to determine if school administrators in the state used portfolios, why and how they used them, what did they believe was useful content, and how the portfolios could be presented most effectively during the portfolio process. The ultimate goal of the teacher education faculty was to acquire information in order to advise students how to best edit the extensive collection within the professional portfolio so it would become useful as an employment tool.
Methodology

Participants

Subjects who participated in this study included 252 school administrators whose districts are within the university’s student teacher placement region. Respondents included superintendents, building principals, assistant principals, assistant superintendents and others who are involved in the teacher hiring process. Administrators surveyed were from private, public and vocational education sectors. School district sizes, by enrollment numbers, ranged from fewer than 500 to over 10,000 K–12 students.

A questionnaire, accompanied by a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope, was originally sent to 675 school administrators. Surveys were mailed to school district superintendents and principals at each school in the region. Forty percent of those surveyed returned completed, usable questionnaires. A single mailing was used with no mail or telephone follow-up. This single mailing was done because of fund limitations. The majority of the respondents were building principals (73.3%) who had the major responsibility for reviewing job applications and portfolios.

The schools represented in this sample included as many as 12 different grade level arrangements from Pre-K through high school, with various districts configuring those grade levels in various ways (e.g., K–6, K–8, K–12, 7–9, 10–12). For the purpose of data analysis the administrators were grouped, based on their response to Question #15 on survey, into the following categories: elementary school (n = 126, 52.7%), middle school (n = 21, 8.6%), junior high school (n = 7, 2.9%), high school (n = 38, 15.6%), vocational/technical school (n = 2, .8%), and others (n = 25, 10.3%).

Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a survey consisting of a total of 19 items, which solicited information about the job search portfolio. Five of the nineteen items were used to secure demographic information about the administrators. Questions 1–7 were scored using a five-point Likert scale. Question 7 of the survey was adapted from the Beginning Teacher Portfolio Checklist developed by Williamson and Abe (1989) to create a Professional Portfolio Checklist for this study. A panel of experts in the field reviewed the complete survey instrument to ensure content validity and clarity of the statements (see Appendix A).

Professional Portfolio Checklist

Weinberger and Didham (1987), in their work with student teachers, developed a list of items that were used in portfolios for elementary and secondary majors. Williams (1979) also suggested a list of items for prospective teachers to include in portfolios that would help the applicant convince hiring personnel they had the skills necessary for demonstrating competence as a teacher. Taking the lead from Weinberger and Didham (1987) and Williams (1979), Williamson and Abe (1989) developed a portfolio checklist, which was first field-tested with 25 administrators in southern Georgia. Respondents were asked to consider the items listed and make deletions or additions that would be helpful in the creation of a final checklist. The final Beginning Teacher Portfolio Checklist was then used in a research study given to 245 administrators in southern Georgia. Using the checklists developed in these three studies and additional items required for inclusion in the professional portfolio for Oklahoma Teacher Certification, a Professional Portfolio Checklist was developed for this study. An example of this checklist is found as a component of the survey in Appendix A (Question 7).

Results

Two hundred and fifty-two surveys (40%) were returned by the respondents. The surveys were used to present a list of items considered important by those involved in hiring beginning teachers. This task was achieved by computing “Means” for each item on the checklist based on the averaging of total responses on a five-point scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree, and 5 = don’t know).

As shown in Table 1, the most commonly requested items are traditional hiring tools: résumé (99.2%), certification documents (97.9%),
transcripts (94.6%), and letters of recommendation (90.2%). Items that are more integrated measures of teaching performance, such as individual case studies (31.9%), research papers (24.8%), and video-tapes of teaching (28.9%) are seldom requested. Two exceptions to the more traditional hiring tools that are frequently requested are a classroom management plan (93.3%) and a statement of teaching philosophy (92.0%).

Table 1
What Should Be in a Portfolio?
Frequency (n = 243)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree and Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resume/vita</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification document</td>
<td>97.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management plan</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters of recommendation</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of teaching philosophy</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal statement</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of communication with families</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical sketch</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit plan</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations of technology usage</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content depends on the subject area of candidate</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment philosophy</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self assessment</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of record keeping</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional aids</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate designed tests</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques of standardized tests/curricula/texts</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art projects</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research papers</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video tapes</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio tapes</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratings were based on a five point scale: 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Don’t Know

As seen in Table 2, results from 22 respondents (10% of 242 total respondents) who do not use portfolios as part of the job interview process show that the lack of structure (86.4%), time
constraints (63.6%) and excessive amounts of material (63.6%) were the most frequent reasons given. Likewise, as reviewed in Table 3, 159 respondents who do use portfolios in job interviews, do so because they: a) provide an opportunity for candidates to efficiently present a great deal of information (81.1%), b) allow assessment of a candidate in greater depth (76.7%), c) provide information that is not available using other methods (74.8%), and d) are a good means of identifying an individual’s strengths (65.6%).

An overwhelming number of respondents (90.1%, n = 243) agreed that portfolios will provide hiring information which is not available using other methods (Table 4). However, only 46.1% of these same respondents felt that the portfolio plays a major role in the hiring process, and 35.8% of the administrators felt that the portfolio should only include a teacher candidate’s best work as opposed to that work from which a candidate learned the most. A descriptive caption is desired on each item by 70.9% of the respondents, which should include context and date in which the artifact was created, description of the task and skills that are demonstrated, and a reflection on the significance of the artifact.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency (n = 22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios are too unstructured</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of portfolios too time consuming</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios contain excessive amounts of material</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios make it too difficult to assess a candidate’s abilities objectively</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio evaluation lacks focus</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios lack depth</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency (n = 159)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios provide an opportunity for candidates to efficiently present a great deal of information</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios allow to assess a candidate in greater depth</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios provide information that is not available using other methods</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios are a good means of identifying an individual’s strengths</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios are helpful in distinguishing one candidate from another</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios make it easier to assess a candidate’s abilities objectively</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios give a clear idea as to how a candidate will fit into a particular job</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
Portfolio Usage and Format
Frequency (n = 243)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree and Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios will provide hiring information which is not available using other methods</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like using portfolios as part of the hiring decision</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my experience, the portfolio plays a major role in the hiring process</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The employment portfolio should include only a teacher candidate’s best work (as opposed to that from which they learned the most)</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each item in a portfolio should have a descriptive caption.</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions should include:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context in which evidence was created</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of task or assignment</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of skills demonstrated</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on significance of the item</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date item was created</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions
One major issue that has emerged in the use of portfolios in teacher education is a frequent conflict in purposes among teacher educators and their students (Zeichner & Wray, 2000). The students’ focus on the “showcase” aspects of portfolios and in presenting a favorable image to prospective employers sometimes conflict with the goal of using the portfolio for professional development and assessment and has created tensions between student teachers and teacher educators. As reported in a study done with teaching portfolios at the University of Colorado (Borko et al., 1997), student teachers were most concerned about the use of their portfolios as an aid in gaining employment while teacher educators were most concerned about using portfolios to promote professional development and to make assessments.

One way of dealing with the above mentioned tension is to use separate portfolios to address the different purposes. This can either involve the construction of totally separate teaching portfolios as is done at the University of California-Santa Barbara (Snyder et al., 1998), or as recommended selections made from a professional portfolio for an employment portfolio after the completion of the teacher education program, as done at University of Wisconsin-Madison (Zeichner & Wray, 2000). Information and feedback gained from this study will assist teacher educators with recommendations from administrators as to what selections would be most beneficial in an employment portfolio.

The overriding implication of this study is that, based on the evidence derived from the survey, teacher education faculty can help direct students in the organization and preparation of a portfolio that will aid them in seeking employment. Differences among school districts are recognized, but there is a general interest in portfolios, which allows a candidate to showcase his or her ability to effectively communicate, plan sequenced instruction and organize and manage a classroom. This information will help faculty direct students’ efforts as they begin the highly competitive process of interviewing and obtaining
a teaching position. The findings in this study corroborate previous data reported by Guillaume and Yopp (1995) who state “many administrators are impressed by the initiative displayed by student teachers’ efforts to compose portfolios and that interviewers welcome the portfolios as vehicles to encourage professional discourse during interviews” (p. 96). This study also corroborates results from the study done by Williamson and Abel (1989) in that inclusion of resumes and transcripts are highly recommended by administrators for the job interview portfolio.

The use of teaching portfolios in the teacher education program was initially designed to assist the pre-service teachers in understanding and articulating their developing professional knowledge. In a study done by Loughran and Corrigan (1995), it was not until the pre-service teachers linked the notion of presenting their views on their learning to a prospective employer that a better understanding of the portfolio process began to emerge. By considering their target audience (prospective employers), the pre-service teachers began to develop portfolio items so that themselves and others could recognize the educational basis of their views. This, in turn, led to the teachers deliberately linking a variety of ideas from their own experiences and making judgments about those ideas by thinking about and questioning their own learning.

The time and effort to create a professional teaching portfolio appear to be valued most when the pre-service teacher begins an initial job search. As stated by Hurst, Wilson, and Cramer (1998):

“Our experiences and the experiences of our students with teaching portfolios show that they are a powerful instrument for placement or career advancement. Moreover, the process of creating teaching portfolios refines an individual’s professional and personal goals. It often encourages reflection and creates an awareness of a teacher’s professional journey. Just as teachers now emphasize a holistic view of students, taking into account the diversity of learner abilities and experiences, administrators can benefit from the same approach as they examine teachers’ portfolios. Professional portfolios can provide a more holistic picture of pre-service or in-service teachers, assist teachers in job interviews, document teaching strengths and competencies, and clarify future goals and objectives for the educator. (p. 582)

While the data in this study is descriptive and one should be cautious about attempts to generalize, it is felt that the results do support the premise that administrators find portfolios useful and they are willing to spend some time in reviewing them. There was also greater agreement than expected regarding the preferred format and important types of evidence to include.

Further studies should be done to lend to deeper understandings of the construction, use and benefits of teacher portfolios. Interviews with administrators as a follow-up to the surveys would allow for richer descriptions and insights into their perspectives and attitudes about portfolio assessment. In addition, pre-service teachers also need to be surveyed and interviewed as to their perspectives about the purpose of portfolios. Barton and Collins (1993) noted the first and most significant act of portfolio preparation is the decision on the purposes for the portfolio (p. 203). Do conflicts in opinion and understanding exist between teacher educators, pre-service teachers and ultimately administrators as to the true purpose of the professional portfolio? And if so, how might these conflicts be impacting the nature and quality of the portfolios themselves, as well as the perspectives and attitudes of those involved in constructing the portfolios as well as those reviewing and assessing them?

Implications for Teacher Education

The information gathered from this study has been compiled into a presentation now being made to all student teachers prior to graduation. The following items are suggested to students as they transition from their professional program portfolio to a job search portfolio, based on the responses from administrators:

1. Do administrators use portfolios? Yes, 85.8 % of the respondents in this study like to use portfolios in some capacity as part of the hiring process.
2. Who reads the job portfolios? As a result of this survey, it was clear that building level interviewers, such as principals or interview committees, are the ones who desire to review the portfolios.

3. When should student teachers submit portfolios for job applications? Most of the administrators prefer the portfolios to be given to the school district at the interview stage and not as part of the initial application.

4. What do administrators want in the portfolio? Almost all of the administrators desire transcripts, resume, certification information and letters of reference to be included in the portfolio, if they are not already included in the application. The following items were responded to positively by over 80% of the respondents to include in the portfolio: philosophy of teaching, autobiographical sketch, classroom management plan, goal statement, lesson/unit plan, evidence of technology competency, and evidence of communication with parents/families.

5. What do administrators not want in the portfolio? The following items were reported by over 50% of the respondents to not include in the portfolio: case studies, research papers, art projects, audiotapes, and videotapes.

6. Warnings: Time is of the essence. Those administrators who do not like to use portfolios find them too time consuming or lacking depth and focus. Students should be highly selective of what evidence is included and keep the number of items in the portfolio to around 10 to 12. The readers of the portfolios want depth, not flash. Captions for each artifact are desired if they are brief and direct the reader to the skills demonstrated.

The overriding implication of this study is that, based on the evidence, faculty in the teacher education program can now help direct students in the organization and preparation of a portfolio that will aid them in seeking a teaching position. There will be some differences among school districts, but there is a general interest in portfolios that allow candidates to highlight their ability to communicate effectively, plan sequenced instruction and assessment, and effectively organize and maintain a classroom.

Above all, students should be advised that the portfolio they have developed through their preservice years is not the one they want to present as their professional job portfolio, without some modifications. The former focuses on documenting their professional growth towards achieving professional competency. The latter should focus on demonstrating and highlighting achievement of their professional competency and excellence.

Resources


The Value of Professional Teaching Portfolios


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**Appendix A**

**Survey Instrument**

Listed below are statements about the use of the portfolio in the hiring process. Where requested, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statement …

Please note the scale runs:

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK = Don’t Know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Portfolios will provide hiring information which is not available using other methods.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I like using portfolios as part of the hiring decision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In my experience, the portfolio plays a major role in the hiring process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The employment portfolio should include only a teacher candidate’s best work (as opposed to that from which they learned the most).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Each item in a portfolio should have a descriptive caption. If you agree, what should be included?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context in which it was created</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the assignment or task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of what skills are demonstrated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on the significance of the item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please explain):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Artifacts in the portfolios should provide evidence that the candidate can:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Create learning experiences that make the central concepts and methods of the subject matter meaningful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Provide learning opportunities that support intellectual, social and physical development of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Create instructional opportunities that adapt to student differences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Demonstrate curricular integration which encourages critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills and use of technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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e. Use best practices related to motivation and behavior, encouraging positive social interaction and active engagement.  

f. Use a variety of effective communication techniques.  

g. Adapt instruction based on assessment and reflection.  

h. Use a variety of assessment strategies  

i. Evaluate the effects of his/her choices and actions and seek opportunities for professional growth.  

j. Foster positive interaction with colleagues, parents/families and the community.  

k. Foster career awareness and career concepts in the curriculum.  

l. Value continuous life long learning.  

m. Understand the legal aspects of teaching.  

n. Develop instruction based on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum.  

o. Incorporate the criteria for Effective Teaching Performance in designing instructional strategies.  

7. The following items should be included in a professional portfolios.  

- a. a resume/vita  
- b. letters of recommendation  
- c. self assessments  
- d. transcripts  
- e. certification documentation  
- f. autobiographical sketch  
- g. statement of teaching philosophy  
- h. research papers written for class  
- i. case study write ups  
- j. critiques of standardized tests/curricula/texts  
- k. assessment philosophy  
- l. goal statement  
- m. classroom management plan  
- n. lesson plan  
- o. unit plan  
- p. examples of record keeping  
- q. evidence of effective communication with families  
- r. instructional aids  
- s. art projects  
- t. audio tapes  
- u. video tapes  
- v. photographs  
- w. demonstrations of ability to use the internet or other technology  
- x. candidate designed tests  
- y. content depends largely on the subject area of candidate  
- z. other items you think should be included (please explain).
What is the maximum number of items you would prefer to review? ________________

**Portfolio Practices**

8. In the hiring process do you:
   _____ a. require portfolios (go to #10)
   _____ b. discourage portfolios (go to #9)
   _____ c. encourage portfolio (go to #10)
   _____ d. not consider portfolios (go to #9)
   _____ e. have no preference concerning portfolios (go to #11)

9. If you discourage the use of portfolios or do not use them as part of the hiring process, please check any of the beliefs which contribute to your decision.
   _____ a. Portfolios are too time consuming to review in the hiring process
   _____ b. Portfolios are too unstructured.
   _____ c. Portfolios contain excessive amounts of material.
   _____ d. Portfolio evaluation lacks focus.
   _____ e. Portfolios lack depth.
   _____ f. Portfolios make it too difficult to assess a candidate’s abilities objectively.
   _____ g. Other. Please explain: ____________________________________________

10. If you do use, or encourage the use of portfolios in the hiring process, please check any of the beliefs which contribute to your decision:
    _____ a. Portfolios are a good means of identifying an individual’s strengths.
    _____ b. Portfolios provide an opportunity for candidates to efficiently present a great deal of information.
    _____ c. Portfolios make it easier to assess a candidate’s abilities objectively.
    _____ d. Portfolios give a clear idea as to how a candidate will fit into a particular job.
    _____ e. Portfolios allow me to assess a candidate in greater depth.
    _____ f. Portfolios are helpful in distinguishing one candidate from another.
    _____ g. Portfolios provide information that is not available using other methods.

11. If your district uses portfolios for hiring decisions, the responsibility for reviewing them falls on:
    _____ a. Superintendent _____ c. Principals
    _____ b. A hiring committee _____ d. Other. Please specify: (___________)

12. How long has the use or non-use of portfolio review been your practice? (Answer according to whatever your current practice is.)
    _____ 0 years _____ 1 to 2 years _____ 3 to 5 years _____ over 5 years

13. How many portfolios have you reviewed personally as part of the hiring process? (Answer even if you do not do so currently.)
    _____ a. 0 _____ b. 1 – 10 _____ c. 11 – 20 _____ d. over 20
Demographics:

14. Are you a: (check one)
   _____ a. Building principal
   _____ b. Superintendent
   _____ c. Assistant principal
   _____ d. Assistant superintendent
   _____ e. District Personnel Director
   _____ f. Other (Please specify:____________________)

15. If you are in a school administrator position, is your school:
   _____ a. Elementary School
   _____ b. Middle School
   _____ c. Junior High School
   _____ d. High School
   _____ e. Vocational/Technical School
   _____ f. Other (Please specify:_____________)

16. If you are a school administrator, your school is:
   _____ a. public
   _____ b. private

17. The grade range of your school district is:
   _____ a. K – 6
   _____ b. K – 8
   _____ c. K – 12
   _____ d. Other (Please specify: __________________________)

18. The number of students enrolled in the district is:
   _____ a. over 10,000
   _____ b. 4,000 – 9,999
   _____ c. 1,000 – 3,999
   _____ d. 500 – 999
   _____ e. under 500

Additional Comments:
Creating Highly Qualified Teachers for Urban Schools

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The University of Memphis

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Abstract
This article describes a design for a teacher preparation program that is successfully preparing teacher candidates to teach in the complex, diverse classrooms in urban schools. The program provides intensive, authentic, field-based experiences and effective mentoring support for teacher candidates as they gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for successful teaching. The authors examine the perceptions of participants in this program to discover strengths and weaknesses of the program, the experiences the teacher candidates found beneficial, and the trends in performance of the teacher candidates on the Praxis II Exams. Findings from multiple open-ended surveys, Likert Scale ratings, and focus group interviews are presented. Teacher candidates clearly articulate that they are well prepared to begin a career in teaching as a result of participating in this teacher preparation program. Recommendations for program improvement are presented in order to increase the recruitment and retention of teachers into the teaching profession.

Introduction
In a meta-analysis that focused on empirical studies of teacher quality and qualifications, Rice (2003) named five broad categories that appear to contribute to teacher quality: (1) experience, (2) preparation programs and degrees, (3) type of certification, (4) coursework taken in preparation for the profession, and (5) teachers’ own test scores. Wayne and Youngs (2003) also targeted teacher quality in their analysis of studies that examined the characteristics of effective teachers and their link to student achievement. Similarly, Wayne and Youngs examined ratings of teachers’ undergraduate institutions, teachers’ test scores, degrees and coursework, and certification status. They concluded “students learn more from teachers with certain characteristics” (p. 100-101). As mandated by No Child Left Behind and as the demand for highly qualified teachers who can teach in complex, urban settings intensifies, the traditional structures and approaches to teacher preparation programs come into question. Teachers are faced with educating students who have diverse needs and come from diverse, complex backgrounds. The concern at this time appears to be focused on urban schools, particularly those that are failing to bring about successful achievement scores for these urban learners. In order to ensure success for all students, teachers must be well prepared and possess those “certain characteristics” to face the challenges of ensuring that all students achieve. Goodlad (1990) states, “Few matters are more important than the quality of the teachers in our nation’s schools” (p. xi). Arturo Pacheco (2000), in his address to the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, echoes Goodlad’s conclusions and reminds teacher educators, “Better teachers lead to better schools” (p. 8).

Various professional organizations including, among others, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and the Association of Teacher Educators, have adopted policy positions regarding elementary teacher education and teacher licensure. While institutions of higher education scramble to meet revised state and national standards, these positions demand incorporating a more integrated knowledge base and instructional applications in programs for prospective teachers. New elemen-
tary teacher licensure standards reflect a national trend towards a more integrated view of both early and middle grades curriculum and instruction. This growing consensus, informed by research and tested through practice, echoes the 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future. The report indicated that teachers need more than content knowledge and that a special blend of content and pedagogy is essential for teachers to be effective. The report further pointed to a need for teacher candidates to develop curricular practices that accommodate student diversity, develop the habits of reflective practitioners, and gain a fuller understanding of the teacher’s changing roles.

Johnson (2001) reports that new teachers are leaving the field in record numbers and Pipho (1998) adds “in some states and in some urban areas the teacher shortage is dire.” Tye and O’Brien (2002) warn that some teachers experience feelings of alienation, isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness that are found in many urban school environments and drive teachers to pursue degrees in other areas. The authors posit that changing student characteristics, negativity, and pressure from parents and the community, along with student apathy and parent hostility contribute to a decreased teacher work force. In order for teachers to perform well in urban settings they “must be responsive to the different environments children are in and resourceful in getting the financial and human resources necessary to teach children in those different environments” (Reading Today, 2003, p.3). Further, the article points out that “preservice education should prepare new teachers for culture shock they will face.” Urban schools have proven to be a challenge for veteran teachers but can be particularly intimidating for beginning teachers. The emphasis in a second Reading Today article (2003) highlights that poverty and lack of adequate health care for students and their families living in poverty have a significant impact on learning. Not only are beginning teachers struggling to learn the curriculum, they also must deal with lack of parent involvement and students who have been raised in a culture that often lacks parental supervision. Many, but not all, urban students come to school without proper food, clothing, and supplies. Many times, medical care has been inadequate. Urban school students come from low socio-economic backgrounds where the adult(s) in the house may be at work and unable to provide the academic and emotional support needed in order for a student to become successful in school. New teachers are often ill-prepared for such children and their problems. This causes many new teachers leave the profession due to their inability to cope with these urban conditions.

The problems of recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers for demanding urban teaching situations is a challenge for every institution that offers teacher education. One college has tackled these challenges by adopting as its initial focus the improvement of its teacher education program for the purposes of ensuring (1) a diverse and high-quality approach to teacher preparation that involves solid K-12/postsecondary partnerships, strong field experience in urban schools, and good support for new teachers; and (2) that teacher recruitment and retention policies target the schools of greatest need (usually Title 1 urban schools) and the teachers most likely to staff them successfully. In an effort to offer a comprehensive teacher preparation program aligned with college goals and NCLB requirements, the Elementary Education Program at this university was redesigned and emerged after substantial changes as the Integrative Studies Major Program leading to a Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S. Ed.) degree.

The Research Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teacher candidates who participated in the Integrative Studies Major Program leading to elementary teaching licensure in early and middle grades (K-8). The Integrative Studies Major Program replaced the previous program with more field-based coursework situated in urban schools, extended classroom participation in an urban Professional Development School (PDS), an integrated methods block class of 12
hours taken the semester before student teaching (designated as an internship), and student teaching in the same urban PDS for at least seven or eight weeks of the 15-week student teaching experience. The same classroom teachers and the same university professor, who was one of the authors of this article, mentored these students during internship and for one student teaching placement in this program. Student teaching second placements were in suburban or rural schools in order to expand the experiences of the teacher candidates and because not all our graduates would stay in urban schools. The State Board of Education dictated the requirement of two different placements.

Data regarding the perceptions of the participants involved in this program were gathered and analyzed for program evaluation purposes. In addition to the formative evaluation data aimed at determining how the program functioned and how it can be improved to better achieve its goals, data were gathered and examined to determine the effectiveness of the teacher education program in helping prospective teachers acquire the knowledge and skills needed to develop an understanding of teaching in urban schools. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What are the teacher candidates’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Integrative Studies Major Program?
2. What experiences do teacher candidates find most beneficial in their preparation to become teachers during their internship and student teaching semesters in the Integrative Studies Major Program?
3. What are the trends in performance on the Praxis II Exam over time for elementary licensure teacher candidates?

The Integrative Studies Major Program

The central mission of the Integrative Studies Major Program is the preparation of educational leaders, primarily for urban classrooms. The program is designed to prepare teachers who are able to maximize the development and learning of all children and emphasizes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions as set out in the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards. The program integrates courses in mathematics, literacy, science, social studies, and fine arts to provide a solid core of knowledge for teacher candidates. Beginning teacher education classes have numerous field components, all situated in urban classrooms. The cultural diversity strand runs through all coursework, giving the students a strong background along with hands-on experience working with culturally diverse students. Moving into the final semesters, the program involves teacher candidates working closely in cohorts with their peers and with university professors, attending integrated course classes together (commonly referred to as “block” classes), as well as working and teaching for more than 100 hours in an urban PDS as an intern assigned to a mentor teacher. This component emphasizes knowledge of K–8 learners in an urban setting, integration of curriculum, student learning and cognition along with content area curriculum, use of technology, and adaptations for students with special needs. The student teaching component of this program includes one placement (typically eight weeks) in the same PDS where teacher candidates are familiar with mentor teachers, students, and school routines, and a second placement (seven weeks) in an alternate school setting, as required by state licensing regulations. This alternate setting is usually in a suburban or rural setting and often it is the only time these students visit “non-urban” schools.

The urban schools in which our students are placed for observation, field experiences, and internship are generally Title 1 schools. The student population of these urban schools is 93.6% African American and the schools are designated as economically disadvantaged. Most children in these schools come from nontraditional families. Many students live with someone other than their parents, such as grandparents or aunts and uncles. While this program is most beneficial for those individuals planning to teach in urban schools, it is generally held that if they can make it as teachers in these difficult schools, they can teach any-
where and some of our students do choose to teach in suburban and rural schools.

**Methodology**

This study had a qualitative research design with Likert Scale data included, in conjunction with open-ended surveys and taped focus group interviews as the data collection formats for answering the research questions. According to Merriam (1998), “Meaning is embedded in the peoples’ experiences” (p. 6). Seidman (1998) reports that at the root of the research “is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 3). Since this study sought to answer questions related to the unique experiences of teacher candidates participating in the Integrative Studies Program and attempted to understand what these experiences meant to them, it was appropriate to center this inquiry in qualitative research methodology.

Study participants included a nonrandom sample of 27 teacher candidates (25 females, 2 males). The students were enrolled in the Integrative Studies Major Professional Education Block for fall (referred to as internship semester) and in student teaching during the spring semester. Participants completed written surveys at the end of the fall internship semester and again at the end of the spring student teaching semester. In addition, a randomly selected group of teacher candidates participated in focus group interviews at the end of the internship semester and again at the end of the student teaching semester. A constant comparative data analysis method that involved comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences was used in this study (Merriam, 1998). Data were unitized into the smallest meaning units, coded, grouped together for similarities, assigned category names, and then examined and compared for recurring patterns and emerging themes. All surveys were anonymous and coded for organizational purposes only with participants granting written permission to be interviewed.

Focus group interviews were conducted at the end of internship and again at the end of student teaching. Teacher candidates were asked to volunteer for the focus group interviews. Those participants who appeared at the scheduled time were interviewed. These interviews were treated as conversations in which respondents were asked to describe their perceptions of the Integrative Studies Major Program and their experiences in the program. Interviews were open-ended so that the respondents could frame their answers in their personal style. All respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and participation in the study was voluntary. All responses were coded for confidentiality and kept in a secured location. The first focus group interview was conducted by one of the professors teaching in the program. A professor in the department who was not a part of this particular program conducted the second focus group interview.

In order to determine the degree of improvement in student knowledge and skills for teaching others, university students’ performance scores on the Praxis II exam (taken prior to the student teaching semester) were extracted from the College of Education’s database and were examined for changes over succeeding years. This analysis is an ongoing process and will continue for several years. Data available at the time of this study include three years of scores from those students who completed the program. Tracking of students for five years after graduation will be attempted by establishing mail and email addresses whereby students can be contacted for follow-up and longitudinal effects of the program and determination of retention rates in the teaching profession.

**Findings**

**Survey Responses**

Twenty-seven (27) interns responded to initial surveys administered at the end of the fall semester. The return rate was 100% as the surveys were completed during class time. Nineteen (19) student teachers responded to the identical second survey administered during the final weeks of student teaching (spring semester). Participants were given surveys during a seminar class and asked to return them at the next class meeting.
Some students forgot to return surveys after several reminders; therefore, the return rate for student teaching surveys was 70%.

Strengths. When asked to discuss the strengths of the Integrative Studies Program, the majority of responses reflected students’ acknowledgment of the value of the intensity and depth of classroom experience. One intern stated, “It provides future teachers with the best opportunity to observe and absorb the teaching profession.” The other prominent responses indicated that in addition to having support from their peers, they had an expert team of university and classroom professionals to help them. Interns reported generally they were able to see best practice in operation, and that they had begun to understand the concept and advantages of an integrated curriculum.

Ten of the 19 student teachers reported that peer interaction was one of the most important pieces of the entire program. Others believed that the hands-on approach to the program was very beneficial. One student teacher summed it up:

Many hours of observation and hands-on experience with students during the methods block helped tremendously to prepare me for my student teaching. In fact, it was almost as if I was already doing my student teaching and being able to learn as I went along.

Other student teachers reported learning a variety of teaching strategies and understanding how to construct effective lesson plans as particularly valuable. Six student teachers indicated the time they spent in classrooms with students was the program’s main strength.

Weaknesses. Teacher candidates also discussed the weaknesses of the program. Interns, in general, reported becoming “overwhelmed” with the workload of the block. They characterized some of the work as busy work and not connected to the real world of teaching. Interns were concerned about professors’ personalities, differences in teaching styles, and several instances of miscommunication between professors and students.

In the spring administration of the survey, one issue of concern was that teacher candidates were required to take and pass the Praxis II Exam before beginning their student teaching semester. They recognized that the college requirement of taking the exam before completing their most advanced coursework was a disadvantage for them. One student teacher expressed the opinion that a weakness of the program was the quality of the school in which students were placed for their internship semester. (The school that hosted the block experienced controversy during the semester, creating a negative school climate for the university students and professors.) Another student complained that they were not familiar with the textbooks used in the classrooms. Student teachers had limited access to teacher manuals as there were a limited number. In addition, because of the neighborhood in which the school was situated, student teachers were forced to leave the school early in the afternoon, thus limiting further their access to textbooks. Student teachers were able to compare their knowledge and skills with student teachers from other university programs and believed that they were generally better capable of handling the demands of the classroom.

Benefits of the Program

When asked what they found beneficial during their internships, the 27 teacher candidates commented on their development and understanding of students, schools, and cultures.

Mentors and cooperating teachers. In general, interns viewed working with mentor teachers as very important to their development. One teacher candidate responded:

I enjoyed being able to work with one mentor teacher so that I was able to see the workings of her class from the first bell in the morning to the last bell of the day. It allowed me to see what the ‘real’ school day is like.

Interns were asked to describe their relationships with their mentor teachers. Twenty-three of the 27 interns reported having had a positive experience. While a small portion of the mentor-intern partnerships were less positive, some
remarks indicated there was still much to learn from those partnerships. Intern 20 wrote that her mentor was “more like a peer…. We got along as people, but I do not admire this person as a teacher. I usually take notes on what not to do.”

Participants described how their mentors and cooperating teachers helped them to improve their teaching. Participants generally agreed that they learned the craft of teaching through their work with the experienced teachers. The majority of interns valued and commented how mentors answered questions and explained the *whats and whys* of teaching. They provided interns with opportunities to “get a feel for how to run the classroom.” Cooperating teachers in the spring semester of student teaching were also noted for helping their student teachers in much the same ways. A student teacher responded, “Feedback, feedback, feedback. She’s like a mirror so that I can see what I’m doing and find the areas needing improvement.”

As student teachers, the teacher candidates’ remarks were more holistically reflective, and comments indicated additional benefits of the integrative program that were not emphasized in the fall survey. Specifically, the student teachers valued their relationships with those cooperating teachers who had extensive knowledge about teaching. Others indicated student teaching expanded their experiences to different areas of teaching. A student teacher explained, “I learned so many things through planning, teaching, and observing. I got a feel for different grades and the difference it made and the impact it had on my teaching style.”

A cohort of peers. A dominant theme among the open-ended comments was the support the candidates received from their peers in the Integrative Studies Program. Twenty-seven men and women spent from August until May working as a cohort. While there were personality conflicts and cliques as would be expected with a group this large and mostly young, the interns developed lasting bonds and indicated they shared ideas and collaborated on coursework and classroom work.

The people around me were always support-
... how to think like a teacher. I am able to evaluate myself and find ways to fine-tune my delivery and approach.

Student teachers reported that they transferred this practice and used reflection on a daily basis to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and to improve their teaching.

Time management. Participants were queried as to how the program enabled them to balance the varied demands of teaching. Interns reported that they “became more flexible,” “more prepared and they learned “to juggle time requirements.” They wrote that they became aware of “all a teacher does.” One student teacher commented, “There is so much included in teaching that there is not a university course for.... Student teaching has exposed me to this and I’m glad because I’d be shocked, once in my own classroom, having to do all of the paperwork.”

Lesson planning. The participants were asked how the Integrative Studies Program enabled them to develop long and short range plans to meet the needs of students. According to their comments, they learned how to “set realistic goals for themselves and their students.” Student teachers discussed planning lessons and units to meet the needs of all students. One student teacher explained: “I am able to think further ahead to the big picture and able to plan the little parts to get there.”

Becoming educational leaders. Finally, teacher candidates were asked how the program had enabled them to become effective leaders, a major goal of the program. An intern wrote:

I have learned diplomacy by working in cooperative groups and I have learned a sense of urgency for the importance of teaching... These two things together make me want to step up and do what needs to be done, especially when children’s education is involved.

After completing their internships, several students responded that they had “confidence,” “knowledge,” and “experience.” In addition, they...
felt they had developed a sense of “responsible, open-minded honesty.” Some interns admitted that although they perceived that they had the skills to be a leader, they were unsure because they had not yet had “their own classroom.” One intern commented:

This program has taught me that leadership comes in many forms. It does not simply mean standing in front of the room and dictating to students. Effective leadership in the classroom is a mindset that creates an environment that is most conducive to learning and meeting the needs of the students.

Again, as student teachers, the preponderance of the participants expressed that they felt the program enabled them to become leaders. Only one student teacher wrote that she did not feel like a leader.

Preparation to teach. Interns and student teachers were asked how well the Integrative Studies Program prepared them to begin a career in teaching. Fifteen of the 27 interns responded that they felt well prepared as a result of the program. One intern expressed these thoughts:

We were phased in and out of the classroom, so we could test the ideas being taught in our classes. If you can’t test it, then how do you know it will work? I learned more in this one semester than any other courses I have taken previously because the information actually was applied to a real life situation.

Interns remarked that they recognized the value of being in the classroom as compared to “just observing one or two hours” as in the former program. Comparing it to the medical model, an intern replied, “It is the best preparation. I can’t fathom another means of preparing future teachers for their profession. Doctors and nurses spend years in the profession studying as interns. It seemed illogical for teachers not to do the same thing.”

Likert Scale Survey Results
In addition to the open-ended comments on the surveys, participants were asked to complete Likert scale ratings of 11 statements representing factors impacting their experience in the Integrative Studies program. Table 1 lists the factors and the mean ratings. A rating of 1 indicated the most negative impact and a rating of 5 indicated the most positive impact. In the fall, the most positive ratings were given to the quality of instruction in the block methods courses (4.59) and the quality of the internship experience (4.41). These same factors also received the highest positive ratings in the spring (4.79 and 4.83). The factors having most negative impact were availability and use of technology (1.6 in fall) and school pressures (2.93) in the spring.
Table 1

**Intern/Student Teacher Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = major negative impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = some negative impact</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = neutral impact</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = some positive impact</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = major positive impact</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 = don’t know</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 = School pressure: classes, deadlines, and paperwork requirements for university</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 = School pressure: classes, deadlines, and paperwork requirements for university</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 = The quality of supervision by university professors</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 = The quality of supervision by mentor teachers</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 = The availability and use of technology in the school</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listed below are some factors that affect you as a preservice teacher. For each of the factors, please use the scale provided to rate your experience in the Integrative Studies Major Program. Spaces are provided for your comments.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted with interns at the end of the block semester and at end of the student teaching semester to determine candidates’ perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the block methods semester (fall), the student teaching semester (spring), and to gather suggestions for improvement of the Integrative Studies Major Program. The interviews were taped and data obtained through these focus group sessions were analyzed for themes and discrepancies. Participants were asked to sign a Consent Agreement Form, informed that the interview was being recorded by tape, and verbally assured that their identities would not be revealed in any reports related to the program evaluation. Five interns were interviewed at the end of the block semester for the purposes of this study. They met on the university campus and were interviewed by a university professor not directly involved with the program. At the end of the second semester, four candidates completing their student teaching were interviewed following the same procedure.

**Advantages.** Interns were asked what they perceived to be the advantages of the block program over a traditional teacher education program. One intern explained what the candidates agreed was the major advantage:

“What we learn in class we go out and use the next day. Instead of it just being teacher-tell, you use that strategy to see if it will work in your classroom.”
Interns also liked being assigned to one class with one mentor teacher and one group of students. They felt comfortable in their classrooms and did not have to worry about getting to know different teachers, students, and routines. Another advantage was that interns were at the school site all day and experienced “everything that goes on” in the school. They were “not there for two hours on Friday ... and [saw] the same thing over and over.” Interns also found advantage in the immediate feedback and consultation they received from mentors and university professors:

When we did lesson plans in other classes, my professors just said what was wrong with it. I want to know why... like why it won’t work in a classroom. Being able to have my professors correct it and then going into the classroom and teaching it, brought a lot of enlightenment into everything.

Interns were asked how the Integrative Studies Major program helped prepare them for teaching in an urban environment. Through their stories, it became clear that because of their extended experiences in the classrooms they began to connect with their students in unexpected ways and found that many of their life experiences were similar. They found that these urban students suffered losses (of parents or loved ones) and financial difficulties just as some of the candidates did when they were young. Teacher candidates reported that they now understood that appropriate social skills along with cooperation had to be taught as many students had not been exposed to an appropriate model before entering school. (During debriefing sessions with professors, students often spoke about how shocked they were at the home environment from which their students came, and how their lives outside of school were filled with difficult circumstances such as parents in prison, parents who were deceased, little food or basic necessities.)

Benefits. When asked what they found beneficial about the program, interns’ comments reflected the primary themes they had expressed in their written responses on the survey. Specifically, they commented on creating and teaching the thematic unit because “it was the first time I ever got to see my lesson plan from its inception to its grading.” In addition, the six instructional models taught during the block expanded their knowledge base and understanding of effective lesson delivery. Interns also found beneficial the relationships they developed with their peers and professors. They knew they could call on others for help when needed. Being exposed to special education issues was also beneficial to the interns. Interns learned to adjust lessons plans to fit the needs of all learners. Interns found the merger of the block classes beneficial (as opposed to separate methods classes in the former program). “It just all flowed together and it helped so much” is how one intern described it. Another commented on how beneficial it was to be at the school site. “It was neat to see how the principal did her job and how everybody needs to work together and how the teachers plan together....”

Weaknesses. Interns reported that some assignments were not useful to them, and they felt they should be downsized or eliminated. The professors worked to eliminate redundancy in assignments after the semester was over. Other participants were concerned that the teacher practitioners from the school site were not qualified to teach a component of the block, nor did the practitioners have time to prepare properly for teaching university students because of all of their other responsibilities. (Two teacher practitioners agreed to co-teach the social studies component of the block along with one of the professors. However, the professor discovered later in the semester that one of the practitioners would come to class ill-prepared.) Interns also objected to the point grading system, finding that the points were too high, that the work was too time consuming for the number of points they received, and that points were not distributed equally among assignments and throughout the semester. Again professors worked to equalize points so as to be more equitable.

Suggested improvements. Interns felt the grading system should be changed, but they were unable to suggest another way to make it fair and
equitable. They also suggested having the opportunity to rewrite assignments after receiving feedback from professors. One professor did this and it seemed to have worked well. They wanted this process to be a policy. Third, interns suggested the professors teaching in the block should have more communication with each other and more consistency with their expectations and policies.

**Student Teacher Responses**

The focus group interview of student teachers was conducted with four female students in May 2002 at the University. The interviewees had just completed their student teaching placements. A University professor not associated with the program conducted the one and a half hour interview and followed the same procedures as in the fall.

*Positive experiences.* The students agreed (100%) with obvious enthusiasm that the Integrative Studies Program was a positive experience for them overall. Their responses were more strongly positive for the block semester (fall) than for the student teaching semester. As one student said, “The block was awesome, but the student teaching semester needs to be revised.” Their comments, however, addressed strengths and weaknesses in both semesters and were actually more critical of particulars in the block semester (see following sections). The students also agreed that their goals and expectations for their preparation to assume careers as elementary teachers were fully met through this program.

All students emphatically agreed that the primary advantages for them were the level of confidence they had developed in classroom management and the extent of opportunity to see and learn what schools were “really like.” Because many of them had been able to see the first days of the beginning of a school year, they felt like they knew how “to get started on the right foot.” As a consequence of the extended time spent in one school, one student explained: “We don’t feel so helpless because we have some ‘tools’ to fix problems when they come up.” Another student continued with the tools metaphor: “In our toolbox we have lots of strategies. We know how to modify instruction when students are struggling; we know how to assess; to use tests as a tool; how to interpret tests; how to question; how to focus on students’ problems and set our objectives to match them.”

Another advantage of the Integrative Studies Major Program that students discussed was having a cohort of peers with whom they spent a lot of time and shared common experiences. Although the block semester’s class was fairly large (27) and the common meeting space (classroom) at the school was described as small, the students did not perceive these factors as disadvantages. One student explained: “If someone started to get on your nerves, you weren’t stuck with them. There were plenty of others to interact with for a while. We already knew a lot of the people from previous classes anyway, so it wasn’t like having to start from scratch to get to know 26 strangers.” Another student said, “Having 26 other people with me since August helped me a lot. In the old program, you would be lucky if you got to student teaching and the seminar with it and knew anyone.”

The students who had the same professors both for the block semester and for university supervisor for the student teaching semester indicated that this was also an advantage. One student explained: “I felt OK in student teaching semester when Professor X came to see me, because she knew me and what I was able and capable of doing. Of course, it worked the other way, too. When I wasn’t necessarily at my best, she knew that, too, and that motivated me.”

In summarizing their perceptions of the most beneficial aspects of the program, the students decided that they could sum up their opinions with “C” words. They felt “confident” to enter the student teaching semester; they liked the “cohort” concept of both students and professors working together and indicated that it provided “cohesiveness” for them; the “consistency” of lesson plans and portfolios required by professors and mentor teachers made them “comfortable” and provided “continuity” for moving through the different levels of experiences in the block semester and into student teaching. Searching for one last “C”
word and not finding the exact one, the students concluded by explaining that the site-based program was the “real world” and that it was no longer mysterious for them. In the words of one student: “We found out that we could help kids and that if we could do it here and now, we could do it anywhere, anytime.”

Negative experiences. The students were in somewhat less agreement as to the perceived disadvantages of the Integrative Studies Major Program. For some, the new program presented increased financial hardships. University tuition was significantly increased during this academic year. Traveling to an inner-city school some distance from the main campus required additional transportation costs and arrangements; and, because students are required to be on site for a full day, every day, most were not able to work for the full year. Those who were able to keep some limited work schedules were at a real disadvantage for keeping up with their school requirements. In addition, students had only limited access to materials and supplies provided through the school, as budgets were very tight in the school system. If students wanted to make or do something extra to support their instruction, they felt limited both by school funds and personal finances for money they might have otherwise spent for copying, laminating, and supplies. Students complained, also, that some professors required textbooks that were never used during the year.

Students were critical of the block semester for its follow-through from the “methods instruction” to the application in the classrooms. The students expressed their confidence in their university professors, their expertise, and their knowledge of current best practices taught in the methods instruction. However, when they went into the classrooms, they did not see or experience what the university professors had taught as current best practices, but rather more traditional instruction. Students were confused because they were not sure who was correct—the research-based theory or the classroom teachers.

A related concern raised during the discussion was the selection of schools and the level of professionalism of teachers in those schools selected for program experiences. Students reported that there were instances when they were made to feel uncomfortable by faculty members because of their race. Some classroom teachers sometimes took advantage of them and left them for extended periods of time as the responsible adult in the classroom, and some mentor teachers (who had not attended the preparatory mentoring sessions) were not aware of what their responsibilities were or what the expectations were for the university students while in their classrooms. Although the students expressed their awareness that 27 extra people (in addition to several professors in and out of classrooms over a semester) would have definite impact on a school environment and could be intrusive, they also felt they had a lot to offer to teachers in their knowledge of current best practices and that some of the tensions they experienced should be addressed and focused on in future collaborations between schools and the University.

Although students expressed their high levels of confidence in entering the student teaching semester as a consequence of the extended time and prior experience they had in the fall semester, they also indicated there were areas in their elementary content knowledge where they still felt uncomfortable. One student indicated she lacked confidence in teaching reading in kindergarten and first grade because of her inadequate knowledge of phonics, and another expressed her concern that she felt weak in content knowledge at upper grade levels. (One of her student teaching experiences was in seventh grade pre-algebra classes.) In her words, “The content at the higher grade level was very challenging. I wasn’t confident at all in dealing with some of the questions the students asked.”

Praxis Scores

The State Department of Education requires that all teacher candidates take the Praxis II Series Exams in order to obtain licensure to teach. The Praxis II Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers was developed and administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS). Teach-
er candidates are required to take and pass the following exams: 1) Test 0522, Principles of Learning and Teaching in Grades K–6; 2) Test 0012, Elementary Education, Content Area Exercises; 3) Test 011, Elementary Education, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; and 4) Test 014, Elementary Education, Content Knowledge or Test 0146, Middle School, Content Knowledge. Tests 014 and 0146 scores were currently being normed. Although teacher candidates are required to take one of the tests, these scores did not affect licensure at this time.

At this University, time requirements for passing the Praxis II (see Table 2 and 3) have shifted and may have affected reported scores. The university policy stated that students can graduate with a degree in Elementary Education/Integrative Studies but cannot receive state teacher licensure until they pass the three Praxis II exams. Later, the University added the stipulation that candidates must take and pass all tests before they are allowed to student teach. This stipulation proved to be a disadvantage, as it required students to take the Praxis II exams before they had taken their methods classes. The following spring this stipulation was removed. Also, candidates had the option to retake the test three times. Some students reported all scores to the University and some reported only the passing scores. Therefore, some scores represent multiple efforts of candidates to pass the exams. These multiple reportings may have lowered test score averages and for the purposes of this report are included in the data. Also, some students may not have reported their highest score directly to the University as they may have sent scores only to the state for licensure purposes. Thus, it is possible that some of the highest scores may be missing from the included data.

ETS reports the following summary statistics for these three tests.

**Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews were conducted with interns at the end of the block semester and at end of the student teaching semester to determine candidates’ perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the block methods semester (fall), the student teaching semester (spring), and to gather suggestions for improvement of the Integrative Studies Major Program. The interviews were taped and data obtained through these focus group sessions were analyzed for themes and discrepancies. Participants were asked to sign a Consent Agreement Form, informed that the interview was being recorded by tape, and verbally assured that their identities would not be revealed in any reports related to the program evaluation. Five interns were interviewed at the end of the block semester for the purposes of this study. They met on the university campus and were interviewed by a university professor not directly involved with the program. At the end of the second semester, four candidates completing their student teaching were interviewed following the same procedure.

Given the stipulations, Praxis II score results indicate that the Integrative Studies Program effectively prepares teachers for a career in education. On test 011 candidates performed higher than the national median, on test 012 candidates performed below the national median, and on test 522 candidates performed at the national average.
Table 2
Praxis II Summary Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Possible Score Range</th>
<th>Score Interval</th>
<th>No. of Examinees</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Average Performance Range</th>
<th>Standard Error of Measurement</th>
<th>Standard Error of Scoring</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34,557</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>146–163</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65,368</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>169–188</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56,107</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>167–182</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Praxis II Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Praxis Test</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>No. of Reported Scores</th>
<th>Passing Rate</th>
<th>University Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Fall, 2000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>173.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Spring, 2001</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>176.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Fall, 2001</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>166.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011 Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>172.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Fall, 2000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>152.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Spring, 2001</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>148.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Fall, 2001</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>146.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>012 Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>149.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522</td>
<td>Fall, 2000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>173.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>522</td>
<td>Spring, 2001</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>184.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>522</td>
<td>Fall, 2001</td>
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<td>155</td>
<td>166.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522 Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>174.70</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Note. Fall 2000 candidates required to take Praxis II before student teaching
Spring 2002 candidates required to complete Praxis II by student teaching

Discussion and Recommendations
Based on the data of this study, participants believed that they were well prepared to begin a career in teaching. They predicated this confidence on their extensive experience in real classrooms working with real students; their relationships with peers, mentors, cooperating teachers and university professors; and, the rigors and requirements of the Integrative Studies Major Program. Although there were issues and problems that arose during this first year of implementation, none were significant detractors of the overall program concept and design.

Program Modifications and Improvements
The suggestions for program modification concerned (a) improved interaction between university and school personnel, (b) more direct
connections and follow-through between methods instruction, classroom experience, and student teaching placements, and (c) closer alignment to content knowledge expected to be taught, especially at early levels in reading and in upper levels of other content areas. These suggestions were used for planning and modification for the next cycle of the program.

There is obviously great need for strong leadership in the implementation of any new teacher preparation program in order to bring about improvements that will continue to build strong teachers for the future. In addition, schools selected for housing the program must have whole-school teacher commitment and high levels of professionalism in helping the young and inexperienced learn what they need to know to be successful teachers. One student expressed this concern by saying, “A struggling school can’t help us. This program needs to be in strong schools where teachers are having success.” She continued by saying, “I also learned from this program that I won’t be happy teaching where teachers don’t get along or they don’t work together. I like working with a team and not every school has this spirit.” Another student commented, “We were given a mission in this program—to change what teaching is. I think we want to do that, and we think we can do it, but we know, also, that we are not ready to be a ‘leader’ yet. We are going to need support in these first years to get there.” These comments point to the importance of selecting schools where environments are supportive and conducive to collaboration. They also point to the increasing problem of recruiting and retaining teachers in schools where environments are not positive. Thus, ways of strengthening the mentoring aspect of the program should continue to be explored and developed not only in the final year of preparation for becoming a teacher, but also in the first years of developing into a teacher.

University professors must continue to examine what they are teaching in order to better align methods with content and to work collaboratively. They also must be committed to “following through” with students and giving them feedback on their performance in the classroom and not just on written assignments or portfolios. Coursework prior to the block semester needs to be continually examined for ways of creating closer alignment with what elementary and middle school teachers, as well as students, are expected to know and be able to do.

The Integrative Studies Program is one teacher preparation program that meets the criteria for developing highly qualified teachers. The teacher candidates in this program receive extensive classroom experience before beginning to teach and complete intensive coursework tied to actual classrooms, students, and practical application. Also, Praxis test scores appear to indicate that teacher candidates from this program are performing at or above expected scores. Forming strong liaisons and building shared commitment between the University and school sites, as well as adequately preparing the university professors, schools, and teachers for delivery of the program are challenging tasks that emerged from the discussion with the students as areas of priority for continued improvement of the program. The students’ levels of enthusiasm for becoming teachers and their confidence levels in assuming their professional roles was clearly evident and indicates that there is much promise through the Integrative Studies Program for increased recruitment and retention of teachers into the teaching profession.

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Understanding Teachers’ Perspectives on Professionalism

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Abstract

What does it mean to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism? Depending on the context, these concepts may evoke many images and have multiple definitions. In this paper, we examine what it means to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism in the field of education. We go beyond theoretical definitions of teacher professionalism to explore what it means on a practical level. Specifically, we use focus group interviews to ask inservice teachers what they believe are the basic qualities of professional teachers and what aspects of professionalism ideal teachers exhibit. According to teachers in this study, professionalism is exhibited in many ways and encompasses both attitudes and behaviors.

What does it mean to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism? Depending on the context, these concepts may evoke many images and have multiple definitions. In the world of sports, professionals are distinguished by the level of skill that competitively sets them apart from amateurs. Likewise in music, professionals have a level of skill that enables them to perform beyond the amateur level and often, as in sports, qualifies the professionals to be paid for their performance. In the business world, “professional” is often synonymous with “successful” or at least refers to behavior that is expected of individuals in specific occupations. Doctors, nurses, physical therapists, pharmacists, and others are health care professionals with clearly delineated roles, responsibilities, and limits on their occupational behaviors. Moreover, professionals in the “classic” fields of law, medicine and theology have codified rules and expectations for behavior developed over many centuries (Hart & Marshall, 1992). In these examples, there are many shared understandings regarding what it means to be “professional.” In the field of education, however, being a classroom teacher is not always associated with being a professional. That is, American society does not generally view teachers in the same way as they view other professionals; the belief that “anyone can teach” is not found in other professions (i.e., not just anyone can play professional baseball, or be an accountant or engineer, or practice law or medicine).

While teachers may be viewed differently than other professionals, the importance of effective teachers in societal change cannot be underestimated. In fact, the classroom teacher is arguably the single most important individual in directing student success. Although authors such as Stronge and Tucker (2000) agree that the teacher is the most important school-based factor in student achievement, there remains an uncertainty of what comprises “effective” or “professional” teaching. By understanding and sharing a common definition of “professional” and “effective,” perhaps we can improve teaching so that more students will benefit from successful educational experiences. In this paper, we examine what it means to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism in the field of education from the perspective of practicing teachers. While there are many descriptions of teacher as professionals and its importance, little research has examined what practicing teachers think about this subject. We go beyond theoretical definitions of teacher professionalism to explore what it means on a practical level. Specifically, we use focus group interviews to ask inservice teachers what they believe are the
basic qualities of professional teachers and what aspects of professionalism ideal teachers exhibit.

**Teachers as Effective Professionals**

On the most basic level, the definition of “professional teacher” refers to the status of a person who is paid to teach. It can also, on a higher level, refer to teachers who represent the best in the profession and set the highest standard for best practice. For example, Wise (1989) describes professional teachers as those:

[who] have a firm grasp of the subjects they teach and are true to the intellectual demands of their disciplines. They are able to analyze the needs of the students for whom they are responsible. They know the standards of practice of their profession. They know that they are accountable for meeting the needs of their students (p. 304-305).

This definition clearly illustrates that teaching at a professional level is an advanced and complex undertaking. Both Clement (2002) and Seifert (1999) point out that becoming a professional teacher is a process that takes time to master.

Stronge (2002) categorized the attributes, behaviors, and attitudes of effective teachers into six major areas: prerequisites of effective teachers, the teacher as a person, classroom management and organization, organizing for instruction, implementing instruction, and monitoring student progress and potential. The first two areas examine the teacher as an individual, while the remaining four explore the responsibilities and practices of teachers. He further summarizes the characteristics of effective teachers into three statements: the effective teacher recognizes complexity, communicates clearly, and serves conscientiously.

Hoyle (1980) portrays professionalism as the quality of one’s practice. In other words, the behaviors exhibited by a professional teacher are what identify a teacher’s professionalism. Similarly, Hurst and Reding (2000) associate specific behaviors with teacher professionalism, from appearance and punctuality to using proper language and building strong relationships with colleagues. Morrow (1988) believes professionalism is the degree to which one is committed to the profession and notes that individuals vary in their identification with their profession and in their support of the profession’s values—i.e., teachers have varying levels of professionalism. Kramer (2003) contends the most critical elements of teacher professionalism can be classified into three categories: attitude, behavior, and communication. These three broad areas cover a wide range of behaviors and characteristics that should be demonstrated in the professional lives of teachers, from being on time and dressing neatly to understanding learning theories to clearly communicating with colleagues, parents, and students (Kramer 2003). Additionally, Cruikshank and Haefele (2001) categorize “good teachers” in multiple areas including being analytic, dutiful, expert, reflective, and respected.

In *The Moral Base for Teacher Professionalism*, Hugh Sackett (1993) lays out a broad theory of the moral foundations of teacher professionalism. He describes professionalism as the “manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality, and their contractual and ethical relations with clients” (p. 9). Using composite descriptions of idealized teachers in three classrooms, he identifies five major aspects of professionalism for teachers: character, commitment to change and continuous improvement, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and obligations and working relationships beyond the classroom.

A teacher’s character refers to personal virtues such as patience, determination, courage, and respect for children. Sackett (1993) claims that we often overlook the importance of character by focusing on performance of the teaching act. However, he believes that it is impossible to separate the character of the individual teacher from the act of teaching. Sackett’s (1993) second category of teacher professionalism is commitment to change and continuous improvement. He states (p. 7), “Striving to adjust to change seems inevitable for a professional if teaching is to be good, since children in classrooms are never
replicas of those who have gone before.” Teachers exhibiting this behavior are constantly looking for ways to improve their practice and adjust to the individual needs of students. Mitchell and Kerchner (1983) describe a similar trait in which teachers adapt their teaching strategies based on analyses of the students’ learning situations.

Next, teachers must have a depth of knowledge and understanding of what they teach as well as pedagogical knowledge and the skills to teach. Sockett (1993) correctly makes the distinction between these two aspects of professionalism; one may have a solid grasp of subject knowledge, but not have the pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach students. He believes pedagogical knowledge goes beyond subject knowledge to include an awareness of the teaching context. In other words, teachers must be effective in the “hows” of teaching such as questioning, classroom management, and curriculum delivery. Sockett (1993) believes that modern education emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of professionalism above and to the detriment of the other categories.

The final category in Sockett’s typology of teacher professionalism involves obligations and working relationships beyond the classroom. This broad category includes characteristics that allow teachers to work with colleagues, parents, and the public. Sockett (p. 8) describes this aspect of teacher professionalism in the following way:

...outside the classroom a teacher has wider obligations and working relationships with colleagues and with parents in the exercise of his or her role as a teacher. Professionalism requires that we go beyond classroom performance or classroom activity as descriptors of teaching acts to the complete and complex role a teacher fulfills. Public education needs teachers who are able not only to shine in the four categories mentioned within the classroom but also to undertake the demands of partnership with other professionals, of collaborative leadership, and of a wider role within the school.

Clearly, the concepts “professional” and “effective” have many layers and belie a single definition. As Stronge (2002) contends, “effective teaching is an elusive concept.” In other words, defining exactly what is meant by “effective” or “professional” teacher is no simple matter; there are many definitions. Stronge and Hindman (2003) state, “Some researchers define teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement; others focus on high performance ratings from supervisors; and still others rely on comments from students, administrators, and interested stakeholders” (p. 49). The issue at hand is not to come up with a single, all-encompassing definition of professional or effective teacher. Rather, it is to establish parameters of behaviors and characteristics that can be fostered among teachers. Further, while the literature describes the complexities of being a professional teacher, these descriptions are mostly theoretical in nature and informed by general observations rather than empirical research. The purpose of our exploratory study was to begin an empirical examination of professionalism from practicing teachers’ perspectives. Therefore, we asked, “how do practicing teachers define professionalism?” To answer this research question, we have embarked on a multi-stage study to understand practicing teachers’ perspectives of professionalism. In this paper, we describe the first stage of the study: exploratory focus group interviews with elementary school teachers.

Method

To determine what teachers think about effective teaching and professionalism, focus group interviews with teachers were conducted at four elementary schools, each of which is a professional development school (PDS) partner with a university teacher education program. This collaborative relationship offers students and faculty at the university a context for bridging theory and practice. Education majors have opportunities to visit a variety of classrooms, observe mentor teachers, work with children, and be part of a greater learning community. Teachers have opportunities to participate in a number of profes-
sional development activities, such as conferences, study groups, and workshops. While the PDS relationship may have some impact on the teachers’ perspectives on professionalism, the schools are otherwise very ordinary. Further, each elementary school in the PDS partnership serves a diverse population of students with many on free or reduced lunch.

Focus group interviews were appropriate for this study because they help reveal the perceptions, feelings, and thinking of people about issues (Krueger & Casey, 2000). At three of the elementary schools, the principals asked for volunteers to participate in the discussions. The number of participants at these three schools were eight, nine, and eleven. At the fourth school, the discussion occurred at a faculty meeting, hence most of the teachers participated (approximately 40 teachers). While we recognize that a group with 40 participants does not adhere to standard focus group methodology which calls for group sizes of 6 to 8 (Krueger & Casey, 2000), we nonetheless wanted to include the perspectives of the teachers at this PDS site. In order to obtain teachers’ spontaneous responses, none of the groups were informed of the topic of the focus group interviews beforehand. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and included teachers across grade levels, subjects, and years of teaching experience. The sessions were facilitated by two university faculty members who asked teachers two open-ended questions: 1) What does it mean to be a professional teacher?; and 2) How do teachers exhibit professionalism? The questions were intentionally broad in order to elicit an open discussion. However, the facilitators used clarifying questions and prompts to keep the discussion active and participants focused on the issue. The responses were noted on large pads of paper as well as tape recorded. After each focus group, data from the written notes and tapes were coded and categorized in common themes. Although two broad questions were used to facilitate discussion, the responses to both questions were analyzed together. Following Krueger’s (1998) focus group analysis guidelines, participant comments were analyzed for internal consistency, frequency, intensity, extensiveness, and specificity. Some characteristics identified by the teachers overlap and may represent aspects of more than one theme, but we categorized the characteristics where we thought was most appropriate.

Findings

According to teachers in this study, professionalism is exhibited in many ways and encompasses both attitudes and behaviors. After examining the data, we recognized that teachers’ comments fit into well-established categories of teacher professionalism and the qualities of effective teaching. However, we purposely grouped teacher comments according to Sockett’s (1993) five categories of professionalism: 1) character, 2) commitment to change and continuous improvement, 3) subject knowledge, 4) pedagogical knowledge, and 5) obligations and working relationships beyond the classroom. These categories cover a wide range of aspects of professionalism and effectiveness and provided a comprehensive coding scheme for the teachers’ comments.

Character

Teachers in this study seem to agree with Sockett’s proposition that personal virtues such as patience, determination, courage, and respect for children contribute to professionalism. In each interview, teachers first commented on the character component of professionalism. These comments also made up the primary response category in each of the four interviews. Teachers’ comments describing the character aspect of professionalism demonstrated a consistency in this theme more than any other. For this category of professionalism, participants described an ideal “professional” teacher as one who is resilient and keeps his/her composure at all times and under all circumstances; is caring, nurturing, friendly, patient with all, well-organized, flexible, displays confidence in the classroom; and remembers that he/she is a role model for students. According to the participants, professional teachers are also conscientious, creative, dedicated, goal oriented (they set their own goals and adhere to them). They also care about what they do, take pride in

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their work, have good morals, are ethical in and out of school, adhere to code of conduct/ethical behavior, set high standards for self and students, go above and beyond to do the job, and are open to new ideas/receptive to suggestions. They dress neat and clean and appropriate for teaching situation, have positive attitudes, respect children and their thinking, have a passion for teaching, are dedicated to students, and put the child’s welfare first. They are risk takers, eager to learn new things, view teaching as a career, not just a job, look forward to coming to school, and are enthusiastic about teaching. Clearly, the many features of “character” identified by the focus group participants define an ideal type not found in any single teacher on any given day. Further, there will not be agreement among all educators that each of these examples is a necessary character trait for professional teachers. However, the long list of “character” characterizations illustrates the importance of these traits for the teachers we interviewed.

Commitment to change and continuous improvement. Teachers in the focus group interviews made comments that indicate their awareness of attributes related to the commitment to change and continuous improvement. For example, one teacher said, “Professional teachers are reflective and constantly evaluating their choices and actions to improve instruction.” An examination of the teacher comments clearly indicates that they recognize the necessity to change and continually seek to improve their classroom practices. One teacher summarized this by stating that professional teachers always ask, “How does what I’m doing help my students?” Comments coded in this category of professionalism also include: continues education, reads journals and attends conferences, stays current in the field with latest research and changes in best practices, not satisfied with the status-quo, attends workshops to help classroom practice, looks for resources to aid in lessons. Further, participants described “professional teachers” as those who understand current trends in education, actively seek opportunities to grow professionally, participate in meaningful professional development activities, initiate changes if appropriate/necessary (new programs), and are lifelong learners.

Subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Through responses such as “have a knowledge of curriculum,” “possess content knowledge,” and “be knowledgeable in all areas of certification,” teachers in this study recognized the importance of subject knowledge as a component of professionalism. However, they seem to emphasize pedagogical knowledge more than subject knowledge. The emphasis on pedagogical knowledge may be in part due to the fact that teachers in this study all taught at the elementary school level, many of them responsible for teaching a broad spectrum of the curriculum—e.g., math, reading, science, social studies, etc. On the other hand, the heavier weighting of comments regarding pedagogical over subject knowledge may lend support to Sackett’s contention that modern education emphasizes the pedagogical aspects of professionalism to the detriment of the other areas. Other teacher comments about subject and pedagogical knowledge were coded as: innovative teaching, reflective, effective implementation of curriculum, participates in action research, motivates students to learn, knows how to assess learning and plan lessons accordingly, applies learning theories, addresses needs of children, uses proper English and is articulate, uses appropriate learning strategies for discipline (varies them according to needs of students and subject), and has various teaching strategies and knows when to use them.

Beyond the Classroom

Although there was less discussion on this aspect of teacher professionalism, teachers in the study recognize that professionalism involves more than simply their actions inside the classroom. They understand that professional teachers have a responsibility to collaborate and cooperate with faculty, staff, administration, parents, and community members. One teacher’s comment that “professional teachers are involved in developing and changing policies and rules” illustrates that professionalism should impact many educational settings. Comments from teachers in the focus
group interviews illustrating the “beyond the classroom” aspect of professionalism also include:

effective communication with parents, colleagues, community members; role model for other teachers in and out of the classroom; mentors other teachers when appropriate; participates in school decisions; cooperative with faculty, staff, administration, parents, community members; shows respect for colleagues and parents; engages in collaborative efforts; concerned about fellow teachers; and participates in professional organizations.

Conclusion

Because the foundation of an educated society relies on the teachers who daily interact with students from early childhood to young adulthood, it is important to understand what it means to be a professional teacher. Linda Darling-Hammond (1996, p. 5) states, “The invention of 21st century schools that can educate all children well rests, first and foremost, upon the development of a highly qualified and committed teaching force.” These kinds of schools demand that teachers understand how children learn and make teaching decisions based on that knowledge. However, it would be misguided to simply state that the educational system needs professional teachers without understanding what is meant by “professional.” In this paper, we examined what “professional” means to practicing teachers and found that their conceptualization matches many of the descriptions in the literature on teacher professionalism and effectiveness. A close look at the teachers’ responses reveals interesting conclusions and raises several questions for further investigation.

First, the findings in this study indicate that teachers have high standards, ideals, and expectations for themselves and other teachers. The findings also suggest that teachers believe there are qualities and characteristics of teachers that separate “professionals” from others. In other words, they do not believe all teachers exhibit the behaviors and characteristics of being a professional. Hence, it is important for the educational community to determine ways to enhance the professionalism of all teachers. Stronge (2002) maintains that these behaviors and characteristics can be fostered for veteran teachers through high-quality and appropriate professional development activities and beginning teachers through “observing other teachers, receiving peer feedback, cultivating collegial relationships, and participating in lifelong learning experiences” (p. 64).

Interestingly, teachers discussed the “character” component of professionalism more than any other aspect. It is apparent that this is an important part of being a professional teacher. This coincides with Wong and Wong’s (1998) contention that, “A professional is defined not by the business a person is in but by the way that person does his or her business” (p. 293). The emphasis on the character aspect of professionalism raises an important question: can “character” be taught or is this simply something individuals bring with them to the teaching profession?

Finally, the results of this study indicate the importance of communicating what it means to be a professional teacher to a wider audience. Although there may be a general agreement among educators regarding what it means to exhibit professionalism, it is important to communicate this outside the field to combat the widely held notion that anyone can teach. Teachers in this study concurred by mentioning the importance of communicating what they do to the public. This supports Sockett’s (1993) emphasis on the importance of communicating to the public the values and practices of the teaching profession. He also believes that standards of professionalism need to be clarified in order to guide novice teachers, develop appropriate evaluation structures for teachers, and improve teaching. Therefore, it is important to continue research in this area.

As mentioned above, this research was the first part of a multi-stage study examining teacher professionalism. The results from the focus group interviews have been used to develop a survey instrument that has been administered to more than two hundred practicing teachers, from both PDS and non-PDS sites. Using the results from the survey research, we hope to answer several addi-
tional research questions. First, are the characteristics of teacher professionalism primarily idealized or do teachers typically behave in these ways? What aspects of professionalism do teachers deem as most important and why? Further, does teaching at PDS sites impact the professionalism of teachers? As we continue to examine teachers’ understanding of what it means to a professional, we need to learn how to best utilize this information in order to cultivate and enhance the professionalism of all teachers.

References
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